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President formally opens new lounge at Yangon Airport

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein unveiled a bronze plaque to mark the opening of a new lounge at the Yangon International Airport in Mingaladon township yesterday.

Present at the opening ceremony were Union Ministers U Soe Thane, U Myint Hlaing, U Nyan Tun Aung, U Khin Maung Soe, U Zeya Aung, U Htay Aung and U Ye Htut, including Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, high-ranking officials and diplomats.

The airport was constructed in 1952, Union Minister U Nyan Tun Aung recounted, adding that the then President Dr Ba Oo put it into service on 8 January 1957.

"The airport was recognised as a regional hub in Southeast Asia," he said. The facility underwent an expansion in 1994 in a bid to cater for growing numbers of foreign and domestic passengers after 1988. A two-storey building was constructed and opened on 18 September 1996. Another expansion started in 2004, including the construction of a building, a parking lot and a terminal equipped with four passenger boarding bridges of international standard.

As part of encouraging private-sector participation in line with the political, economic and executive reforms, the government invited tenders for a project to extend and renovate the airport on 26 February 2013, with the union minister saying that Yangon Aerodrome Services Co Ltd won the tender and signed a concession agreement for the works with the Department of Civil Aviation on 6 January 2015.

The newly-opened lounge is a five-storey building with 240 metres in length and 97.7 metres in width and is expected to facilitate the airport's capacity to ensure the smooth flow of passengers projected to exceed 6,000,000 by 2017.

The airport saw a surge in the number of foreign and domestic

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The newly-opened lounge at Yangon International Airport is seen on innaugural day. PHOTO: MNA

HOME FROM THE FRONT

Tatmadaw releases 46 child soldiers

THE Tatmadaw released 46 children and young people from service yesterday, handing them over to their parents as part of an effort to rid its ranks of underage soldiers.

The military has released 744 underage recruits in 12 batches including yesterday's release and action was taken against 382 soldiers including 73 officers and 309 other ranks involved in the recruitment of the children.

"The Tatmadaw is committed to rid its ranks of underage soldiers," said the Army-run Myawady Daily quoting Maj-Gen Tauk Tun of the Commander-in-Chief's (Army) Office who delivered an address at the ceremony.

The Tatmadaw has banned recruiting underage children for the army, pledging that it has been scrutinising its forces in order to release those who were recruited wrongly.

At the ceremony held at the Transit Centre in Yangon, authorities presented national citizenship scrutiny cards to the underage soldiers.

The children were discharged to their families in the presence of senior officers from the Tatmdaw, Myanmar Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Employment and Social Securities, Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and responsible personnel from UNICEF and UNHCR, International Labour Organisation, Save the Children, World Vision, World Food Programme and UNDP.

The Tatmadaw will provide them with health care, opportunities for formal and informal education, receiving vocational skills and jobs.

Since 2011, the Tatmadaw has taken some steps to professionalise the armed forces, including the release of soldiers recruited under the age of 18.—*GNLM*

Authorities handed over 46 underage soldiers to families. PHOTO: MYAWADY

WW-II era Nineteen anti-aircaft rockets unearthed in Inndaw township

NINETEEN rusted rockets were found near Hae Nu village railway, Inndaw township, Sagaing region on Friday. According to a police investigation, the 19 rounds of rockets were discovered by an archaeological team between railway mileposts 606/24 and 607/1 when they dug in with a bulldozer. The rockets are 14 inches long and seven inches in diameter. And, they are believed to be remains from WWII. The police handed them over to Light Infantry Regiment No. 309.—*Maung Chit Lin (Inndaw)*

WWII era nineteen rusted rockets found in Inndaw. PHOTO: MAUNG CHIT LIN (INNDAW)

Faculty members complete special refresher course

Union Minister for Education Dr Daw Khin San Yi presenting award to an outstanding trainee. PHOTO: EDUCATION

SPECIAL refresher course No 24 for faculty members from universities and colleges concluded yesterday at the Central Institute for Civil Servants (Phaunggyi).

A total of 450 trainees participated in the course which was concluded with the concluding remarks by Union Minister for Education Dr Daw Khin San Yi.

In her speech, she called on the faculty members to make efforts toward the development of human resources and research work producing intellectuals and intelligentsia whilst improving themselves.

She awarded outstanding trainees with prizes.— *Education*

Crime NEWS

Yabba seized in Mingla Taungnyunt

Kyaw Kyaw Han and Ma Yamin Oo. PHOTO: MPF

AN anti-drug squad seized 2,300 yabba pills from Ma Yamin Oo and Kyaw Kyaw Han from a vehicle at gate 2, Kandawgyi circular road, Thabyaygon ward, Mingla Taungnyunt township on Tuesday.

Similarly, police searched a house owned by one Nay Sun Lu in ward 6, Tang Yang town and found 940 yabba pills at his house on Friday. Sai Swun Hay was also found together with the host Sun Lu.

Also, police arrested Ma Nan Mya Aung who was selling the drugs in Man Kaung, ward 9, Tang Yang town.

Likewise, police discovered 260 yabba pills from a vehicle driven by Ta Aung (a) Khun Thein Aung with Ma Mi Nge on board at Hopong town on 8 March. The police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— *Myanmar Police Force*

Police arrested two-digit lottery seller

POLICE have arrested a woman who allegedly sold two-digit lotteries from her house in ward 4-A, Swa (South) town on Thursday.

The police searched the house owned by one Ma Su Mar, 38, and found K80,200 and the relevant document items of two-digit lottery.

Local police have filed charges against her.— *(059)*

Ma Su Mar. PHOTO: KYEMON (059)

Gas bottle explodes in Sanchaung coffee shop

A GAS explosion occurred at the Happy Café & Noodles shop at the corner of Shin Saw Pu street and Pyay road, Sanchaung township, on Thursday.

According to an investigation the explosion occurred when the shop manager was handling gas cylinders at the shop. The explosion broke the glasses of the 15 ft by 15 ft room and injured four workers. They are receiving medical treatment at Yangon West general hospital. Local police have filed charges against Daw Nwe Ni Oo, 50, the shopkeeper and Ko Ye Kyaw Swa, 33, the shop manager. —*(040)*

Officials investigating the site of gas explosion. PHOTO:(040)

Road accident kills a woman, injures one man

A MOTORBIKE being driven by one U Aung Pu, 48, with Daw Naw Yee on board hooked with a vehicle between mileposts 143/1 and 143/2 on the Yangon-Mawlamyine road on Wednesday, leaving one dead and the other injured.

The accident seriously injured the two people and they were sent to the general hospital. Daw Naw Yee succumbed to her injuries.

The police said "We got the information late as the place where it occurred is deserted.

The woman died when she arrived at the hospital.

The police are still investigating the reckless car driver who fled from the scene.— *Thet Oo (Tahtoon)*

President formally opens new lounge at Yangon Airport

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passengers from 4,394,815 in 2014 to 5,054,037 in 2015. The Department of Civil Aviation entered into an agreement with Yangon Aerodrome Co Ltd on 7 December 2015 for an additional three-phase project to serve 20 million passengers a year. Currently, the Yangon International Airport handles 11 domestic airlines and 28 international airlines.—*MNA*

President U Thein Sein unveils bronze plaque of the new lounge at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: MNA

Efforts made to preserve elephant dance troupes in Kyaukse

THE Ko Myay Gone Saung Shwe Sin Maung elephant dance troupe has carried out a series of free-of-charge elephant dance classes in the town of Kyaukse, Mandalay Region, in a bid to create a new generation of elephant dance professionals, it is known.

The dance classes took place at the headquarters of the aforementioned troupe between March 7-11 during the hours of 6-9pm.

"The majority of elephant dance troupes in Myanmar are situated in the town of Kyaukse. Everyone knows the dance maneouvers of Hle Kha, Kone Baung, Hsone Lay and Kim Myi Kauk Htaung are synonymous with the Kyaukse elephant dance. We will be passing these dance moves on to the next generation." said U Soe Shwe from the aforementioned elephant dance troupe.

Cho Gyi, a repat from Singapore, and Ko Linn lead the elephant dance trainings with assistance from the Ko Myay Gone Saung Shwe Sin Maung elephant dance troupe which included the famous dance moves associated with elephant dancing from Kyauk Hsay.

"Those that attended the trainings were clever. They were so interested [in the elephant dance]. We set the days of the classes based on days which students could attend. The Mandalay elephant dance troupe has extended offers to assist with the sending of required equipment for the teaching of the elephant dance, and to provide refreshments, for the next series of classes." added Ko Soe Shwe.

The Kyaukse elephant dance troupe has made it known that they will provide free-of-charge elephant dance classes to elephant dance troupes who were not able to make the trip to Kyaukse to attend.

Elephant dance donation ceremonies, which include the offering of alms to monks, have been traditionally held within the town of Kyaukse without fail for the last 900 years, it is known.

In a bygone era, homage used to be paid to elephant figures modelled out of sticky rice. It wasn't until around 1925 that a man named Saya Nge, who lived in Nyaung Kyauk Pin neighbourhood of Kyaukse, created the elephant dance festival with his elephant named Nwe Hso. The festival and dance techniques have been handed down through the generations to this day ever since. —*Myitmakha News Agency*

An elephant dance troupe participating in the elephant dance competition in Kyaukse.
PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Tribunal investigates police officer who beat Dawei worker to death

A TRIBUNAL set up by the Taninthayi Region Police Department is currently investigating the case of a worker who died after being beaten by a police officer.

A worker at the Haiyun cold storage facility in Dawei was hospitalised after several police officers stepped in to manage a dispute at the facility between the worker and his employer on 7 March, beating the worker until he was unconscious. The worker was sent to Yangon General Hospital on 8 March on a chartered plane. He failed to awake from his comatose state. He succumbed to his injuries on the evening of 9 March.

"We're currently calling in for questioning those police officers and workers involved in the incident, together with the local administrator and witnesses. We've questioned about 20 individuals so far, and we will continue to question those who remain," said a police officer from the Taninthayi Region Police Department.

"The current tribunal investigating the case is made up of regional police chief Chit Sein, district police chief Aung Htun and head police chief Zaw Min. The police officer in question is currently being held in custody at the Dawei police station, where he has been charged under section 325 of the Penal Code.

"The problem was over a dispute between two workers and their employer over the breaking of company policy. The ward administrator and the compound fire service were called to resolve the situation. They informed the police, after which 14 police officers and the township police chief arrived on the scene. Since the group grew larger, another six police were called to come and control the situation.

The two workers in question were drunk," said a police officer who was present during the incident. While the heavy police presence attempted to quell the argument between the two workers and their employer, one of the two workers fled the scene before returning with a wooden stick. One of the police officers snatched the stick out of the worker's hands before beating him with it.

The aforementioned police officer was originally charged with committing grievous bodily harm, but this was revoked and changed to murder after the worker died from his wounds. The case is still being investigated.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

LOCAL Business

Crab exports to China fall with species decline in Rakhine State

Crab farming is seen in Rakhine State. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

DWINDLING hauls of crab catchers in Rakhine State has led to smaller crab exports to China, according to companies that export the crustaceans abroad.

