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Experts and media personnel attend the two-day conference on the Broadcasting Law. PHOTO: MNA

FUTURE OF MEDIA

Discussions focus on structure of broadcasting law

A CONFERENCE on the Broadcasting Law took place at Park Royal Hotel in Yangon from 19 to 20 March, with participants discussing such topics as production, criteria for public broadcasting services and the management of broadcasting services.

Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut expressed his view that ministries of information and communications should be combined in the future.

He also expressed disapproval of proposed ideas to abolish the cross-ownership and to blend community radio with public service.

"I do not agree because such ideas are contrary to internationally accepted norms", said the Union minister, calling for fair competition in the media sector.

The incumbent government has carried out some media reform by abolishing media censorship and allowing private dailies to publish, press organisations to form, and foreign correspondents to cover news by being based in Myanmar.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw passed the Broadcasting Law in August last year.

Daw Khin Ma Win of the ABC News Agency welcomed the proposed shift from state-owned media to the public service broadcasting, stressing the government's role in developing frameworks.

After the conference, the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) organised a debate on the structure of the broadcasting law. DVB's deputy news director U Khin Maung Win, former director U Aung Than Soe of the Office of the Union Attorney-General, columnist U Sithu Aung Myint and general manager U Than Htwe Zaw of Cherry FM led the discussions during the debate.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt/Myat Sandy Thin Zaw*

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President-elect to submit cabinet nominations to parliament on 24 March

Thein Ko Lwin

THE nominations of cabinet members in the next government will be proposed to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 24 March.

U Win Htein, CEC member of the National League for Democracy, confirmed the schedule at a meeting with reporters yesterday after the meeting of central executive committee members of the party.

Meanwhile, Dr Zaw Myint Maung, the spokesperson of the NLD, told that the party has finalised the process of picking up persons for the posts of union ministers in the cabinet and chief ministers of regions and states.

Some members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party are expected to be appointed as ministers for the sake of national reconciliation, said U Win Htein.

The number of ministers and deputy ministers will reach between 30 and 40, he added.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will hear clarifications on proposal by president-elect U Htin Kyaw and will make a decision on it today.

The president-elect submitted a proposal for the formation of the next government with 21 ministries and 18 ministers. —*GNLM*

Shwesaryan pagoda festival to start on 23 March

Aung Thant Khaing

THE historic Shwesaryan Pagoda will be held for seven days starting from 23 March in Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region. The pagoda is located on the riverside of Dutthavadi.

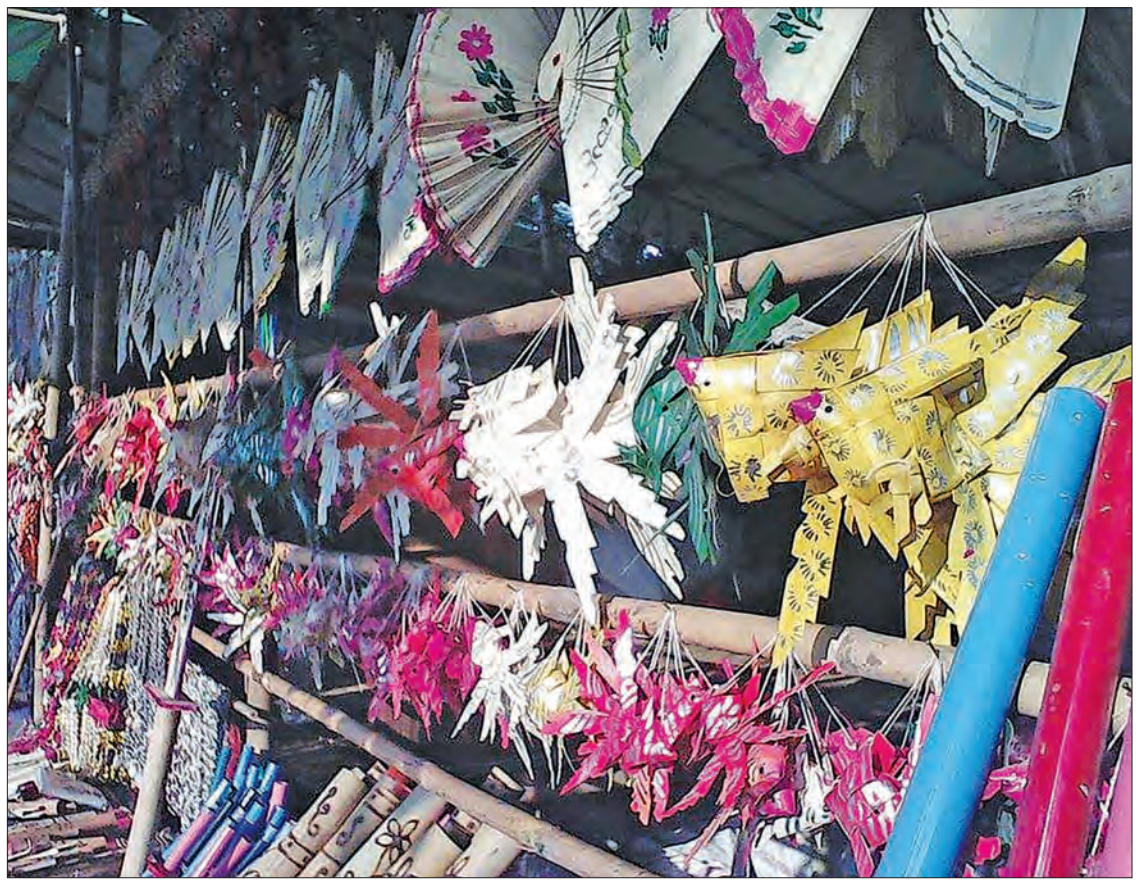
The annual festival attracts vendors and pilgrims. Local residents from Shan State and upcountry villages mainly come to the festival. There are stalls selling palm beads made of palm leaves, Myanmar handicrafts and households goods.

