

Holy symbols hoisted atop Sagaing Htupayon Pagoda

A SACRED diamond bud (Sein-phudaw) and a sacred bird's perch vane (Hngetmyatnadaw) were hoisted atop a famous pagoda in Sagaing Region yesterday with a ceremony attended by President U Thein Sein.

The sacred religious objects were consecrated by members of the Sangha led by Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Nannisara before being hoisted atop the Htupayon Pagoda in Sagaing.

Prior to the ceremony, the congregation led by President U Thein Sein heard a sermon delivered by the Sitagu Sayadaw, followed by a luncheon offered to members of the Sangha.

The Htupayon Pagoda is said to have been built by King Narapati of Inwa in 806 Myanmar Era in the fashion of the Thuparama pagoda in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Enshrined in the 202-foot-high pagoda were sacred relics presented by the king of Ceylon.

According to records, the pagoda experienced earthquakes in 874, 863 and 952 Myanmar Era (ME) and was repaired by a king in 967 ME. The religious facility suffered damage caused by an earthquake in 1200ME and was renovated by the king of Bagan in 1212ME. Dipa Aye Mya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nandasiri

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Dignitaries fix a diamond orb atop Htupayon Pagoda. PHOTO: MNA

President meets students from University for the Development of National Races

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FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

US pledges financial assistance to Myanmar anti-TIP Project



Police Brig-Gen Win Naing Tun (R) and Mr Suresh Barlett of WorldVision (Myanmar) sign agreement PHOTO: MNA

THE United States has pledged assistance to Myanmar's measures against human trafficking, following an agreement of cooperation, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Police Chief Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win confirmed the signing of the bilateral agreement in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Under the agreement, World Vision (Myanmar) will render assistance to prosecution against smugglers, training to social workers, and closer cooperation in the rehabilitation of victims.

The United States has pledged \$700,000 for a three-year plan from 1 October 2015 to 30 October 2018. The plan is aimed at protection and rehabilitation of

the victims in Myanmar and will be carried out in partnership with local departments, civil society, and INGOs and NGOs from Australia and the United States.

According to the police officer, the country joined the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and has signed its protocols since 2004.

The country signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT MoU) in 2004 as part of cooperation in the fight against human trafficking by the six countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

The country also became a

signatory to the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in November last year.

As for bilateral cooperation, the country has been working together with its neighbours China and Thailand in combating human trafficking after drawing action plans.

Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win spoke of two five-year plans for anti-human trafficking, the first from 2007 to 2011 and the second from 2012 to 2016.

World Vision (Myanmar) is an organisation that has been focusing its efforts on the development of children and families across the country for 25 years.— Myanmar News Agency

MPF, USIP organise post-election review workshop

THE Myanmar Police Force and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) jointly organised a workshop on the post-election review in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. The event was attended by senior police officers and experts from the Institute.

In his address, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win called for ways and means to be sought at the workshop to ensure the successful holding of future elections, acknowledging public participation in the 2015 general elections.

Next, Mr. Vanessa Johanson, USIP's country director for Myanmar, extended greetings on the occasion. The workshop is aimed at holding discussions on various topics including the establishment of a coordination mechanism to improve relations among stakeholders including government agencies and political parties, media and public relations, risk assessment and violence prevention, study on conflict management strategies and lessons learned from electoral security. —Myanmar News Agency



Police officers participate in the workshop on the post-election review in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

MNA to operate international flights at new terminal as of 20 March



MYANMAR National Airlines will open routes to Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok from the newly-opened terminal at Yangon International Airport from 20 March, according to a press release from the airlines yesterday.

Myanmar National Airlines began operating Yangon to Sin-

gapore flight service in August 2015, Yangon to Hong Kong in December 2015 and Yangon to Bangkok in February 2016 with its three Boeing 737-800 NG aircraft.

More Boeing aircrafts will be delivered to Myanmar this year, added the airline. —GNLM

Myanmar receives motorcade tours of Thai, British tourists

TOURISTS are currently visiting Myanmar in motorcades, arriving and departing from the country via border entry points.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism said that Thai and British tourist groups took a motorcade tour in Myanmar this month separately.

All Asia Exclusive Travel & Tours Co Ltd conducted a three-day motorcade tour for a 180-member Thai tourist group in 49 cars this March.

Under the arrangements

of Thanakha Travels & Tours Col Ltd, a group comprising 10 British tourists took a motorcade tour in Myanmar for 13 days, visiting Monywa, Sagaing, Bagan, Kalaw, Pindaya, Inlay, Taunggyi, Toun-goo, Kyaik-hti-yoe, Mawlamyine and Myeik.

The two tourist groups arrived and departed from Myanmar via Tachilek, Myawady, Mawtaung and Tamu border points, according to the ministry. —Myanmar News Agency

Mandalay students finish matriculation examinations

UNIVERSITY entrance examinations for the 2015-2016 Academic Year which started on 9 March concluded yesterday, with 91,252 students taking their final papers in Mandalay.

According to the office of the Mandalay Region Education

Officer, 39,911 appeared for the biology paper while 51,341 appeared for the economics paper at 165 exam centres in the region.

A total of 95,656 students were registered to sit for matriculation examinations that began on 9 March and will end on Friday

in Mandalay.

As 91,687 contestants appeared for Myanmar language paper on the first day of the examinations, 3969 students failed to take the examinations in Mandalay Region.— Min Htet Aung (Mann sub-printing house)

Construction kicks off at Mandalay Industrial Zone wastewater treatment plant



A ground breaking ceremony to construct a wastewater treatment plant is seen. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

CONSTRUCTION of a wastewater treatment plant expected to relieve environmental impacts of wastewater from Mandalay Industrial Zone kicked off at a designated place in Amarapura Township yesterday.

The plant is designated to treat wastewater from factories and plants in the zone as they are unable to create their own plan to carry out the wastewater treatment

process, said U Tun Kyi, Mandalay City Development Committee member-6. The plant construction project is set to be implemented in two phases— construction and installation of wastewater treatment systems— at Taung-inn Myauk-inn area in Amarapura Township of Mandalay Region.

The project has now kicked off the construction phases following an agreement in 2013 be-

tween the MCDC and Hydrotek Supreme Mandalay Co., Ltd which is conducting environmental impact assessment for ensuring the release of a report on environmental management plan by the Environmental Conservation Department. Upon completion of the plant, treated water will be released into the Dokhtawady River. — Min Htet Aung (Mann sub-printing house)

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had the pagoda reconstructed and hoisted a sacred diamond bud and a sacred bird's perch vane in 1329ME as it had suffered from various natural disasters.

The religious structure experienced 15 points of damage on its body due to an earthquake that hit in 1375ME, equivalent to 2012 AD, which prompted Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Nannisara to protect and preserve the edifices of cultural and religious heritage. The Sitagu Sayadaw initiated the renovations to the damaged pagoda in 2012. The renovation work was completed in 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on the diamond orb which would be fixed atop Htupayon Pagoda. PHOTO: MNA

President U Thein Sein meets students from University for the Development of National Races

ONGOING endeavors are aimed at shaping a better future for posterity, said President U Thein Sein in a meeting with faculty members and students at the University for the Development of National Races in Sagaing yesterday.

In his address, the President highlighted the importance of the role of young people in the country's long journey toward building a nation that is on track to development with a promising future, saying the country has regained international recognition and plaudits following its smooth democratic transition.

The president said the university, where all the students are ethnic minorities, is a significant foundation for the Union. He expressed his delight at its record of nurturing able youths who have been elected Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and regional Hluttaw representatives.

The president stressed the

need for the establishment of a federal system that is suitable for the Union and is formed in cooperation with the states, adding that the country was formed under such a system in the 2008 constitution.

He also called for comprehensive understanding of the difference between a confederation and a federal state, saying a confederated state can collapse easily.

He indicated his expectation that a Kayin national belongs not only to the Kayin State but also to the Union in the federal system, stressing the need to ensure equal sharing of development between developed and under-developed regions based on the Union spirit.

On national unity and internal peace, the president emphasised how important common consent is to development as the country cannot enjoy prosperity without unity and peace.

He also stressed the need to improve the country's readiness for

opportunities and challenges, calling for more efforts in the implementation of regional development tasks for border areas and ethnic minority areas.

The president said the country has been transformed into a promising one during the previous five years, and all eyes are on the country hoping to see the country grow over the next 10 years.

On his tour of the university, the president presented K5 million each to the University for the Development of National Races and the Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College.

The University for the Development of National Races has so far educated 93 graduates who obtained Master's degrees in education, 35 graduates who obtained Master's of Philosophy, 3,453 B.Ed graduates and 9,609 teacher training diploma holders over the last five decades.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Thein Sein greets students from University for the Development of National Races. PHOTO: MNA

President U Thein Sein sends felicitations to Irish President

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, on the occasion of the National Day of Ireland, which falls on 17 March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Thein Sein sends felicitations to Irish Prime Minister

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Enda Kenny, Prime Minister of Ireland, on the occasion of the National Day of Ireland, which falls on 17 March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Foreign Affairs Minister felicitates Irish counterpart

U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Charles Flanagan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, on the occasion of the National Day of Ireland, which falls on 17 March, 2016.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Commander-in-Chief congratulates president-elect

THE Office of the Defence Services Commander-in-Chief announced yesterday its congratulations to the newly elected President of Myanmar.

The announcement said: "The Defence Services Commander-in-Chief's Office would like to express delight for the election of U Htin Kyaw as the next president, pledging to cooperate with him in future for stability, unity and development of the country."—*Myanmar News Agency*

Crime NEWS

Yabba, Marijuana and ammunition seized in Pa-an



Culprits together with seized marijuana and yabba pills seen at the police station. PHOTO: MNA

LOCAL authorities seized one gram of marijuana and 38 yabba pills in a house owned by one Ma

Zar Chi on Bogyoke road in ward 1, Pa-an town on 12 March. Police also arrested Win Htet Aung

and Kyaw Myo Aung who were suspected of selling the drug along Innwa road, Pa-an.

On the same day, police searched the house of one Than Zaw Latt and confiscated 174 yabba pills. Police further discovered 1,330 yabba pills on one Ma Nay Chi Oo from Inn Pyay road.

According to the connected investigation, police searched a house owned by one Phay Lin Aung and discovered 1,400 yabba pills, a firearm, 25 bullets and a vehicle. One Ma Myint Myint Aye was found together with the host. According to another connected investigation, the police searched a house owned by one Saw Thein Win and confiscated 10,000 yabba pills and a vehicle. Charges have been filed against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Police stop robbery in Chanmyathasi

POLICE have arrested four men who allegedly robbed a couple on 45 street, Aung Thaya ward, Chanmyathasi township on 11 March, according to a police report.

According to the police investigation, four men, aged 20 or so, with two motorbikes approached a couple who were sitting under a tree and robbed them at knifepoint. They forcibly took away with them two mobile phones and a motorbike.

Local police discovered the crime in progress while on patrol and managed to capture one Hla Cho, 18, from Htun Tone ward. When interrogated, he admitted that he had committed the robbery together with Myo Ko, 18, from Kan Thaya ward,



Hla Cho, Myo Ko, Lwin Moe Oo and Tun Tun Win. PHOTO: TIN MAUNG (MANN SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

Lwin Moe Oo, 19, from Htun Tone ward and Tun Tun Win, 19, from Kan Thaya ward. Police arrested all three of them with the

motorbike for evidence. Police are still investigating the case.— *Tin Maung (Mann Sub-Printing House)*

Raw opium and yabba seized in Banmauk



Daw Mya Win, Sein Win and Shwe Than. PHOTO: MPF

LOCAL authorities seized raw opium and yabba in a house in Haw Yaw village, Banmauk township, Sagaing region on 12 March.