U Aung Naing Lin, manager of the soft crab meat producing company Ngwe Nga Kyun, said the decline in exports began last August due to a combination of a fall in the volume of crabs being caught and shrinking demand in foreign markets.

"In the first half of 2015, we were able to export on average between eight and 10 tonnes [of crabs] per month, depending on the volume of our catches. The decline in demand from foreign markets, including the EU, at the start of last August was the catalyst for the decline of crab-catching businesses locally. The first two months of this year have seen us export just between just six and seven tonnes. Our decline is also affected by the direct export of crabs to Muse [on the Chinese border] from the townships of Myaybon, Inn and Kanhtaung Gyi," he said.

Soft crab meat from Rakhine State is mainly exported to China, Singapore, Japan, Australian and EU markets. Despite the lack of fluctuations in the price of crab meat, lower crab yields and shrinking demand have forced crab exporting companies have been forced to reduce their business activities. "The Kyauk Phyu Than Sit River was cleared to make way for Chinese oil tankers. It's had a disastrous impact on the natural ecosystem, causing distinct declines in the numbers of crabs being caught. People are catching immature crabs and selling them in local markets. This is enabled by the weakness of the Fisheries Department in educating crab catchers [on the negative consequences of their actions]," said U Htun Wai, owner of the Shwe Yaung Ashaytaing Ah Aye Khan crab meat processing company. There are three crab meat exporting companies based in Kyauk Phyu Township. While there has been a decline in demand for crab meat from markets in Singapore, Japan, Australia and the EU, demand from China has remained constant. Kyauk Phyu crab meat companies export their produce through connections with agents based in Yangon. Dependent on their size, a kilo of crabs fetches between $6 and $8, while the current market price for a tonne of crabs goes for between K18 million and K20 million, according to export companies.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Rakhine shrimp wholesalers suffer K5 million losses after depreciation in Yangon markets

RAKHINE fresh water shrimp wholesale suppliers have been suffering heavy losses of up to K5 million in the last couple of days after a depreciation in value of the crustacean within Yangon markets, it is known.

"We've been suffering financial losses of around K5 million in the last couple of days. This time two years ago we were consistently selling over 50 viss of shrimp a day. These days we're lucky if we push just 5 viss [of shrimp] a day." said U Than Kyaw, shrimp wholesaler owner from the town of Pauk Daw.

Shrimp bought by wholesalers in Rakhine State for K45,000 is only fetching K35,000 in Yangon markets, with some wholesalers unable rid themselves of remaining shrimp left in stock. It is known that the main factor behind the depreciation in value of shrimp is due to a decline in purchasing demand with Yangon markets.

A viss's worth of a size of shrimp that each weighs 14 tical (224 grams) fetched K45,000 within Yangon markets on Monday, with the same quantity of sized shrimp with a weight of 12 tical (192 grams) costing K35,000.

The unexpected sudden depreciation in the price of fresh water shrimp by up to K10,000 since 7 March resulted in heavy financial losses for Rakhine State shrimp wholesalers who practice a system of advance purchasing with local shrimp farmers. "We pay a high price for shrimp. On top of that, we pay shrimp catchers in advance for their catch. That's why all of us have lost out." said Ko Maung Kyi, manager of Nyi Nyi shrimp wholesalers based in the town of Minbya. It is known that shrimp from Rakhine wholesalers end up in Yangon markets as well as those further afield in neighbouring Bangladesh. —*Myitmakha News Agency*

SECM grants securities business license to five companies

SECURITIES and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has announced that it has granted securities business licenses to the following companies according to Article 7 (a) of the Securities Exchange Law.

According to the announcement, the SECM granted the license to KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Co Ltd on 26th February, 2016, to Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre Co Ltd on 26th February, 2016, to AYA Trust Securities Co Ltd on 1st March 2016, to CB Securities Co Ltd on 1st March 2016 and KTZ Ruby Hill Securities Co Ltd on 1st March, 2016.

Types of securities business licenses granted are Securities underwriting license, Securities dealing license, Securities brokerage license and Securities investment advisory license.—*GNLM*

Bamboo manufacturers in Tatkon see handsome profits

THE bamboo product manufacturers of Byaing-in village in Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw district area, have seen increased prices due to high demand not only for bamboo walls but also the bamboo baskets and bamboo mattresses.

The demand is on the rise as it is the time when local people are repairing their houses or building new ones.

"The workers are happy as they earn roughly K4,000 per day", said U Zaw Zaw, a local resident.

The villagers bought the bamboo poles from downtown and wove various sizes of bamboo wall.

They are now receiving a regular income from manufacturing bamboo products. —*Tin Soe Lwin (MMAL)*

Broom plants are seeing higher income

BROOMS in Khamaukkyi Township, Taninthayi Region, are fetching a high income for the broom collectors due to the high demand from both local and foreign markets.

"The 1,000 broom plants are sold out for K3,600 or B100", said U Than Win, a local resident.

Local people are earning a higher income because they do not need to make any investment as the broom plants grow naturally in the mountain region and in rubber gardens.

The villagers go to the jungle to collect the broom plants.—*Mg Mg (MMAL)*

Onion yield likely to fall

ONION cultivators in Taungtha Townsip are expecting to experience a lower harvest due to the erratic weather.

"Weather this year has been erratic. Insects have increased because of bad weather. Sometimes it is cloudy and sometimes snow is falling. Although we are spraying pesticides they don't work as we hoped", said, U Hla Moe, a local farmer.

The onion plants are dry at their tips and there are insects on them.

The farmers spend between K600,000 and K one million per acre for onion cultivation. The local farmers expect to see a good harvest as well as a good price.—*Lin Let Ce (MMAL)*

Indonesia targets annual furniture export at 5 bln USD by 2020

JAKARTA — The Indonesian government expects the export value of its furniture to reach 5 billion US dollars per year in the next five years, a minister said on Friday. That compares with 2.2-billion-US dollar shipment of the products to overseas market in 2014, Indonesian Industry Minister Saleh Husin told reporters in Jakarta.

"This trend leads to the optimism for the achievement of 5 billion US dollars export within the next five years," Husin says.

In 2013, Indonesia furniture export stood at 1.8 billion US dollars, rising from 1.4 billion US dollars in the previous year, according to data from the industry ministry. To increase exports, Husin asked sellers to boost the quality and design of their exported products. Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla on Friday asked shareholders in the industry to develop innovation to comply with the taste of global buyers.

The Indonesian government has barred outbound shipment of woods and rattan in a bid to boost added value of the raw materials.—*Xinhua*

Huge festival starts in Delhi, defying environment, safety fears

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the opening on Friday of a giant music and dance festival that has been criticised for environmental damage and the possible safety risks of its enormous stage.

Large crowds braved heavy rain for the start of the event, crossing army-made pontoon bridges across Delhi's main river, the Yamuna, to the "World Culture Festival", where 35,000 dancers and musicians will perform to an expected audience of millions over three days.

Modi, the star guest at the opening ceremony, sat next to organiser Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a well known guru, on a specially built VIP stand, as hundreds of holy men chanted in harmony and women dressed in red and gold danced to drum beats on the stage below.

The festival has pitted Ravi Shankar against environmentalists, concerned about damage to the nature-rich floodplain, and the Delhi police, who said the 7-acre (3-hectare) stage — which organisers say is the world's largest — lacked a safety certificate.

India's top environmental court this week fined Ravi Shankar's organisation 50 million rupees ($750,000) and questioned why authorities had allowed the festival to be held in such an environmentally sensitive area, but it did not stop the event going ahead.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering at the venue of World Culture Festival on the banks of the river in New Delhi, India, on 11 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Green groups say the event will destroy the biodiversity of the 1,000-acre (400-hectare) site by ripping up vegetation, flattening land and altering the river's flow.

Ravi Shankar has rejected criticism and promised to leave the area better than he found it.

Delhi police expressed concern about whether organisers were equipped to manage such a large number of people, warning of the potential for "utter chaos".

The Yamuna, a tributary of the Ganges and the source for much of Delhi's water, is revered by many Hindus who bathe in it, despite high levels of industrial and human waste.—*Reuters*

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Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the People's Bank of China, answers questions at a press conference on the financial reform and development on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 12th National People's Congress in Beijing, capital of China, on 12 March. PHOTO: XINHUA

Support for HK offshore yuan market unchanged: central bank

BEIJING — Recent fluctuations in Hong Kong's offshore yuan market are market-driven and the central bank's support for the market remains unchanged, officials said yesterday.

The issuance in Hong Kong of dim sum bonds, bonds denominated in yuan but issued outside Chinese mainland, dipped and Hong Kong's pool of yuan shrank recently.

The changes were driven by the market, said Zhou Xiaochuan, central bank governor, at a press conference on the sidelines of the annual parliamentary session. He added that the financial market is inherently prone to fluctuation.

The fluctuations were largely due to the market's expectation of the value of yuan, said Yi Gang, vice governor of the central bank.

As the expectation stabilises, the offshore yuan market's advantages would be back, Yi said.

"The development of Hong Kong's offshore yuan market is unchanged. The market's business will expand further," he said.—*Xinhua*

India shuts down nuclear plant following leak

NEW DELHI — Authorities in India's western state of Gujarat Friday shut down a nuclear power plant and declared an emergency, following a heavy water leak in one of the reactors, officials said.

All the workers at the plant were reported to be safe.

The leak was detected in Kakrapar Atomic Power Station in Surat, 283 km south of Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat.

"Consequent to a small leak in Primary Heat Transport (PHT) System, the reactor was shut down as intended as per design provisions," reads a statement issued by Lalit Kumar Jain, a senior official of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) in Gujarat.

Reports said the workers within the plant were allowed to go home after thorough checks to prevent no radioactivity is reported outside the plant.

A senior government official Rajendra Kumar posted in Surat told media there was no need to panic and "things were under control."

A local television news channel NDTV described the leak as a "major one" and quoting officials saying the nuclear reactor was slowly cooling down and was in a "safe stage".

The plant's two reactors produce 440 megawatts of power.—*Xinhua*

North Korea defector reveals late leader's fears over libido and diabetes

People cheer toward the stands with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as they carry a large picture of his father and former leader Kim Jong-il during the parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, in Pyongyang on 10 October 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — As North Korea grappled with a massive famine in the 1990s, scientists were working at an elite institute to find ways to boost then leader Kim Jong-il's longevity — and his libido, a defector said on Friday.

In the early 1990s scientists were sent to Denmark to find ways to improve the tenderness of North Korea's beef which Kim thought was too tough, said biologist Kim Hyeongsoo who worked at the centre for six years.

He told a human rights conference in London that some 130 scientists selected from the best universities worked at the centre which was dedicated to promoting the health and longevity of North Korean founder Kim Il-sung and his son who took power in the secretive state in 1994 and died in 2011.

Scientists were tasked with developing aphrodisiacs using ingredients including the genitalia of male lions and seals as well as traditional medicinal herbs, Kim said.