A Patthana recitation is usually held before the pagoda festival kicks off. The vendors from the Konlein, Thabeikyin, Myaybon, Thantaung, Leikkya villages of Pyin Oo Lwin District sell their handicrafts, according to U Pyay Nyein, the chairman of Pagoda Board of Trustees.

There are a total of 1,104 stalls at this year's festival, of which 860 stalls are displayed by Bamar people at the rental rate of K15,000 per stall. Shan ethnic sellers are displaying 174 stalls at the festival. All the shops, except the Bamar shops, will be rented out at a price of K10,000 each.

The local products, including garlic, bamboo shoots and ginger are also available at the festival. Palm leaf beads are the favourite souvenir at Shwesaryan, he added. The pagoda was consecrated by Saw Mon Hla, wife of King Anawratha durig the Bagan Period, the daughter of Mong Mao, the Saopha of Shan State. There is a royal manor near the pagoda.

Saw Mon Hla was so favored by King Anawratha that some jealous rival queens accused her of being a witch. The queen was forced to return to her home town.



Palm leaf fans, leads and other souvenirs. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Hundreds of non-standard, expired and prescriptive medicines confiscated in Mon State

A TOTAL of 278 types of expired, non-standard and prescriptive medicines have been recalled from 23 pharmacies within the Mon State township of Thaton, according to Dr. Thin Thin Ei, from the Thaton district hospital.

The confiscations were made during inspections conducted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during March 14-16 on over forty pharmaceutical outlets within Thaton township to check whether they were selling harmful drugs.

"We've conducted countless education awareness initiatives. As such, some pharmacies need to be more aware. This marks yet another time whereby harmful medicines have been confiscated during inspection rounds by the township level FDA.

We ordered them to sign a statement of admission. Legal action will be taken against them should they be caught [selling such drugs] in the future." said Dr. Thin Thin Ei.

Among the 278 types of medicine that were confiscated were the Hopwa brand medicine that relieves muscular pain; expired medicines, penicillin, drugs not registered by the FDA as being safe; and the anti-malarial drug Artesunate. According to the Thaton FDA, the haul compiled of approximately 30,000 medicine tablets are worth around K1 million. —*Myitmakha News Agency*

Cultivation of substitute crops yet to be realised in Naypyidaw

THE cultivation of substitute crops on five thousands acres of land within the compound of the Naypyidaw Union Council is yet to be realized, according to the Naypyidaw Department of Agriculture. It is known that the acres of land cannot be used for the cultivation of summer paddy harvest as the area lacks irrigation.

"Come the last week of March and we'll be able to irrigate the fields. A lack of rain water [last year] resulted in an insufficient water supply for the irrigation of crops which means a late harvest. We experience [this problem] ever year." said U Tin Soe Kyaing, regional head of the Naypyidaw Department of Agriculture. The irrigation of water will commence during the last week of March, allowing for substitute crops to be cultivated on the 5,000 acres land during the first week of April.