Acting on a tip-off, the police discovered raw opium weighing 5.6 grams, 5,250 yabba pills and K3.8 million in a house owned by one U San Pyay.

Police arrested one Daw Mya Win, 53, Sein Win, 43, and Shwe Than, 38, who came to buy the drugs at U San Pyay's home. Police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— *Myanmar Police Force*

Forest fire destroys warehouse in Namtu

A WAREHOUSE was destroyed by a forest fire in Namtu town, Shan State on Monday.

According to an investigation the fire broke out at around 1:45 pm near a golf

course and spread to the warehouse which stood in one U Kyaw Win's field.

The fire was put out by firemen from Namtu town. — *Township IPRD*



Firefighters putting out the fire in Namtu. PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD

Two men injured in car accident

TWO men inside a six-wheel vehicle sustained injuries in a traffic accident on the Yangon-Mandalay road between mileposts 186/1 and 186/2, Yedashe town, Bago region on 13 March.

According to an investigation the six-wheel vehicle, driven by one Tun Naung, 27, with one Aung Myo Htet, 25, on board,

crashed into a 22-wheel vehicle which had stopped on the highway. The two men in the six-wheel vehicle were injured in the accident.

They are receiving medical treatment at Toungoo general hospital. The reckless driver has been charged by the police.— *Ko Lwin (Swa)*



Damaged six-wheel vehicle seen at the site of the traffic accident. PHOTO: KO LWIN (SWA)

Man charged for drug dealing

A MAN who was found in possession of a cache of yaba pills in Shan State was arrested for drug smuggling on Saturday, according to a police report.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members of an anti-drug squad together with witnesses searched a house owned by U Yan Chain Myint in

Yanbo Village in Mabain Township, Moemeik District, of Shan State.

They discovered 119,600 WY-variety yaba pills and K239 million (US\$197,808) in cash from the 41-year-old homeowner, who has been charged under the law by local police.— *Township IPRD*

LOCAL Business

YSX to see more public companies this year



WHILE planning to launch the first list of Myanmar's new stock exchange participants on 25 March, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar has a plan to permit more public companies for trading on the YSX this year, said Dr Maung Maung Thein, Chair-

man of the SECM.

The YSX was officially launched on 9 December with 6 selected Myanmar companies qualified to be listed for trading. Trading is slated to launch on 25 March. It will be the country's first modern securities market.—002

Government to grant more licenses to foreign insurance firms

THE Myanmar Insurance Business Supervisory Board has plans to give further licenses to insurance companies which have opened offices in Myanmar and operated for at least three years, according to an announcement of the Europe Insurance Business Supervisory Board.

These companies also need to meet with the rule and standards set by the board. They will get permission to operate their services in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (TSEZ).

As part of its efforts to attract foreign investors to the Thilawa SEZ the Myanmar Insurance Business Supervisory Board is

planning to grant licenses to foreign insurance businesses. Insurance businesses based in Europe are most likely to receive a license.

Currently there are three insurance companies permitted to work inside the Thilawa SEZ. All are Japan based. The Thilawa SEZ was implemented by investment from Japan.

Any foreign insurance companies which have opened offices in Myanmar and operated for at least 3 years, have 30-year-experience in the industry and at least two-year-experiences in ASEAN countries are eligible to apply for the license.—PPN/Union Daily

Myinmu site of new solar energy project

ANDAMAN Capital Partners (ACP), based in the USA is conducting an electricity generating project using solar energy on 450 acres of land in Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region, according to Regional chief minister U Tha Aye. The project is expected to generate up to 80 megawatts of electricity.

The company is currently negotiating with local authorities. It is initiating a report titled the

Feasibility Study Report, he added.

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration Department (DICA) was opened in Monywa on Monday with a view to developing the local economy and providing faster service in the investment businesses in Sagaing Region. It has provided the companies with registration help and extensions. Myo Win Tun (Monywa)

Tomato price down

TOMATO farmers have experienced a decrease in price of the kitchen crop due to the constant mass flow of tomato into the market.

"The mass stock of tomatoes causes a low demand and a cooling market", said U Myint Oo, a trader of tomato.

Tomato is sold out for K200 per viss (aprox. 1.6kilograms)

and K4,500 per box (18 viss) at Thirimingalar Market.

The decrease in the price of tomato has been going on for two months. Traders are expecting that tomato prices will rise again in April.

One of the factors which caused the downward price of tomato is the mass plantation this year.—Myawaddy

New Industrial Zone in Mon State to open this month

THE Kyauktan Industrial Zone Implementation Committee has announced that the Kyauktan Industrial Zone, located in Mon State, will officially be opened on 26 March.

Basic industrial zone infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water and electricity supply have recently been completed after a construction period of two years.

"Implementation of the industrial zone is now about 90 per cent complete. An opening ceremony will be held on 26 March. Around 10 businesses have already started operating [within the zone]," said U Tin Hlaing, chair of the committee.

Construction on the industrial zone project began in 2014. It was led by the Mon State Development Committee under a directive from the Mon State government, but it was privately funded.

Businesses entrepreneurs, who purchased land from land-

owners for the purpose of building the infrastructure for the industrial zone, are required to pay a sum of K17 million (US\$13,957) per acre of land in instalments over a three-year period to the Kyauktan Industrial Zone Implementation Committee, as well as also paying K3.45 million (\$2,833) into an industrial zone grant fund.

"We businessmen have bought farmland at the current market price. Since this is farmland though, we can't build an industrial zone on it. We have to pay approximately K20 million to the committee per acre of land owned for it to be levelled and for electricity and water to be made available," said investor U Win Naing.

A total of 59 investors from around the country have purchased land in the industrial zone, which covers 254 acres.

"The previous industrial zone was far away from Mawlamyine. It was located in the

town of Kyaikmaraw. There were two suspension bridges that needed to be crossed to reach it, making it difficult to access. They had to limit the tonnage of vehicles. Container vehicles weren't able to cross the Attaran Bridge. Water was scarce, electricity supply was patchy, and phone connections were bad. It was for these reasons that it wasn't a success. The construction of the new Kyauktan Industrial Zone is in Mawlamyine, so everything is fine," said U Hla Shein, chair of the Mon State Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The industrial zone features a variety of different business enterprises, including zinc, barbed wire, ready-mix cement, food and drink production, textiles, gold purification, ice factories, shoe production facilities, furniture enterprise, plastic enterprises, cool seafood storage and car accessory businesses.—Myitmakha News Agency



Kyauktan Industrial Zone in Mon State.
PHOTO: MYITMAKAH NEWS AGENCY

MPE cancels tender for Nyaungdon LPG Plant Joint Venture Project

THE Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE) announced yesterday that there were no successful applicants for the Nyaung Don LPG Joint Venture Project and the tender is officially cancelled.

The MPE invited prospective foreign investors to submit a Letter of Expression of Interest (LOEI) for the implementation of a Joint Venture Project at the Nyaungdon LPG Plant on 1 April 2014. A total of twenty-two companies submitted a LOEI and of

those eleven companies were prequalified. The eleven prequalified companies were invited to participate in the tender process.

MPE launched the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the prequalified companies on 1 December 2015 and the tender closing date was 29 February 2016.

According to the announcement, of the eleven prequalified companies, six companies : NK Co Ltd, Korea, Sojitz Corporation, Japan, PT Titis Sampurna, Indo-

nesia, Andaman Capital Partners, Hongkong, PUMA Energy Group Pte Ltd, Singapore, and PTT Public Company Ltd, Thailand purchased the tender documents.

"None of the above companies submitted proposals before the deadline. Therefore, MPE hereby announces that there are no successful applicants for the Nyaungdon LPG Joint Venture Project and the tender is officially cancelled," said the announcement.—GNLM

Philippine frontrunner favours easing foreign ownership in media, utilities

MANILA — Grace Poe, frontrunner in the Philippines' presidential election campaign, said yesterday she favoured relaxing restrictions on foreign ownership in utilities and media as part of changes she would introduce in the constitution.

The 9 May election is being closely watched by investors who fear the political succession could derail average economic growth of more than 6 per cent a year and stall efforts to crack down on corruption made under outgoing President Benigno Aquino, who is limited to one term.

Poe, who is a senator, has campaigned on a pro-poor platform, promising to build on Aquino's programmes of creating jobs and building infrastructure, which have helped propel one of Asia's fastest growing economies.

Foreigners are barred from owning media companies in the Philippines and are restricted to 40 per cent ownership of public utilities.

"Within my first month in office, it will be part of the agenda, the economic amendments of



Grace Poe, frontrunner in the Philippines' presidential election campaign. PHOTO: REUTERS

our constitution," Poe, 47, told a business forum in Manila, referring to relaxing restrictions on foreign ownership in utilities and media.

"Why not allow more foreign ownership for as long as they employ Filipinos and there is also a technology transfer? I am not for land ownership but I am for media, for certain utilities, for academic institutions and also for the medical profes-

sion." The Supreme Court on 8 March ruled that Poe, who spent much of her life in the United States, was eligible to run for president, reversing a decision by the election commission that disqualified her on grounds that she failed to meet a 10-year residency requirement.

Poe also supported the lifting of a bank secrecy law as senators launched an investigation on Tuesday into millions of dol-

lars hackers stole from the Bangladesh central bank's account at the New York Fed and found their way into a Philippine bank.

Poe has been leading opinion polls with Aquino's chosen successor, former interior minister Manuel Roxas, lagging behind her and Vice President Jejomar Binay.

She is the adopted daughter of action movie hero Fernando Poe who died soon after making an unsuccessful run for the presidency in 2004.

She said she was also keen on signing free trade agreements with other countries if elected.

On the South China Sea, Poe said there was a "need to be able to engage China constructively to follow a peaceful code of conduct" but added the Philippine military should be strengthened.

"If our defence is strong then we will not be bullied as easily as we are being bullied now."

China claims most of the South China Sea through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines and neighbours Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Viet Nam also have claims.—Reuters

15 trafficked Cambodian labourers rescued from Thai fishing boats

PHNOM PENH — The Thai authorities have rescued 15 trafficked Cambodian men from two Thai fishing vessels in southern Ranong Province, Chum Sounry, a spokesman for the Cambodian ministry of foreign affairs, said yesterday.

The victims, aged between 19 and 62 years old, have been temporarily living in a rehabilitation centre for trafficked victims in the province, pending testifying before the court on 24 March in a case against the fishing boat owners, he said.

"The court will consider allowing the labourers to leave Thailand when it gets enough answers," he said in a statement. According to the spokesman, the fishing boat owners agreed to pay 25,000 Thai Baht (713 US dollars) to each of the labourers. Trafficked fishermen are frequently forced to work long hours and physically and psychologically abused. They are often unpaid and forced to serve on voyages for months or even years.—Xinhua

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter

Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors

Jacob Goldberg
jgold.news@gmail.com

Alec Wilmot
alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin
mryehtuttin@gmail.com

Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news

Tun Tun Naing
tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin
juniorlwin25@gmail.com

Tun Aung Kyaw
tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators

Hay Mar Tin Win
haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung,

Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,

Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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Australia, Indonesia renew push for trade deal amid warming ties

SYDNEY — Australia and Indonesia yesterday said they would formally resume long-stalled negotiations aimed at sealing a bilateral trade agreement between the often uneasy neighbours within 18 months.

Australian Trade Minister Steven Ciobo and Indonesian Trade Minister Thomas Trikasih Lembong said in a joint statement talks would resume in May after a lengthy hiatus spanning a period of diplomatic tumult.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited Indonesia last year in the hope of smoothing over ties strained by rows over spying, the execution of Australian citizens in Indonesia and Australia's tough asylum-seeker policies.

Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest economy but is Australia's twelfth largest trading partner, with two-way trade worth just under A\$12 billion (\$8.95 billion) in 2015.

"While Indonesia is a close neighbour and firm friend, our trade and economic relationship can and should be performing better," Ciobo said in a statement.

"I am pleased to announce the reactivation of the Indonesia-Australia Business Partnership Group to ramp up business links."

Australia's live cattle exports to Indonesia have been a source of friction as Indonesia, trying to develop self-sufficiency in its livestock market, has

thrown up barriers to Australian imports.

Lembong suggested that the live cattle export issue may be put aside in the hope of reaching a broader agreement more quickly.

"Sometimes maybe we need to call time out on the most contentious issues and work on areas where we can more easily find common ground," he told reporters in Canberra.

"Personally, my priority is to try to broaden the dialogue so we don't get bogged down on old issues of contention."

Australia and its giant neighbour have a history of diplomatic turbulence stretching back decades, but relations reached historic lows under former Australian

Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who was ousted in a party coup in September.

Just one month after he took office in September 2013, revelations that Canberra had spied on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his wife sent relations plummeting.

Abbott's policy of towing back to Indonesia vessels carrying asylum seekers, while popular at home, infuriated Jakarta, which sees it as an infringement on its sovereignty.

Tension reached a peak in May 2015 when Indonesia executed two Australian members of the so-called "Bali Nine" drug trafficking ring, despite intense lobbying from Canberra.—Reuters

China's HK policies will not change despite unrest: Li

HONG KONG — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday the country's commitment to Hong Kong's semiautonomous status will not change despite recent unrest in the territory, and that he believes in the local government's ability to handle such incidents.

Li, responding to a question over rioting that took place in Kong Kong's Mongkok district last month, said the "one country, two systems" policy and "high de-

gree of autonomy" have not changed and will not change in the wake of the incident.

"We believe the Hong Kong government has the ability, and the people have wisdom, to handle all sorts of complicated issues and situations facing Hong Kong," Li said, at a press briefing following the closing of the annual National People's Congress session in Beijing.

Hundreds of people faced off with riot police over Lunar New

Year after authorities' alleged sweeping of street vendors who would normally be allowed to operate during the festive holidays. Violence erupted as police tried to disperse the crowd, members of which threw bottles and bricks in return and forced one policeman to fire two warning shots to restrain the crowd. The chaos lasted about 10 hours and left more than 130 people injured, of which about 90 were police officers, and nearly 80 people were arrested

and charged with "rioting."

The Hong Kong government has blamed the rioters for the violent protest and denied any responsibility for the growing social discontent. The local legislature approved yesterday plans to start an inquiry into the unrest.

Hong Kong, a former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997, enjoys a semiautonomous status under which Beijing is not involved in its economic and judicial systems.—Kyodo News

China's ties with Japan still 'fragile,' says Premier Li

BEIJING — China's relations with Japan have improved somewhat but remain far from ideal due to disagreements over historical issues, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday.

"There have been some signs of improvement in Sino-Japanese relations, but they are not fully established yet and they are still fragile," Li told a press conference in Beijing following the closure of the annual session of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

Li said it is important for Japan to demonstrate consistency between words and actions over historical issues.

"What I don't want to see is us retracing our steps," he said, when asked about the prospects for relations between the two Asian powers and a framework for trilateral cooperation also involving South Korea.

Until Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping had their first meeting in November 2014, bilateral ties were at their lowest levels in decades, because of fierce disputes over the sovereignty of the Japan-controlled, China-claimed Senkaku Islands and wartime issues.

China, like South Korea, believes Japan has not appropriately atoned for its atrocities before and during World War II and friction remains over the uninhabited islands in the East China Sea.

Still, Li, Abe and South Korean Park Geun Hye met in Seoul last November for the first three-



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) and Premier Li Keqiang attend the closing session of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 16 March 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

way summit since May 2012.

After a three-and-half-year hiatus, they agreed to revive the annual trilateral summit talks, which this year are scheduled to take place in Japan.

On Wednesday, Li, who has yet to visit Japan since taking office in March 2013, said, "As to whether the (trilateral) format will enjoy a smooth development in the future, it's much up to interaction among the three

countries." Noting that the three economies account for about 70 per cent of Asia's total growth, he said, "I believe our mutually complimentary relationship is strong" and there is still much room for better cooperation.

Li's press conference, which lasted about two hours, centered on questions about the Chinese economy.

China's largely rubber-stamp parliament approved

the Communist Party-controlled government's major policies for 2016 and the 13th Five-Year Plan during the annual session that began 5 March.

Amid growing global concerns over a slowdown in the Chinese economy, Li said he is confident that the country will not see a hard landing and will meet its own growth targets.

He said there are "more hopes than difficulties" for the Chinese economy.

At the opening of the session, seen as China's most important public political event of the year, Li said the government will aim for average economic growth at or above 6.5 per cent for the next five years.

As China, the world's second-largest economy, has been struggling to push through reforms, the government has set its growth target for 2016 in a range of 6.5 per cent to 7 per cent, which compares with the previous year's 6.9 per cent expansion, the slowest in 25 years.

As China tries to move away from an investment-driven economic model, the much-heard phrase during the annual meeting was "supply-side reform."

Chinese leaders have called for more efforts to curb industrial overcapacity, especially in the steel and coal sectors, and to restructure unprofitable "zombie" state-owned companies, while stressing the need to nurture new growth drivers and develop homegrown products attractive enough for consumers. —Kyodo News

Indonesia security forces kill two Chinese Uighur militants in Sulawesi shootout

JAKARTA — Indonesian security forces have killed two ethnic Uighur Chinese belonging to a militant network led by the country's most wanted man, police said yesterday.

Indonesia has launched an aggressive, military-backed, security campaign in the jungles of Sulawesi island as it battles the threat from growing domestic support for the Islamic State militant group.

Police said the men, part of China's Uighur Muslim minority, had joined Santoso, a militant in Poso in central Sulawesi, who is Indonesia's most high-profile backer of Islamic State, and has been on the run for more than three years.

Tuesday's shootout followed a challenge by security forces to a group of unknown men to identify themselves, during an operation to comb through a forested area of Poso, which is more than 1,600 km (994 miles) northeast of Jakarta, the capital.

"Based on testimony from another suspect we had arrested, those two were identified as Uighurs," said Central Sulawesi police spokesman Hari Suprpto, adding that authorities had notified the Chinese embassy in Jakarta.

A Chinese embassy press official declined a Reuters request for comment.

Four other Uighur men were jailed last year for attempting to join the same militant network, whose leader authorities say they have cornered, after a hunt that lasted more than a year and involved hundreds of troops.

"We have been successful in surrounding them. Their supplies have started to dwindle," the chief security minister, Luhut Pandjaitan, told reporters last week. "We hope Santoso will surrender, but we are prepared for the worst-case scenario."

Asked for an expected timeframe, he gave no details.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Uighurs keen to escape unrest in their far western Chinese homeland of Xinjiang have travelled clandestinely via Southeast Asia to Turkey.

China says they often end up crossing into Syria and Iraq to fight for Islamic State militants.

Hundreds of people have been killed over the past few years in resource-rich Xinjiang, strategically located on the borders of central Asia, in violence between Uighurs and ethnic majority Han Chinese.

Beijing has blamed the unrest on Islamist militants, though rights groups and exiles say anger at Chinese controls on the religion and culture of the Uighurs is more to blame. China denies any repression in Xinjiang. —Reuters

North Korea sentences American student to hard labour for 15 years



US university student Otto Warmbier is taken out of North Korea's top court in Pyongyang on 16 March 2016, after being sentenced to 15 years of hard labour. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

PYONGYANG/BEIJING — North Korea's top court yesterday sentenced an American university student, who has been detained since early January for committing what Pyongyang

calls an anti-state hostile act, to hard labour for 15 years.

The sentencing of Otto Warmbier, a student of the University of Virginia, comes as tensions are rising over North

Korea's nuclear and missile development programmes.

North Korea's official media first reported about Warmbier on 22 January, saying he was suspected of entering the country "under the guise of a tourist for the purpose of bringing down the foundation of its single-minded unity at the tacit connivance of the US government and under its manipulation."

In late February, Warmbier apologised and begged for his early release in a meeting with local and foreign media organizations in Pyongyang that was organised by North Korean authorities. At the meeting, he confessed that he stole a sign with a political slogan meant to inspire the Korean people's love for their system from a staff-only area of the hotel where he had been staying on 1 January and was detained the following day at the airport as he was about to leave North Korea.

Warmbier said he entered North Korea as a tourist on 29 December, about a week before the country conducted its fourth nuclear test in defiance of past UN resolutions. He is the sixth foreign national known to be

held in North Korea. Four others — three South Koreans and a Korean-Canadian pastor — have been sentenced to life in prison with hard labour.

North Korea has a track record of detaining foreigners to use as bargaining chips in disputes with the United States and other countries, and Warmbier's case may prove to be yet another example of this.

The court decision came a day after official North Korean media reported that leader Kim Jong Un has said his country will soon conduct more nuclear warhead and missile tests to improve its military attack capabilities.

The declaration followed the UN Security Council's adoption early this month of new sanctions against North Korea for conducting the nuclear test on 6 January and launching a long-range rocket on 7 February, which was widely seen as a cover for testing long-range ballistic missile technology.

North Korea is banned from developing nuclear and missile technologies under multiple Security Council resolutions. —Kyodo News

— OPINION —

The feel of democracy

Kyaw Thura

WHAT we are good at by nature is criticising each other, apparently because each person sees things differently. Criticisms, however constructive or destructive, can be interpreted as insulting if it lacks recommendations and suggestions. Never-

theless, criticisms are a crucial feature of a healthy democracy.

It is of utmost importance that the government be open to criticism when it comes to creating the feel of democracy. However, it is one thing to take criticism, and it is quite another to pay complete attention to criticisms that reflect some objective reality.

One of the taxing responsibilities assigned to the government by the people is to be on the relentless pursuit of a common goal, which is to bring the people closer to a high quality of life. Another important thing is not to let our disagreements block our ability to compromise on matters of public interest.

As Former US President John F Kennedy once eloquently said: "Geography has made us neighbours; history has made us friends; economy has made us partners; necessity has made us

allies; and what unites us is far greater than what divides us."

Our common ground should, therefore, be focused on our collective efforts to leave a better, safer and more prosperous democratic country to posterity. The more united we are, the more we will realise the true essence of democracy.

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.

Indaw Gyi Lake, the largest wetland of Myanmar

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja,
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

THIS year 2016, February Myanmar printed media reported that Indaw Gyi Lake had been enlisted in the world wetlands on the occasion of the UN Wetlands Day. Mo Yun Gyi in Bago Region was the first to join that list. Now Indaw Gyi Lake has become the second. The report gives natural resources-flora, fauna and minerals as well as its natural beauties.

The writer of this article is so pleased with the report that he could not help writing this article for the readers of the highly esteemed Daily *The Global New Light of Myanmar*.

The writer had visited Indaw Gyi Lake at the time of the festival of Shwe Myitzu Pagoda in the middle of the lake. He did some research at the local forest department and local Buddhist monasteries. Below are the data and knowledge he had collected from them.

The largest natural lake not only in Myanmar but also in South East Asia, Indaw Gyi is in Mohnyin township in Kachin State. The largest wetland ecosystem in the country, its water surface and water body measure 100 sq miles and its forested areas cover 214. 67 sq miles – a total of 314. 67 sq miles. The lake is accessible by train and car in open season.