They were also asked to replicate the leader's favourite western brand of cigarette — Rothmans — with tobacco imported from Africa.

The scientists were sworn to secrecy and could not even tell their families what they were working on. The institute was surrounded by armed guards and electric fences, he added.

Kim said the centre's work continued even as hundreds of thousands faced hunger in the mid-1990s.

The scientist said he had no idea of the extent of starvation until he returned to his home town in 1998 and saw bodies lying in the street.

Around a million people are estimated to have died in the famine which has been blamed on a combination of economic mismanagement, the loss of Soviet support and natural disasters.

Kim said it was well known that the leader liked to drink and smoke and had young girlfriends.

"Some of the health problems that Kim Jong-il personally was much concerned about was heart function, diabetes, tuberculosis and also his libido, so this was the focus of our research."

Kim said products developed at the institute were tested on humans as well as animals.

He eventually decided to escape after witnessing close-up a particularly horrific execution in 2008 which he described in graphic detail.

"Everyone has seen a public execution in North Korea," he added. "On a day of execution all work places have to close and all schools, from middle and above, have to suspend lessons so that people can (attend)."

Kim was arrested and tortured by state security agents but managed to flee.

"To go through a state security investigation and come out alive is a miracle," said Kim, now a teacher living in the South Korean capital Seoul.

His mother was also caught and tortured while trying to escape and died six months later.

Kim said bodies of torture victims were disposed of so that they could never be used as evidence.

He described North Korea as a mass hostage situation.

"North Korea is imprisoning 20 million people. They are held hostage not by a gun but by the situation," he told the conference hosted by the European Alliance of Human Rights in North Korea.

But he said even defectors were never free because the regime could target family members they left behind. Some defectors were also placed on assassination lists, he said.

A UN Human Rights Council commission of inquiry said last year that rights abuses in North Korea may amount to crimes against humanity. Speakers at the conference said the abuses were "unparalleled in the modern world".—*Reuters*

US, South Korea stage assault drill; North threatens to wipe out enemies

POHANG — US and South Korean troops staged a big amphibious landing exercise on Saturday, storming simulated North Korean beach defences amid heightened tension and threats by the North to annihilate its enemies.

The landing and assault drills on South Korea's east coast were part of eight weeks of joint exercises between the allies which the South has said are the largest ever. The North has denounced the exercises as "nuclear war moves" and threatened to respond with an all-out offensive.

Tension on the Korean peninsula has been high since the North conducted its fourth nuclear test in January and followed that with a long-range rocket launch last month, triggering new UN sanctions.

About 55 US marine aircraft and 30 US and South Korean ships, including the USS Bonhomme Richard and USS Boxer, which carry AV-8B Harrier attack jets and V-22 Osprey aircrafts, took part in the assault on beaches near Pohang city, the US navy said.

"They will penetrate notional enemy beach defences, establish a beach head, and rapidly transition forces and sustainment ashore," the US military based in South Korea said in a statement before the exercise.

The North's military said it was prepared to counter the US and South Korean forces "with an ultra-precision blitzkrieg strike of the Korean style".

"The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK holding tightly the arms to annihilate the enemies with towering hatred for them are waiting for the dignified Supreme Command to issue an order to launch a preemptive strike of justice," it said in comments carried by the state KCNA news agency.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

CNN reported yesterday that North Korea has been searching for one of its submarines that has been missing for days off its east coast.

The submarine may be adrift under the sea or have sunk, perhaps after a technical problem during an exercise, CNN quoted US officials with intelligence of secret US monitoring of the North's activities as saying.

North Korea has said it is developing submarine-launched ballistic missiles although doubts about that were raised after Western experts said publicly released footage of tests appeared to be fake.

On Thursday, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un watched as his forces fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea. This month the North conducted drills with what it said were newly developed large caliber rocket launchers.

Kim has ordered the country to improve its nuclear attack capability by conducting more tests, in defiance of a UN Security Council resolution adopted last week in response to the isolated state's latest nuclear test.

Kim also said his country had miniaturised nuclear warheads to mount on ballistic missiles, although the US and South Korean governments have expressed doubts about that too.

The South Korean and US militaries have said they had notified the North of "the non-provocative nature" of the exercises involving about 17,000 American troops and more than 300,000 South Koreans.

The United States has about 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea.—*Reuters*

Australian foreign minister to visit storm-hit Fiji

SYDNEY — Australia's foreign minister, Julie Bishop, will travel to Fiji on Sunday to meet Fijian prime minister Frank Bainimarama and survey the damage wrought by cyclone Winston, her office said.

The cyclone, which was the worst storm ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, hit the South Pacific archipelago last month, killing 43 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless.

Three weeks later, more than 25,000 Fijians remain in evacuation centers, according to the latest report from Fiji's National Emergency Operation Centre.

During her visit Bishop will also meet Fiji's foreign minister, Ratu Kubuabola, and disaster management minister, Inia Seruiratu, as well as Australian aid workers there.

Australia has committed A$15 million to the recovery effort and deployed its largest navy vessel, the HMAS Canberra, to Fiji with 60 tonnes of emergency relief supplies.—*Reuters*

US to raise Iran's 'dangerous' missile tests at UN

A ballistic missile is launched and tested in an undisclosed location, Iran, on 9 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS — The United States will raise during UN Security Council consultations next week the issue of Iran's recent ballistic missile launches and is urging countries to cooperate on undermining Tehran's missile programme, the US envoy to the United Nations said on Friday.

"We will raise these dangerous launches directly at Council consultations, which we have called for, on Monday," US Ambassador Samantha Power said in a statement. "These launches underscore the need to work with partners around the world to slow and degrade Iran's missile programme."

A series of ballistic missile tests this week conducted by Iran's Revolutionary Guard units drew international concern. The United States, France and other countries said that if confirmed, the new launches of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles would violate UN Security Council resolution 2231.

Power said Iran's missile launches were "provocative and destabilising." "Moreover, Iranian military leaders have reportedly claimed these missiles are designed to be a direct threat to Israel," she said. "We condemn such threats against another UN member state and one of our closest allies."

Power added that Washington would continue to demand "full implementation of resolution 2231, which expressly prohibits third-party support to Iran's ballistic missile programme, as we also consider our appropriate national response."

The closed-door consultations on Iran will take place Monday morning. The 15-nation Security Council is scheduled to hold separate consultations on Syria at 10am ET (1500 GMT).

The United States has said Iran's missile tests do not violate the terms of an historic nuclear deal between Tehran and six major powers, which resolution 2231, adopted in July 2015, endorsed. The UN missile restrictions and an arms embargo on Iran are not technically part of the nuclear agreement.

Council diplomats say they will first await confirmation from national intelligence agencies about whether the missiles Iran has fired were nuclear-capable. They also say that Russia and China, which had opposed continuing UN restrictions on Iran's missile programme, would likely block council action.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that the tests were not in violation of the nuclear agreement, which led to lifting of sanctions in January.

Western diplomats say resolution 2231, which "calls upon" Iran to refrain from certain ballistic missile activity, offers no green light for nuclear-capable missile launches by Tehran and is therefore a clear ban.

However, they acknowledge that Russia, China and Iran likely interpret that language as an appeal to Iran to voluntarily refrain from missile activity. Tehran has also said that none of its missiles are designed to carry nuclear weapons.

While no new UN sanctions may be imminent, Western diplomats say that the United States and some of its allies could take additional punitive action in the form of unilateral national sanctions against Iran over the latest missile launches, something Washington has done previously.

When UN sanctions on Iran were lifted in January, the Security Council's Iran sanctions committee was shut down. But council diplomats said they expect the former chair of that now-defunct committee, Spain, will take on the task of overseeing the monitoring of Tehran's compliance with resolution 2231.—*Reuters*

EU pact to establish full ties as Cuba's thaw with West progresses

HAVANA — The European Union and Cuba signed an agreement in Havana on Friday to establish normal relations, bringing the Communist-run island further into the international fold and paving the way for full economic cooperation with the 28-member bloc.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini witnessed the signing of the pact, which will replace a policy imposed by Europe 20 years ago that pushed for changes to Cuba's one-party political system.

"This accord opens a new chapter in the history of relations between the European Union and Cuba," Mogherini said, shortly after EU negotiator Christian Leffler and Cuban deputy foreign minister Abelardo Moreno signed the deal. Rodriguez said the two sides would soon meet to revive a human rights dialogue they started in Brussels last year.

The pact adds to Cuba's rapidly thawing relations with the West since its 2014 detente with the United States and the renegotiation of debt with creditors from the Paris Club of wealthy nations in December.

It comes just days before a visit to Havana by President Barack Obama on 20 March, the first by a US president since the victory of Cuba's 1959 revolution.

Days after the visit, rock group the Rolling Stones will play on the island for the first time, and electronic music act Major Lazer this week entertained 400,000 young Cubans on Havana's sea front, the largest ever show by US artists on the island. Despite the warming relations, Washington retains an economic embargo against Cuba, making it harder for European companies with US business interests to operate on the Caribbean's largest island.

Mogherini railed against those sanctions. "The US embargo is totally obsolete," she said. "The blockade is a measure that belongs to another century. Now the priorities are dialogue and cooperation." Europe's unilateral "common position," in place since 1996, sought to make Cuba adopt a pluralistic democracy to unlock aid and commerce. Cuba has always rejected pressure to change its political model.

After ex-leader Fidel Castro handed power to his brother Raul in 2006, Cuba cautiously began to open to private enterprise without major political change.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

US nominates Scaparrotti as top NATO commander

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama nominated US Army General Curtis Scaparrotti on Friday to become NATO's top military commander, the Pentagon said, a key role as NATO builds up its posture in eastern Europe in a bid to deter Russia.

Scaparrotti, currently commander of US forces in South Korea, would succeed US Air Force General Philip Breedlove as NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe. His appointment requires US Senate confirmation.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter said in a statement on Friday that Scaparrotti's previous postings coordinating US and international forces had prepared him well for the NATO command.

"General Scaparrotti is one of the US military's most accomplished officers and combat leaders, and it is my hope that the Senate will act quickly on his nomination," Carter said.

Breedlove has been an outspoken critic of Russian military moves during his tenure.—*Reuters*

Floods and mudslides kill 15 people in and around Sao Paulo

SAO PAULO — At least 15 people have died in flooding and mudslides in and around Brazil's largest city, Sao Paulo, officials said on Friday.

There were also reports of more people missing following the heavy rains that began late Thursday and continued Friday, but firefighters could not confirm exactly how many.

Sao Paulo firefighters said they had recovered the bodies of 15 people, all but two having been killed in mudslides in the outskirts of the Sao Paulo metropolitan area. Traffic in Brazil's economic hub was thrown into chaos, while the downpour closed the international airport for six hours overnight.—*Reuters*

Europe needs to plug data gaps to track militants — German police head

BERLIN — Europe should set up a transnational data network to keep better track of Islamist militants who may have returned from Iraq and Syria, the head of German police said yesterday.