"The bringing in of water through irrigation channels will roughly coincide with the Thingyan rains so we'll only be able to plant summer sesame and mung beans. The majority of substitute crops are planted on land owned by the Myanmar Armed Forces and that located in the township of lewe." added U Tin Soe Kyaing. A lack of rainfall during 2015 meant that over 5,000 acres of arable land for paddy within Naypyidaw could not be irrigated. As a result, the Naypyidaw Department of Agriculture has anticipated the 2,000 acres of summer sesame and 3,000 acres of mung beans be planted as substitute crops.

"[Paddy] can't be planted on land that hasn't been irrigated because it would be too dry. We've already tilled the land for the planting of summer sesame. If the land can be irrigated then we will just plant a surplus [of paddy]. We can only plant [paddy] if the land can be irrigated. If we had to irrigate it under our own initiative then it wouldn't be cost-effective for the amount of petrol costs that would be incurred." said U Maung Win, a farmland owner from lewe township.

It is known an acre of land within the Naypyidaw Council compound in 2015 produced 11.16 bushels of summer sesame and 23.2 bushels of mung beans. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Green gram farms in Pyay Township are facing high temperature

GREEN gram farms in Bago Region, Pyay Township are facing high temperatures and resulted in yellowing crops and a shortfall of the gram, according to local farmers.

A bushel (1.16 kilograms) of green gram last year peaked at approximately K30,000 while this year has seen the same volume of the gram increase up to K50,000 but the market is confronted with a short fall of the crop because of wilted plants, unable to withstand the onset of this year's El Nino induced rise in temperatures.

Gree gram farms faing scorching heat. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

An acre of green gram crops used to be able to produce 15 bushels worth, whereas this year has seen yields fall from 10 bushels to a mere 3 bushels able to be harvested. Farmers have said this low yield has not allowed their crop to be cost-effective this year, for all the added expense incurred to irrigate their crops.

"We've had a much reduced yield [this harvest]. The hot weather has caused our crops to turn yellow in colour, rendering plants unable to produce beans. An acre [of green gram] that should produce 15 bushels is yielding just 10 bushels, and in some cases only 3 bushels. The price of the crop is good but a small yield isn't a convenient situation to be in." said Ko Than Htaik Aung, a green gram farmer from Hmawzar village.

Green gram harvested in January of this month showed no signs of yellowing, whereas yellowing crops became evident on those harvested at the end of February and beginning of March.

It is known from local farmers that green gram is cultivated until the end of the rainy season in the villages of western Bago Region, while they have expressed difficulties encountered in irrigating their crops with a lessening supply of water from the drying up of underground water reserves, the rise in price of crops together with that of labourer wages.

A bushel of the Myo Thant green gram currently fetches K80,000 while the ordinary variety costs slightly less at K76,000. However, the rental cost of an engine to irrigate an acre of crops costs K15,000 with roughly K95,000 needing to be spent to irrigate an acre of land with enough water to make it ready for planting. Another round of irrigation costing K20,000 is then needed when crops open up during the time of the full moon.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife strike the great bell. PHOTO: MYAWADY

Senior General donates bell to Nay Pyi Taw pagoda

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla unveiled a great bell in the compound of Maha Thata Thataha Maha Bodhi Pagoda in Pobbathiri Township yesterday.

Dedicated to peace in Myanmar and around the world, the senior general donated the bell, named the Peace Bell, which weighs 997 kilos.

The senior general and his wife formally opened the bell and struck it nine times.

To mark the opening ceremony and the success of the donation, the congregation led by the senior general and his wife donated gifts to members of the Sangha.—*Myawady*

Over 100 unlicensed vehicles confiscated in Mon State distributed among government departments

Unlicensed vehicles confiscated in Mon Sate are seen in Mawlamyine. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

A TOTAL of 146 vehicles confiscated in Mon State will be distributed out to government departments during the third week of March through a lucky draw, the Mon State government has made it known.

The Mon State government comprises 91 different departments. A list was initially compiled with those departments in need of vehicles, while it is known that departments will not be permitted to choose vehicles to their liking. The distribution will be made at random.

"Vehicles will be handed out to the [government] departments in the coming days. The number of vehicles differ between departments. Our department will get a fair amount of vehicles that we need. A person of responsibility from the ministry will draw our ticket. We'll get a good vehicle if we're lucky. There's no stipulation as to which department will get a certain type of vehicle." said Dr. Min Nway Soe, Mon State Minister for Finance.