The lake is a paradise for nature lovers and a virgin field for environmentalists. Thickly covered with temperate and semi-ever green forests, flora varieties include teak, taung tamar, Sei Khar Thin Kon, Ma-u, Baing, Ngu, Yamanay,

Kanyin, Hpet Win, Hpan Kha, Htauk Kyant, Kha Paung, Saga-wa, Hpet Hpyu, Myauk Nyo, Thittazin, Kyeelan, Kyee Htein, etc. and several other fruit, flower, medicinal trees, plants and creepers. Fauna varieties range from tiger, leopard, bear, wolf, gour, banteng (wild ox) to wild goat, mountain goat, sambhur, barking deer, wild dog, jackle, hogbadger, porcupine, many kinds of monkey, many winged creatures – birds, bees, butterfly and insects. The lake also abounds in aquatic and amphibious lives.

Fascinating legends enshroud Indaw Gyi Lake. First the arrival of Lord Gotama Buddha on the summit of Nalagiri Mountain with his cousin Shin Ananda. When the Buddha gazed at the vast plain below, Shin Ananda asked the Buddha why he gazed at the plain. The Buddha predicted that "360 years (about B.C. 184) after my demise this plain would become a big lake and where I had stopped there would emerge an island in the middle of the lake on which a zedi would be built. This zedi would be wellknown in the history of my sasana."

The rest are fairy tales of Naga Serpents. To narrate them briefly, there was a Naga kingdom under the oceans where Naga King "Erapatta" ruled. As Naga population multiplied, spilling over the Kingdom King Erapatta told his family and courtiers to go out and look for new places for habitation. There Ngas, father and two sons went out in quest of a new living place. They came upstream the

Ayeyawady River. When they arrived at a place near Indaw, they turned it into a lake. Today this lake is called Manlei Inn (refv,ftif;).

Later the two sons left there to look for another place where they would set up their own Kingdoms when they reached where Indaw Gyi Lake is today, they found an extensive plain surrounded by forested lofty mountains. They also met beautiful guardian angles of the mountains. There was romantic love affairs between the two Naga brothers and angles. They caused rain for days until the vast plain turned into a big deep lake i.e. Indaw Gyi in which the two Naga brothers set up their kingdoms.

The legend turns to many adventures, warfare and love affairs. Palm leaf manuscripts such as Shan, Kachin and Myanmar found at the local monasteries and their translations give slightly different versions of the same legend.

Shwe Myit Zu Pagoda on the island in the middle of the Lake is one of many Yeylai Pagodas in Myanmar – Yeylai means in the middle of the water body. There are Kyaik Khame Yeylai Pagoda, Kyauk Tan Yeylai Pagoda and Myat Maw Tin Zun Yeylai Pagoda in lower Myanmar. Three Yeylai Pagodas in Upper Myanmar are Inlay Phaungdaw U Yeylai Pagoda, Anya Thihataw yeylai pagoda on an island opposite to Thabeik Kyin town and Shwe Myitzu Yeylai Pagoda in Indaw Gyi.

The history of Shwe Myitzu Yeylai Pagoda began with the arrival of Buddha Sasana there. Forest monks residing in the forests meditated and began building small religious monu-

ments with the help of villagers. It was about the time of King Mindon (1853-1878 A.D) that one monk named U Sobhita resided in the valley of these mountains to the west of Indaw Gyi Lake. His forest recluse was so far away in the wilderness that only few humans occasionally visited him. It is said that this monk preached Dhamma to guardian deities of the mountains and Lake who offered him fruits and water. U Sobhita thought he should introduce Buddha Sasana to the lake area. He told the local people that he would build a pagoda on an island in the lake and requested their help. So begun the building of Shwe Myitzu Pagoda in the Buddha Sasana year 2421, Myanmar Era 1230 (1868 A.D.) on Saturday 11th waxing of Tabaung (March). On the 8th waning of waso (July) the pagoda was completed. It was 10 cubits high. Because sacred relics enshrined in it were miraculously granted by Shwe Dagon Pagoda where U Sobhita prayed for them, The Pagoda was named Shwe Myitzu.

The first festival was held from 8th waxing to 1st waning of Tabaung. Later, Shwe Myitzu was renovated and embellished by donors. In Myanmar Era 1235 (1872 A.D.) one Maung Shin Nyee of Nant Phaung village raised the height of the Pagoda to 18 cubits 2 mites and 4 thits.

Apart from the sublimity of the Pagoda and scenic beauty of the Lake and the surroundings, one strange phenomenon that appears when the festival time approaches is the occurrence of two sand pathways in the Lake leading to Shwe Myitzu Pagoda – one for human pilgrims and visitors and one for deities and

nats-spirits. The two sand corridors are formed by waves in the lake which move opposite bringing up sand and soil making two pathways in the lake. After the festival they disappear gradually.

Devotees and pilgrims believe that there are nine wonders of Shwe Myitzu Pagoda. They are:-

- (1) the appearance of two pathways in the lake leading to the Pagoda at festival time;
- (2) inspite of heavy rain and storm, lake water does not touch the base of the Pagoda;
- (3) there are now crows at the festival time; they come back after the festival;
- (4) all ethnic groups regardless of their faiths come to the festival and they are happy;
- (5) all aquatic creatures especially fish frolic around the island but no one catches them;
- (6) visitors of all religions visit the Pagoda; they all feel happy and peaceful;
- (7) there appears a pool of shallow water at the entrance to the island to remind you to take off your footwears;
- (8) a red line appears in the lake around the island meaning the deities pour medicine into the lake to purify the water; and
- (9) if Wednesday falls on the full moon night of Tabaung, some pilgrims witness emissions of rays of light from the Pagoda and some Arahats Saints coming down to worship the Pagoda.

Myanmar traditional hand loom draws attention of tourists



Tourists are on a study tour of Myanmar traditional hand loom workshop. PHOTO: NAN MYO WIN (MYITNGE)

AMARAPURA, well known as Yetkan-myodaw, is a town in which residents rely on the Myanmar traditional hand weaving industry. The business has quickly gained the interest of tourists. Tourists study how to manufacture the woven clothes at a workshop in Amarapura.

Thai citizens came out on top among tourists who study

traditional crafts and they said Myanmar-Lunyarkyaw silk cloth is famous. "I explain to them the difference of hand woven crafts between Thai and Myanmar people and demonstrate it on the tour", said a tour guide visiting the Shwesintine silk cloth workshop. We did not contact any tour agencies but welcome all the tourists who wish to see the hand woven

business. Tourists mostly come and see in November and March, said the owner of the Shwesintine silk cloth workshop.

Lunyarkaw cheit is well known as the weaver who has to warp threads harmoniously with his loom. A Lunyarkyaw silk sells for between K80,000 and K300,000.—Nan Myo Win (Myitnge)

10,000 tonnes green gram to be exported to EU

LOCAL exporters plan to ship over 10,000 tonnes of green gram to European markets in the coming fiscal year, a spokesperson of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

The export volume of beans and pulses between 1 April and 26 February this fiscal year reached over 1 million tonnes, generating US\$890 million.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, this amount represents an increase from the export volume during the same period last year.

India is the largest buyer of beans and pulses from Myanmar. Around 70 per cent of Myanmar's total pulse exports went to India in the current fiscal year. However, demand from China and Viet Nam is expected to surpass that of India soon. Myanmar generates around US \$ 1 billion from exports of beans and pulses annually.

It is estimated that the export of pulses is likely to increase in the future as the EU has officially accepted exports of pulses from Myanmar.—May Lwin/Union Daily



Green gram plantation in Tatkon Township.

PHOTO: TIN SOE LWIN (TATKON IPRD)

Female Community leaders meet Swedish Development Head

A LOCAL level female leader was very proud to share her experience of being a ward administrator with a visiting head of a foreign development agency.

Daw Thidar Win showed Ms Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, the Director General of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), around her ward, Myoma 4 Quarter, Dala Township, located across the Yangon river, a few minutes from the city's business district.

Village tract administrators, present in rural areas, or ward administrators, in urban areas have a direct line of communication with township administrators and form a bridge between township administration and the people living in the wards and village-tracts. Prior to 2012, local administrators were appointed by Government. Since the reforms in Myanmar initiated in 2012, local administrators have been elected from a group of nominated 10 household heads.

"I start every day by walking around my ward, meeting people, listening to their concerns at the same time noting the conditions of the roads, water reservoirs and other infrastructure. Based on my discussions with people and my observations, I make plans for what the com-

munity needs to develop further. For example, when I took up my role, I noted that there was a need for repairing a number of reservoirs which have been the main water sources of many people and roads. I raised this with the Township Administrator, concerned government departments and together secured funds for this work," Daw Thidar Win told Ms Gornitzka on Sunday.

Little was known about Myanmar's tiny fraction of female local administrators, until a nationwide local governance mapping exercise conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the General Administration Department, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, revealed that during the first elections held over 2012-2013, only 42 women were elected, constituting 0.25 % of the total 16,785 ward/village tract administrators (W/VTA).

One of the requirements for being elected as a ward or village tract administrator is to be a 10 household head. A number of representatives of Myanmar's Rural Women's Network, May Doe Kabar are already shouldering such responsibilities. They see ward and village-tract administrators as an aspiration to aim

for greater leadership heights.

May Doe Kabar board member, Daw Nyo Nyo San, from Nawngkhio township in Shan State is very happy that she had a chance to interact with and learn from the female ward and village tract leaders first at a weeklong workshop organized last December, and now an opportunity to observe Daw Thidar Win work in her ward.

"I am now a 10 household head. I would like to become a VTA and help to address women's needs better," said Daw Nyo Nyo San.

Ms Gornitzka said she was impressed by the determination

and dedication shown by Daw Thidar Win and Daw Nyo Nyo San, as well as the other Myanmar female local leaders she has heard about.

"I have had very inspiring discussions with the local women leaders. It is great to see practical work that matters!," said MsGornitzka.

Sweden provides funds to support UNDP's work with a particular emphasis on improving local governance and strengthening women's participation.

Developing women's leadership in local governance is a priority for UNDP.—GNLM



Participants pose for documentary photo. PHOTO: UNDP

2,500 tonnes of nutritious rice to enter local market within six months

WITH the aim of promoting public health among citizens, the Myanmar Rice Federation will distribute 2,500 tonnes of nutritious rice for local consumption within six months, a federation spokesperson said.

The nutritious rice includes vitamins and minerals including iron, zinc, folic acid, Vitamin A, B1, B6 and B12, which can protect people from several diseases. The nutrients are also meant to ensure the normal development of foetuses.

Through the cooperation between government departments, international social organisations, the MRF and other local companies that manufacture nutrient-rich rice for public consumption, the project is proceeding with success.

In its first stage, the nutritious rice manufactured at 10 rice mills in Yangon, Bogale, Mawlamyine and Latbutta townships will enter the market through 1,000 retail shops this month.—200

Trump knocks Rubio out of Republican race, party in chaos



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump stands between his campaign manager Corey Lewandowski (L) and his son Eric (R) as he speaks about the results of the Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois and Missouri primary elections, during a news conference held at his Mar-A-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida on 15 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PALM BEACH — US Republican front-runner Donald Trump swept three states and drove rival Marco Rubio out of the White House race, but the New York billionaire's loss in the crucial state of Ohio wrought more chaos for a party deeply fractured by his candidacy.

While the Republican race remained in turmoil on Tuesday, Hillary Clinton's victories in Florida, Illinois, Ohio and North Carolina cast doubt on US Senator Bernie Sanders's ability to overtake her for the Democratic Party's nomination.

Trump's wins in Florida, Illinois and North Carolina brought him closer to the 1,237 delegates he needs to win the nomination and left those in the party trying to stop him with a dilemma.