Holger Muench, president of the BKA federal police, told Redaktionsnetzwerk (RND) Deutschland, that Europe's IT security architecture was insufficient. Only around half of the European Union's 28 member states automatically compare finger prints or DNA profiles, he said. "We need to become quicker and better here. EU states should work together via a joint transnational data network," he said.

Muench said he was also concerned that a network of jihadists was being formed of fighters who have returned to various European countries. "These people got to know one another in Iraq or Syria and are maintaining their contacts and relationships here in Europe," he told RND.—*Reuters*

Twelve Indian paramilitary troopers injured in landmine blast

NEW DELHI — At least 12 paramilitary troopers of India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were wounded Friday after their vehicle was hit by a landmine planted by militants in the central state of Chhattisgarh. State-run broadcaster All India Radio ((AIR) reported that the explosion took place in village Kunta in Sukma district, 392 km south of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

Three of the injured are under critical situation, said the report.

Media reported that the CRPF men were conducting combing operations in the forest area.—*Xinhua*

5.6-magnitude quake hits 24km WNW of Callaguip, Philippines

HONG KONG — An earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale jolted 24km WNW of Callaguip, Philippines at 04:00:27 GMT on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10.0 km, was initially determined to be at 18.1737 degrees north latitude and 120.277 degrees east longitude.—*Xinhua*

OPINION

Become active participants in the reform process

Khin Maung Aye

IN democratic states, citizens have a say in the affairs of the state. Among the rights, the political rights are the foundation of democracy. A literature review in regard to the political rights would reveal nine common political rights: the right to vote; the right to stand for election; the right to hold public office; the right to petition; the right to criticize the government; the right to residence; the right to protection while staying abroad; the right to public meeting; and the right to resist.

The right to vote is the primary right whereby the citizen freely chooses his representatives in a democracy whereas the right to stand for election is a corollary of the right to vote. There are generally certain minimum qualifications of age or education to be able to contest the elections for membership of the legislature. Concerning the right to hold public office, every citizen must be accorded equal chance to hold office inclusive of the highest public office in the state providing that he fulfills the requisite qualifications.

Regarding the right to petition, citizens in a democratic state are entitled to address either individually or collectively the appropriate governmental authorities, petitions incorporating their demands and grievances. These enable the authorities to keep themselves in touch with public opinion. As democracy is very often described as a government by discussion and criticism, the citizens are entitled to criticize the government. This right enables the citizens to point out the flaws in government's policies and acts and draws its attention to public grievances. Matter-of-factly, constructive public criticism makes a government responsive and responsible. In addition, all citizens are free to reside in any part of a country. And when citizens are staying abroad, they shall have the right to seek the protection of their home state. It is also worth noting in this juncture that free discussion and constructive criticism of government's policies are allowed in a democracy.

On top of all, the citizens have the right to resist but this right cannot be described as a legal right. In fact, it is only a moral right because there can arise occasions when the citizens have the moral duty to resist and disobey the commands of the state. However, this right should be exercised sparingly and as a last resort when other peaceful, constitutional methods have failed to correct an erring government. Democracy provides a congenial atmosphere for the effective enjoyment of the political rights, which enable citizens to become active participants in the political process and contribute to the overall stability of the political system.

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.

South China Sea territorial dispute News Analysis (1)

U Khin Maung
(A retired diplomat)

Background

South China Sea territorial dispute has been the top news item of the recent weeks and is still developing as such. China, the fastest growing economy in Asia and the second biggest economy in the world, claims almost the entire energy rich South China Sea waters. Through the South China Sea, more than US dollar 5 trillions worth of marine trade passes cash year. The four ASEAN nations—Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam—and the self-ruled territory, Taiwan have the over-lapping claims over the same South China Sea.

China's assertiveness in this "South Sea'' has raised tensions with its neighbours and with the United States, which is the dominant security partners of the Philippines and Taiwan. Against this background and China's assertiveness and unilateral claims over the South China sea, the United States of America has come into this sea dispute, in a sense, I think, for the purpose of balance of power and in another sense, for the purpose of getting this solved peacefully and diplomatically according to international law. Moreover, as this territorial dispute is a big international issue, it is actively and intensively discussed in ASEAN and US leaders special summit held in California, U.S.A. At the end of 15-16 February Special ASEAN and US leaders summit this topic is mentioned in the Sunny Lands Declaration. But no mention of China is made, as China is not present in the summit. It is an act of diplomacy, I think, In this article only the extract of joint declaration, relevant to the topic will be mentioned as follows:

- Mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality and political independence of all nations by firmly upholding the principles and purposes of the charter of the United Nations, the ASEAN Charter and international law.
- Shared commitment to peaceful solution of dispute including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resort to the threat or use of force in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Developing news

Fox News Agency of the United States reported very recently that China has deployed an advanced surface to air missile system on one of the disputed islands of South China Sea. Taiwan authorities confirmed the deployment. Regarding this news item, China said these reports were creations of some western media. However, when asked about reports of deployment of missiles, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman replied that any deployment of missiles on China's own territory would be legitimate. But, Viet Nam, one of the rival claimants over the South China Sea protested China's missile deployment, saying it a serious violation of Viet Nam's sovereignty. Australia and New Zealand urged both China and Viet Nam to exercise restraint.

As this territorial dispute goes far beyond the national interests of the parties concerned, US and European Union could not afford to remain silent and unconcerned. So, US and EU also warn China to respect international law, and South China Sea ruling. US also accuses China of raising tensions in the South China Sea. And as China has set up air fields and has built artificial islands and has now deployed missile system on the South China Sea, US President Obama calls for need to lower South China Sea tension. In this situation, U.S.A also states that U.S.A will continue to fly and sail wherever international law allows, emphasizing freedom of air-flight and navigation.

News analysis

As regards this issue, the "United States and ASEAN agreed on the importance of a rule-based regional and international order that upholds and protects the rights and privileges of all states."

And "with malice towards none, with charity for all and with firmness in the right'' or in other words, with a good-will towards all parties to the dispute, I, a retired diplomat, with some sort of legal background, would like to submit my sincere, simple, and humble views on this dispute, in essence, that it should be settled in accordance with international law in general and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in particular. Moreover, where, there is a dispute among states, it should be settled by diplomatic means in good faith and with a good will. Where there is a will, there is a way. It is a well-known old saying. In addition, may I also submit that diplomacy is the first line of defence, when it comes to settling a dispute. In other words, any assertion, any claims and any dispute should be settled peacefully or by diplomatic means. It is a well-established, time-tested and long-lasting doctrine that diplomacy is the time of defence.

In this news analysis, I would like to quote the wise remarks of H.E Bernardo Zuela, UN Under Secretary-General and special Representative of the UNSG for the law of the sea, particularly "on the settlement of disputes," as prescribed in the UN Convention. It reads as follows:

"The convention obliges parties to settle their dispute peacefully and provides a selection of methods for doing so in the event that they are otherwise unable to reach agreement even with the third party intervention. The system under the convention is a compulsory and binding one in that, with limited exceptions, a party has no choice but to submit to a settlement procedure if requested to do so by the other disputant and is bound to abide by the findings of the body to which the dispute is submitted."

In this territorial dispute, tensions are escalating especially between China and the United States. So, let's wait and see how this dispute will be settled finally and also let's hope and expect that it will be solved diplomatically and legally without threat or use of force by the parties concerned. May peace, law and order prevail in this world of us.

Reference:

(1) The Global New Light of Myanmar.
(2) Channel News Asia Satellite Channel
(3) Oxford Advanced Leaner's Dictionary
(4) UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

U Khin Maung is a retired Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sales of recycled instant coffeemix sachets increases

A woman making the mat with the use of sachets of instant coffee mix. PHOTO: YE WIN NAING (IPRD)

A VILLAGER from Ngathayauk township in Mandalay Region is making money from recycling throwaway sachets of instant coffee mix into mats.

The mats, made from old packaging material have captured the attention of people from surrounding villages.

High demand for such mats has created employment for local residents, thereby increasing family incomes, a local said.

"We collect old sachets of some brands and rinse them with soap. We trim off the edges of the packets before weaving them into mats," the villager said.

The mats come in sizes for one person and three persons. A single mat costs K7,500 and a triple mat, K15,000. —*Ye Win Naing (IPRD)*

Correction

PLEASE read "Department of Electric Power Planning" instead of "Hydropower Planning Department" in the announcement of the appointment of Daw Mi Mi Khaing as the Director-General of the Department of Electric Power Planning under Myanmar Gazette on Page 9 of 11 March issue of GNLM.— *Ed*

Temporary Roadside Shops POEM:

In Yangon City center well past mid-day daily
appear the roadside 'shops' with their motley
of wares displayed on the pavements temporarily
on ground sheets, sometimes with makeshift shelter
leaving only a small lane for pedestrians to manoeuver.
Some new, some used and some imitation articles probably,
displayed with the sellers making their sales pitch loudly
attracting townspeople, rural folks and curious on-lookers
examining the displayed goods and making offers
in the hope of an article at a bargain price purchasing
compared to similar articles the stores are selling.

Also on the pavements, local 'fast food' stalls there are,
some cooking varieties of 'Deep-fried Foods' of Myanmar
some in the open, some under makeshift shelters
with gas, coal or wood open fire stoves, unmindful of safety
in the midst of pedestrians going about their affairs in the city.
The pavement food 'stalls', small stools surrounding
with people sometimes in small groups patronizing.
Workers, shoppers, or those in the city for official business
eating food at prices competitive with permanent food places.
The temporary food shops of course are filling a need
for people as a source of reasonably priced food indeed.
Sad thing is that many of the food 'stalls' are situated
near garbage containers and some times even located
quite near to some of the deep uncovered drains
of the city's liquid wastes with germs of various strains.
To make matters worse some of the temporary food sellers
often clean their plates and cutlery used by the customers
with a few quick dips in often reused stored water
instead of fetching more fresh water for that matter.

Perhaps, the roadside food sellers of the City center
for safety and health reasons could be relocated elsewhere
as on designated 'food-floors' complete with piped water
in the city's municipal markets or other locations that are proper.

Lokethar

English : an international language for communications

Arakan Sein

THE news report of English test for the MPs from the National League for Democracy and other parties, which appeared in the 4th March issue of 7-day daily compelled me to write this article. After taking the test from 8-10 March, the MPs will have to attend the classes according to their respective results. Furthermore, the attendance of the MPs from the NLD is compulsory whereas those from that of other parties is optional.

So, why is English so important for our MPs? Is it possible to learn a language (English) in a period of short time? Do they concentrate on learning rather than doing their jobs which will keep them fully occupied for the sake of the country.

Actually English is important not only for our MPs but also for leaders from around the world. It doesn't belong to England nor to the US. It has become a universal language which is officially used in world organizations such as the UN, World Bank and IMF and it is used as an official language even in the ASEAN.

When the World War Two ended abruptly in 1945, the language has become more and more popular with help and participation of the US, Canada, Australia. New Zealand, South Africa and India, keeping the other languages at bay. French teachers in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are being replaced by English Language ones.

