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THE RIGHT HAND MAN

Presidential Electoral College elects three vice-presidents

THE two houses separately voted to confirm U Htin Kyaw and U Hnery Van Thio as candidates for the presidency and vice presidency yesterday while a group of military representatives put forth U Myint Swe, a former Lt-Gen, as its nominee for vice presidency.

Following election of the candidates, a body for scrutinising presidential qualifications is working out whether or not the vice-presidential candidates possess the qualifications prescribed for the position.

The 7-member body comprising the speakers and deputy speakers of the Amyotha Hluttaw and the Pyithu Hluttaw, representatives from the two houses and military representatives is expected to announce their findings on 14 March, said an MP.

When voting at the second day meeting of the Pyithu Hluttaw's presidential electoral col-

lege, 274 of 317 representatives voted for U Htin Kyaw while votes of 29 representatives went for Dr Sai Mauk Kham. Of 317 votes, 14 were deemed invalid.

Likewise, the Amyotha Hluttaw's presidential electoral college voted on a vice-president. U Henry Van Thiao received 148 votes while U Khin Aung Myint won 13 votes. Of 167 votes, six were deemed invalid.

A group of the presidential electoral college formed with Defense Services personnel Hluttaw representatives have also approved Lt-Gen Myint Swe (Retired) for the vice-president.

According to the law, rules and regulations of the election of the President and Vice-Presidents, a list of the names of vice-presidents elected by three groups of the Presidential Electoral College will be put forward to the Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.—
Myanmar News Agency



PHOTO: REUTERS

U Htin Kyaw, Pyithu Hluttaw's presidential candidate

He is the son of late famous poet Min Thu Wun. Born on 20 February 1946 in Kunchangon, Yangon Region, he attended the University of Economics in 1962, receiving a B.Econ in 1967 and a M.Econ in 1968. He left for Britain for further studies. He now acts as an EC member of Daw Khin Kyi Foundation. His wife is Daw Su Su Lwin, MP of Pyithu Hluttaw.



PHOTO: REUTERS

U Henry Van Thio, Amyotha Hluttaw's presidential candidate

A Chin national, his parents are U Hlyan Talon and Daw Ngun Pearl. Born on 9 August 1958 in Thantlang township, Chin State, he studied at Yangon University and Mandalay University, and graduated in law. He used to be an army officer before he was transferred to Ministry of Industry-1. He is married with two sons and one daughter. His wife is Dr Swe Lwam.



PHOTO: MNA

Former Lt-Gen Myint Swe, presidential candidate elected by the group of military representatives

He is the son of U Kyi Maung and Daw Kyi. Born in Mandalay on 24 June 1951, he attended the 15th Intake of the Defence Services Academy and retired as lieutenant general in 2010. Currently, he holds the post of chief minister of Yangon Region. He is married with one son and one daughter.



Fishermen preparing for catching fish in the Attaran River.

PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Local fishermen entreat Mon State Hluttaw to solve destruction of Attaran river by coal tankers

LOCAL fishermen have entreated the Mon State Hluttaw to resolve destruction to the Attaran river and the frequent sinking of motorised fishing vessels due to the plying along the river by large container ships and coal tankers servicing the concrete factory in Kyaikmaraw township.

"If this problem can't be resolved this time then us fishermen will have to take some kind of action ourselves in relation to the

MCL [factory]." U Aung Thin Oo, chair of the Kyaikmaraw township fishermen group.

The entreaty was sent on Thursday. It is known that between 2014-15 similar letters of request were sent four times to the Mawlamyine Cement Limited (MCL) factory, the Department of Fisheries for Mawlamyine, the Kyaikmaraw general administrators office and the Mon State government, but any of these efforts

had come to no avail.

"Two hundred feet long ships come and go from the MCL [concrete] factory in Kyaikmaraw four or five times a day. When one of these ships sails along the river it creates waves taller than a man. Our fishing boats can't withstand damage from these waves. They sink. And if they don't sink then our engines do or all our fishing lines are broken off.

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Top priority given to Mt. Khakaborazi for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Mt. Khakaborazi in Putao, Kachin State.

PHOTO: SEARCHMYANMAR.COM

AMONG Myanmar's bid for seven places to be inscribed on the list of World Heritage Site, Mount Khakaborazi is given top priority to win UNESCO's recognition, according to the UNESCO's national project coordinator.

The Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is conducting surveys on the biodiversity of Mt. Khakaborazi and its adjacent areas in cooperation with UNESCO, said Daw Ohnmar Myo, national project coordinator of UNESCO.

Located in Putao of Kachin State in northern Myanmar, Mt. Khakaborazi is the highest peak in Southeast Asia with estimated 19,296 feet in height.

The mountain was first ascended in 1996 by Takashi Ozaki, a Japanese mountaineer, and Nyama Gyaltsen, a local.

A team of mountaineers from Nature's Call Foundation, University Hiking and Mountaineering Association

scaled the mountain and the two climbers conquered Mt. Khakaborazi.

Six others in the world heritage tentative list are Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary, Ayeyawady Dolphin, Nat Ma Taung (Mt. Victoria), Taninthayi nature reserve, Inndawgyi Lake and Myeik Archipelago.

The national project coordinator stressed the need for cooperation between officials concerned and local people to ensure the seven nominations qualified for inclusion on the list of world heritage.

In Myanmar, three ancient cities—Thayekhittaya near Pyay, Beikthano near Taungdwingyi and Hanlin near Shwebo—had been designated as world heritage sites.

The Ministry of Culture and organisations concerned are trying to get the Bagan archaeological area and monuments to be listed as a World Heritage site.—*Ko Moe*

Scrutiny board formed for assessment of presidential eligibility

A SEVEN member scrutiny board was formed and tasked with a special assignment to assess the elected vice presidential candidates for their validity and eligibility for presidency and vice-presidency, the Office of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw said in its announcement signed by its

Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than on Thursday.

The members of the board are Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye

Tha Aung, Pyithu Hluttaw representative Dr Myo Aung of East Dagon Myothit constituency, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Ba Myo Thein of the Yangon Region constituency, and military representative Maj-Gen Than Soe.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Mandalay cork factory damaged in blaze

A FIRE occurred at to a cork factory in Pyigyidagun Township, Mandalay Region yesterday, causing a loss of K3.8 million in the accident.

The Mandalay Region Fire Services Department said that the friction of rolls of cork is believed to have started fire that had caused extensive damage to the Kaung Hein San cork factory. While responding to the fire, three firemen including a member of an auxiliary fire unit suffered suffocation while one fire fighter got a cut on his right leg, according to the department.—*Aung Thant Khaing*



Some firemen got injuries as they tried to control the fire at cork factory in Mandalay on 11 March, 2016. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Onion prices fall as numerous onion supplies arrive in Bayintnaung Brokerage

WITH the constant flow of onions into the Bayintnaung wholesale market in Yangon, the Onion market is currently depressed.

"Though onion prices rose until the third week of February,

it began to drop from last week.

I guess the main reason for fall in onion price is the low demand", said U Zin Oo, an onion trader.

In one week, more than 30 to

40 vehicle loads of onions supplies are flowing to Bayint-naung market from different regions which has caused a cooling in the onion market and low demand.—*ML (Union Daily)*

New Ngamoeyeik bridge to allow traffic flow soon

MOTORISTS will be allowed to use the Bohmu Bahtoo Bridge being built across Ngamoeyeik creek by the end of this month as construction of the bridge linking Dagon Myothit (North) and North Okkala Township had reached 80 per cent completion according to the Yangon City Development Committee.

The aim of building the new bridge parallel to the old one is to ease traffic congestion caused by a line of vehicles crossing the old bridge, said an official of the YCDC.

On completion of the new bridge with a two-lane motorway, traffic woes of motorists will be relieved to a certain extent, added the official.

The new reinforced-concrete bridge is 185.5 meters in length and 10.35 meters in width and the bridge's clearance above water is 11 feet and two inches at the maximum water level.

Bridge construction began on 1 July 2015, with the manpower of more than 150 including engineers and workers.—*Soe Win-MLA*



Construction workers are seen on Bohmu Bahtoo Bridge which is under construction. PHOTO: SOE WIN-MLA

President inspects flood control measures in Zalun, visits Singapore-Myanmar Vocational Training Institute in Yangon

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein inspected works being carried out for river bank protection and flood control in Zalun Township, Ayeyawady Region and visited Singapore-Myanmar vocational training institute in Bahan Township, Yangon yesterday.

On his inspection tour of the flood control and river bank protection works in Zalun the President heard reports on work progress in construction of a drain to divert water from Ayeyawady River and prevent flooding.

Next, the President and party observed the worksite where the project of building a 5.5-mile drain and other structures including construction of the Maydon dyke is being implemented. The works are currently at 38 per cent completion.

As compensations for crops and lands, payments of K700

million had been fully made, sources said.

Then, the President and party visited the Singapore-Myanmar Vocational Training Institute in Yangon. In his address at the meeting the President elaborated on the government's efforts to establish vocational training schools across the country and called on trainees to strive to ensure national development through the knowledge they have gained at school.

The SMVTI, established on 16 October, 2015 is offering six-month full-time training courses to Myanmar youth. The Institute can allow 800 trainees a year to take courses and is set to be officially opened in the middle of this year in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Myanmar-Singapore Diplomatic Ties.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Thein Sein visits the Singapore-Myanmar Vocational Training Institute. PHOTO: MNA



Meeting between the government's supporting committee and the transition team of the National League for Democracy. PHOTO: MNA

Government, NLD meet for fourth time to discuss handover of duties of the Head of State

THE fourth coordination meeting between the governments's supporting committee for the handover of the duties of the Head of State and the transition team of the National League for Democracy was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, both sides discussed a handover ceremony of the duties of

the Head of State, ongoing works and procedures to establish strategic framework for national-level administrative reform and presentations by permanent secretaries on Union ministries.

The two sides agreed to hold the fifth meeting in the middle of this month.

Present at the meeting were

Union Minister U Hla Tun, chairman of the government's supporting committee, Deputy Director-General U Maung Maung Ohn of the Ministry of Construction, Deputy Director-General U Zaw Htay of the President's Office, NLD CEC member U Win Htein, Dr Myo Aung and Dr Aung Thu.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Local fishermen entreat . . .

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The fishermen are not drowned because they can swim. I want to say, please solve these problems for us," said U Maung Maung Gyi, secretary of the Kyaikmaraw fishermen group.

It is known that the majority of fishermen have suffered because of the large ships which ply the waters, while the fishing boats and fishing equipment of roughly twelve fishermen have been sunk or destroyed, with total damages amounting approximately K5 million.

Fishermen have voiced their desire for negotiations

with responsible personnel from the MCL concrete factory to discuss the reduction in speed of shipping vessels when entering and leaving the factory waters and for financial reimbursement to those who have suffered monetary losses because of the ships in question.