Unlicensed vehicles that were confiscated in the past were auctioned off, but the auction which was scheduled to be held on February 17 earlier this year was called off under a directive of the Union Government, with a decision made for the vehicles to be distributed among government departments instead, added Dr. Min Nway Soe.

The vehicles will be distributed among a total of 91 departments from within the Mon State Government, Mon State General Administration Department, Mon State Hluttaw and Mon State Election Commission, while it is known these vehicles will not be for personal use, but for use of the departments and their staff.

Departments that receive vehicles will be required to make requests to relevant government departments for vehicle maintenance costs, fuel, lubricants and drivers, while of those relevant government departments, the Mon State government is in most need of vehicles.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Thilawa SEZ gets 50 MW gas-fuelled power station

THE Ministry of Electric Power opened a gas-fuelled power station in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in the south of Yangon Region, with an address by the Union minister.

In his speech, U Khin Maung Soe said the ministry spent millions of foreign and local currencies on the construction of power plants across the nation as demand for electricity has risen sharply due to the emergence of economic zones.

The country's electricity generation rose from 3,413 MW in 2010-11 to 5,235 MW in 2015-16, the Union minister said, stressing plans for the speedy completion of ten power projects so as to generate an additional 2,042 MW.

According to him, Thailand boasts a capacity to generate 34,000 MW of electricity, with 27,000 MW in use and 7,000 MW in reserve.

Failure to implement new power projects will undermine the industrial development in the country, whose current power distribution stood at 2,700 MW.

Yangon Region is expected to consume 1,250 MW of electricity this year, compared with its use of 1,050 MW, even in the hottest season last year.

The Japanese ambassador to Myanmar gave a brief on the construction of the Thilawa 50 MW gas-fired power plant.

After unveiling the plaque to the power plant, Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe and Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe inspected the machinery installed at the facility.

The power plant was constructed at a cost of over 3.7 billion Japanese yen, loaned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The plant will use 15 million cubic feet of gas per day, supplied by the Zawtika offshore gas project. According to the ministry, the country borrowed US$1.69 billion from international monetary institutions, including the World Bank, of which the government has used over $103 million, with $1.5 billion remaining untouched. —*Myanmar News Agency*

50-MW gas-fuelled station in Thilawa Special Economic Zone. PHOTO: MNA

Crime NEWS

Man wanted for impersonation

A MAN, who pretended to be a policeman, is still on the run and local police are putting more effort to arrest him in order to prevent further similar cases in the region, police reported.

According to an investigation, the impersonator illegally took an expensive mobile device from a young couple near a pagoda in Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay Region on 14 March.

The 18-year-old university student Maung Zaw Myo Naing said, "When I am talking with my friend Ma Phyo Phyo Zaw near convocation on the campus of the university in Mahaaungmye Township, a man wearing police uniform came to us and begged K30,000 fine for visiting the restricted area."

"Afterwards, he replaced my motorbike with his motorcycle and seized my iPhone and left us on 73 Street,

"I visited police station to pay the fine the next day when I knew he is an impostor policeman. I then filed a case against him for pretending to be a police and took my mobile device." Police are still investigating the case.—*Maung Pyithu (Mandalay)*

Young motorcyclists snatch property from woman in Mandalay

THE two young men are wanted by police in connection with a robbery case occurred in Aungmyethazan Township in Mandalay, police reported yesterday. The two motorcyclists snatched a purse hung at the handle of a motorbike being driven by a woman named Zin Mar Win near 19 Street and 81 Street junction on 17 March.

They fled the scene after snatching the purse covering K27,000, a mobile handset and a saving book from Ayeyawady Bank. Police are trying to seize the suspects who will be charged under Section 382 of the Criminal Law.—*Maung Pyithu (Mandalay)*

Child injured in an accident in Maubin

A CHILD was injured in a motorbike accident on Tuesday between mileposts 2/4 and 2/5, near Zegon village, Maubin township, Ayeyawady region. According to an investigation the motorbike heading from Palaung village to Hlaing Tar, driven by one Tin Tun Zaw, 20, with Thant Zin Oo on board hit Zin Myo Aung, 7, when the victim was crossing the road.

The motorbike driver is being charged for his careless driving by a local police station.—*200*

Fire destroys two houses and two warehouses in Myaungmya

A FIRE destroyed two houses and two warehouses in Ludawgyi village, Myaungmya township, on Wednesday. The accident occurred around 2:30am. The fire broke out in a house, the owners of which were away. The reason for fire is not yet known. The fire was brought under control by firemen with the help of neighbours. Further investigations are being made to find out the cause of the fire.—*Aung Min (IPRD)*

Fire breaks out in Taninthayi Region

A FIRE broke out at an agriculture and vocational training camp in Myeik of Taninthayi Region on Friday.