India expelled the British and gained independence in 1947 but has maintained the language—English, thereby producing the world-famous writers such as V. S. Naipaul, Salmon Rushdie, Vikram Seth and so on.

India-born announcers are often seen on the BBC Radio and TV screens.

Myanmar also expelled the British with the help of Japanese and gained independence in 1948 but downgraded the teaching of English in schools and colleges in 1965, prioritizing Myanmar-sar as our national language. In the same year Singapore was separated from Malaya Peninsula but English was prescribed as an official language under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew who built Singapore from a fishing village to the most modern state among the Asian countries.

The result is what we have been facing now: the standard of our English language acquisition is much lower than that of Singapore and other Asean coutries This is a reality ; like it or not our MPs will have to learn English in order to be able to discuss with their counterparts from around the world. I am really thrilled to know about the results of English test for the MPs who are going to take a test in the learning centres in the offices of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaws As a lifelong English language teacher I wonder if it is possible for hundreds of MPs to learn English in a very short period of time.

English is easy to learn but hard to master because it is a living language. A lot of new words are added to this language day by day.

But I feel encouraged to know that the levels of these crash courses will be conducted by qualified teachers under the supervision and cooperation between the respective offices of the Hluttaws and the British Council in Yangon. But don't expect too much from these courses; Rome was not built in a day.

Something is better than nothing. Hope for the best and prepare for the worst. I would like to advise the newly-elected MPs not to get discouraged: English is one of your tools; you have already got a lot of other qualities---supervision, management, honesty, hard work and finally trustworthiness from the people of our country. I would also like to give an example to encourage the newly-elected MPs who are eligible and are going to attend the crash courses in English.

When U Thant was nominated for the third Secretary-General of the United Nations, the French-speaking countries objected to his nomination because he had a little knowledge in French language.

He studied that language very hard and within a period of six months, he was able to discuss face to face with the then French President Charles de Gaulle.

In conclusion, all the MPs are given a golden opportunity of serving our country in a democratically-elected government and are urged to exert utmost efforts in all the tasks assigned , assuming that learning English is also regarded as a major task in order to be able to conduct discussions diplomatically with your counterparts from around the world.

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US general sought greater powers in Afghanistan before exit

WASHINGTON — The US general who until last week commanded the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan said on Friday he recommended broader scope for US military activity as the country fends off a resilient Taliban insurgency.

Army General John Campbell declined to disclose the specific powers he requested from President Barack Obama's administration before he stepped down as part of a normal leadership transition. But he expressed a sense of urgency, "otherwise it's not going to impact" the war in 2016.

"I'm not going to get more people. So the only way that I can impact is potentially change some of the authorities we have. So authorities deal with: what you can strike, what you can't strike, at what levels you can do train, advise, assist," Campbell told a group of reporters at the Pentagon.

"So I've asked for some modifications."

The incoming commander, General John Nicholson, will also get to weigh in on the matter, Campbell said.

Campbell acknowledged frustrations over the lengthy bureaucratic process behind decision-making in Washington, something other Pentagon chiefs, including Obama's three past defence secretaries, have also noted.

Outgoing Commander of Resolute Support forces and United States forces in Afghanistan, US Army General John Campbell, walks during a change of command ceremony in Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 2 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

"But I would tell you with President Obama — every time I would get to the president, I got the decision I was really looking for," he said.

Since Campbell's arrival in Afghanistan in 2014, Obama has rolled back some of his drawdown plans as Taliban militants made gains, Islamic State established a nascent presence and casualties increased among Afghan security forces.

The Obama administration also gave US forces broader authority to hit Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan, who Campbell said probably numbered closer to 1,000 than 3,000 fighters.

Campbell's successor, Nicholson, inherits a conflict that is testing Afghan security forces and the roughly 13,000 international troops who remain, with insurgents contesting or controlling as much as a third of Afghanistan.

US rules for engagement are far more limited in Afghanistan since NATO ended its combat mission in 2014.

Campbell acknowledged that even with new authorities, much would come down to the performance of Afghan forces, who he said needed to continue to come off checkpoints and become more maneuverable as they seek to push back the Taliban.

"We could have all the authorities we want. If the Afghans aren't doing what they need to do, it's not going to make a difference," he said, even as he lauded their efforts so far.—*Reuters*

Lebanese minister says garbage crisis '99 per cent solved'

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk said on Friday the country's rubbish crisis had been "99 per cent solved" at a government committee meeting on the issue.

The Lebanese National News Agency quoted Machnouk and reported there would be a cabinet meeting yesterday to finalize the agreement. It gave no further details.

Politicians' failure to agree on a solution for garbage disposal has left mountains of trash piling up in and around Beirut for months and prompted warnings over the potential spread of diseases. Lebanon cancelled a plan to export its rubbish to Russia last month, a government agency said.

The problem is symptomatic of political deadlock that has left the country without a president for almost two years and prevented the government from taking even basic decisions.

Opposing factions include parties backed by regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran. Conflict across the Middle East, including the war in neighbouring Syria, where Iran and Saudi Arabia support warring sides, has strained Lebanon's sectarian political system.

Saudi Arabia recently halted $3 billion of aid to Lebanon's armed forces, blaming the government's failure to condemn attacks on its diplomatic missions in Iran after Riyadh executed a Shi'ite cleric.

Arab states have also labeled Shi'ite Hezbollah, a powerful political and military force in Lebanon, a terrorist organisation.—*Reuters*

A general view shows packed garbage bags in Jdeideh, Beirut, Lebanon, on 23 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Syria opposition to attend Geneva peace talks

BEIRUT — Syria's main opposition group said it would attend peace talks on Monday but accused the government of President Bashar al-Assad of preparing to escalate the war to strengthen its negotiating position.

The UN-brokered talks, which coincide with the fifth anniversary of the conflict, will take place in Geneva two weeks after the start of a ceasefire agreement.

The truce deal has reduced violence although not halted the fighting, with further hostilities reported in western Syria on Friday, and as battles against Islamic State raged further east.

The High Negotiations Committee said on Friday it would attend the peace talks as part of its "commitment to international efforts to stop the spilling of Syrian blood and find a political solution".

But it played down any chance of reaching agreement with the Syrian government to end the war that has killed more than 250,000 people and led to a refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe.

Russia said it expected its ally Syria to attend, although Damascus has yet to publicly confirm it will do so. The Syrian foreign minister is expected to announce his government's position on the talks on Saturday.

Peace talks convened two years ago collapsed because the sides were unable to agree an agenda: Damascus wanted a focus on fighting terrorism, the term it uses for the rebellion, while the opposition wanted to discuss a transitional government.

Residents and Civil Defence members inspect damage after an air strike on the rebel held al-Saliheen district in Aleppo, Syria, on 11 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

A senior adviser to Assad, Bouthaina Shaaban, said on Friday Russia had done more to fight terrorism in Syria than the United States and its allies, according to a BBC interview cited by state news agency SANA.

The latest talks are intended to focus on future political arrangements in Syria, a new constitution and elections, UN envoy Staffan de Mistura said.

The opposition HNC said it wanted the talks to concentrate on the establishment of an interim governing body with full executive powers.

HNC coordinator Riad Hijab said the group was "concerned with representing the just cause of the Syrian people ... and investing in all available chances to alleviate the Syrian people's suffering".

"We know that they (the government) are committing crimes, and that they are preparing an air and ground escalation in the coming period," he said, without elaborating.

HNC spokesman Salim al-Muslat said they expected a government escalation with the aim of strengthening Damascus's position at the negotiating table.

"I believe this is a strategy," he said.

A prominent Syrian dissident who is not part of the Saudi-backed HNC, Haytham Manna, said he would stay away from the talks, which he regarded as a "failing project".

Manna, co-leader of the Syrian Democratic Council that includes Kurdish members, boycotted the last round of talks because the Kurds were not included.—*Reuters*

Spacecraft to seek life on Mars in European-led mission

BERLIN — A spacecraft is due to set off for Mars next week on a mission that scientists hope will help answer one of the most burning questions of spacefaring times: Is there life on other planets?

The craft, part of the European-Russian ExoMars programme, is to lift off from the Baikonur spaceport in Kazakhstan on board a Proton rocket at 5:31AM EDT (0931 GMT) on Monday, starting a seven-month journey through space.

It will carry an atmospheric probe that will study trace gases, such as methane, around Mars as well as a lander that will test technologies needed for a rover due to follow in 2018.

US space agency NASA's Mars rover Curiosity in late 2014 found spurts of methane gas in the planet's atmosphere, a chemical that on Earth is strongly tied to life.

Scientists believe the methane could stem from micro-organisms, called methanogenes, that either became extinct millions of years ago and left gas frozen below the planet's surface, or that some methane-producing organisms still survive.

The Proton rocket, that will launch the ExoMars 2016 spacecraft to Mars, is lifted on the launchpad at the Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, in this handout photo released by European Space Agency (ESA) on 11 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"Proving that life exists or has existed on Mars would show that Earth is not unique in terms of having life on it," Rolf de Groot, head of the European Space Agency's (ESA) Robotic Exploration Coordination Office, told Reuters.

"That would make it much more likely that there are other places in the universe that also have life," he added.

Another explanation for the methane in Mars's atmosphere could be that it is produced by geological phenomena, like the oxidation of iron.

The second part of the ExoMars mission in 2018 will deliver a European rover to the surface of Mars. It will be the first with the ability to both move across the planet's surface and drill into the ground to collect and analyse samples.

"The radiation from space destroys all the biological material. If you go two metres into the ground you may be able to find places that were protected (from radiation)," de Groot said.

Landing on Mars is a notoriously difficult task that has bedevilled nearly all of Russia's previous efforts and has given NASA trouble as well. The United States currently has two operational rovers on Mars, Curiosity and Opportunity.

The ExoMars 2016 mission is led by ESA, with Russia's Roscosmos supplying the launcher and two of the four scientific instruments on the trace gas orbiter. The prime contractor is Thales Alenia Space, a joint venture between Thales and Finmeccanica.

The cost of the ExoMars mission to ESA, including the second part due in 2018, is expected to be about 1.3 billion euros ($1.4 billion). Russia's contribution comes on top of that.

In 2018, NASA also plans to launch a Mars spacecraft, a satellite known as InSight and designed to study the deep interior of Mars, the US agency said this week.—*Reuters*

Reading from a tablet before bed may affect sleep quality

SWITZERLAND — People who read from an iPad for 30 minutes before going to sleep felt less sleepy and had different electrical activity in the brain during sleep than those who read from a physical book, a recent study found.

But the time it took to fall asleep and time spent sleeping were similar under both conditions.

"Since light has an alerting effect, we predicted a lower sleepiness in the iPad condition at bedtime compared to the book condition," said lead author Janne Gronli of the University of Bergen in Norway. But it was surprising that the iPad light did not delay sleep initiation, she said.