Construction began on the MCL concrete factory in Kyaikmaraw township back in February 2014, before being completed during February this year. It is known that the factory produces around 5,000 tonnes of concrete a day.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Bomb blast in Sittwe

A BOMB blast occurred in Sittwe, Rakhine State, on Thursday, with no injuries reported, according to local police.

At 11:30pm on Thursday an explosion was heard inside a house in Danyawady ward in Sittwe, Police Lt-Col Win Naung said.

Despite an ongoing investigation into the blast the cause

remained unclear, the police officer said, promising detailed investigation into the cause of the blast in a bid to wipe out public panic.

Local residents speculated that the explosion was an intentional act of arousing unrest at a time when students were taking their matriculation exams.—*Man Yu Kyaw (Shwewamywe)*

MAT to assist deceased family to receive compensation

THE Myanmar Association Thailand will lend assistance in the obtaining of compensation for the family of a deceased Myanmar employee who was killed at his worksite.

Thai police, the company chief and the car driver who killed the Myanmar man promised that they would compensate the man's family. It was further promised that the compensation

would be provided to the family within 45 days of the accident.

However, the company chief delayed the compensation for the deceased Soe Min Naung, 21, without making any contact.

"The company proprietor is not willing to meet me and disappeared when I went to see him. He rejected my appointment", said, Ma Moe Sandar Win, a member of the de-

ceased's family.

Soe Min Naung, 21, was knocked off by a twelve-wheel vehicle and succumbed to his injuries while on a worksite in Thailand on 15 January. He was from ShweLountin village, Yathetaung Township, Rakhine State.

The MAT organisation will provide help as best they can, according to the source.—*Soe Win*

Fatal vaccine are undergoing laboratory tests: MoH

THE condition of newly born babies which suffered side effects after being injected with a hepatitis B vaccination at Bago General Hospital is stable, not getting worse, said Prof Dr Myint Han, a director-general of the Ministry of Health.

Officials of the ministry gave a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, clarifying the situation of the babies receiving intensive care around the clock at Yankin Children Hospital, saying that the authorities are carrying out an investigation into the case to determine whether or not there is a link between symptoms of found

in the babies and the vaccine; that currently, they have prohibited the sales of the vaccines as the medicine is put for laboratory tests.

The investigation came after deaths of two infants after receiving hepatitis B vaccine in Bago where 28 infants were given the vaccines, Engerix B and Hepavax B, bought from a pharmacy shop at Bago General Hospital.

Of 28 infants, two who are among 14 discharged from the hospital died at their homes. The 12 infants were brought back to the hospital following the incident, and ten are being given intensive care at the hospital while the remaining

two are being monitored at their homes.

Meanwhile, the officials disclosed that seven children aged from five to nine suffered from encephalitis in Thazi, confirming that four died of the disease.

Currently, the authorities from the Ministry of Health are investigating the case and took preventive measures against the disease.

They are monitoring the villages where the outbreak of the infectious disease happened, said Prof Dr Soe Lwin Nyein, Director-General of the Public Health Department.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Martial arts training offers traditional self-defence techniques of Bando



A bando refresher course for local trainers. PHOTO: PHO CHAN (MONYWA)

A MARTIAL arts refresher course for local trainers is being conducted in Monywa Township of Sagaing Region as of 3 March with the objective of promoting the role of Myanmar's traditional martial arts and enhancing fighting skills.

In cooperation with the Sagaing Region Sports and Physical Education Department, a local non government Myanmar

Martial Arts Federation (Central) organised the ToT training at the region's sports ground.

Altogether 20 trainees from Sagaing, Monywa and Yinmabin districts are attending the 10-day course with five trainers from the MMAF. "The ToT course mainly offers Bando (free hands system), one of traditional self-defence techniques," said U Tayza Aye, vice chairman of Sagaing

Region Myanmar Martial Arts Sub-committee. "The course also focuses on enforcing the rules and regulations of such a type of self-defence in local sports competitions." Bando, Banshay (Arts of the sword, staff and spear), Lethwei (Myanmar Boxing) and Naban (Myanmar wrestling) are famous among other traditional martial arts in the country.—*Pho Chan (Monywa)*

Photo exhibition highlights lifestyles of ethnic nationalities

A PHOTO exhibition is being conducted at Yangon gallery with a focus on showcasing both colourful and black and white photographs depicting natural landscapes, the beauty of wild animals and ethnic diversity.

The Myanmar Photographic Society organised the exhibition in order to show younger generations the photographic industry.

During the three-day event, works by winners of its 52nd annual photo contest plus 50 creations by its members are being displayed at the gallery. The majority of photographs feature lifestyles and traditional customs

of ethnic people.

The organiser is inviting enthusiasts to come to the event and attend the seminar entitled Japanese Rall Road by a Japanese photographer Tokashi Koike.

Mr Robert Collins, a British photographer, will share his knowledge and experience with local photographers. There are 30 enthusiasts registered to attend the seminar.

The Yangon Gallery is located within the compound of People's Park near Planetarium on Alone Road.—*Kyan Daing Aung*



A photo highlighting the lifestyle of Padaungs. PHOTO: KYAN DAING AUNG

Crime NEWS

Passenger vehicle plunges into ravine



The mini bus seen overturned. PHOTO: MYINT OO (MYEIK)

A MINIBUS leaving Kawthaung for Myeik being driven by one Shwe Tasoke, 36, plunged between mileposts 31 and 32, Kawthaung- Myeik road, Myeik township, Taninthayi region on Thursday when the driver lost control of the vehicle.

The accident killed Daw Aye Kyi, 41, while seven other passengers sustained serious injuries. They are now receiving medical care at Myeik general hospital. Police have filed charges against Shwe Tasoke. —*Myint Oo (Myeik)*

Man arrested for robbery

POLICE have filed charges against a man on suspicion of robbery in Nat Chaung village, Kale township on Thursday.

According to an investigation, a man who covered his face with a mask and held a gun robbed the Shwe War Linn Jeweler around 9:30am on Bogyoke road in Aung Myay Man ward, Kale. He forcibly took away with him 41 gold chains and 28 pairs of gold earrings in the presence of the shop owner. He escaped on a motor bike.—*Chin Dwin Thar*



The robber seen with the gun used. PHOTO: CHIN DWIN THAR

Two missing following capsizing of motored sampan

A MOTORED sampan with eleven green grocers on board sank into the Yangon river on Thursday when it crashed into the No.2 buoy because of thick fog. A fishing vessel nearby saved nine passengers but two passengers are still missing.

According to a police investiga-

tion the vessel, named Aung Nang Lwin, was being driven by one San Nyunt alias Kyet Tet, 36, from Dala. The victims have been identified as Daw Ye San, 62, from 2nd street and U Tin Win, 56, from 9th street, Boyan Pay ward in Dala.—*Than Htay (Dala)*



Yangon River where the sampan overturned. PHOTO: THAN HTAY (DALA)

Motor vessels' head-on collision kills one, injures two

A MOTOR vessel named the Sun Moon collided head on with the motor vessel Aung Yadanar in the Pyanmalot river on 5 March, leaving one dead and two injured.

The first vessel was being driven by one Maung Wai Hlan Phyto, 20, with 20 workers on board, when it crashed into the

Aung Yadanar being driven by one Han Min Paing, 20, as the former lost control.

The collision killed Ma Ye Ye Win, 18, from Aun Gyi village on the spot while Ma Khin Thet Swe, 39, and Ma Khine Khine Htay, 23 were seriously injured.—*(Patheingyi Hla Kyi)*

LOCAL Business



Water tanks are established in Monywa to supply water to local people. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Japanese loan of K473 million brings water to Monywa

THE Monywa Township Development Committee has announced that six wards in the town of Monywa, located in Myanmar's northwestern Sagaing Region, will be connected to a supply of drinking water using a loan from the Japanese government worth over K473 million (US\$387,387).

Monywa currently consumes 3,330,800 gallons of water per day, but the local water distribution facility operated by the mu-

nicipal development committee only has the capacity to provide 1,195,000 gallons, or to just 36 per cent of the total.

"The Monywa municipal department will provide water to wards without water with a loan from Japan. Wells and reservoirs will be dug. We will then connect wards of the town with water from these sources. The implementation of the project will begin at the end of March," said Ma Nway Aye, an engineer for the

Monywa Township Development Committee.

The Monywa wards of Aye Tharyar, Monywa Taung, Nat Luu Hteithan, Myo Thit, Obo Taung and Chan Myawaddy do not currently have a reliable supply of drinking water.

Equipment for the water supply project is now being collected, and the project is slated for completion within the 2016-2017 fiscal year.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Report and receive 10% of the fine

Aung Thant Khine

THE Department of Internal Revenue in Mandalay Region has announced that anyone who reports on the failure to stick revenue stamps on a commercial receipt will be rewarded with a portion of the bounty.

"We have instructed all restaurants to place the revenue stamps on the receipts according to the law. If the consumer reports exactly to our department mentioning the name and nationality

scrutiny certificate number, we will fine the restaurant K200,000 and will reward the reporting citizen", said U Kyaw Aung, assistant director of department of internal revenue, Mandalay region.

Sticking the revenue stamps on the vouchers will help the customer to see the reason for why 5% was collected by the Department of Internal Revenue. It means the restaurant collects the revenue on the behalf of the department.

The effect of failure to pay

the tax would not be significant if a customer buys a food item for K1,000, but the impact would be substantial if he buys the food items for up to K50,000. Certainly, the restaurants are responsible to give the revenue since they earn at least half profit from the customer, he added.

The authorities in Mandalay Region handed out fines worth more than K1 million from restaurants in the downtown area during their inspection tour in December 2015.

Jovago signs deal with top Myanmar hotel operators

THE French hotels and tourism booking website Jovago signed an agreement with three of Myanmar's top hotel operators at the beginning of March to provide hotel bookings services through their website, according to Jovago Myanmar.

The three hotel operators are the Amata Hotel Group, Kandawgyi Palace, the Aureum Palace and Resort and Myanmar Treasure Resort Hotel Enterprises.

Jovago also announced that it will sign a renewal contract with Amazing Holidays Hotel and Resort Enterprise.

"Being able to make a connection with three hotel operators in this way as reliable clients goes to show how the Myanmar hotels and tourism industry has changed for the better. Connecting with Jovago takes the confusion out of travel. Whatever the location

and wherever one wants to go, one can compare rates and services of hotels within minutes, giving one the ability to choose the hotel one likes," said Hugo Schleicher, managing director for Jovago Myanmar.

The Amata Hotel Group operates hotels and resorts in both Thailand and Myanmar, while Kandawgyi Palace is regarded as one of Yangon's top hotels.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Monywa farmers see good price for mutton

FARMERS in Monywa Township, Sagaing Region are seeing a high price for mutton this year, selling at K750 (US\$0.62) per pound, locals say.

The price is higher compared with late 2015 when the farmers received K550 (\$0.45) per pound.

Currently, local farmers are monitoring the development of the market to sell the lambs at a high price.