The fire started in a kitchen of a house owned by U Aung Min, head of the camp on Friday afternoon. The flames quickly got out of control and spread to an office apartment and five warehouses.

A 35x35 feet house, a 50x20 ft warehouse, three 150x45 ft rice warehouses and a store keeping agriculture machineries, 200 bags of rice and 600 uniforms were badly damaged in the blaze.

With the assistance of neighbours, the fire was put out by firefighters with two private-owned fire engines.

Police are still investigating the case.—*Nan Tha Ye-Htain Win*

Fire breaking out at the agriculture and vocational training camp. PHOTO: NAN THA YE-HTAIN WIN

Car accident kills student, injures thirteen

A VEHICLE en route to Dawei from Palauk carrying 25 passengers overturned between mileposts 80/6 and 80/7 on Myeik-Dawei road, Pyi Char village, Palauk town, Taninthayi region, on Wednesday, leaving one dead and thirteen injured.

According to an investigation, the vehicle was carrying grade-11 students and teachers when it capsized after the driver lost control. The accident injured 13 passengers out of 25. Saw Say Say Win died upon arrival at Dawei hospital. The driver has been charged by police.—*Township IPRD*

Car carrying students seen. PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD

Raw opium seized in Phakant

A LOCAL anti-drug squad in Mohnyin seized raw opium weighing 4.2 kilos from one Ma Khin Win Kyaing, 44, in Ngapyawtaw ward, Phakant town on Tuesday.

Police have filed charges against her under the Anti-Narcotics Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Ma Khin Win Kyaing. PHOTO: MPF

Boy killed by short circuiting

A 17-year-old boy has died of an electric short circuiting in Da-zai Township in Sagaing Region on 18 March, according to a police report.

Pyae Phyo Kyaw was killed by short circuiting after touching the electrical wires while they removed them from the car being driven by his father U Phoe Than in Pauktaw Village.

"The car is located too close to those wire cables linking households in the village from self-reliant power supply programme," a witness said.

The boy died on the way to the hospital.

Police are still investigating the case.—*Police Information*

Police find corpse in Shwe Htee hotel

THE dead body of a woman was found at the Shwe Htee hotel, Sabali road, Chanmyathasi township, Mandalay on Thursday. According to information received police identified the victim as Ma Yu Yu Htet, 21, from Yedashe ward, Bahan township, Yangon. The police sent the corpse to Mandalay general hospital. Police are still investigating the case.—*Min Htet Aung (Mann Sub-printing house)*

LOCAL Business

YCDC instructs distillery to effectively discard its waste

Farmers work near a drain of a distillery. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS

YANGON City Development Committee (YCDC) has directed an alcohol distillery, located in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone (2), to effectively discard its waste after complaints were received from the surrounding neighborhood of intolerable odour being emitted from the distillery's drains.

"The YCDC has made three trips [to the distillery] now because of foul odour permeating the surrounding environment. The owner is taking action to clear the water pipes and drains to get rid of the bad smells. In the past, we just used plastic pipes so they would clog up with sediment. We're going to conduct tests on the laying of new Japanese pipes." said Ko Moe from the Shwe O alcohol distillery assigned with digging drains.

Drains began to be dug on March 17 for the laying of pipeline of six inches in diameter. The pipeline will be laid four feet under the ground and run a length of 2,800 feet.

It is known that roughly forty families from the Mikyaung Aing neighbourhood, located in the vicinity of the distillery, have been making a living from selling of fish feed which they sourced from the aforementioned water drains.

"Since [the YCDC] prohibited [us from using their water drains] we would go and place our nets during the night and check them in the early hours of the morning. The odour emitting from the overflowing drains was most unpleasant." said Ma Mya, a fish feed seller.

It is known that the drains were closed off to fish feed gatherers from March 17, while the aforementioned distillery is commencing the digging of drains in a bid to mitigate the foul smells emitted from its discarded waste.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Mineral exports decline in 2015-16 Fiscal Year

MYANMAR earned over US$950 million from exports of mineral extractions, including jade, this financial year, which is about one fold less than the country earned during the same period last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 April 2015 and 11 March this year, the private and public sectors earned $445.8 million and $505 million respectively, compared to last year's $979.875 million in the public sector and over $459 million in the private sector.