Republicans can either throw their weight behind a candidate who rejects their policy goals or go on trying to stop him in the hope that he falls short of the majority required, enabling them to put forward another candidate at the July convention in Cleveland to formally pick their candidate for the 8 November election.

That, however, would risk alienating the millions of Americans who back the real estate developer and former reality TV show host.

Ohio Governor John Kasich's victory in his home state left him as the last establishment Republican candidate standing after Rubio, a US senator, pulled out of the race after losing in a Trump landslide in Rubio's home state of Florida.

US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who has sought to fashion himself the lead anti-Trump alternative, was outclassed by

Trump everywhere on Tuesday except Missouri, where he trailed Trump narrowly with nearly all votes counted.

Early yesterday, MSNBC projected Trump and Clinton would win Missouri in very tight races.

Many party leaders are appalled at the billionaire Trump's incendiary rhetoric and believe his policy positions are out of step with core Republican sentiment, such as his vow to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, temporarily ban Muslims from the United States, build a wall along the border with Mexico and impose protectionist trade policies.

But their bid to stop him has come too late as a Republican field that once included Trump and 16 high-profile party figures has dwindled now to only three with Trump, 69, in command ahead of Cruz, 45, and Kasich, 63.

Trump, speaking at his Mar-a-Lago beachfront resort on Florida's Atlantic Ocean coast, called on Republicans to unite behind him and made a point of mentioning that he had spoken to the two top elected Republicans in the United States, House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"The fact is we have to bring our party together," Trump, more restrained than usual, said at an event that was billed as a news conference but where he took no questions.

"We have something happening that actually makes the Republican Party the biggest political story anywhere in the world," he said, referring to what he says are the millions of new voters he has attracted to the Re-

publican Party.

"Democrats are coming in, Independents are coming in, and very, very importantly, people that never voted before. It's an incredible thing," Trump said.

After Tuesday's victories, Trump needs to win about 54 percent of the roughly 1,100 delegates still up for grabs. It's not an insurmountable challenge, especially when factoring in winner-take-all states, like Arizona's 58 delegates and New Jersey's 51 delegates.

The wins for former Secretary of State Clinton, 68, added to her lead in pledged delegates over Senator Sanders, 74, of Vermont, and gave her an almost insurmountable edge, burying the memory of her stunning loss in Michigan last week.

As she had after other primary wins, Clinton was thinking on Tuesday about a possible match-up in the 8 November presidential election with Trump.

"We can't lose what made America great in the first place, and this isn't just about Donald Trump," Clinton told supporters in West Palm Beach, Florida. "We can't just talk about economic inequality, we have to take on all forms of inequality and discrimination." Kasich's win in Ohio, his first in the nominating fight, makes him the candidate of choice for party leaders worried Trump's rowdy campaign will lead Republicans to defeat not only in the presidential race, but in state and US congressional races. Kasich, who has tried to emphasize the positive in a Republican race dominated by the pugnacious Trump, said his campaign was "about holding us together, not pulling us apart." —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kremlin says work with US on Syria crisis causes satisfaction

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said yesterday it was satisfied with the way the United States coordinates with Russia work on securing a peaceful settlement to the Syria crisis.

"The main thing now is to coordinate efforts to promote the process of peaceful settlement in Syria," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a conference call with journalists. "In this case readiness (by the United States) to coordinate these efforts is certainly what causes satisfaction, and the main work of Moscow and Washington is now focused on this." —Reuters

Belgian TV says two suspects held after Brussels shooting

BRUSSELS — Belgian private broadcaster VTM said yesterday that two suspects have been detained after a shooting during a house raid in Brussels linked to investigations into November's Islamist attacks in Paris.

VTM cited no source and the judicial authority could not immediately be available for comment.

Belgian media had reported that police were searching for two suspects who fled when officers killed an unidentified armed person after four police had been wounded on Tuesday during what investigators had expected to be a routine search. —Reuters

Federal system to be announced in Kurdish-controlled northern Syria

BEIRUT — Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Syria are expected to declare a federal system yesterday, a Syrian Kurdish official said.

The announcement would mean "widening the framework of self-administration which the Kurds and others have formed," said Idris Nassan, an official in the foreign affairs directorate of Kobani, one of three autonomous areas set up by Kurdish groups two years ago, speaking to Reuters.

The areas would be named the Federation of northern Syria, he said, and represent all ethnic groups living there. —Reuters

EU must not let Cyprus spoil migrant deal, says Turkish minister

ISTANBUL — The European Union must not allow the "caprice" of Cyprus to spoil a planned migrant deal with Turkey, the Turkish EU minister said yesterday, after Cyprus vowed to block efforts to speed up Ankara's accession talks.

Cyprus said on Tuesday it disagreed with the EU expediting the accession talks — part of a deal in which Ankara has promised to stem the flow of migrants to Europe. Cyprus and Turkey have been at loggerheads since a 1974 Turkish invasion of the island.

"When a step has been taken towards a solution, when agreement has been reached on a package the whole structure should not be allowed to be ruined just because of the ... caprice of one EU member country," Volkan Bozkir, minister for EU affairs, said in a live interview with NTV. —Reuters

Pakistan's top court lifts travel ban on former military ruler Musharraf

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday ordered the government to lift a ban on travel by former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, paving the way for him to leave the country while awaiting trial for treason, among other charges.

The departure of Musharraf, who has faced a battery of court cases since returning home from exile in 2013, would remove a source of friction between the powerful army and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Musharraf, who ousted Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999, ruled Pakistan until 2008, when he stepped down in the face of mass protests. His lawyers have said he is in poor health. —Reuters

Russian warplanes leave Syria, raising UN hopes for peace talks

MOSCOW/BEIRUT/GENEVA — Russian warplanes flew home from Syria on Tuesday as Moscow started to withdraw forces that have tipped the war President Bashar al-Assad's way, and the UN envoy said he hoped the move would help peace talks in Geneva.

As the first aircraft touched down in Russia, UN envoy Stefan de Mistura called President Vladimir Putin's surprise move a "significant development" towards resolving a conflict which this week passes its fifth anniversary.

Assad's opponents hope Putin's announcement on Monday that most Russian forces would be withdrawn signalled a shift in his support. However, its full significance is not yet clear: Russia is keeping an air base and undeclared number of forces in Syria.

Russian jets were in action against Islamic State on Tuesday. Assad also still enjoys military backing from Iran, which has sent forces to Syria along with Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Russia said last month Assad was out of step with its diplomacy, prompting speculation Putin is pushing him to be more flexible at the Geneva talks, where his government has ruled out discussion of the presidency or a negotiated transfer of power.

Damascus has dismissed any talk of differences with its ally and says the planned withdrawal was coordinated and the result of army gains on the ground.

British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, whose government supports the opposition, indicated the gaps in Western understanding of Putin, saying he had "no insight at all into Russia's strategy" after a decision that came out of the blue.

The West had been equally surprised by Putin's decision to intervene. "Unfortunately none of us knows what the intent of Mr Putin is when he carries out any action, which is why he is a very difficult partner in any situation like this,"



Participants attend a ceremony to welcome Russian military jets and pilots upon their arrival from Syria at an airbase in Buturlinovka in Voronezh region, Russia, in this still image taken from video, on 15 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hammond said.

Analysts in Moscow said Putin's acquisition of a seat at the diplomatic top table may have motivated his move to scale back his costly Syria campaign.

Russia appeared to be following through on its pledge, the US White House said, but spokesman Josh Earnest said it was too early to assess the broader implications, adding Moscow did not give the United States direct notice of its withdrawal plan.

US Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed Putin's announcement and said he planned to visit Moscow next week for what he called the best opportunity in years to end the war.

The Geneva talks are part of a diplomatic push launched with US-Russian support to end a conflict that has killed more than 250,000 people, created the world's worst refugee crisis, and allowed for the rise of Islamic State. Opening the indirect talks, de Mistura said Syria faced a "moment of truth".

US-Russian cooperation has

already brought about a lull in the war via a "cessation of hostilities agreement", though many violations have been reported.

Opposition negotiators demanded on Tuesday that the government spell out its thoughts about a political transition in Syria, saying there had been no progress on freeing detainees, who were being executed at a rate of 50 a day.

The opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) used their first meeting in the round of peace talks to give de Mistura a set of general principles to guide the transition.

A peace process for Syria endorsed by the UN Security Council in December calls for a Syrian-led process that establishes "credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance", a new constitution, and free, fair elections within 18 months.

The HNC wants Assad out of power by the start of a transition. While some rebels have expressed guarded optimism at Putin's announcement, others doubt he is about to put serious pressure on

Assad.

"We do not trust them," said Fadi Ahmad of the First Coastal Division, who says his rebel group has been fighting a Russian-backed government offensive near the Turkish border throughout the cessation agreement that came into effect on 27 February.

The Syrian government, which had been losing territory to rebels before Russia intervened, had indicated it was in no mood to give ground to the opposition on the eve of the talks that started on Monday, calling the presidency a "red line".

Russian television showed the first group of Su-34 jets landing from Syria at a base in the south of the country.

The pilots were greeted by 200-300 servicemen, journalists, and their wives and daughters, waving Russian flags, balloons in red white and blue, and flowers. They were mobbed and thrown in the air by the crowd. A brass band played Soviet military songs and the national anthem. Two priests paraded a religious icon.

Russia flew more than 9,000 sorties during the Syrian operation, according to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. Military officials say they destroyed arms dumps, weapons and fuel supplies being used by what they called terrorists.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which reports on the war using sources on the ground, says Russian air strikes have killed more than 1,700 civilians. Moscow denies that.

Showing Russian warplanes were still active in Syria, heavy air support was reported helping the Syrian army make major gains against Islamic State near the ancient city of Palmyra. IS is not included in the cessation of hostilities.

At least 26 people were killed east of the Islamic State-held city on Tuesday, the British-based Observatory reported.

Putin said Russia had largely fulfilled its objectives in a campaign which has so far cost Russia \$700-\$800 million according to a Reuters estimate, an additional financial burden at a time of low oil prices.

Russia, which has haunting memories of the long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, said it would be keeping its most advanced air defence system, the S-400, in Syria.

A Western diplomat said Putin would "now move to focus on the peace talks and this will put pressure on the Syrian government to negotiate". The diplomat added: "We don't know if he is giving up on Assad but we know that the Russians are delivering a message to Assad that they are keen on negotiations over transition to proceed."

Moscow has said it is up to the Syrian people, not outside powers, to decide Assad's future. Even Assad's enemies in the West have moved away from demanding he leave power immediately.—Reuters

Aid reaches 13,000 families in Syria's Aleppo Province —Red Cross

BEIRUT — Fresh humanitarian aid reached some 13,000 families in northern Aleppo Province as a convoy of 26 trucks entered areas hit by recent fighting, the Red Cross said yesterday.

The delivery by the Syrian Red Crescent to towns including Azaz, Afrin and Tal Rifaat was the largest in the area for weeks, Red Cross spokesman Pawel Krzysiek said. Clinics had been resupplied in the meantime, he said.

A fragile cessation of hostilities agreement has reduced violence in western Syria but has not halted fighting.—Reuters

Iraq preparing to push Islamic State away from oil region — report

BAGHDAD — Kurdish Peshmerga forces, an Iran-backed Shi'ite militia and Iraq's army will launch an offensive soon to push Islamic State fighters away from the northern oil region of Kirkuk, a state newspaper reported yesterday.

The operation would bring

the combined forces closer to Mosul, the largest Iraqi city still held by Islamic State, which also controls parts of neighbouring Syria.