There are over 24 locals who operate a commercial sheep farming business even only in Phankhakyin Village. They normally sell their farm animals to brokers from Monywa, Mandalay and the upper part of Chindwin.

U Zaw Win, a local farmer,

said: "The breeding of sheep in the region can reduce expenses for food than other farm animals such as cows, pigs and goats."

"The farmers need to wash them at least one time per week in the summer. To protect them from infectious disease, farmers need to inject the necessary vaccinations every four week," he suggested. People from villages located in the northern part of Monywa Township are mainly engaged in agriculture and live-stock breeding tasks.

After harvesting crops, local farmers focus on the breeding of farm animals on a manageable scale as the rural areas in the township is plentiful of pastureland for them.—*CNH/Union Daily*

Cross-border trade with Thailand declining

THE Ministry of Commerce figures up until 26 February this year show the border trade volume at the Tachilek border trade camp totalled US\$80 million over the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

According to the ministry, the current trade volume with Thailand is lower than that of the volume during the same period last fiscal year. These figures were over \$98 million in the 2014-2015 FY.

During this FY, the export volume of the trade zone amounted to over \$9 million while the imports amounted to

over \$71 million

Tachilek border trade camp is one of the border trade camps being opened along the Myanmar-Thailand border area.

Myanmar mainly exports agricultural products including rice and other commodities to Thailand, and imports cement, fuel, food and beverages, tractors and its accessories as well as construction materials.

Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce has granted Individual Trading Cards (ITCs) since 2013, with the aim of promoting trading relations with Thailand.—*ML/Union Daily*

Japanese rice to be grown in Myanmar farms

IN COOPERATION with the Department of Agriculture, local farmers plan to cultivate four different kinds of Japanese rice during the coming rainy season in Nay Pyi Taw, Hmawbi in Yangon Region, Pyay in Bago Region and Heho in Shan State, growers say.

The pilot project is aimed at importing rice to Japan as some Japanese traders only buy Japanese rice. The production process will be carried out by the Myanmar Agri-business Public Corporation Ltd (MAPCO).

Japanese native rice plantations can produce about 90 baskets per acre, trading at around

US\$1,000 per tonne, which is higher than other imported rice varieties.

"We received the invitation from foreign traders to buy Japanese native rice. The buying price for the Japanese rice is approximately at K7,000 (\$5.75) per basket," said farmer U Ngwe Toe.

Local farmers are now developing plantations for Japanese species of rice obtained under a government-to-government programme and are planning to establish commercial plantations in future, an agriculture department official said.—*Zar Ni*

'Hearts are in pieces' five years after tsunami hits Japan

RIKUZENTAKATA (Japan) — Japan mourned yesterday the thousands who lost their lives in a massive earthquake and tsunami five years ago that turned towns to matchwood and triggered the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

The nine-magnitude quake struck offshore on a chilly Friday, sparking huge black waves along a vast swathe of coastline and killing nearly 20,000 people.

The tsunami crippled the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, where meltdowns in three reactors spewed radiation over a wide area of the countryside, contaminating water, food and air.

Naoto Kan, the prime minister at the time, has said he feared he would have to evacuate the Japanese capital Tokyo and that Japan's very existence could have been in peril.

More than 160,000 people were evacuated from nearby towns and some 10 per cent still live in temporary housing across Fukushima prefecture. Most have settled outside their hometowns and have begun new lives.

Some areas remain no-go zones due to high radiation. Demonstrators in front of plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co (Tepco) bore signs saying, "Give



Lanterns from northern Japanese city Natori are illuminated during an event to pray for the reconstruction of areas devastated by the on 11 March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and mourn victims of the disaster at the Canadian embassy in Tokyo, Japan, on 10 March 2016, a day before the five-year anniversary of the disaster. PHOTO: REUTERS

me back my hometown!"

At cemeteries along the devastated coastline, in front of buildings hollowed out by the wave, and on beaches, families gathered to offer flowers and incense, bowing their heads and wiping away tears. Flags at central government buildings were at half-mast, some

draped in black. In coastal Rikuzentakata, which was flattened by a wave as much as 17 metres (56 ft) high and lost seven per cent of its population along with its entire downtown, pain remains strong.

"The reality is that we still feel the scars here, and there are still many struggling to restart

their lives," said 65-year-old Yasuichi Yanashita, a retired city hall official. The four-storey city hall was inundated by the wave.

At 2:46 pm (0546 GMT), the moment the quake hit, bells rang out in downtown Tokyo and people around the nation bowed their heads in a moment of silence. All

the trains on Tokyo's vast underground paused for a minute.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Emperor Akihito bowed in front of a stage laden with white and yellow flowers in a Tokyo ceremony attended by 1,200 people, including survivors from the stricken area.

"Father, that day, I called your mobile phone so many times, but you didn't answer ... " said Masakiyo Kimura, who lost his parents to the wave in the city of Onagawa. "Our house was completely torn from its foundation. Nothing remained except for the pair of matching teacups father and mother used, lying on top of each other."

Billions of dollars in government spending have helped stricken communities rise from the ruins, including elevating the earth to protect them from future waves and cleaning radiation-contaminated land, but much remains to be done for thousands still languishing in barracks-like temporary housing.

"I get the feeling that the number of people who don't know what to do, who aren't even trying, is increasing," said Kazuo Sato, a former fisherman from Rikuzentakata. "Their hearts are in pieces." —Reuters

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Asia-Pacific remains 'most disaster-prone region' in world in 2015, UN reports

UNITED NATIONS — The Asia-Pacific region "continues to be the most disaster prone part of the world in 2015" and needs a risk-sensitive development approach, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said here Thursday.

More than half of the world's 344 disasters in 2015, resulting in more than 16,000 deaths and affecting some 59 million people, occurred in Asia-Pacific, Dujarric said, quoting a new report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), which was released earlier Thursday.

The report was entitled "Disasters in Asia and the Pacific: 2015 Year in Review."

"The cost of economic damage to countries in the region was more than 45 billion US dollars, although that figure would be much higher if indirect losses were included," he said.

South Asia was the hardest hit, recording 52 disasters and more than 14,000 deaths, with most deaths attributed to the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that hit Nepal in April 2015, the spokesman noted.

Meanwhile, the report warned that the region's burgeoning cities may not be adequately equipped to tackle urban disasters that occur more frequently and with greater intensi-

ty. More than 700 million people in the region live in cities at "extreme" or "high" disaster risk, and by 2030 this number could reach one billion, according to the report.

In many big cities in Asia-Pacific, much of the infrastructure is outdated and built without adequate attention to disaster resilience, the report noted.

Last year, the urban centres of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Japan were affected by severe floods, while Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu, bore the brunt of the economic damage from the April earthquake.

Widespread floods in Chennai, India in December 2015 illustrate the common challenges faced by many big cities. With the ecological buffers depleted over time by rapid, unplanned urbanisation, the floods inundated critical infrastructure, disrupted power networks and waterlogged major city roads.

Economic damage and loss from the floods have been estimated at more than 10 billion US dollars, the report said.

A prolonged El Niño phenomenon last year drew attention to neglected and often forgotten slow-onset disasters by severely exacerbating effects of heat waves, forest fires, haze, and droughts.

El Niño — which means the

Little Boy in Spanish — and its sister La Niña — the Little Girl — are weather events, which contribute to changes in climate and weather.

Last year was the hottest on record, with Pakistan and India reporting more than 3,400 fatalities from a searing heatwave.

Drought caused serious water and food shortages in much of South and Southeast Asia and several fatalities in the Pacific. Rather than dealing with the drought only when it becomes an emergency, it should be addressed from a long-term perspective to protect livelihoods, said the report.

To build a resilient Asia-Pacific, the report further called for increased focus on risk-sensitive development, and stronger regional cooperation for managing trans-boundary disasters. It advocated capitalising on emerging technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles for disaster management but stresses the need to establish regulatory standards for effective use of these technologies. The report, commending the "Zero Casualty" policy implemented in the Philippines as a regional good practice, concluded that disaster risk reduction cannot be achieved without political will and effective leadership at all levels of government.—Xinhua

Kim Jong Un orders nuclear strike means to be ready for action

PYONGYANG — Top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un has ordered all nuclear strike means to be ready for action when he watched a firing drill of ballistic rockets, the official KCNA news agency reported yesterday.

Kim ordered all nuclear strike means of the military strategic force that targets South Korean combat command centres and US military bases in the Asia Pacific region to be always ready for action and fight a decisive battle, the report said.

Kim underscored the need to "put greater spurs to developing nuclear weapons," which is a new goal set by the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, and to "dynamically push forward diversification of means for delivering nuclear warheads."

Emphasizing the need to strengthen cooperation between nuclear research and rocket research, he instructed conduction of more nuclear tests in the future to estimate power of newly produced warheads and bolster nuclear attack capability. Kim ordered the military to ensure "a prompt and safe operation of nuclear attack system" in utmost emergency scenario and "a unitary system of command and control over nuclear force." —Xinhua

China premier urges more efforts in restive Uighur heartland

BEIJING — China's violence-prone western region of Xinjiang needs to make more efforts at development in its ethnic Uighur heartland to ensure young people there have "something to do and money to earn", Premier Li Keqiang told its top officials.

The government says it faces a serious threat from Islamist militants and separatists in energy-rich Xinjiang, which sits strategically on the borders of Central Asia and where hundreds have died in violence in recent years.

However, exiles and rights groups say China has never presented convincing evidence of the existence of a cohesive militant group fighting the government, and much of the unrest can be traced back to frustration at controls over the culture and religion of the Muslim Uighur people who live in Xinjiang.

Speaking to Xinjiang delegates to China's annual meeting of parliament, including the region's Communist Party chief and governor, Li said Xinjiang occupied an "especially important strategic position", the official *Xinjiang Daily* said



China's Premier Li Keqiang claps as he stands at a podium during the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, on 5 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

yesterday.

"Xinjiang's development and stability ... have bearing on national and ethnic unity and national security," Li said, adding he thought Xinjiang was "gener-

ally stable" at present.

Turning to the topic of the heavily Uighur southern part of Xinjiang, where much of the unrest has occurred in recent years, Li said companies which "suit

actual local conditions and are good for the environment" needed to be "guided" to set up there.

"Let the people, especially the young, have something to do and money to earn," he said.

Recognising the economic roots of some of the violence and frustration of many young Uighurs at missing out on China's economic boom, Beijing has increased its focus on southern Xinjiang, pumping in money and encouraging development.

China's fourth-ranked leader, Yu Zhengsheng, called southern Xinjiang the "main battle ground in the anti-separatist struggle" during a visit last September. Li said education was also an important part of development and stability.

"You must pay attention to education work, especially in southern Xinjiang, send educators to southern Xinjiang, nurture well the next generation."

He did not elaborate, but China has been enforcing in Xinjiang more teaching in Mandarin, the national tongue, rather than the Uighur's own Turkic language, hoping to better integrate Uighurs into the Chinese society.