However, "we found a delay of 30 minutes in the generation of the restorative slow waves during sleep in the iPad condition," Gronli told Reuters Health by email.

The study included 16 nonsmokers ages 22 to 33 who were familiar with tablets and had no sleep, medical or psychiatric disorders. For a week before the study began, they were instructed to keep to a regular sleep-wake schedule and to stay in bed at least as long as they needed to sleep.

During the study, in which participants slept in their own beds, the researchers took polysomnographic recordings for three nights of sleep: one to collect a baseline of how each person slept, one night of reading from an iPad for 30 minutes before turning out the light and one night of reading from a book for the same amount of time.

On the night they read from a book, the participants used ordinary reading light in their bedrooms.

The polysomnographic recordings, including electroencephalograms to measure brain electrical activity, collected data on total sleep time, sleep efficiency, percentage of time spent in each sleep stage, and other aspects of sleep quality during the time between lights off and sleep onset as well as the time between sleep onset and first period of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

A light metre measured illumination at eye level while the participants were reading in each condition. Illumination was about twice as high while reading from the iPad compared to the book, and the iPad emitted a high level of blue light, the researchers note.

Bedtime and the time at which people got up from bed were similar in both conditions, with an average sleep duration of slightly less than eight hours on both days.—*Reuters*

US doctor with Lassa fever en route to Atlanta from West Africa

ATLANTA — An American doctor who was working with missionaries in West Africa is being moved to an isolation ward at an Atlanta hospital on Friday with a suspected case of Lassa fever, a deadly hemorrhagic disease similar to Ebola, officials said.

The patient, who has not been identified publicly, was being flown in a specially equipped aircraft from Togo and was expected to arrive at Emory University Hospital sometime Friday or this weekend, officials said.

The isolation ward is where Emory successfully treated four Ebola patients in 2014, said Dr Bruce Ribner, director of Emory's Serious Communicable Disease Unit.

"The take-away from this for the public, is that there is absolutely no risk to anyone," he said. "We've shown that we can handle Ebola and this is a lot less communicable."

Lassa fever has been endemic in Africa for many years, with up to 300,000 infections annually. Only about 3 per cent presenting symptoms severe enough need hospitalisation, Ribner said.

Of those hospitalised, about 20 per cent of the cases are fatal, compared with a 70 per cent rate for all patients who catch Ebola, which is transmitted through blood and bodily fluids.

An ecologist extracts a sample of blood from a Mastomys Natalensis rodent in the village of Jormu in southeastern Sierra Leone in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

"With Lassa, most of the people who get it never even know it," Ribner said.

The worst Ebola outbreak in recorded history began in West Africa in December 2013, spreading to at least 11 countries on the continent before petering out. In all, more than 11,300 people died, almost all in the three worst-affected countries.

At its height, the Ebola outbreak sparked fear around the world, prompting governments and businesses to take emergency precautions.

An outbreak of Lassa fever is now underway in Nigeria, according to the World Health Organisation, and it is starting to spread to nearby countries including Togo.

According to a WHO statement, 159 suspected cases of Lassa fever and 82 deaths were reported between August 2015 and January 2016. Some media reports have said as many as 101 people have died as of February.

Like Ebola, Lassa causes a severe fever with bleeding, Ribner said. It is most commonly transmitted to people from rodent excrement, and it can be transmitted from person to person by contact with blood or bodily fluids, Ribner said. He said the hospital will take every precaution and that the public should not be alarmed.

"You can't catch it like you get the common cold," he said. "We can handle this."—*Reuters*

Trump snags former rival's backing, scraps Chicago rally

CHICAGO/PALM BEACH, (Fla) — US presidential candidate Donald Trump canceled a campaign rally Friday night amid security concerns just hours after the Republican front-runner earned the endorsement of a former rival who said the billionaire's pugnacious campaign style is belied by a more thoughtful, private side.

"There are two different Donald Trumps: there's the one you see on the stage and there's the one who's very cerebral, sits there and considers things very carefully," Ben Carson said Friday as he became the second former Republican candidate to back Trump in the White House race.

The soft-spoken retired neurosurgeon, who dropped out of the race last week, said the American people would be "comforted" when they discover Trump's gentler side.

The thousands of protesters who showed up for Trump's rally Friday evening at the University of Illinois at Chicago — along with thousands of supporters — showed little indication they had noticed anything but the candidate's combative campaign style.

Demonstrators celebrate after Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump cancelled his rally at the University of Illinois in Chicago on 11 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

The university arena turned into a chaotic scene as the two warring sides amped up their positions. A half hour after the rally was slated to begin, a Trump campaign staffer announced it was being postponed for safety reasons, unleashing competing chants of "We dumped Trump!" and "We want Trump!" throughout the packed venue.

"We made a great decision not to have the rally," Trump told CNN after meeting with law enforcement and making the call. "I am not a person that wants to see violence," he added. Trump blamed protesters for creating disturbances at his campaign events and said it is a "love fest" among his supporters.

Friday's event in Chicago stood out because the huge number of protesters virtually matched the number of Trump supporters, as opposed to other Trump campaign events where protesters have been a very small, albeit vocal, minority.

Earlier in the day, speaking at a public event in St. Louis, Missouri, Trump was interrupted repeatedly by protesters who were led out of the event by police and security, an increasingly common occurrence at his raucous rallies.

"He's all mouth, get him out," Trump shouted as one of the protesters was led out. "Go back to mommy," he said as another protester was led away.

The latest endorsement for Trump followed a Republican debate in Miami on Thursday night at which Trump and the remaining three candidates in the Republican race struck a markedly more civil tone.

Carson shot to the top of the Republican pack last year but faltered in the early nominating contests. His endorsement is unlikely to dramatically shift the Republican race, but it gives Trump a boost as the Republican establishment cranks up attacks, and comes just days before crucial nominating contests in the battle to be the party's presidential candidate for the 8 November election.

The Republican primaries to be held on Tuesday in five states will be critical for Trump to cement his lead, and to determine whether US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Ohio Governor John Kasich, whose home states are among those holding contests on Tuesday, will be able to continue with their increasingly long-shot candidacies. Trump's nearest rival in the race is US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

Carson's comments on Friday aimed to soften Trump's public image after a campaign marked by his demeaning personal attacks on opponents, harsh comments about Mexican immigrants and calls to temporarily bar all Muslims from entering the country.—*Reuters*

South African court to try misconduct cases against peacekeepers in Congo

KINSHASA — A mobile South African military court has arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo to try 32 South African peacekeepers accused of misconduct, the UN mission in Congo said on Friday.

UN peacekeeping missions have been dogged by accusations of sexual abuse. The United Nations reported 99 such allegations against staff members across the UN system last year.

Friday's statement said none of the 32 cases to be tried in Congo involved alleged sexual abuse. It said that the mobile courts, which South Africa first used in 2001, represented an important tool in the fight against impunity.

"Holding the trial in DRC is indeed more practical, less costly and, above all, more attentive to the circumstances of victims who are not able to travel to another country," the statement said.

It added that the mobile court, which arrived this week, consisted of a judge, a lawyer, a prosecutor and a clerk. It will hold hearings in the capital Kinshasa and in the conflict-torn east before returning to South Africa on 22 March.

The statement said the alleged infractions dated back as far as May 2015, but did not specify the charges.

"We're trying to clamp down on all elements of ill-discipline wherever they are," military spokesman Xolani Mabanga said in South Africa.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called this month on troop-contributing states to allow prosecutions inside countries where the alleged crimes took place and for the creation of a DNA registry of all peacekeepers.—*Reuters*

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Trudeau sees no flood of Americans to Canada if Trump wins

WASHINGTON — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday joked that he is not expecting an influx of unhappy Americans across the border if firebrand Republican Donald Trump becomes president.

As Trump's popularity builds in the race for the Republican presidential nomination, Internet search providers have noted a spike in queries from Americans about moving to Canada.

Trudeau told students on the third day of an official visit to the United States, however, that the idea of emigration by voters who feared ending up on the losing side was common during US election campaigns.

"If over the past decades that had been the case, we'd have more people in Canada than in the United States ... It becomes an easy thing to cry out," he said during a discussion at Washington's American University. Canada's population is just over a tenth the size of that of the United States.

Trudeau said Canadians and Americans continually crossed the border to live in the other country.

"That's just the nature of our friendship and relationship and to link it too much to politics is humorous ... There will always be flows back and forth and one must never fret or be disappointed with that," he said.

Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau. PHOTO: REUTERS

Migration data from after Republican George W. Bush's 2000 election and 2004 re-election — other times when some liberal Americans pledged to move to Canada in protest — suggests few followed up on their promise.

Trudeau, whose Liberals took power in Canada last November, had previously largely avoided questions about the consequences of a Trump victory, saying he will work with whomever wins.

Earlier this week he said he would neither fight Trump nor support him but understood his appeal for people fed up with politics.

Trudeau made his comments a day after talks at the White House that set the seal on better ties with the United States. Trudeau and President Barack Obama agreed joint steps to combat climate change and make it easier for people and goods to flow back and forth across their countries' long border.

Trump has in the past mused about tearing up the North American Free Trade Agreement, which could cripple the Canadian economy. Keeping good relations with the United States is critical for Canada, which sends 75 per cent of its exports to its southern neighbour.—*Reuters*

South African teen finds suspected piece of missing MH370 plane

A piece of debris found by a South African family off the Mozambique coast in December 2015, which authorities will examine to see if it is from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 on 11 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

JOHANNESBURG — A South African teenager has found debris which will be sent to Australia for testing as part of the investigation into the disappearance of a Malaysian Airlines plane two years ago, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) said on Friday.

Liam Lotter, 18, told South Africa's East Coast radio he found the piece of debris on a beach in Mozambique while on holiday in December and his family took it back to their home in South Africa.

He said that after a suspected part of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 was found in Mozambique last week his family made the connection with his find.

That white, metre-long chunk of metal is being tested by officials in Australia, with help from Malaysian authorities and representatives of manufacturer Boeing Co (BA.N). South African authorities plan to hand over the debris found by Lotter to the same Australian team.

"We are arranging for collection of the part, which will then be sent to Australia as they are the ones appointed by Malaysia to identify parts found," SACAA spokesman Kabelo Ledwaba told Reuters.

Flight MH370 disappeared on 8 March, 2014, with 239 passengers and crew on board, shortly after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing. It is believed to have crashed in the Indian Ocean.

A piece of the plane's wing was washed up on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion in July 2015.—*Reuters*

Canada dam construction moves ahead following indigenous protest

TORONTO — Construction of a major dam in northern Canada is moving full steam ahead after some work was halted by an occupation by indigenous activists angry about its impact on land rights, its builders say.

At a cost of more than $8 billion, the hydro electric dam project in northwest British Columbia province will flood more than 5,000 hectares of land, the equivalent of about 5,000 rugby fields.

Local farmers and indigenous people who have lived and hunted in the area for generations say their traditional lands will be inundated to provide power to far-away urban centres.