The commander of the Shi'ite Badr Organisation, Hadi al-Amiri, met the Kurdish Regional Government's interior minister, Karim Sinjari, and officials from

Iraq's defence ministry in Kirkuk on Tuesday, *al-Sabah* newspaper said. They agreed plans to take back territory stretching from Kirkuk and Baiji, to al-Shirqat, it said.

The oil city of Kirkuk is under Peshmerga control while Baiji, which has an oil refinery, is

held by the Badr Organisation, the largest component of the Shi'ite Popular Mobilisation Forces coalition that assembled in 2014 to fight Islamic State.

Al-Shirqat is about 100 km (60 miles) south of Mosul, 100 km west of Kirkuk and 60 km north of Baiji.—Reuters

Turkish police detain 20 in Istanbul raids targeting PKK: Anadolu

ISTANBUL — Turkish police detained 20 suspects, including lawyers, in an operation involving raids across Istanbul targeting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, the state-run Anadolu Agency said yesterday.

The raids came as fight-

ing between security forces and PKK militants spread to new areas in southeast Turkey, with tanks, helicopters and armored cars deployed after a suicide bombing that killed 37 people in the capital, Ankara.

The agency said the anti-terror police raids, backed by hel-

icopter, were carried out simultaneously at 32 spots across the city and those detained included lawyers of an unspecified association.

The suspects were taken to the main Istanbul police station after routine health checks, Anadolu said, adding that further

suspects were detained in operations in eight other provinces.

No group has claimed responsibility for the car bomb that tore through a crowded transport hub in Ankara on Sunday, but the interior ministry said it was carried out by a woman PKK member.—Reuters

Led by China, Mekong nations take on Golden Triangle narco-empire

THE MEKONG RIVER — The Lao People's Army patrol boat was custom-made in China with night-vision capability and two of the most powerful engines on this remote stretch of the Mekong River.

Today, like most days, it sits idle for lack of gasoline, guarded by a single Laotian soldier in flip-flops. Even occasional patrols by boats like these, supplied by China to the Laotian army and Myanmar police, have successfully subdued the pirates who once robbed the Mekong's cargo ships with impunity since Chinese-led joint patrols began in 2011.

But there has been little progress on another objective — stemming the flood of illicit drugs — exposing the limits of China's hard power in mainland Southeast Asia even as Beijing accelerates its militarisation of disputed islands in the South China Sea.

While attacks on Mekong shipping have tailed off, drug production and trafficking in the untamed region, known as the Golden Triangle, is booming — despite the presence of Chinese gunboats and units of Chinese armed police along the Mekong. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that Southeast Asia's trade in heroin and methamphetamine

was worth \$31 billion in 2013.

"That's bigger than the economies of some Southeast Asian countries," says Jeremy Douglas, the UNODC's Asia-Pacific chief. "It's like having an undeclared sovereign state in your midst with no borders and lots of money."

Enter another Mekong boat, looking at first glance like a pleasure cruiser filled with middle-aged tourists. In fact, they are senior police and drugs experts from four countries, among them one of China's top anti-narcotics officials, Wei Xiaojun.

Arranged by the UNODC and lent further clout by Wei's involvement, their recent voyage down the Mekong was aimed at mustering the regional collaboration needed to tame the Golden Triangle. Reuters was invited to join the four-day trip from the Chinese port of Jinghong through the heart of the Golden Triangle.

Wei, who is deputy secretary general of China's National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), called drugs the "main threat" along the Mekong.

"All other types of organised crime are rooted in the drug business, like human trafficking, money laundering and the illegal wildlife trade," he said.

China is a favourite destination for Myanmar's drugs, which

are flowing through Asia in unprecedented quantities.

More than 250 million methamphetamine pills, better known by their Thai name "ya ba" or "crazy medicine", were seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2013, an eight-fold increase from 2008.

Seizures of "crystal meth" or "ice" — a potent, crystalline form of methamphetamine dubbed "the poor man's cocaine" — doubled during the same period.

In 2015, China seized a record 36.5 tons of methamphetamine, said the UNODC, with most of the drug in pill form coming from Myanmar. Myanmar is the world's second largest producer of opium, the bulk of which ends up in China as heroin.

A recent report from the NNCC raised concerns about the involvement of some Chinese military personnel in drug trafficking, and said the number of registered drug users in China rose to more than 2.3 million in 2015.

Increasingly Myanmar too has a drug problem, with police last year making record-breaking busts of both ya ba and ice.

This could severely test the new government of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy party has yet to formulate drug policies, say experts. —Reuters

Denmark world's happiest country, Burundi least

ROME — Denmark overtook Switzerland as the world's happiest place, according to a report yesterday that urged nations regardless of wealth to tackle inequality and protect the environment.

The report, prepared by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Earth Institute at Columbia University, showed Syria, Afghanistan and eight sub-Saharan countries as the 10 least happy places on earth to live.

The top 10 this year were Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden. Denmark was in third place last year, behind Switzerland and Iceland. The bottom 10 were Madagascar, Tanzania, Liberia, Guinea, Rwanda, Benin, Afghanistan, Togo, Syria and Burundi.

The United States came in at 13, the United Kingdom at 23, France at 32, and Italy at 50.

"There is a very strong message for my country, the United States, which is very rich, has gotten a lot richer over the last 50 years, but has gotten no happier," said Professor Jeffrey Sachs, head of the SDSN and special advisor to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. While the differences between countries where people are happy and those where they are

not could be scientifically measured, "we can understand why and do something about it," Sachs, one of the report's authors, told Reuters in an interview in Rome.

"The message for the United States is clear. For a society that just chases money, we are chasing the wrong things. Our social fabric is deteriorating, social trust is deteriorating, faith in government is deteriorating," he said.

Aiming to "survey the scientific underpinnings of measuring and understanding subjective well-being," the report, now in its fourth edition, ranks 157 countries by happiness levels using factors such as per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and healthy years of life expectancy.

It also rates "having someone to count on in times of trouble" and freedom from corruption in government and business.

"When countries single-mindedly pursue individual objectives, such as economic development to the neglect of social and environmental objectives, the results can be highly adverse for human wellbeing, even dangerous for survival," it said. "Many countries in recent years have achieved economic growth at the cost of sharply rising inequality, entrenched social exclusion, and grave damage to the natural environment." —Reuters

Commuter chaos seen for Washington DC as safety inspection shuts subway

WASHINGTON — The second-biggest US subway system, which serves Washington DC, will close for 29 hours at midnight EDT (0400 GMT) on Tuesday for emergency safety checks, leaving hundreds of thousands of government workers, tourists and business travelers struggling to get around town.

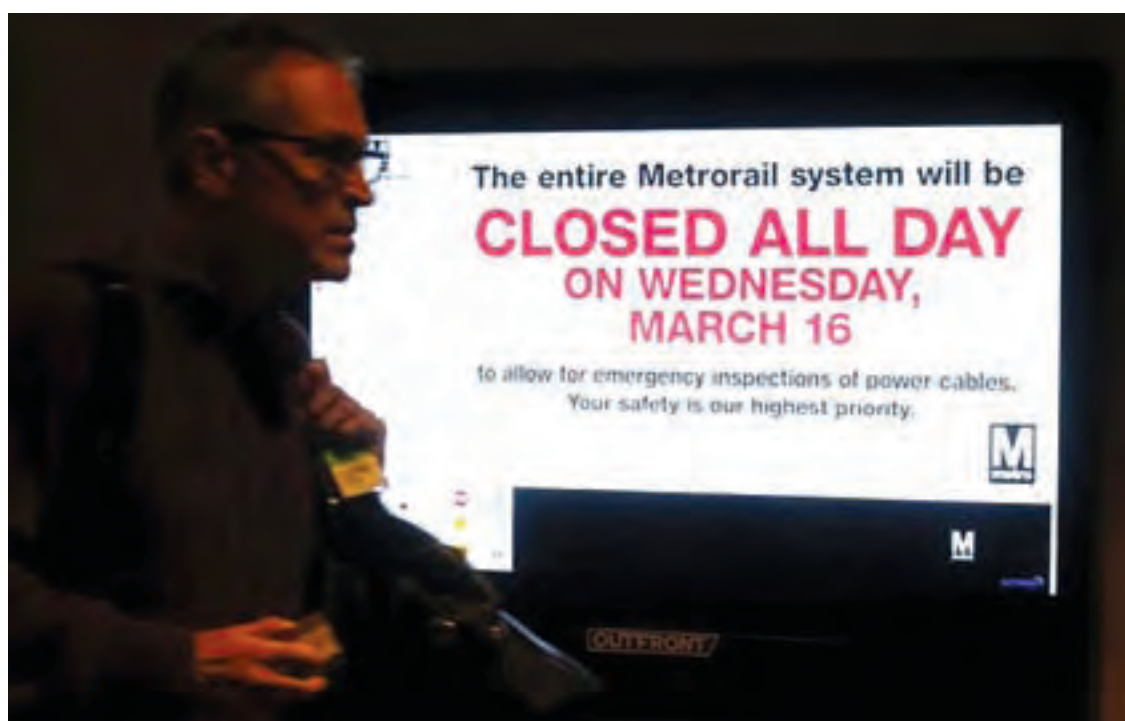
Transit officials in the nation's capital announced the unprecedented closure of the Washington DC-area Metro subway system so it could inspect 600 underground cables after a cable fire this week caused delays. The subway will reopen at 5 am EDT (0900 GMT) on Thursday.

The Office of Personnel Management, which oversees the federal workforce, said government offices would remain open but federal workers could take unscheduled leave or work from home. Congress will be open.

Ed Etzkorn, a 43-year-old federal employee, said he had no idea how he and his wife, also a government worker, would get to work.

"We're going to have to figure that out tonight," he said. "It's awkward for those of us who have to commute, but I understand they need to do what they need to do for our safety."

About 700,000 people ride



A rider walks down into the Metro subway system during the evening rush hour in Washington, on 15 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Metro on average every week day including about a third of the region's federal workforce.

The area has some of the worst traffic in the United States, and local radio station WTOP predicted the subway closure would cause "major mayhem" on the roads.

Meissa Toure, who rides Metro twice a week, said yesterday

would find him behind the wheel of a car. "I'll definitely be driving tomorrow. It's going to be a mess tomorrow. I plan to leave about 30 minutes early."

Buses will run normally yesterday, and parking will be free in Metro-owned lots and garages, the transit agency said.

Metro riders said they welcomed the shutdown as an indica-

tion that Metro was getting serious about safety even though it would snarl their commutes.

"We don't have any way to commute. I live way out, so the subway is the only way to get in," said Regina Smith, 50, a federal worker from Quantico, Virginia. She hoped she could telecommute.

Tourist Holly Morris, 57, a teacher from Shorewood, Wisconsin,

in town with her family, said she had not heard about the shutdown. "That's difficult for us to get around in an economic fashion. We'll have to use taxis, buses, but we don't have bus cards, so that's stressful."

San Francisco-based ridesharing company Lyft said it was expecting high demand and offered new customers \$20 off their first ride. Uber [UBER.UL] said it would cap surge pricing in the Washington area at 3.9 times base fares during the shutdown. It said it was expanding uberPool coverage across Washington, Maryland and the Virginia metro area.

The closure of the 119-mile (230-km) subway system, which has been plagued by equipment breakdowns and fires, will allow safety officials to inspect the cables for worn-out casings, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority General Manager Paul Wiedefeld said at a news conference.

"While the risk to the public is very low, I cannot rule out a potential life safety issue, and this is why we must take this action immediately," he said.

Wiedefeld said the shutdown was prompted by a cable fire on Monday that caused delays on three of the system's six lines. —Reuters

Argentina coast guard sinks Chinese trawler fishing illegally

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina's coast guard has sunk a Chinese trawler that was fishing illegally within its territorial waters, the coast guard said on Tuesday, marking a first test for relations between President Mauricio Macri and Beijing.