Some Uighurs have seen that as another way for China to repress their culture.

China strongly denies any repression or human rights abuses in Xinjiang.—Reuters



A Pakistani airforce F-16 plane flies over a Pakistani national flag during a full dress rehearsal for Pakistan Day parade in Islamabad in 2005. PHOTO: REUTERS

Bid to block Pakistan F-16 sale fails in US Senate

WASHINGTON — The US Senate on Thursday blocked an effort to prevent the \$700 million sale of Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N) F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan, although a key lawmaker said he would not allow the use of US funds to finance it.

Lawmakers voted 71 to 24 against an attempt introduced by Republican Senator Rand Paul to prevent the sale under legislation known as the Arms Control Act.

President Barack Obama's administration announced on 12 February that it had approved the sale to Pakistan of the aircraft, as well as radars and other equipment. It drew immediate criticism from India and concern from some members of Congress.

Paul had called Pakistan "an uncertain ally" and other lawmakers expressed concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program, commitment to fighting terrorist organisations and cooperation in the Afghanistan peace

process. However, they generally supported the sale, saying the South Asian state needs to modernize its air force and counter-terrorism activities.

Republican Senator Bob Corker said he would use his power as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to bar the use of any US funds for the deal.

In a statement, Corker said, "Prohibiting a taxpayer subsidy sends a much-needed message to Pakistan that it needs to change its behaviour, but preventing the purchase of US aircraft would do more harm than good by paving the way for countries like Russia and China to sell to Pakistan while also inhibiting greater cooperation on counter terrorism." The United States identified Pakistan as a key partner in its war against terror following the 11 September 2001, attacks and spent billions of dollars on military aid to help the country fight insurgents.—Reuters

In-orbit delivery of Laos' 1st satellite launched

VIENTIANE — The ceremony of in-orbit delivery of Lao's first satellite cooperated with China was held in Laos' capital Vientiane on Wednesday night.

Speaking at the ceremony, Lao Minister of Post, Telecommunication and Communication Hiem Phommachanh said that the in-orbit delivery of Laos' first satellite was a milestone in cooperation between Laos and China in field of space technology. At present, all technical tests of the satellite have been successfully completed and the satellite is ready to provide services.

Lao government, especially Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and Communication will create favourable conditions for

the operator in terms of policies and international cooperation, Phommachanh said.

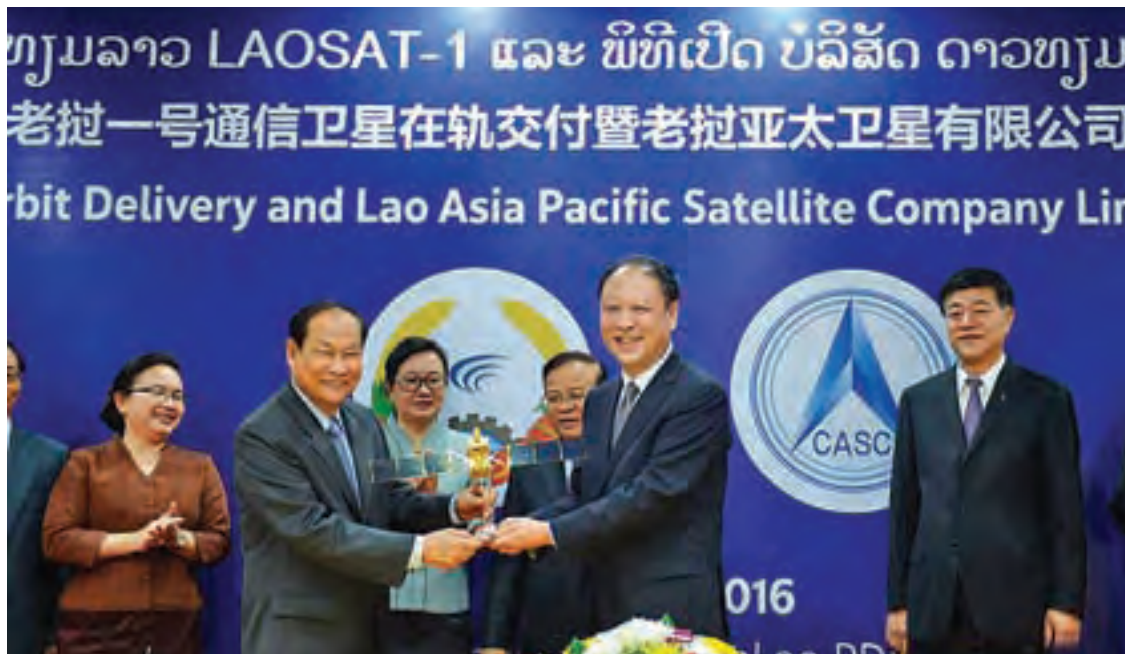
Once being put into operation, the satellite is expected to bring new income for Laos, contributing to socio-development of the country, Phommachanh added. Vice President of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation Yang Baohua said the satellite project is of great significance as it was the first export project of China's satellite to an ASEAN country, marking a solid step in space technology cooperation between China and Laos.

The satellite, which is a major project in implementing the "Belt and Road" initiative proposed by China, will promote the image of

Laos, driving the development of Laos' hi-tech industries as well as economy and culture, Yang said.

After the ceremony, Yang and Phommachanh inaugurated the Lao Asia Pacific Satellite Company Ltd., a joint venture between China and Laos which is in charge of commercial operation of the satellite.

The Lao Asia Pacific Satellite Company Ltd. will provide satellite communications, satellite television broadcast, wireless broadband and other services for Laos and other neighbouring countries. On 21 November, 2015, Laos' first ever satellite was launched into the space from Xichang satellite launch centre in China.—Xinhua



Vice President of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation Yang Baohua (R, front) presents a model of a satellite as a gift to Lao Minister of Post, Telecommunication and Communication Hiem Phommachanh at a ceremony in Laos' capital Vientiane, on 9 March 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

OPINION

Hoping against hope

Kyaw Thura

WITH three vice-presidents having been elected by secret ballot by three separate entities at three different places on the same day, the presidential race is expected to start at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) on 15 March albeit unconfirmed. The Electoral College has given the green light to their eligibility for the presidential contest.

At the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) yesterday, U Htin Kyaw won the vote against incumbent Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham of the Lashio constituency, nominated by the Union Solidarity and Development Party. Of 317 votes, there were 274 votes for and 29 against his election, with 14 ineligible votes.

The Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) chose U Henry Van Thio of the Chin State constituency as its presidential contender by 148 votes to 13, with six ineligible votes. His contender was USDP's nominee U Khin Aung Myint of the Mandalay Region constituency 8, former Amyotha Hluttaw speaker.

The military representatives unanimously voted for former Lt-Gen Myint Swe, who is also incumbent Yangon Region Chief Minister, as one of the three vice-presidential contestants.

The finalised three vice presidents will run for presidency, presumably on Tuesday, with the one with overwhelming votes will be elevated to presi-

dency, whereas the remaining two will act as the first and second vice presidents.

Nevertheless, one thing we can be sure of is that the presidential race is on in a matter of days. We should keep in mind that there are times when we have to hope against hope that unexpected things in life tend to happen at any unexpected time.

Write for us

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

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

Looking 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from Human Rights Perspective

Dr. Khine Khine Win

IN September 2000, during the Millennium Summit, UN member States adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It comprises 8 goals with 18 targets to address poverty and other socio-economic deprivations. It has provided an important framework for worldwide development and a lot of progress has been made on MDGs but that's not good enough and not adequately aligned with Human Rights and did not give sufficient attention to discrimination and inequalities. MDGs have ended at the end of 2015 officially.

In September 2015, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives gathered at New York to attend the UN Sustainable Summit where they have taken a bold step to embark on the 2030 Development Agenda. This important document entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". It is a new compact for people and planet anchored in 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible. They are to replace the MDGs as MDGs expired at the end of 2015. This 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was officially adopted by UN General Assembly with the resolution number A/RES/70/1 by UN member States.

Short form of 17 Sustainable Development Goals are (1) no poverty (2) zero hunger (3) good health and well-being (4) quality education (5) gender equality (6) clean water and sanitation (7) affordable and clean energy (8) decent work and economic growth (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure (10) reduced inequalities (11) sustainable cities and communities (12) responsible consumption and production (13) climate action (14) life

below water (15) life on land (16) peace, justice and strong institutions (17) partnership for the goals. All goals cover almost all areas that matter for the wellbeing of people everywhere. If all the issues are effectively addressed, the world would be a different place where people are living happily, prosperous and peaceful lives. In order to get these 17 goals, the United Nations has conducted the largest consultation program in its history to gauge opinion on the SDGs should include.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said this new agenda encompasses a universal, transformative and integrated agenda that heralds an historic turning point for our world and also this is the People's Agenda, a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimension, irreversibly, everywhere and leaving no one behind.

Preamble of the new agenda states that SDGs seeks to build on the MDGs and complete what they did not achieve. And also the preamble open with a reference to strengthening peace in larger freedom and then seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The commitment to leave no one behind has been the key features of SDGs. The idea is that no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone, whenever they live, whatever they do or whoever they are.

As I mentioned before, though MDG process led to significant progress in realization of certain economic and social rights, it failed to adopt a human-rights based approach. Human rights were, therefore, not considered in a consistent or comprehensive manner when State sought to achieve the MDGs. This resulted in uneven progress across regions and countries exacerbated by conflict, gen-

der inequality, poverty and environmental threats. However, the new 2030 Agenda marks an important paradigm shift towards an equitable and sustainable world that is human rights - based. It is explicitly grounded in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of human rights, human rights treaties and instruments including the Declaration on the right to development and UN guiding principles on Business and Human Rights. Although the goals and targets do not explicitly mention particular human rights, the issues covered effectively mirror the international human rights framework encompassing civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to development. This will provide new opportunities for mainstreaming human rights into development and also provide a new vehicle through which human rights can be claimed and governments held accountable to their international obligations.

It is worth noting that there are 12 times "human rights" word expressions in the 2030 agenda. It means that UN and all member states acknowledge the important role of human rights and greatly recognized that human rights are essential to achieve sustainable development. As a globally agreed blueprint for 2015-2030, the SDGs are likely to become the major point of reference for development actors at all levels and will have a significant impact on the human rights agenda for years to come.

The 2030 agenda reaffirm the responsibility of all States, respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction of any kind as race, sex, color, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status (2030 agenda Para 19). Also the new agenda recognizes the need to

build peaceful, justice and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect of human rights, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions (2030 agenda Para 35).

Unfortunately, there is no reference whatsoever to the contributions by human rights bodies to monitoring and implementing the SDGs. However the National Human Rights Institution, where they exists can contribute much to the follow up of the SDGs. Regional human rights Institutions and similar human rights bodies can also bring in valuable insights and recommendations. At the global level UN Human Rights Council and its subsidiary entities, along the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights can help greatly. As SDGs targets are closely aligned with human rights standards, I, myself wish to have a human-rights sensitive SDG indicator framework to monitor progress for all people from everywhere.