"This is our home. We use this land," Helen Knott, an indigenous activist told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, adding, "Rivers are the arteries of Mother Earth. When you block those, the planet is going to get sick."

Knott and other campaigners dismantled a protest camp at the construction site this month following a court injunction.

Their protest lasted about two months, halting construction on part of the project.

Supporters of the dam known as Site C, which include businesses and government, say it will generate clean energy and economic growth and flood sparsely populated land in the vast hinterland.

"This project is expected to create about 10,000 construction jobs and about 33,000 direct and indirect jobs," said Dave Conway, spokesman for B.C. Hydro, the government-linked company behind the project, earlier this month.

"Protesters left the site peacefully, and work has resumed," he said.

The dam should begin producing electricity in 2024, Conway said. Much of the current work involves building labour camps for workers and clearing the land.

Four separate court cases challenging aspects of the project are making their way through Canadian courts, and more protests are planned, opponents said.

The project conflicts with long-standing treaties between indigenous people in the region and the Canadian government, a spokesman for Amnesty International said.

Northern British Columbia is already a major site of natural gas extraction and other resource projects, and the dam could leave indigenous groups unable to hunt on the land, Amnesty said.

The land they use is being chipped away, said Amnesty's spokesman Craig Benjamin.

"Year after year, project after project, little pieces have been taken away until there is almost nothing left," he said.—*Reuters*

French government fails to convince student unions on labour reform

PARIS — The French government failed to convince student organisations in talks on Friday of the merits of its labour reform plans, and the unions stepped out of the meetings making renewed calls for street protests next week. Students and unions staged rallies across France on Wednesday, and more are scheduled for Saturday, Thursday and 31 March.

Just over a year before presidential elections, Socialist President Francois Hollande, already deeply unpopular, has to find ways to tackle growing anger from left-wing youth organisations that would usually back him.

Hollande and his government have said they are willing to make some tweaks but want to stick to the main aspects of a reform that aims to loosen labour relations and make them open to negotiation at individual companies. "We want that law to be withdrawn," William Martinet, the head of France's biggest student group Unef, which is close to the ruling Socialist party, said after talks with Prime Minister Manuel Valls and his labour and economy ministers.

French police apprehend a man during a demonstration against the French labour law proposal in Lyon, France, as part of nationwide labor reform bill protests by students and union members, on 9 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

He told reporters that Friday's talks had only strengthened the union's belief that protests were all that could be done to persuade the government to change its mind.

Unef has for decades been close to the Socialist party, and many of the party's top officials come from its ranks, some of whom are giving the union cash handouts to support its campaign.

Alexandre Leroy from students union FAGE, which says it represents 2,000 students associations, also called on students to take to the streets yesterday. "If nothing's done, we're heading to a dead-end," he said. The government's reform plan aims at limiting the cost of laying off workers and puts most aspects of France's strictly codified rules on labour relations up for negotiation.

Initially due to be adopted in a cabinet meeting this week, the bill was postponed by two weeks after it triggered harsh criticism from within the Socialist party.—*Reuters*

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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.

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Beyonce's new album is very powerful

LONDON — Beyonce has the ability to "make you forget she's a superstar", according to songwriter Carla Marie Williams.

The music professional has been working with the R&B legend on her upcoming album.

She has written a track for the record, which is top secret, but promised fans they will be blown away by Beyonce's musical transformation on her next offering, reported *Daily Mirror*.

"When I'm in the studio with Beyonce she makes you feel so at ease you forget she is a superstar. I am loving where she is going."

"I haven't heard the whole album but we're talking real issues. The new single we've done is very powerful."

Carla has previously worked with the likes of Kylie Minogue and Paloma Faith in the past and she is now collaborating with Britney Spears.—*PTI*

Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger strolls through Bogota

BOGOTA — The Rolling Stones front man Mick Jagger took a stroll through downtown Bogota ahead of a Thursday concert in the Colombian capital.

On his walk, Jagger stopped off to try the traditional oblea wafer and ate the popular Colombian desert as he walked through Plaza Bolivar.

Thursday's concert is part of a Rolling Stones tour through Latin America.—*Reuters*

British rock singer Joe Cocker (L) is honoured at Hollywood's Rock Walk as he holds a plaque presented to him after placing his handprints in cement 1 April in Hollywood, accompanied by fellow musician Keith Emerson (R) of the group Emerson Lake and Palmer. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lukas Graham set pop record in Britain, Adele returns to top

LONDON — Four-piece Lukas Graham set a new record in Britain on Friday by becoming the longest-reigning Number 1 single from a Danish act in UK pop chart history, while Adele returned to the top of the album lists with "25."

"7 Years" had been tied with Whigfield's "Saturday Night" and Aqua's "Barbie Girl," before scoring a fifth week at the top, the Official Charts Company said on Friday.

"Lukas Graham may have held onto the Number 1 spot for seven days longer, but they've still got another record to break – Whigfield and Aqua's tracks are both million sellers," the company noted.

7 Years finished more than 20,000 combined chart sales ahead of its nearest rival, and was the week's most streamed track, clocking up 4.52 million listens, it added.

It was also the longest consecutive chart topper since Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars logged six straight weeks starting from December 2014 through January 2015 with "Uptown Funk."

Mike Posner's "I Took A Pill In Ibiza" climbed one place to second while "Work" by Rihanna featuring Drake was down one spot to third.

Adele was back on top of the album charts for the third time as her tour completes four sell-out nights in Manchester and she prepares to begin a week-long residency at London's O2 Arena. The tour goes to Europe and the United States later this year.

Climbing four places to the runner-up position this week was Jess Glynne's "I Cry When I Laugh," while Justin Bieber's album "Purpose" was unchanged at three.—*Reuters*

Adele. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rock keyboardist Keith Emerson died from self-inflicted gunshot

NEW YORK — British-born keyboardist Keith Emerson of the 1970's progressive rock band Emerson, Lake & Palmer died from a self-inflicted single gunshot to his head, police said Friday. He was 71.

Emerson's body was found by local police at his Santa Monica, California, home in the early hours of Friday. Police have preliminarily ruled the death a potential suicide, Santa Monica police spokesman Sergeant Rudy Camarena told Reuters.

Born in 1944 in the Yorkshire village of Todmorden, Emerson was a keyboardist for a number of groups in the 1960's, including The Nice. But he was best known as a founding member of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, a so-called "super group" of well-known rock musicians formed in 1970.

In addition to Emerson, the band included bassist Greg Lake, formerly of King Crimson, and drummer and percussionist Carl Palmer, a veteran of several famous English bands.

"Keith was a gentle soul whose love for music and passion for his performance as a keyboard player will remain unmatched for many years to come," said Palmer on his website.

"He was a pioneer and an innovator whose musical genius touched all of us in the worlds of rock, classical and jazz."

The band posted about Emerson's passing on Facebook, asking "that the family's privacy and grief be respected."

The band released nine studio albums during the 1970's, including its debut self-titled album and its follow-up "Tarkus," released in 1971. The latter reached the top spot on the Billboard 200 chart, according to Billboard.com. Emerson later worked as a solo artist and wrote an autobiography, "Pictures of an Exhibitionist," in 2004.—*Reuters*

Jennifer Garner explains how new faith film made her return to church

Cast member Jennifer Garner PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — In new faith film 'Miracles from Heaven', which is based on a true story, actress Jennifer Garner plays Christy Beam, the mother of a young girl Annabel (Kylie Rogers) who is diagnosed with an incurable and painful disease.

Because of the illness, pressure on the young family was high as Annabel had to undergo numerous hospital appointments and procedures.

However, one day Annabel was involved in a freak accident and fell from a tree and hit her head. When she came to, doctors discovered she'd somehow been cured.

"I mean there's reason there's a movie and a book about it," explained Garner in an interview. "It's not a small thing that happened, it's a really big thing that happened that this child would be cured of something that's incurable and free from pain that she had for so many years but yeah, I think maybe I had a moment of cynicism about the story but not when I met Christy and certainly not when I met Annabel."

"This movie did bring faith back into the conversation of my life and did make me realise that my kids weren't just going to get this via osmosis because my parents had given this to me, that I actually had to be intentional and to participate in it. I think I'd been lazy about it so I got off my duff and we had a conversation and found a church we loved where we've been totally embraced and really happy," she said.

"Miracles from Heaven" goes on release in North America on 14 March.—*Reuters*

Brazil's mothers left to raise microcephaly babies alone

CAMPINA GRANDE (Brazil) — Ianka Barbosa was 7 months pregnant when she found out her child had microcephaly. Before the baby was even born, the father had gone.

Barbosa, 18, blames the break-up on her baby's abnormally small head and brain damage that doctors link to the Zika virus she contracted during pregnancy. "I think, for him, it was my fault the baby has microcephaly," said Barbosa, wearing a blue dress and cradling tiny two-week old Sophia in a cramped bare brick house where she now lives with her parents in Brazil's northeast.

"When I most needed his help, he left me."

The house, which overlooks a polluted stream on the edge of a poor neighbourhood, is now home to a family of nine. Only Barbosa's father has a job doing occasional building work.

Her ex-partner, Thersio, says he does not see Sophia, but avoids discussing microcephaly and blames Barbosa's parents for the break-up. "I gave her the choice, are you your parents' woman or mine ... And she chose her parents."

Single parents are common in Brazil where some studies show as many as 1 in 3 children from poor families grow up without their biological father, but doctors on the frontline of the Zika outbreak say they are concerned about how many mothers of babies with microcephaly are being abandoned.

With the health service already under strain, abortion prohibited, and the virus hitting the poorest hardest, an absent father is yet another burden on mothers already struggling to cope with raising a child that might never walk or talk.

At a specialised microcephaly clinic in Campina Grande, psychologist Jacqueline Loureiro works with mothers to help them cope with stress and trauma. Of the 41 women she counsels, she says only 10 receive adequate financial or emotional support from their partners.

"At first many of the women say they have a partner, but as you get to know them better you realise the father is never around and the baby and mother have effectively been abandoned," Loureiro said. Loureiro blames Brazil's macho culture, which she says is particularly strong in the northeast.

Gender roles are strictly defined and women still tend to care for the baby and look after the household. The added burden of having a child with microcephaly strains this dynamic, says Loureiro, and often the man ends up leaving or refusing to help.

Much remains unknown about Zika, including whether it actually causes microcephaly in babies. Brazil said it has confirmed 745 cases of microcephaly since October, and considers most of them related to Zika infections in the mothers. It is investigating another 4,230 cases of suspected microcephaly.

Ianka Mikaelle Barbosa, 18, poses for a photograph with Sophia, 18 days old, who is her second child and was born with microcephaly, at her house in Campina Grande, Brazil, on 17 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Until the World Health Organisation declared Zika a global health emergency last month, there was little interest in microcephaly and no data for its toll on parents. But studies into children with other special needs shows it substantially increases the chance of marital breakdown.