The public sector saw a drop while the private sector saw a rise in mineral exports, said a spokesperson of the ministry.

The country normally receives a vast amount of foreign currency from jade exports, a major mineral export, and China is the largest trade partner for Myanmar, followed by Hong Kong and India.

The private sector mainly exports agriculture products, aquaculture products and animal products.

The government sector mainly carries out exports for the rest groups, including mineral products, forest products and industrial finished goods.

The Ministry of Mines' scrutinising and supervising committee for mining licences allows private mining companies owned by citizens in the Mongshu, Namyarseik, Kandi, Mohnyin, Mawlu and Mawhan areas in accordance with existing laws.—*ML/Union Daily*

Income, commercial taxes to be paid by March

THE Internal Revenue Department has announced that income taxes and commercial taxes will be paid by March this fiscal year, according to the Union Tax Law.

Those who fail to pay in on time will be fined according to the Law.

Cash is to be submitted by 31 March, while paying by cheque must be done before 31 March, according to the Internal Revenue Department. The Central Bank will receive the cheques by 11:30am on 31 March and make settlements. That's why Myanmar Economic Banks will receive cheques by 30 March, said the Director of the Internal Revenue Department (Yangon).

Those individuals who are listed at the top and those companies which are top listed will be announced by the Internal Revenue Department, according to the state-owned daily newspaper.

The companies in the oil and gas sector and the banks stay at the top of the list, followed by the wholesales shops and super markets.

Government revenue is still on the decline because of the high exchange rate of the US dollar, although the amount of tax received has risen, according to economists.

The revenue reached 10 per cent of GDP during the five-year term of the government. However, it is still on the decline compared with other ASEAN countries. The high revenue can lift subsidies for health and education of the people. —*KMK (Union Daily)*

Latest Volvo cars coming soon

THE latest Volvo cars will be sold in Myanmar very soon.

Performance Auto International Co Ltd (PAI), the joint venture between Volvo Car Group and the two companies owned by Myanmar, has been appointed as sole agent for Sweden-made Volvo cars, following the signing of the agreement at Hotel Novotel on 18 March.

"We are excited about representing Volvo in Myanmar, said Mr Temmy Wiradjaja, the general manager of PAI Co Ltd. We promise to provide the customers with the excellent experience of Volvo cars," he added.

The Volvo Car Centre will be opened in September at No 146(a) Dhammazedi Street, Yangon. Official Volvo Centres will also be opened in Siri Lanka and Vietnam.

Volvo was established in 1927 and has become the most popular brand in about 100 countries as over 500,000 cars are sold every year. Various luxury cars with international brands have penetrated Myanmar's imported car market since the relaxation of the Import Law in 2013. —*Win Win Maw*

AIA Plans to Extend Market

AIA, regarded as the biggest insurance company in Asia, will venture to extend its business in the Myanmar market, according to its announcement.

AIA has opened a branch office in Yangon. It will apply for a licence from the Insurance Business Supervisory Board and has announced that it will grant licences for foreign insurance businesses, which opened an office in Myanmar at least three years ago with a background history doing the same business within the ASEAN region.

AIA will operate the insurance business related to the stock exchange. Besides, it will collect and buy the treasury bonds as long-term investments.

It is time to extend the business in Myanmar, said Mark Tucker, CEO and president of AIA Group. Myanmar conducted the reformation process both in politics and economics. Currently, foreign investment companies and financial service companies are competing enter the Myanmar market, and we are one of them, he added.

AIA has already been making capital investments in Thailand, buying Thai treasury bonds equal to 20 per cent of government debt. The stock exchange, the legal investment business, will thrive in Myanmar, which has lost its firm capital business for many years. Many foreign investment companies like AIA are preparing for extending in Myanmar because the country sees increasing financial development, the probability of thumping foreign investment and good conditions in the economic sector, according to some economists.—*PPN (Union Daily)*

Nine organisations gather to hold remembrance event for 1st ann of Lee Kuan Yew's death

SINGAPORE — Nine organisations from the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian communities yesterday jointly organised a remembrance event to commemorate the legacy of Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, who died on 23 March at age of 91 last year.

More than 1,000 people, including ministers and members from public and private sectors, were present at Stamford Green, where the event was held, to honour the late Lee Kuan Yew for building Singapore a cohesive, multi-racial society.

Four youth representatives from the Malay, Indian, Eurasian and Chinese communities have delivered a speech in honour of the late prime minister. Some highlighted his contribution to a clean nation with mutual respect, while others pay tribute to his personal character such as self-discipline and hard-working.