From 1 January 2016, the new goals and targets have come into effect. So, it is the time to change from commitment to action for the achievement of SDGs. To do so we need action from all actors. Government must identify and plan for the changes they need to undertake to reach these new goals. There is no doubt that there are many challenges along the way in terms of implementing as there is wide range of serious issues of poverty, deprivation, widening income inequality, lack of social protection and insecure employment, conflicts, environmental pollution and natural resource depletion and so on.

In fact, regarding the means of implementation, the 2030 agenda reaffirm that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in

accordance with its national circumstances and priorities to achieve sustainable development (2030 agenda Para 59). Here it should be noticed that people are at the centre of sustainable development. According to Mary Robinson (former president of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights), rights are central to every aspect of development, and a people-centered approach may be more successful in addressing the vicious cycle of poverty, environmental degradation and conflict.

As 2030 agenda is an agenda of the people, by the people and for the people, we all need to work together. It is not only up to government. It is up to all of us to take action. But whenever and whatever we take action, we must look into human rights perspectives. We must consider basic principles of human rights such as non-discrimination and equality in order to leave no one behind.

To conclude, let me highlight again the 2030 agenda, agenda of the people, by the people and for the people is a universal agenda and is universally applicable for all people in all countries, including developed, developing countries and least developed countries. Bear in mind that respect for and enforcement of human rights is a precondition of sustainable development. In order to achieve all sustainable development goals (SDGs), enhance governance grounded in the rule of law, respect of human rights and high-level political commitment is essential.

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Pakokku waterway micro-project to be completed by June

A PAKOKKU waterway development micro-project will be carried out between March and June this year, according to the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of Water Systems.

The aim of the micro-project is to improve the flow of water along the stretch of waterways connecting Pakkoku with Nyaung Oo. The directorate announced the project at a press conference at Yangon's Central Hotel on 8 March.

"Pakkoku and Nyaung Oo are places most affected by problems along the stretch of the Ayeyawady River between Manadalay and Nyaung Oo.

It's imperative that this project is carried out because the waterways could be destroyed if it is not completed this year.

If we do not dig these water channels then water could flow into other water routes, such as the wharf in Nyaung Oo. This project will provide assistance with supporting against riverbank erosion," said U Win Hlaing, director of the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of Water Systems. Digging will be car-



Water crafts are seen in the Ayeyawady River. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

ried out by dredgers at low-tide hours between March and June this year.

The directorate also announced that the project is being carried out with an interest-free loan from the World Bank of approximately K1 billion

(US\$819,000).

"The upper and lower stretches of Pakkoku will be dredged. We will build river diversions and dams within Nyaung Oo. We will open up the top entrance of the sandbank we are developing. Once com-

pleted, we will then open up the mouth of the lower sandbank.

This will allow the water to flow through naturally when the tide rises. We have sufficient dredging equipment [to carry out these activities]," U Win Hlaing continued.

The project is part of a larger Ayeyawady River management project that started in the 2015-16 fiscal year with an interest-free loan from the World Bank of \$100 million, which will continue until 2020.—*Myit-makha News Agency*

9,000 staffers apply for low-cost apartment in Mandalay



Photo shows the low-cost apartments in Mandalay. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

OVER 9,000 eligible government staffers have sent their applications to the Mandalay City Development Committee to buy low-cost apartments, according to the MCDC.

The Public Works implemented a low-cost housing project in Myayeenanda Ward in Chanmyathazi of Mandalay Re-

gion.

The project produced 400 apartments with 650 square feet each, planning to sell out the property for K16.5 million (US\$13,590) for ground floor apartments, K15.5m (\$12,767) for the second floor and K13.5m (\$11,119) for the third floor.

Residents with above 25 years service, who currently serve as government staff at any department in the region, may apply for the low-cost apartment at the MCDC.

The MCDC sold application forms between 26 and 4 March.—*Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)*

Golden deer in Shwsettaw Wildlife Sanctuary faces water shortage

GOLDEN deer in Shwsettaw Wildlife Sanctuary are facing a water shortage during the hot season, according to a spokesperson of its administration office.

With the assistance of local well-wishers, members of the Shwsettaw administration office has filled the six reservoirs within the sanctuary with drinking water with plans to fill more water every ten days.

To solve the water scarcity problems in summer, the local authorities are planning to reconstruct an old lake located

in the sanctuary to store rainwater.

The Shwsettaw Wildlife Sanctuary has been running since 1985 in order to protect and conserve the endemic Shwethamin (*Cervus eldithamin*) deer of Myanmar, conserve the "Than-dahat" forest which is part of the Dry Zone Ecosystem and natural habitat of Shwethamin and sustain the environs of the cherished Shwsettaw Buddhist heritage.

Around 1,600 golden deer are conserved within the sanctuary.—*447/Myawady*

Harsh paddies seeing lower export prices

THE US dollar and China Yuan are currently dropping causing a decrease in the price of low quality rice exports.

The rice which is mainly exported to China are Eehmathah, Zayya and Ngasein at a price of around K500 to K1,000 per bag.

"However, the price of the fine rice consumed by most peo-

ple in the country is stable at a high price and it is expected not to go much higher than that", said U Min Min, a rice trader.

A lack of Pawsan paddy supplies is also one of the reasons for the increase in fine paddy prices. Currently Pawsan paddy is priced K40,000 per bag.—*ML (Union Daily)*

German anti-immigrant party set for strong showing in Sunday votes

BERLIN — The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) is set to storm into three state parliaments by winning up to 18 per cent in Sunday's regional elections, a poll showed, in what would be a big setback for Chancellor Angela Merkel and her open-door refugee policy. The elections in the states of Saxony-Anhalt, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate are the first in Germany since the refugee crisis began and will give voters a chance to punish or reward parties for their role in or response to the influx of more than a million migrants last year.

The poll for broadcaster ZDF showed the AfD would probably win 18 per cent of the vote in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, up one point from the same survey last week, putting it on course to be the third biggest political force there after Merkel's Christian Democrats

(CDU) and the far-left Linke.

Eleven per cent of voters in the industrial heartland region of Baden-Wuerttemberg are poised to vote for the right-wing AfD while the Greens are set to be the strongest performer there with 32 per cent, followed by the CDU on 29 per cent — down one point compared with the same poll last week.

In the wine-growing region of Rhineland-Palatinate 9 per cent are set to give their vote to the AfD in a move that would make it the third biggest party there.

The Social Democrats (SPD) — the junior coalition partner to Merkel's CDU at the federal level — are set to remain the biggest party in Rhineland-Palatinate with 36 per cent, with the CDU close on its heels at 35 per cent.

The AfD is already represented in five of Germany's 16 regional parliaments but the par-

ty, which was originally founded as an anti-euro party in 2013, is not yet present in any of the state assemblies that will be elected on Sunday.

The three states have a combined population of some 17 million, around a fifth of Germany's 81 million.

The AfD, which has used slogans such as "Secure the borders! Stop the asylum chaos!" has benefitted from growing concerns among Germans about migrant numbers and the country's ability to integrate vast numbers of people with different cultures.

The party, whose leader stirred controversy by suggesting that migrants trying to enter Germany illegally should be shot if necessary, has eaten away at support for the established parties in Germany and could make it harder for them to form stable coalition governments.—Reuters

Migrants scramble for food, firewood at Greek tent city



Migrants try to get products from a truck at a makeshift camp on the Greek-Macedonian border near the village of Idomeni, Greece on 10 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

IDOMENI, (Greece) — Scores of migrants stranded on Greece's northern border scuffled for free food and water on Thursday, struggling to seize eggs and bread thrown from a truck at the muddy tent city which has become their temporary home.

They were among thousands of people, many fleeing war-torn countries in the Middle East and Africa, braving rain, wind and cold temperatures for days at a camp near the town of Idomeni, hoping border shutdowns throughout the Balkans will be lifted.

No one has crossed into Macedonia this week, Greek authorities say, and at least 12,000 people are stranded in squalid conditions in the camp — nearly

eight times its capacity.

More than 40 per cent of those are children, aid groups on the ground estimate. Babies, some just weeks old, lie down on cardboard boxes. Scores suffer from respiratory conditions.

"My daughter and my wife are crying all the time for two days," said 42-year-old Magir Asfour, who fled fighting in the Syrian city of Aleppo. "Our tent is wet. We didn't sleep last night. It flooded."

After two days of rainfall, their flimsy summer tent, like others pitched beside them, is soaked through. Nearby, men try, unsuccessfully, to light fires using anything dry — from plastic bags to old, worn-out clothes and nappies.

"I'm carrying wood in the morning and my wife is waiting two hours in the rain to get a couple of sandwiches and an orange for my child," Asfour said.

It is a frequent sight across the camp: A young migrant boy trailing through the thick mud, dragging a blanket full of wet firewood to get him and others through the night.

Others are pushing cartfuls of logs to their family's tent, and men stagger wearily along muddy pools of water, weighed down by heavy tree trunks on their shoulders. Conditions show little sign of improving. Dozens jostled for supplies this week when a shipment of firewood ordered by non-governmental organisations arrived at the camp.

On Thursday, they climbed onto a truck packed with free supplies — rice, pasta, water, diapers — and tossed eggs and bags of food to fellow migrants.

By the latest count, there were more 41,000 refugees and migrants stranded in Greece on Thursday, a day after Macedonia sealed its razor-wired fence border with Greece to "illegal migrants" after Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia announced tight new restrictions on migrant entry.

More than 130,000 people have reached Europe from Turkey this year and despite the Balkan route being closed, arrivals to Greece continued unabated on Thursday, with more than 2,300 arrivals to its eastern Aegean islands by early morning.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN envoy sees Syria presidential election in 18 months' time

MOSCOW — Syria will hold a presidential election in 18 months, Russia's RIA news agency yesterday quoted the United Nations peace mediator on Syria Staffan de Mistura as saying.

The starting point for the election will be the latest round of Syria peace talks which are planned for 14 March in Geneva, de Mistura told RIA in an interview.—Reuters

Former Russian press minister died in US of blunt force injuries

WASHINGTON — Former Russian Press Minister Mikhail Lesin, who was found dead in a Washington hotel room last year, died of blunt force injuries to the head, US authorities said on Thursday.

Lesin who once headed the state-controlled Gazprom-Media, also had blunt force injuries to the neck, torso, arms and legs, the US capital's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Metropolitan Police Department said in a brief statement.

According to a police incident report, Lesin, who was President Vladimir Putin's press minister from 1999 to 2004, was found unconscious on 5 November on the floor of his room in the Doyle Washington Hotel. The hotel is also known as the Dupont Circle Hotel.