Jennifer Lewis, who runs the US based Microcephaly Foundation and has a 12-year-old daughter with the condition, is not surprised fathers in northeast Brazil are abandoning partners and children. Her charity has a network of around 5,000 families and she says the majority are single mothers.—*Reuters*

Graffiti artwork of drowned Aylan highlights refugees' plight

FRANKFURT — A huge graffiti image of toddler Aylan Kurdi, pictures of whose dead body stirred global sympathy for migrants fleeing war and poverty, confronts motorists, pedestrians and river travellers in Frankfurt.

Thousands of weekday commuters using the Main river footpath and road bridge will see the 120-square-metre image of the three-year-old Syrian boy who drowned in September along with his mother and brother as they tried to reach Europe. The artwork on a peninsula about a 15-minute walk from the city centre will stay until the autumn.

Artists Justus Becker (R) and Oguz Sen stand in front of a huge graffiti artwork of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, after finishing a three-day painting session on a wall on the banks of river Main near the headquarters of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany, on 10 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

"We are very sad about the children dying and we are angry," says graffiti artist Justus Becker, 38, known as COR, who worked on the image with another artist who uses the name Bobby Borderline. "We want to work with issues facing our society."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is struggling to convince other European countries to accept a plan for handling the unprecedented flow of migrants and may face a backlash in state elections on Sunday over her open-door policy on refugees. Staff at the European Central Bank's headquarters across the river can also see the image.

The artists' previous projects include graffiti on the boundary fence around the new ECB building in 2014 which showed a female figure representing Justice holding a scales with euro symbols in one weighing pan and refugees in the other.

The Aylan project, which has used 50 litres of wall paint and about 80 cans of spray paint, is intended to provoke by bringing the issue of refugees to Germans' front doors, explains Becker.

"We hope to have people emotionally rethink their selfish fears of refugees coming to Germany," says the artist.—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International

(13-3-2016 07:00am ~ 14-3-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Writer, Philanthropist: Daw Than Myint Aung (Part - I)
07:53	Am	Graffiti: Portraiture
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Wonderful Indonesia
08:52	Am	Lines and Wash Painting
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-2)
09:47	Am	Amazing "Sayargyi Nyein Chan Aung"
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar National Poet And Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose - Min Thu Wun (Ep-2) Student Life & Early Literary Career
10:50	Am	Myanmar Charitable Labour Association

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Karaweik Palace- A Symbol Of Glorious Myanma Culture
07:42	Pm	Today Myanmar "Eli Niño Phenomenon & Fire Prevention"
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Stories Of The Great Souls (Mar Mar Aye) (EP-2)

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(13-3-2016, Sunday)

6:00 pm
- Weather Report
- Music Programme

6:30 pm
- Myanmar National Poet and Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-2) Student Life & Early Literary Career

7:00 pm
- Music Programme

7:30 pm
- International Movie "The Italian Job"

9:30 pm
- Myanmar Movie

10:30 pm
- Live: English Premier League "Aston Villa Vs Tottenham"

From 13-3-2016 (Sunday)18:00 Pm
To 14-3-2016 (Monday)18:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

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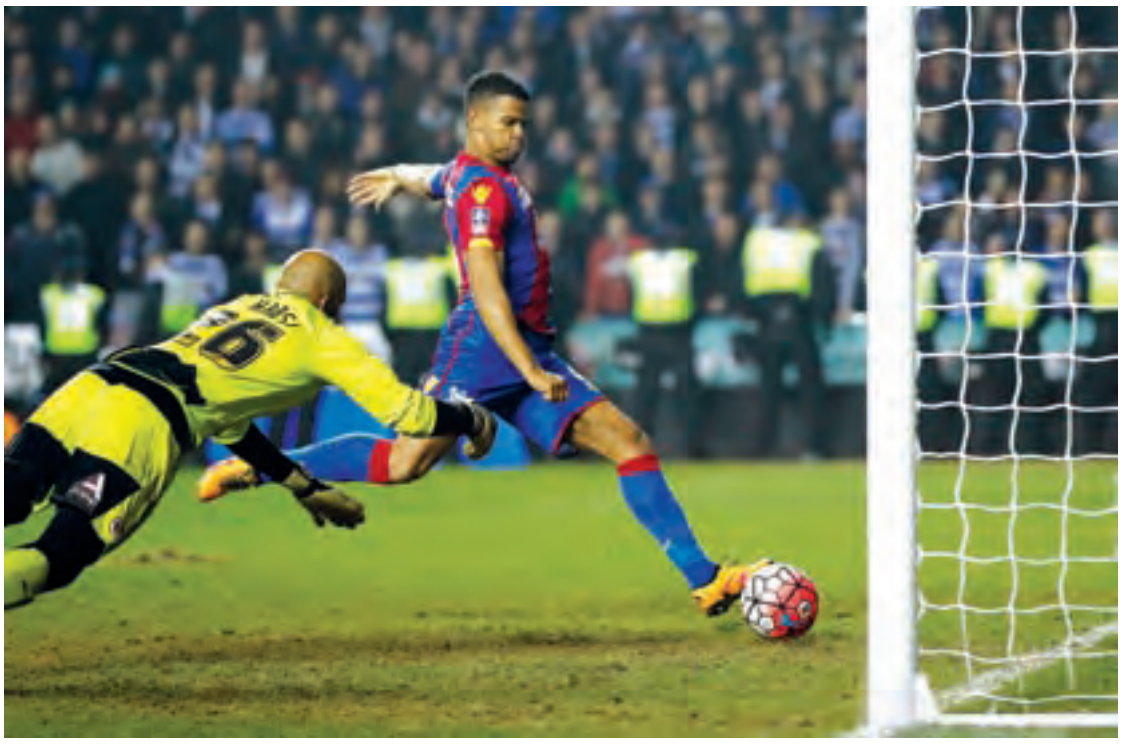

Crystal Palace's Fraizer Campbell scores their second goal during FA Cup Quarter Final at Madejski Stadium ,on 11 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Late goals send Palace through to FA Cup semis

READING — Late goals by Yohan Cabaye and Fraizer Campbell gave Crystal Palace a 2-0 victory at Championship (second-tier) club Reading in their FA Cup quarter-final on Friday.

Cabaye opened the scoring with a penalty in the 85th minute after Jake Cooper was sent off for fouling Yannick Bolasie.

Substitute Campbell made sure of Palace's place in the Wembley semi-finals when he pounced on a clever pass from Wilfried Zaha and beat goalkeeper Ali Al Habsi in stoppage time.

"It was a tricky tie for us but we were really good today and should have wrapped it up before the penalty," Palace manager Alan Pardew told the BBC after his side reached the last four for the first time since 1995.

"It has been a strange run we have been on. We have been terrific in the FA Cup but edgy and nervous in the Premier League.

"Hopefully we can take this into the league," said former Reading boss Pardew, referring to the fact his team have yet to win a league match in 2016.

France midfielder Cabaye praised Reading's performance at the Madejski Stadium.

"It was tough, this is a good team with good players but we have done the job," he said. "It would be amazing to win something and we are one step closer to the final."

On Saturday, Premier League champions Chelsea visit Everton while on Sunday holders Arsenal host Watford and Manchester United entertain West Ham United.—*Reuters*

Yorke wants Giggs in charge of Manchester United

SINGAPORE — Manchester United should sack Louis Van Gaal and install his assistant Ryan Giggs as manager, according to former striker Dwight Yorke who wants to launch his own managerial career at struggling Aston Villa.

The former Trinidad and Tobago striker said changes were needed at United, with the 20-times English champions sixth in the Premier League, out of the Champions League and suffering a 2-0 loss to arch-rivals Liverpool in the Europa League this week.

"At the end of the day, it's all about results," Yorke was quoted as saying by Singaporean daily *The New Paper* yesterday after a promotional event in the Southeast Asian citystate.

"In the two years that he's (Van Gaal) been there, he's spent tons of money, brought in tons of players, and simply hasn't got the results that he and everyone else had hoped to.

"You see a lot of young managers, Zinedine Zidane's been given the opportunity at Real Madrid, you got Luis Enrique at Barcelona, Pep Guardiola who's coming to Manchester City, Tottenham's Mauricio Pochettino, they're all ex-players.

"And I feel that the game is going down that road, and maybe this is the right time to give Giggsy the job."

Yorke won three Premier League titles and the 1999 Champions League with United under former manager Alex Ferguson after joining from Aston Villa.

The 44-year-old said he was heartbroken to see Villa struggle at the foot of the table under manager Remi Garde and said he would love the chance to try and rectify the problems. "I feel that I can turn it around for them, if they give me the opportunity to do that," he said.

"They're a club I know very well, the structure is very strong, and if they go into the Championship (second tier) next year...I have the experience and what it takes to win that Championship down there."—*Reuters*

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal looks dejected at the end of the match. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venus makes early exit, dominant Serena advances

INDIAN WELLS — Venus Williams' return to Indian Wells lasted just one match but sister Serena looked poised for a long run after a dominant win at the BNP Paribas Open on Friday.

Venus returned to the event for the first time since 2001, having boycotted it after being booed and heckled by fans during her previous trip, but made a quick exit after a 6-4, 6-3 defeat to Japanese qualifier Kurumi Nara in the second round.

The 15-year-old incident had occurred when Venus withdrew from a semi-final match with Serena, drawing ire from the crowd aimed at the Williams family.

This time, though, Venus was greeted warmly by the crowd before her match and throughout it, a consolation for her poor performance.

"It was enough of a fairytale to come here and play," Venus told reporters. "A win would have been nice, but that means I have to come back, play next year."

Serena had no such issues with German opponent Laura Siegemund in a 6-2, 6-1 romp.

The world number one had already reconciled with the event last year when she ended her own boycott and she appeared freed up as she needed a little over an hour to advance.

"My intensity was key. I knew if I didn't start fast it was going to be a long match," Serena said.

In earlier action, third seeded Agnieszka Radwanska prevailed in a three-set thriller against Dominika Cibulkova 6-3, 3-6, 7-5. She rallied from an early 4-1 deficit to push through.

Defending champion Simona Halep made easy work of Vania King 6-1, 6-1.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, the No.8 seed from the Czech Republic, needed a third-set tiebreaker in a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (5) victory over Danka Kovinic of Montenegro.—*Reuters*

Powell to carry Jamaica's hopes at world indoors

Asafa Powell of Jamaica celebrates with teammates after winning the men's 4 x 100 metres relay final during the 15th IAAF World Championships at the National Stadium in Beijing, China in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

KINGSTON — Asafa Powell will carry Jamaica's sprinting hopes at the world indoor championships this month as the former 100 metres world record holder was named to his country's squad on Friday.

Powell will be the biggest name on the Jamaican team at the 17-20 March worlds in Portland, Oregon, that will not include Usain Bolt as the world record holder over 100 and 200 metres does not race indoors.

The Jamaican team will be made up of 11 men and 13 women, the Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association said in a statement.

Powell, 33, is a two-time world championships 100m bronze medallist. The women's team includes reigning 100m hurdles world champion Danielle Williams and 200m silver medallist Elaine Thompson from the 2015 world chanmpionships in Beijing.—*Reuters*

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