Students read the programme details of Lee Kuan Yew remembrance ceremony held at Stamford Green in Singapore, on 20 March 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

Twenty-eight year-old Cheong Xuan Yong, who graduated from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in 2014 with honour in biomedical science and a bachelor in traditional Chinese medicine, honoured Lee for his bilingual policies in promoting Singapore from a under-developed city-state into a modern nation as well as his dedication in preserving nature.

"Leaping from a third-world to a first-world nation in single generation is no mean feat. Singapore is a miraculous story of a swamp turned into a vibrant metropolis. This is no idle boast and is the most visible testimony to the vision, leadership, determination of Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his team of ministers," he said.

Minister for Prime Minister's Office Chan Chun Sing in his closing speech also honoured Lee for building Singapore into a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nation.

"We respect our diversity rejoice our diversity. We celebrate our diversity and use our diversity to our advantage to build a even stronger nation," he said.

"We hope that as we go forward, as we strengthen our national identity, we also build an inclusive identity that continues to welcome people, regardless of their race, language or religion."

"We have benefited from the contribution of our pioneer leaders. They lend their shoulders for us to stand taller and see further, and that's why we were here today. Our job was not to go down in history as being the best ever for Singapore, our job is try to continue to lend our shoulders for the next generation to stand taller and see further," the minister stressed.—*Xinhua*

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Public polls open to elect national, provincial assemblies in Laos

VIENTIANE — Polling stations across the South-East Asian nation of Laos opened yesterday with nearly 4 million citizens aged 18 and over eligible to cast ballots for national and provincial legislatures.

Citizen voters across the country of some 6.4 million are set to elect provincial representatives to five-year terms in the 149-member National Assembly, the country's peak legislative body.

The election was also held to send members to the country's 18 newly-established provincial and prefectural People's Assemblies, the latter established following an amendment to the country's constitution approved by the National Assembly in December.

Polling stations throughout the nation's 17 provinces and the Lao capital Vientiane welcomed voters including the secretary-general of the nation's ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), Lao Vice-President Bounnhang Vorachith who cast his ballot at Vientiane's Nongbone Buddhist Temple within sight of the revered stupa, That Luang.

A voter casts her ballot at a polling station in Vientiane, capital of Laos, on 20 March 2016. Polling stations across the South-East Asian nation of Laos opened yesterday with nearly 4 million citizens aged 18 and over eligible to cast ballots for national and provincial legislatures.
PHOTO: XINHUA

All 38 Lao embassies and diplomatic missions have also encouraged participation by expatriate electors from among the 17,000 eligible based abroad.

Laos'National Assembly is responsible for considering and approving policy, constitutional and legislative proposals and overseeing decisions of the state executive and civil service bodies.

Among the first tasks of newly elected assembly members will be casting votes to approve a new president of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and an executive cabinet headed by a prime minister and deputies.

Former secretary-general of the LPRP, the country's serving President Choummaly Sayasone and Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong, are not standing for reappointment to their roles.

The 211 candidates nominated for election to the National Assembly include 50 women, with hopes for female representation of about 30 percent in the elected bodies.

Lao citizens over 18 years of age are eligible to vote in the legislative polls, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious belief, social status or profession.

Similar stipulations apply to national and provincial candidates who must be 21 years and older and have their candidacy supported by a relevant public or civil organization.

It is hoped establishment of provincial legislatures will bring improved oversight to raise governance and policy implementation standards across the provinces as they seek to improve efficiency and tackle profligacy.

With political and governance institutions based on a Marxist-Leninist model, the Lao People's Democratic Republic was established on 2 December, 1975 by LPRP co-founder and inaugural Secretary-General, President Kaysone Phomvihane.—*Xinhua*

Japan, Italy agree to work to end North Korea's banned weapons programmes

ROME — Japan and Italy's foreign ministers agreed Saturday to expand cooperation to end North Korea's nuclear and missile development programmes, Japanese officials said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his Italian counterpart Paolo Gentiloni also agreed on the need to prevent what they call unilateral actions to change the status quo in the East and South China seas, an apparent reference to Beijing's aggressive assertion of territorial claims in the disputed waters.

The meeting took place just days after North Korea fired a ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan in yet another act of defiance against the international community and UN resolutions banning such action.

During a joint press conference with Kishida after the talks, the Italian foreign minister said Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to visit Florence in central Italy in early May.

Abe will meet there with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, with the leaders expected to agree on strengthening bilateral cooperation in defense equipment and technology transfer, according to the officials.