An ambulance was called and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Russia's RT television quoted family members at the time as saying he had died of a heart attack. A US law enforcement source said on Thursday the investigation into Lesin's death was being led by Washington, DC police.—Reuters

UN chief calls on North Korea to stop 'destabilising' missile tests

UNITED NATIONS — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls on Pyongyang to "cease destabilising acts such as today's launch of two missiles" and remains "gravely concerned" by the situation on the Korean peninsula, his spokesman said on Thursday.

North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea on Thursday in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, as South Korean and US forces conducted massive war games.—Reuters

Nationwide state of emergency declared due to severe flooding

BELGRADE — The Serbian government declared on Thursday a nationwide state of emergency due to severe flooding, on the proposal of the national emergency situations headquarters.

The decision was made as a preventive measure to facilitate and speed up the activities of all national bodies, in their effort to save lives, ensure the security of citizens and their property and repair the flood damage.

The Serbian government will hold daily meetings of the national emergency situations headquarters, closely watch the situation on the ground and inform citizens about the latest developments, the government's press office said in a release.

The Serbian government urges all citizens to comply with its decisions and do everything in their power to prevent major damage during the critical period of torrential rains expected to last until Tuesday.—Tanjug

India, Middle East countries in talks on oil-for-food scheme

NEW DELHI — India is in talks with countries in the Middle East for a scheme under which they can exchange crude oil for food.

India oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan said yesterday that the country is in talks with the UAE and a few more countries for an oil-for-food programme.

He said discussions between these countries are being held at the leadership level.

India, which is the third biggest crude oil consumer in the world, imports almost 80 per cent of its crude oil requirement from overseas, a majority of which is met through shipments from the Middle East nations.—Reuters

US general warns about resilience of Islamic State

WASHINGTON — The US-led fight against the Islamic State militant group was “not quite yet at an inflection point” because of the militant groups resilience and ability to adapt to losses, Vice Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff General Paul Selva said on Thursday.

“I think the attributes we have to remember about ISIL are they are an incredibly flexible opponent. They are highly decentralized and incredibly resilient,” said Selva, using an acronym for Islamic State. He was speaking a conference hosted by Credit Suisse and McAleese & Associates in Washington.

Selva’s comments come after the Pentagon recently announced a number of successes against Islamic State leadership.

On Thursday, the Pentagon said it had captured the Islamic State’s chemical weapons chief in February from Iraq.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also said this week that Islamic State’s military commander had been badly wounded but still alive.

US officials had said that Abu Omar al-Shishani, also known as Omar the Chechen and described by the Pentagon as the group’s “minister of war”, was targeted near the town of al-Shadadi in Syria.

Selva said that while Islamic State leadership was being hit, it was difficult to predict where the next leaders would emerge from.

“It’s not unreasonable to expect that as you break down the leadership of the organisation ... juniors will



Iraqi security forces work on lowering the Islamic State flag, west of Ramadi, on 9 March.
PHOTO: REUTERS

step up,” Selva said.

While declining to give a timeline to retake the northern Iraqi city of Mosul from the Islamic State, Selva said the conditions

existed to isolate and take Mosul.

Earlier this year, Iraqi Defence Minister Khaled al-Obaidi said Iraq would launch the Mosul opera-

tion in the first half of 2016 and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has said 2016 would see the “final victory” against the militant group.—Reuters

US strikes Islamic State chemical weapons capabilities — Pentagon

WASHINGTON — The United States has carried out air strikes that it believes have degraded the chemical weapons capabilities of Islamic State in Iraq after using information obtained from a captured militant, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

US-led coalition forces detained Sulayman Dawud al Bakkar, Islamic State’s head of chemical and traditional weapons manufacturing, during an operation in Iraq in February, Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said in a statement.

“We believe that the information we’ve been able to obtain will allow us to conduct additional operations,” Cook said at a news briefing on Thursday. Cook said the intelligence came from “the information we learned from this individual.”

Al Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud, was transferred to Iraqi custody on Thursday, Cook said.

He gave details about Islamic State’s chemical weapons facilities and production and the people involved, Cook said.

He said the United States does not believe it has been able to altogether eliminate Islamic State’s chemical weapons capability.—Reuters

Syria air strikes target Islamic State in ancient Palmyra

BEIRUT — Russian warplanes were said to have launched heavy strikes on the Islamic State-held city of Palmyra on Thursday in what may be a prelude to a Syrian government bid to recapture the historic site lost to the jihadist group last May.

Dozens of Islamic State fighters were killed or wounded in the strikes that followed similarly heavy air raids in the Palmyra area on Wednesday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group reported.

The attacks add to the pressure on a group that is losing ground to a separate, US-backed campaign by Syrian militia in the northeast, and whose military commander was declared probably dead by US officials on Tuesday.

The group’s tactics in Syria appear to reflect the

strains, as it turns to suicide missions seemingly aimed at causing maximum casualties rather than sustainable territorial gains.

Islamic State is not included in a cessation of hostilities agreement that has brought about a lull in the war raging in western Syria between rebels aiming to topple President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian army backed by the Russian air force. Military operations against Islamic State in central and eastern Syria are continuing as both Damascus and its allies on one hand, and the United States and its allies on the other, seek to degrade Islamic State’s self-declared “caliphate” that stretches into Iraq.

The Observatory said Russian war planes carried out 150 raids in the Palmyra area on Wednesday,

followed by further attacks on Thursday. “If they take Tadmur (Palmyra) and Qarayatain, the regime would have taken back a big geographic area of Syria,” said Observatory Director Rami Abdulrahman.

The loss of Qaraytain and Palmyra and the surrounding desert would reduce Islamic State’s hold to about 20 per cent of Syria.

Qarayatain is 100 km (60 miles) southwest of Palmyra. After capturing Palmyra, Islamic State blew up some of its ancient monuments in what the UN cultural agency UNESCO called a war crime. Islamic State however appears well-entrenched in Palmyra, and while recovering the city would be a big boost for Damascus, its priority may be elsewhere for now, including the border with Turkey

where it has been fighting rebels despite the truce.

The momentum has turned against Islamic State since its rapid advances two years ago following the capture of the Iraqi city of Mosul. Its finances are also under strain, with fighters’ pay cut by up to a half. In what would be another major blow to Islamic State, US officials said on Tuesday that its “minister of war”, Abu Omar al-Shishani, was likely killed in a US air strike near the town of al-Shadadi in northeastern Syria.

The militant, also known as Omar the Chechen, had a reputation as a close military adviser to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

The Pentagon believes Shishani was sent to bolster Islamic State troops after they suffered setbacks at the hands of US-allied militias

including the Kurdish YPG.

The Observatory, which says it gathers its information from sources on all sides of the war, said on Thursday that Shishani was badly wounded but still alive and being treated somewhere in the group’s Syrian stronghold of Raqqa province. Recent Islamic State attacks have included suicide car bombings in the government-held cities of Damascus and Homs, and a determined but ultimately unsuccessful effort to sever the government’s only land supply route to Aleppo.

Dozens of its fighters were also killed in a 27 February attack on the YPG-held town of Tel Abyad at the Turkish border. A YPG official sent Reuters a list of the names of 72 IS fighters he said had been sent there on a suicide mission.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DA QIANG VOY NO (132)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DA QIANG VOY NO (132) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.3.2016 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.

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AGENT FOR: M/S COSCO SHIPPING CO LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV LUCKY STAR-9 VOY NO (1603)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV LUCKY STAR-9 VOY NO (1603) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of O.E.A where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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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.

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LINES

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Peru's Guzman seeks foreign allies in fight for presidential ticket

LIMA — Julio Guzman said on Thursday he was rallying international support for his bid to be reinstated as a candidate for Peru's presidency after the electoral board barred him on a technicality one month before the election.

Guzman, 45, told Reuters in an interview he had started talks with four foreign governments — from Latin America and “other continents” — about the board's move, which prompted concern from a US lawmaker and the Organisation of American States.

“My candidacy has been rejected in part because I'm the new kid on the block,” Guzman said.

The electoral board's 3-2 decision to bar Guzman from the 10 April election because his party did not follow electoral procedures is expected to bolster center-right front-runner Keiko Fujimori's chances of winning.

The board also disqualified another candidate for giving cash to poor voters while campaigning.

Guzman, a centrist economist, was running head to head with Fujimori in an expected run-off, according to opinion polls.

Fujimori and former



Peru's presidential candidate Julio Guzman gestures during a news conference after Peru's electoral board excluded him from the presidential elections, in Lima, on 10 March.

PHOTO: REUTERS

President Alan Garcia, who is seeking a third term, have denied Guzman's allegations they pressured the electoral board to block him. Fujimori is the daughter of imprisoned former President Alberto Fujimori.

The board has denied acting on behalf of political interests, and no evidence of wrongdoing has emerged.

But the back-and-forth decisions on Guzman's candidacy, which started after his surprise surge to second place in polls, and the confusion over what he did wrong, has raised questions over

the fairness of the election.

“This decision risks undermining the legitimacy of whomever should eventually prevail,” US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce said.

Guzman said he was also reaching out to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, where he might file a lawsuit. The OAS will review the dispute as part of an electoral mission on Monday, he added. In a statement, the OAS said disqualifications so close to elections created “uncertainty in both the elec-

torate and the candidates.”

Lawyers said Guzman had little chance of convincing the electoral board to reverse its decision in a last appeal, and that requests for courts to intervene could take months.

But Guzman expressed optimism the board might backtrack, pointing to electoral rules he alleged other parties also broke — raising the spectre of six candidates being tossed from the race.

“If they let them take part and not us, then the elected authorities, from my point of view, would lack legitimacy,” he said.—Reuters

‘You won’t get rid of me!’ Venezuela’s Maduro tells foes

CARACAS — Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro insisted on Thursday his opponents would fail in a new push to oust him this year and end 17 years of socialist rule in the OPEC nation.

Having won control of the National Assembly in a vote at the end of 2015, the energized opposition alliance has launched a multi-pronged campaign to remove Maduro via street rallies, a recall referendum and a constitutional amendment.

The first protest march is planned for Saturday in Caracas.

Speaking on state TV, the 53-year-old president mocked his foes as divided and corrupt, and insisted he was the man to steer Venezuela out of its current economic crisis.

“We are here to work undisturbed in the great objectives of the economic recovery,” he said at a meeting with businessmen and senior government officials. “And from there, they will not get rid of me, nor should they get rid of anyone.”

Critics blame Maduro for Venezuela's deep recession, triple-digit inflation and depressing shortages of basics, saying he has stuck stubbornly to the statist economic policies of his predecessor Hugo Chavez when reforms were needed.

But Maduro points to the global oil price collapse as the main source of Venezuela's woes. The nation depends on crude for more than 90 per cent of its export revenues.

The price of Venezuela's oil has, at least, crept up in recent days to about \$31 per barrel, Maduro said, but revenues were minimal compared to the days of \$100-plus crude.

With investors fretting over Venezuela's ability to pay foreign debt obligations later this year, Maduro said the government was seeking assistance from major lender and ally China.