A coast guard vessel pursued the fishing vessel Lu Yan Yuan Yu 010 toward international waters in a high-seas chase on Monday, firing warning shots across the Chinese boat's bow as it attempted to raise the crew by radio.

"On several occasions, the offending ship performed maneuvers designed to force a collision with the coast guard, putting at risk not only its own crew but coast guard personnel, who were then ordered to shoot parts of the vessel," the coast guard said in a statement.

It was not clear if the vessel sank on Monday or Tuesday. The crew abandoned ship when the vessel began to go down.

Four crewmen were rescued by the coast guard while others were picked up by another Chinese vessel shadowing the pursuit.

China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement the Chinese government had lodged a protest over the incident and were demanding an explanation.

"The Foreign Ministry

and Chinese embassy in Argentina have already lodged emergency representations with the Argentinian side and expressed serious concern about the incident, demanding Argentina launch an immediate probe and report on the details to China," it said.

China is also asking Argentina to ensure the safety and legal rights of Chinese fishermen and take steps to ensure such incidents do not happen again, the statement said.

Macri's centre-right government, which took office in December, will likely be keen to avoid a diplomatic ruckus with the Asian powerhouse which has gained a strong foothold in South America, traditionally the United States' back yard.

Relations between Argentina and China tightened under former leftist leader Cristina Fernandez. Macri promised during last year's presidential race to review all new contracts with China but has shown no sign of doing so. Among those deals were an agreement to finance and build two nuclear power plants in Argentina in a deal worth up to \$15 billion.

A spokesman for Argentina's foreign ministry said the judiciary was investigating the incident.—*Reuters*

Ehime high schools to require notice of political involvement

MATSUYAMA — All 59 prefectural high schools in a western Japan prefecture have decided to oblige students to inform teachers in advance of their involvement in political activities outside school, the local education board said yesterday.

The move by the schools in Ehime Prefecture to amend their rules so as to introduce the requirement from the next academic year starting in April comes before Japan lowers its voting age from 20 to 18 on 19 June.

Experts warned that the system goes against efforts to encourage young people to participate in politics and possibly infringes on students' right to freedom of thought, while teachers said the move is aimed at protecting students' safety.

Japan's parliament en-

acted legislation last June to lower the voting age and the House of Councilors election this summer is expected to be the first ballot held under the new legislation. There will likely be about 2.4 million new voters, including high school students.

Given the voting age cut, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology informed the nation's prefectural education boards in October of its policy to allow high school students to engage in political activities and election campaigns outside schools.

Against this backdrop, the Ehime prefectural education board held a meeting of vice principals of prefectural high schools in December. At this meeting, it distributed handouts with examples of how school rules could be changed to

ban any political activities on school premises and oblige students to give a week's notice when they participate in such activities off campus.

An official of the board said it did not instruct schools to change their rules and left the decision up to them, adding that the handouts were for reference only. But the board asked the schools to report back if they implemented such changes.

In January, the education ministry announced that schools would be able to have a pre-notification system if they wished.

The principal of Uchiko High School in Ehime said that the school decided to change its bylaws to include the pre-notification system "to prevent students from getting involved in hate speech acts or any other violent activi-

ties." The decision was made after considering the matter with teachers and the education board did not request the school to do so, he added.

Shigeki Mori said, "The school will give guidance to students if it finds the activities to be undesirable, but respects their wish to participate."

Tomoaki Iwai, a professor of politics at Nihon University, said that school authorities' concern over possible violent acts students may get involved in is understandable, but such a system could discourage students from engaging in political activities.

"First of all, it is important to give students a thorough education as sovereign members of society so that they will be able to make their own decisions on various things," Iwai said.—*Kyodo News*

New Zealand navy resupplies Fiji's cyclone-battered outer islands

WELLINGTON — The New Zealand navy is to deliver a second shipload of emergency supplies to the cyclone-battered northern islands of Fiji, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) said yesterday.

The multi-role vessel HMNZS Canterbury had returned to Suva to load

more emergency supplies for Fiji's northern outer islands, Commander Simon Rooke said in a statement.

Fifteen tonnes of construction materials and 9 tonnes of food were loaded for distribution in the northern Lau archipelago, while 15 staff from Fiji government agencies also embarked.

"Returning to Suva has enabled us to pick up more supplies for villages on Vanuabalavu Island, including materials for the rebuilding that is underway there, as well as work that will begin on Yacata Island," Rooke said.

Commanding Officer of the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Task Unit, Major Chris Wilson said eight combat engineers from the NZDF and three from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces formed part of a 16-person reconstruction team that would be based at Yacata from Thursday to support rebuilding on the island over the next 10 days.—*Xinhua*

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Trees planted in recycled buoys are seen in the harbor of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 15 March 2016. Twenty trees floating in water are expected to form a "bobbing forest", an art installation to make people aware of the climate change in Rotterdam. PHOTO: XINHUA

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 23rd MARCH 2016 (Full Moon of Tabaung) and 27th MARCH 2016 (Armed Forces DAY), loading, unloading and delivery for goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (SCY1013)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BEHSHAD VOY NO (SCY1013) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.3.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S LAND & SEA LOGISTICS

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Madonna says was playing character, not drunk, in Australia show

LONDON — Madonna on Tuesday hit back at claims that she was drunk on stage in Australia last week, saying she was merely playing a character during a performance in which she dressed as a clown and fell off a tricycle.

In an Instagram posting, the 57-year-old pop star thanked fans for supporting her after media reports and video clips posted by audience members showed her behaving erratically at shows in Melbourne on 10 and 12 March.

The much-talked-about performances came in the midst of a custody battle between Madonna and her ex-husband, British film director Guy Ritchie, over their 15-year-old son Rocco.

"Too bad people don't know the art of acting and playing a character. I could never do any of my shows high or drunk," Madonna wrote on Instagram.

"Underlying all of this is

sexism and mysogony which proves that not only do we not get equal pay but we are still treated like heretics if we step out of line and think outside the box!" she added.

Last week Madonna donned a pink wig, top hat, striped stockings and a short yellow dress to perform a special "Tears of a Clown" concert in Melbourne, outside of her current "Rebel Heart" world tour. She later posted a photo of herself drinking what her representatives said was one Cosmo cocktail — usually made with vodka and cranberry juice — on stage.

Video clips posted by some audience members showed her at times to be stumbling and speaking erratically during the show — a contrast to her usual highly choreographed tours. Two days later, her behavior again caused a stir at another Melbourne concert.—*Reuters*



PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: REUTERS

'Hometown Glory' for Adele as debuts tour in London

LONDON — Adele made a triumphant London debut to her music tour on Tuesday, kicking off a series of concerts in the British capital that saw one couple get engaged during the singer's performance.

Talking about makeup, burps, pimples and taking selfies with the audience, the singer-songwriter won over thousands of fans at London's O2 arena with her stage chat as she belted out her chart-topping hits.

The 27-year-old opened the show with "Hello" — the single that marked her successful return to the music scene late last year following her 2011 album "21".

In a simple production that saw the London-born singer

perform just alongside her musicians, Adele sang her popular singles including James Bond theme tune "Skyfall" as well as chart-toppers "Someone like You" and "Rolling In The Deep".

"Hometown Glory" sang against a black and white video of the British capital's main sites won rave applause from the London crowd.

"To finally be here is amazing," Adele said during the concert where she invited fans of all ages on stage.

When one couple got engaged during her performance of "Make You Feel My Love", they too were invited to stand beside the award-winning song-

stress, who told the audience of the proposal: "(It's) one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed at one of my shows".

Adele began her sell-out "Adele Live" tour on 29 February in Belfast and will go on to perform around Europe before heading to the United States.

She sang a mix of hits from her albums "19", "21" and "25", which has topped charts worldwide since its November release.

"I love the fact that she swears. She's funny, she tells stories. She's just a laugh," fan Jordan Potts said.

"You know it's a massive show ... but it's so intimate as well. She really connects with the audience."—*Reuters*

Harrison Ford returns for 5th 'Indiana Jones' movie

LOS ANGELES — Harrison Ford and director Steven Spielberg are teaming up to make a fifth "Indiana Jones" action-adventure movie, due for release in July 2019, Walt Disney Co said Tuesday.

Ford, 73, will reprise his role as the Fedora-clad archaeologist and adventurer who first appeared in 1981's "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

"Indiana Jones is one of the greatest heroes in cinematic history and we can't wait to bring him back to the screen in 2019," Disney chairman Alan Horn said in a statement.

The as yet untitled film will come 11 years after the last installment, "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," in which Ford's Jones reunited with his former love Marion (Karen Allen) and discovered he had a grown son, Mutt Williams (Shia LaBeouf). The film received mixed reviews.

Disney did not say whether Allen and LaBeouf would return

and did not reveal plot details. Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall will produce the film. Spielberg, 69, has directed all the "Indiana Jones" films.

Tuesday's announcement follows the success of Disney's "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," the third highest-grossing film worldwide of all time, in which Ford reprised his action star role and regained his box office appeal as space smuggler Han Solo who was first seen in 1977.

The "Indiana Jones" franchise, created by filmmaker George Lucas, has grossed nearly \$2 billion at the global box office with four films and amassed a global fan base.

The announcement quickly became a top ten trending topic on Twitter, but reaction was mixed. Many made fun of Ford's age, offering tongue-in-cheek suggestions for the film's title, such as "Indiana Jones and the Alzheimers," and "Indiana Jones and 'Hey You Kids, Get Off My



US director Steven Spielberg & Harrison Ford. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lawn!"

The new film is the first "Indiana Jones" movie that Disney will make after it bought the distribution rights for the franchise from Viacom Inc's Paramount Pictures in 2013.

Disney also acquired Lucas' LucasFilm, the production company behind "Indiana Jones" and "Star Wars" films, in 2012.—*Reuters*

Life of Pi screened to promote Brain Sciences among kids

JERUSALEM — Irrfan Khan and Tabu-starrer Life of Pi has been screened here that will help promote awareness about brain sciences among youngsters in Israel.

Screened as a part of a unique project, Art and Brain Week, launched by the Edmond and Lily Safra Centre for Brain Sciences (ELSC) at the Hebrew University and Jerusalem Cinematheque, the award-winning film helped students understand how the brain collates a stream of electro-chemical signals and distinctly two different images sent by two human eyes to present a single image.

A doctoral student, Adi Kol, of the ELSC centre in an interesting interactive presentation on "Depth Perception" in imagery prepared the young minds to understand how the brain analyses information sent by sensory organs and how the knowledge has

helped enrich artistic creativity.

Explaining the purpose of this unique initiative, the Executive Director of ELSC, Rafi Aviram said that it was an effort of the centre to connect to the masses and specially to promote awareness about research in the field of brain sciences among youngsters who may at a later stage choose the discipline for higher studies.

The purpose of the Brain Awareness Week "is to raise public awareness to the importance of brain research and present research advances in the field", Aviram said.

"ELSC's 'Art and Brain Week' promotes this goal while strengthening the relationship between community and academia", he added.

Besides the educational part, the film also had many in the audience admiring the beautiful images of Pondicherry.—*PTI*

Syrian refugee chickpeas bloom in Lebanon

BEKAA VALLEY (Lebanon) — In a humid plastic tent in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, a Syrian scientist handles the leaves of the chickpeas, lentils and wheat that may one day help fill neighbouring Syria's post-war kitchen tables.

Fawzi Souied is part of a team trying to safeguard the future of Syrian and global agriculture by recreating a seed collection stored in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo which is at risk of being destroyed by the war entering its sixth year.