“We've reached a big



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro talks in front of the tomb of national hero Simon Bolivar during a ceremony at the National Pantheon in Caracas on 9 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

agreement with China,” he said, without giving any more details. Beijing has lent some \$50 billion since 2007 to Venezuela, which repays with oil shipments.

Earlier, Miguel Perez, the vice president for economy, told Reuters a delegation had taken a proposal to China last week seeking better financing terms.

“They took a proposal, I cannot reveal it today,” he said.

“When you have a creditor and partner, you seek to improve the conditions of the relationship.”—Reuters

A-bomb survivors demand court shut western Japan nuclear plant

HIROSHIMA — Plaintiffs including survivors of the 1945 US atomic bombings filed a lawsuit yesterday with a court demanding a halt to operation of Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata nuclear plant in western Japan.

They brought the suit to the Hiroshima District Court, arguing that the

environment would be devastated and their health affected if an accident similar to the 2011 Fukushima disaster takes place at the plant in Ehime Prefecture, their lawyers said.

Friday is the fifth anniversary of a major earthquake and tsunami that triggered the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi

plant of Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The three reactors at the Ikata plant are currently off-line but Shikoku Electric envisions rebooting the No.3 unit in the spring or later. The reactor cleared a safety screening last July.

The plaintiffs are a group of 67 people, in-

cluding 18 survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and one Fukushima evacuee living in Hiroshima Prefecture.

Three of the plaintiffs are also seeking an injunction ordering the No. 3 unit not to be restarted ahead of the court's final ruling, according to the lawyers.—Kyodo News

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (107N)

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

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BIAK VOY NO (459N)

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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.

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Drenched US South facing more heavy rain after flood deaths

DALLAS

A slow-moving storm dumped more rain on the waterlogged US South on Thursday after heavy downpours killed at least four people this week, prompting evacuations and rescues from inundated areas.

Three people died over the past two days in northern Louisiana, deluged with some of the heaviest rainfall. Two men and a 6-year-old child were killed after either ignoring flood warnings or entering treacherous areas without signs, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals said.

A 30-year-old man drowned on Tuesday as he tried to drive across a flooded area in southeast-

ern Oklahoma, the National Weather Service said.

Forecasters at the NWS received reports of 10 to 15 inches (25-38 cm) of rain in northeastern Texas, parts of Arkansas and Louisiana over a day and a half.

Particularly hard hit was Monroe, Louisiana, with more than 17 inches (43 cm), said Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the NWS Weather Prediction Centre.

As the system moves east, flooding is a concern in areas of Mississippi, western Tennessee and Alabama, along with Louisiana, he said.

"It's going to continue to be a pretty high-impact storm," Oravec said, noting that rains could linger into

Saturday. Videos on social media showed fish swimming on flooded sidewalks near the University of Louisiana-Monroe campus.

The Louisiana National Guard soldiers said it had helped rescue more than 360 people stranded in their homes and on roads by high waters since Wednesday. The guard also said it retrieved 70 dogs, 16 chickens and a guinea pig.

The governors of Louisiana and Mississippi declared a state of emergency in affected regions, and many schools and state government offices were set to be closed through Friday.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson declared 11 counties as disaster areas.



People view the washed-out Methodist Camp Road after flooding near Minden, Louisiana on 9 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

People in as many as 3,500 homes in Bossier City, Louisiana, were told to evacuate, the *Shreveport Times* reported. The National Weather Service is-

sued a flash-flood watch for parts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee. Authorities in central Texas are searching for a rancher who dis-

appeared on Wednesday night while attempting to wrangle cattle from rising floodwaters in Falls County, the *Waco Tribune* reported.—Reuters

Cuba seeks investment from Japan firms in tourism, other sectors

TOKYO — As Cuba seeks foreign direct investment to bolster its economy, expectations are growing that Japanese companies will invest in selected sectors such as tourism, an official with the Chamber of Commerce in Cuba has said.

"We are willing to have

them (Japanese companies) as investors in our country," Mirtha Rippes Aller, head of the foreign investment promotion group at the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba, said in a recent interview in Tokyo.

"Tourism is a big industry and also a priority for

us to attract foreign investment," Rippes said, adding that building high-quality hotels is one possibility. Transportation, energy and agro-food are also among sectors seeking foreign money. Rippes said Japanese business people are "cautious" about investing

in Cuba as they spend time doing market research and some are also waiting for the lifting of the long-held embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba.

"We hope that in the future we will have some investments from Japan and we will be able to...enhance

our trade relationship," she added. For Cuba, China is the largest trading partner in Asia. Japan's trade with Cuba stood at around 6.2 billion yen (\$54 million) in 2014, according to Japanese government data. Since the United States and Cuba fully restored diplomatic ties last

July for the first time in more than half a century, the risk of investing in the Caribbean island nation appears to be waning. President Barack Obama is scheduled to visit Cuba later in March as the first sitting US president to go to the country since 1928.—Kyodo News

China outdoing developed nations in controlling pollution

BEIJING — China, often hit by choking smog that blankets the populous east and north, is doing a better job at controlling pollution than developed countries at similar stages of development, the environment minister said yesterday.

China has been under increasing pressure to halt pollution of its air, soil and water caused by more than three decades of economic growth, and at this year's full session of parliament it promised to cap energy use and draft new laws to decontaminate its soil.

Beijing frequently features near the top of the list of China's most polluted cities as emissions from vehicles and heavy industry combine with weather conditions to raise smog levels. The worst bouts of air pollution tend to coincide with periods of low

wind. Large parts of China suffered a three-week bout of heavy smog in November and December, but the situation had improved in the first two months of 2016, Minister Chen Jin-tong told reporters.

Brushing off suggestions that the improvement only came about because of heavy winds, Chen said China had already made huge efforts to tackle pollution and acid rain.

"We have solved the problems earlier and better than developed countries," he said. "I believe that on the treatment of smog, we will also do it well and our development will become increasingly green."

China said this week that it would aim to pass a law aimed at tackling soil pollution, which has raised concerns about food safety. —Reuters



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Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt move to London

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood's power couple Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have moved to London with their kids Maddox, Pax, Zahara, Shiloh and twins Knox and Vivienne.

The duo settled into an eight-bedroom, USD 21,000-a-month rental at the end of last month, reported US magazine.

The couple and their kids will stay at the "beautiful, White

House-style home," for at least six months, a source said.

Situated on the River Thames in the London suburb Surrey, the mansion has an indoor pool and gym. It is just 40 minutes from friend George Clooney's home.

During their stay in the city Pitt, 52, will be busy with filming of 2017's "World War Z 2" and the Goodwill Ambassador, 40 will focus on her political projects.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS



US musician Joe Jonas (2ndL) poses for a photograph with his band DNCE during an interview with Reuters in London, Britain, on 8 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Joe Jonas returns to music scene with new band DNCE

LONDON — Joe Jonas, formerly of the Jonas Brothers, is back with new band DNCE, whose adult lyrics and funk-pop tunes are a far cry from his teen boy band days in the Disney Channel pop rock trio.

DNCE is made up of Jonas as lead singer, guitarist JinJoo Lee, bassist and keyboardist Cole Whittle and drummer Jack Lawless who worked with the Jonas Brothers.

"Our sound is definitely different from anything I think we've all done before," Jonas said in an interview with the band. "We've all really kind of agreed upon funk, dance and kind of rock music and that's where we pull our biggest inspiration."

DNCE's debut single "Cake By The Ocean" reached No.9 in the Billboard Hot 100 chart and the band is now working on an album.

"The record is going to be ... a handful of 10, 12, 13 snapshots of just ... what the DNCE world is," Whittle said.

"It's romantic, it's fun, it's messy, it's party, it's sexual, it's 'Animal House' the band," he said, referring to the comedy film.

The Jonas Brothers, Kevin, Joe and Nick, formed in 2005 and quickly rose to fame with their upbeat pop rock songs. They split in 2013.

Nick has since launched a solo career and stars in drama "Goat", which screened at Ber-

lin's film festival last month.

"It's very difficult to ... re-invent yourself or come back with new music in this music industry," Joe Jonas said. "So the fact we've got our own audiences and fans and we both have our own things going for ourselves, we definitely feel proud."

Asked if a potential Jonas brothers reunion may be on the cards eventually, he said: "I think if the time found itself in a creative way, maybe."

"I don't think you can say never because you never know. I think we're both so focused on our individual paths and DNCE is just getting started ... we have a long road ahead of us." —Reuters

Spider-Man swings his way into 'Civil War'

LOS ANGELES — Iconic Marvel Comics character Spider-Man has made his first appearance in the larger Marvel comic book universe in the second trailer for the upcoming "Captain America: Civil War".

In February 2015, Sony Pictures, who hold the cinematic rights to the web-slinging superhero, and Marvel Studios reached an agreement for the character to appear in the Walt Disney Avengers franchise as well as a 2017 stand-alone movie under Sony.

Then, in June of 2015, Mar-

vel Studios announced that little known English actor Tom Holland had been picked to play the alter ego of Peter Parker, who has previously been brought to life by actors Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire.

The character appears at the end of the trailer released on Thursday wrenching Captain America's shield off him and then saying "Hey, everyone."

Spider-Man isn't the only new Marvel Comics' character to make a prominent appearance in the trailer.

Also seen in action are Black

Panther (Chadwick Boseman) and Crossbones (Frank Grillo) as well as recently introduced Avengers Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen), Ant-Man (Paul Rudd) and Vision (Paul Bettany).

"Captain America: Civil War" sees fellow Avengers Captain America (Chris Evans) and Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) turn against each other which will in turn see the ever-increasing number of Avengers choose sides between the two of them.

The film is scheduled for release on 6 May in North America.—Reuters

I trust Rita Ora like a sister: Lindsay Lohan

LONDON — "Mean Girls" star Lindsay Lohan says Rita Ora is one of her "close" friends who she trusts like a sister.

The 29-year-old actress, who is currently living in London, said she always turns to Ora, 25, for advice when she needs it, reported *Daily Mirror*.

"Rita Ora is one of my close friends — I love her. She is like a second sister. I have a nice friendship with Rita where if someone just needs to talk, you just trust the person. I can call her like that and she can call me like that," Lohan said. Lohan believes she and Ora get on well because they have very similar careers with both stars acting and singing.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Record 2.23m foreign residents in Japan in late 2015

TOKYO — A record 2,232,000 foreigners were registered as living in Japan as of the end of last year, up 110,000 from a year earlier, the Justice Ministry said yesterday.

The ministry attributed the increase chiefly to rises in the numbers of foreigners who were staying on student and trainee visas, both up by 15 per cent.

Among foreign nationals who were in Japan either as permanent residents or on visas of more than three months' duration, Chinese accounted

for the largest number at 666,000, followed by South Koreans at 458,000 and Filipinos at 230,000.

Vietnamese increased by 47 per cent to 147,000 apparently due to a growing number of students from the Southeast Asian country following a rise in investment by Japanese companies in Viet Nam, an official said.

The number of foreigners who were illegally staying in Japan was 63,000 as of 1 January, of whom 13,400 were from South Korea. —Kyodo News

Amazing scenery of Perito Moreno Glacier seen in Argentina



EL CALAFATE — Image taken with a mobile device on 9 March 2016 shows people watching the Perito Moreno Glacier located at Los Glaciares National Park in El Calafate Township, Santa Cruz Province, Argentina. Perito Moreno Glacier began its process of cyclical break on Wednesday. The glacier last ruptured in March 2012. PHOTO: XINHUA

See now, buy when? Catwalk-to-shop retail model divides brands

MILAN/LONDON — With minutes until show time, a group of seamstresses are adding the final touches to designer Ermanno Scervino's latest creations to be unveiled on the catwalk.

Embellished coats, mosaic print suits and lace dresses are among the outfits the Italian designer is presenting at Milan Fashion Week. It will be months before they hit the shops.

With the amount of craftsmanship involved, Scervino says his clothes take time to make and he has no plans to follow other labels selling their items straight off the catwalk, effectively bridging the traditional six-month runway-to-retail gap.

"I think that it is not for me, it is not for (products of) excellence," Scervino told Reuters. "We have long (designing) time frames. I am not interested."

The recent autumn/winter 2016/2017 fashion



Designer Diane von Furstenberg (bottom L) is joined by models (L-R) Gigi Hadid, Lily Aldridge, Alanna Arrington, Kendall Jenner, Jourdan Dunn, Karlie Kloss, Irina Shayk and Elsa Hosk during a presentation for the Diane von Furstenberg Fall/Winter 2016 collection at New York Fashion Week, on 14 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

weeks in New York, London, Milan and Paris have seen designers divided over retail models some labels

are adopting to put their items immediately on sale after their catwalk presentations. In an age of social

media — where fashion shows are streamed online — and with competition from high street retailers

regularly updating their collections, Britain's Burberry and designer Tom Ford announced new "see now, buy now" strategies last month.

"If we are Instagramming, live-streaming and showing the collections, we can't expect a customer and a consumer to tie in with a traditional kind of calendar," Burberry Chief Executive Christopher Bailey said.

"So I do think we all need to evolve and change but I don't think that there's one rule that fits everybody."

Other labels such as Prada, Diane von Furstenberg and Monique Lhuillier have made similar moves even if on a smaller scale, selling a select few items. Designer Karl Lagerfeld said Chanel is already putting its pre-collections designs in stores fast.

"I realise that when people see an image they want it right away," said

Lhuillier, who put five looks for sale after her New York show. "This is the way we're experimenting to see if this is how we want to show."

Buyers are welcoming the fast fashion move, namely when brands have customers in different climates. "I think the changes have been a long time coming," Ed Burstell, managing director of Liberty store in London, said.

"No one can understand now when they see something 'why do I have to wait six months to buy it.'" However, opposition remains from those who say preparing collections is a lengthy process.

"When you want to make a collection creative, you need the time, you need to study the fabrics, specific research," Carlo Capasa, head of Italy's national chamber of fashion, said. In Paris, label Dior echoed that. — Reuters

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(12-3-2016 07:00am ~ 13-3-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Great Shwedagon- The Exhibition Hall Of The Great Chronicle Of Buddha
07:54	Am	Paper Flower
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Reviving and Promoting a Traditional Festival
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar Game Changers (Episode- II)
09:51	Am	Cultural Shows: Theatrical Art
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar National Poet And Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose - Min Thu Wun (Ep-1) In Memory of Him & His Childhood

10:51 Am Egg Shell

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Friday 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	Clay Toy Pots Festival
07:42	Pm	Young Artist: Maw Thu Da Nu
07:48	Pm	Today Myanmar: Pristine Nature - Gaw Yan Gyi Island
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Stories Of The Great Souls (Mar Mar Aye) (Ep-1)

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Friday 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 Entertainment Channel

(12-3-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- 6:10 pm
- Cassette Recording

7:00 pm

- Myanmar National Poet and Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-1) In Memory of Him & His Childhood

7:30 pm

- International Movie "India Jones and the Temple of Doom"

9:30 pm

- Live: English Premier League "Southampton Vs Stoke City"

11:10 pm

- Myanmar Video
- 12:00 pm
- Close Down

From 12-3-2016 (Saturday)18:00 Pm
To 13-3-2016 (Sunday)18:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Lethal Liverpool sink United, Reus lifts Dortmund

LONDON — Liverpool handed their fiercest rivals a painful lesson on Thursday with a dominant 2-0 win over Manchester United in the first leg of a Europa League last-16 clash.

As the two sides took their bitter domestic rivalry on to the European stage for the first time, a penalty from Daniel Sturridge and a second-half effort from Roberto Firmino gave Liverpool a commanding advantage to take into next week's return leg.

Juergen Klopp's team are well placed to progress along with the German coach's former club Borussia Dortmund who underlined their status as favourites with a masterclass show against Tottenham Hotspur.

Dortmund's Marco Reus scored twice in the second half, after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had given them a 30th-minute lead, in a classy 3-0 victory over a Spurs side who rested a number of players with one eye on their Premier League title challenge.

Shakhtar Donetsk will also take a good lead into the second leg with Anderlecht after a 3-1 home victory, as will Villarreal who beat Bayer Leverkusen 2-0 thanks to a double strike from Cedric Bakambu.

Sevilla's Steven N'Zonzi was sent off with three minutes to go as the holders, bidding for a third straight trophy, drew 0-0 at Basel while Athletic Bilbao beat Spanish rivals Valencia 1-0 with a 20th-minute goal from Raul Garcia.



Roberto Firmino scores the second goal for Liverpool during UEFA Europa League Round of 16 First Leg at Anfield, Liverpool, England, on 10 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Liverpool's rivalry with United stretches back over 122 years but the 195th meeting between the pair was the first in Europe.

The encounter, played at a simmering Anfield, was fast and furious. It was Liverpool who were in control and they would have won more emphatically if it were not for a string of brilliant saves from United keeper David De Gea.

Klopp's side, bidding to avoid a club record fifth successive defeat to United, went ahead in the 20th minute when Nathaniel Clyne was tugged back by

Memphis Depay and Sturridge finished from the penalty spot.

De Gea kept the visitors in the tie with stops to deny Sturridge, Adam Lallana and Philippe Coutinho on two occasions but he was powerless to prevent Firmino converting from close range with 17 minutes remaining.

"We were really good from the first second, everything was there but we could have scored more," a beaming Klopp told BT Sport.

The match in Dortmund promised to be an exciting fixture featuring the second-place sides in the Bundesliga and the Pre-

mier League.

Some of the gloss was taken off the clash, however, when Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino chose to make seven changes to the side that had played on Saturday.

The game also promised to pit two of Europe's leading marksmen against each other, a spectacle that was denied for the majority of the tie as Spurs left leading scorer Harry Kane on the bench until late in the second half.

That left Dortmund's Aubameyang as the leading attraction and the Gabon striker,

who has scored 22 times in the Bundesliga this season, lived up to his billing.

He had a goal disallowed for offside before breaking the deadlock by heading a Marcel Schmelzer cross accurately past keeper Hugo Lloris and into the bottom corner.

It was largely one-way traffic but Spurs stayed resolute at the back until Reus scored twice in nine minutes after the break.

His first came from a corner when he lashed the ball into the net on the volley at the far post while the second was a sidefooted finish from close range after a perfectly-weighted pass from Gonzalo Castro.

"There was a lot of speed in the game in the first half and in the second we were able to move up higher and dominate completely," said Dortmund boss Thomas Tuchel.

In the Ukraine, goals from Brazilian Taison and Oleksandr Kucher gave Shakhtar a 2-0 lead before Anderlecht hit back through Frank Acheampong.

Striker Eduardo then headed home from a corner in the 79th minute to make it 3-1.

Fenerbahce's tie against Braga looked destined to end goalless until Mehmet Topal curled in a superb effort from the edge of the area with eight minutes remaining to secure a 1-0 win.

Sparta Prague took the lead against Lazio through Martin Frydek but the Italians replied through Marco Parolo to grab a 1-1 draw in Poland.—Reuters

Pochettino, Forster pick up monthly Premier League awards

LONDON — Tottenham Hotspur's Mauricio Pochettino has been named Premier League manager of the month for February, while Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster picked up the players' award.

Pochettino's men won all four of their Premier League games in February, beating relegation-threatened sides Norwich City and Swansea City, 13th-placed Watford and fellow title contenders Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium.

Spurs' impressive run saw them climb up the table from fourth to second, where they are currently five points behind Leicester City with nine games remaining.

Forster, who beat Willian, Harry Kane and Jamie Vardy to

win the award, kept three clean sheets during last month, shutting out Arsenal, West Ham United and Swansea.

The 27-year-old also becomes the first goalkeeper to win the award since Tim Krul did so with Newcastle United in November 2013.

"It's obviously fantastic to win the award, but it's just another incentive to keep working hard and work as hard as I can until the end of the season," Forster, who returned from a long-term injury in January, told the club's website (www.saintsfc.co.uk).

"I think it was a good month all round. We put in a lot of good performances as a team with a good run of clean sheets. If you're doing that then it's easier to win games."—Reuters

Forthright Murray says Sharapova should be banned

PALM SPRINGS — World number two Andy Murray says Maria Sharapova should be banned after her positive test for meldonium and questioned the Russian's use of the drug for medical purposes.

The Briton also chided his own racket manufacturer Head after the company said it would continue to support Sharapova in the wake of her admission that she had taken the banned substance.

"It's not up to me to decide the punishment, but if you're taking performance enhancing drugs and you fail a drugs test, you have to get suspended," Murray told reporters at the Indian Wells tournament in Palm Springs on Thursday.

"If you're taking a prescription drug and you're not using it for what that drug was meant for, then you don't need it, so you're just using it for the performance enhancing benefits that drug is giving you. And I don't think that that's right."



Great Britain's Andy Murray.
PHOTO: REUTERS

The drug, produced in Latvia but unavailable for purchase in the United States where Sharapova is based, was only added to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) list of banned substances in January, shortly before her positive test at the Australian Open. Manufactured for people suffering from heart problems, it

can also increase blood flow and improve exercise capacity.

Sharapova, who will be provisionally suspended by the International Tennis Federation from this weekend and faces up to a four-year ban, told a news conference in Los Angeles on Monday that she had been taking the drug for 10 years.

She said she was first given it by a family doctor after she frequently became sick, had irregular electrocardiogram results, a magnesium deficiency and a family history of diabetes.

"I read that 55 athletes have failed tests for that substance since January 1," said Murray.

"You just don't expect high-level athletes at the top of many different sports to have heart conditions."

The highest-paid woman in sports, Sharapova has already lost support from some sponsors, with Swiss watchmaker TAG Heuer cutting ties this week, while Nike and Porsche have distanced themselves from her.—Reuters