Fighting has cut the road to the research centre 30 km (about 20 miles) outside Aleppo and, because of frequent power cuts, scientists can no longer guarantee the safety of the deep-frozen 150,000 seeds, which contain part of the genetic history and future of the world's food crops.

"There is treasure in Aleppo," said Souied, research assistant at Lebanon's branch of the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).



A specialist from ICARDA, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, inspects wheat inside a Syrian seed nursery in Tirbol village, Bekaa valley, Lebanon on 10 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"There is nothing in the world like it in terms of the varieties, the seeds and the work carried out there."

Keeping copies of wild and domesticated varieties of staple crops like wheat, barley and fava beans is important for global food security. Scientists use their various characteristics to breed new varieties resistant to disease, insects or dry conditions.

Aleppo's dry environment was perfect for research into how to feed growing populations in arid regions.

Wheat varieties developed by ICARDA helped water-poor Syria become self-sufficient in wheat in the mid-nineties, said Hassan Machlab, ICARDA country manager for Lebanon.

The ICARDA team in Lebanon has managed to rescue some unique seeds from Aleppo, borrow some 14,000 seeds so far from partner research organisations around the world, and tap a 'doomsday' underground seed vault in Norway's Svalbard islands near the North Pole for

around 8,000 seed types.

This was the first withdrawal made from the Svalbard vault which was designed to protect crop seeds from nuclear events, natural disasters and war.

"A while ago we decided we were now in an emergency situation," said Machlab. "In the past few months, because of the intensification of fighting around Aleppo, we haven't been able to reach the centre and see how the seeds are."

The Syrian conflict, which has killed at least 250,000 and displaced around 11 million, forced ICARDA to move its headquarters in 2012 from Aleppo to Lebanon's fertile Bekaa valley, seven kilometres from the Syrian border.

Staff were still able to enter the centre to maintain the freezers' electricity supply, but late last year Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, supported by Russian air strikes, stepped up offensives around Aleppo and the seed bank became inaccessible.—Reuters

Sony to buy Michael Jackson's stake in Sony/ATV

TOKYO — Sony Corp. said Tuesday it has agreed to buy Michael Jackson's stake to wholly own the world's biggest music publisher that the electronics and entertainment giant set up with the late pop star.

Sony will purchase a 50 per cent share in Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC from his estate for

\$750 million.

The New York-based joint venture was formed in 1995, managing the song catalogues of internationally renowned artists like The Beatles. Sony expects to conclude the deal by the end of the month when the Japanese firm will close its books for fiscal 2015.—Kyodo News

Largest blue diamond to appear at auction

LONDON — The largest oval fancy vivid diamond ever to appear at auction is headed for sale in Hong Kong next month, where it is expected to fetch \$30 million - \$35 million.

The internally flawless blue diamond, at 10.10 carats, was mined in South Africa and is one of a collection of 11 cut by jewelers De Beers in London in 2000.

"Blue diamonds are extremely rare and when

they are over 10 carats and flawless, they are quite special," Quek Chin Yeow, Sotheby's auction house Deputy Chairman for Asia said at a press event in London.

"It's also the largest oval vivid blue diamond to ever be offered at auction."

The blue diamond will lead a 5 April Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong after being exhibited in London, Geneva, New York, Singapore and Taipei.—Reuters

Bangkok slaps curfew on world's biggest water fight amid drought

BANGKOK — The Thai capital will impose a curfew during Thailand's annual water festival next month to show solidarity with farmers hit by drought, city officials said on Tuesday.

Thailand is facing its worst water shortage in two decades, with 14 out of 76 provinces hit and large swathes of agricultural land at risk.

Thailand has entered its annual dry season, which typically runs from March to May, meaning the drought

is likely to get worse. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's solution? Be a wet blanket by cutting festival days down from four to three and imposing a curfew.

"This is partly symbolic, but we hope to save water too because our lakes have become deserts," said deputy Bangkok governor Amorn Kijchawengjul. "We don't want city folk splashing water around carelessly while farmers struggle."

The Songkran festival,

which marks Thai New Year, is often referred to as the world's biggest water fight — a time when revellers splashing water on

each other and everyone, young and old, is fair game. A major tourist attraction, Bangkok's water parties typically run late into the

night. But this year all splashing will have to stop at 9 pm sharp. "We'll just shut down the party," said Amorn.—Reuters



A motorcyclist dodges in the annual water-splashing festival to mark the New Year of the Dai minority in Menglian, Yunnan Province on 13 April 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Newborn seal draws visitors at Japanese aquarium

KAMOGAWA (Japan) — A newborn baby seal has won over a legion of fans, wriggling its way to the hearts of visitors at an aquarium in Japan.

Born on 21 February, the seal is the second ringed seal to be bred at Kamogawa Sea World. It is currently with its mother in a special exhibit area. "I wish I could just keep on watching it here for a long time," teacher Yuka Matsuoka, 38, said during a visit to the aquarium.—Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(17-3-2016 07:00am ~ 18-3-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	SHWE SETTAW (Minbu)
07:44	Am	The Art of Making Glaze Ware
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Kayin Child Boxer
08:37	Am	A May Yay Yin Nat Festival (Ep- 1)
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	"Myanmar's Traditions and Culture" Myanmar Pottery
09:48	Am	A Photographer's Life at Shwedagon Pagoda
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	A Worth Studying Site For Ancient Myanmar Heritages

10:44 Am History Of Mrauk U Pagoda

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Wednesday 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
07:27	Pm	Travelogue "Chaung Tha at its peak period"
07:41	Pm	Myanmar Weaving
07:53	Pm	A Girl Guide
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
08:45	Pm	A Simple And Peaceful Life

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

(17-3-2016, Thursday)

6:00 pm
• Weather Report
• Music Programme
6:30 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti
6:50 pm
• Music Programme
7:00 pm
• Korea TV Drama Series
7:40 pm
• Korea TV Drama Series
8:30 pm
• Cartoon Programme "BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE (Part- XIII)"

8:50 pm
• Music Programme
9:10 pm
• Pa Khan Traditional Nat Festival In Ku Ni Village (Part -2)
9:30 pm
• English Premier League Review (Part-2)
10:00 pm
• Myanmar Video
12:00 noon
• Close Down

From 17-3-2016 (Thursday) 6:00 Pm
To 18-3-2016(Friday) 6:00 Pm

Manchester City ignore injuries to secure Champions League first

MANCHESTER — Celebration was tinged with disappointment for Manchester City who eased into the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time on Tuesday but lost Vincent Kompany to injury in a 0-0 draw with Dynamo Kiev.

Captain Kompany limped off after five minutes with a muscle problem and fellow defender Nicolas Otamendi followed soon after as the hosts chalked up a 3-1 aggregate triumph that was entirely due to their first-leg victory.

There was little in terms of goalmouth action throughout the return leg at the Etihad Stadium, with City keeping a largely lifeless Kiev in check and having the game's best chance when Jesus Navas hit the post midway through the second half.

Manuel Pellegrini's team, who were knocked out in the last 16 by Barcelona in each of the last two seasons and face local rivals Manchester United in a domestic derby on Sunday, only looked like conceding at the end when keeper Joe Hart saved well from Vitaliy Buyalskiy and Olexandr Yakovenko.

"It is a very important achievement for the club," Pel-

legrini told BT Sport. "This is a club that is growing and will continue to develop."

City, whose Premier League title hopes were dented with a 0-0 draw at Norwich City on Saturday, suffered a further blow when Kompany was forced off with a calf problem.

Their injury woes were compounded when Otamendi was also substituted with barely 20 minutes on the clock in what was a soporific start to the encounter.

Kompany had only returned from a calf problem in February, having been out since December, and Pellegrini said he had suffered a recurrence of what has become a persistent issue for the Belgium international.

With City under no pressure to attack having secured a comfortable first-leg advantage, and Kiev seemingly impotent up front, the first half was played like a testimonial.

It took 58 minutes for the home side to make any sort of incision into the Kiev defence as Yaya Toure exchanged quick passes with Sergio Aguero before the Argentine striker flashed his shot wide from a tight angle.

Navas then crashed an ef-



PHOTO: REUTERS

fort against the foot of the post three minutes later as the game showed signs of life while Toure fired straight at Kiev keeper Olexandr Shovkovskiy with 20 minutes to play.

Hart was forced into action in the final few moments with good blocks to deny Buyalskiy and Yakovenko on an otherwise easy night for the City keeper. "We lost this game in Kiev,"

said Dynamo coach Sergei Rebrov. "But I say thank you very much to the players."

"City have big players with big experience but it is not easy now. I wish them well."—Reuters

Aung La N Sang is ready for his homecoming at ONE: UNION OF WARRIORS in Myanmar

Aung La N Sang, an 11-year veteran of the sport of mixed martial arts, will compete in his biggest match to date on 18 March when he headlines ONE: UNION OF WARRIORS in his home country of Myanmar against Mohamed Ali. He left the country in 2003, and has been living in the United States ever since.

The fact that the card takes place inside the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, holds special significance to him. "I lived in a housing district that was about two blocks away," he said. "Never in a million years did I think I would compete in that stadium."

He added: "Walking into the Thuwanna stadium in front of my people is going to be an amazing feeling. I can just imagine all the loud cheering. It's going to be the best feeling, and I'm going to use that to my advantage. All my family that's still in Myanmar will be there. All my high school friends and all my schoolmates. It's going to be pretty crazy."

Aung La N Sang began his



Aung La N Sang stands victorious after his TKO win over Mahmoud Salama at ONE: ERA OF CHAMPIONS in Jakarta. PHOTO: REUTERS

MMA journey in 2005, winning five of his first six fights. All of those were via finish, something all 16 of his career wins share in common. His resume includes fights with notable names such as UFC standouts Uriah Hall and Costas Philippou, along with a victory four years ago inside the Bellator MMA cage.

It will have been just short of two years since we last saw Aung

La N Sang (16-9) in action when he knocked out Mahmoud Salama at ONE: ERA OF CHAMPIONS in the first round. But that does not mean he has been sitting on the sidelines while waiting to resolve the visa issues that kept him from competing in ONE's Myanmar event in 2015.

"I'm at work from 6:30am in the morning to 11pm at night. But it doesn't feel like work to me. It's

not a grind if you love it. Martial arts is something that I love and I'm very passionate about," he says. There's a saying that goes 'choose a job that you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life.' I followed that saying my whole life."

With such a huge opportunity in front of him, Aung La N Sang isn't going to take any chances, and will be going in with full confidence against a dangerous opponent. He knows he has a tendency to rush things and get into trouble, but he promises that will not happen this Friday in Yangon.

"This fight is going to be the fight of the night, because I'm going to put all my heart into it and it's going to end in a finish," he said. "The perfect ending? I set back for his overhand and counter with a straight cross and he's on the floor." "It means a lot to be back in Myanmar and fighting in front of my home people. It means that this last decade of work is going to finally come to show everyone what I've been working on. It's going to be beautiful."—Reuters

Atletico win thrilling shootout to reach quarters

MADRID — Atletico Madrid celebrated like they had won the trophy after reaching the Champions League quarter-finals by edging past PSV Eindhoven 8-7 on penalties on Tuesday following 210 goalless minutes in their last-16 tie.

Juanfran converted the winning spotkick at the Vicente Calderon Stadium, before ripping off his shirt and charging to celebrate wildly with the home fans after the two sides became the first to end a Champions League knockout match 0-0 on aggregate.

It took 16 kicks to finally produce a winner with Luciano Narsingh hitting the crossbar with PSV's eighth effort before Juanfran coolly delivered for his side. Atletico are into the last eight for third successive year, having also needed penalties to beat Bayer Leverkusen last season.—Reuters