Kishida is visiting Italy on the first leg of a trip that will also take him to the Vatican and to France as Japan prepares to host the Group of Seven foreign ministers' meeting on 10 and 11 April in Hiroshima.

At the press conference, Gentiloni also said he intends to visit the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, which commemorates the 1945 US atomic bombing of the city, while there for the G-7 meeting.

Britain, Canada, France, Germany, and the United States will also attend the G-7 meeting.

Following their talks, the two ministers signed an agreement allowing the two countries to exchange security intelligence.

Regarding Abe's visit to Florence, the Italian foreign minister said he hopes the planned visit can help deepen defence industry cooperation between the two countries.

Renzi, a native of Florence, formerly served as mayor of the city.

Later at the Vatican, Kishida met with Paul Gallagher, the Holy See's secretary for relations with states, and requested that Pope Francis visit Japan.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida (L) meets with Paul Gallagher, the Holy See's secretary for relations with states, at the Vatican on 19 March 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Kishida said that with this year marking five years since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Tokyo hopes for the pope's encouragement for rebuilding efforts under way in affected areas in Japan's northeast.

Gallagher replied that the Vatican would arrange the pope's visit to Japan at an appropriate time, according to the officials.—*Kyodo News*

Metro workers mark 21st anniversary of nerve gas attack in Tokyo

Tokyo Metro Co. employees observe a moment of silence at Kasumigaseki Station on 20 March, 2016, the 21st anniversary of the AUM Shinrikyo cult's deadly sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system that killed 13 people and injured over 6,000 others in the capital. Two subway workers were killed by the attack at the station. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Tokyo subway workers commemorated the 21st anniversary yesterday of the AUM Shinrikyo cult's deadly sarin nerve gas attack that killed 13 people and injured over 6,000 others in the capital.

Tokyo Metro Co. employees observed a moment of silence at Kasumigaseki Station and some relatives of victims laid flowers there to mourn those who fell in the terrorist attack on 20 March, 1995. Two company employees were killed by the attack at the station.

"We shouldn't forget the actions of those before us who acted to save people's lives. We intend to continue doing our job to protect the safety of passengers," area manager Mitsuaki Ota said.

After offering flowers at the station, Shizue Takahashi, 69, whose husband Kazumasa, an assistant stationmaster, died in the attack, told reporters that even though 21 years have passed, visiting the station caused her to feel as if it happened just yesterday. "The sadness I felt that day is still with me." Among those who laid flowers at the station were Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and transport minister Keiichi Ishii. "We should never let the incident be forgotten. We will do our utmost to prevent terrorism," Abe told reporters later.

The subway operator set up a stand at Kasumigaseki, Kodemmacho and four other central Tokyo stations where lives were lost to allow people to offer flowers. In the attack, the deadly nerve agent was scattered in five train cars during morning rush hour, causing mayhem at the stations, with many sickened passengers attended by emergency workers outside subway exits.

Death sentences have been finalized against 10 members of the cult, including Chizuo Matsumoto, the 61-year-old founder more commonly known as Shoko Asahara, in connection with the attack and other crimes, though none has yet to be carried out. Lifetime imprisonment has been finalised for four others.

Katsuya Takahashi, a former member who was captured in 2012 after 17 years on the run, has appealed to a high court a district court ruling that sentenced him to life in prison for his involvement in the nerve gas attack. AUM renamed itself Aleph in 2000. Along with the other successor group Hikarinowa, or the Circle of Rainbow Light, Aleph remains under surveillance by public security authorities.—*Kyodo News*

Australian govt abandons campaign to log World Heritage

SYDNEY — The Australian government ended its push to log World Heritage-listed forests on the southern island state of Tasmania yesterday, after the United Nations cultural agency UNESCO issued a report calling for the area to remain protected from logging.

Australia's government in 2014 sought unsuccessfully to have parts of the Tasmanian wilderness, some one million hectares (2.47 million acres) or a fifth of the island, removed from UNESCO's World Heritage listing to enable logging.

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation report issued on Saturday said the whole area "should be off-limits to commercial logging in its entirety" and that it "does not consider a World Heritage property recognised for its outstanding cultural and natural values the place to experiment with commercial logging of any kind".

On Sunday both Australia's national and Tasmanian state governments adhered to the UNESCO request.

"We accept the recommendation ... that special species timber harvesting should not be allowed anywhere in the world heritage area," Tasmania's environment minister Matthew Groom said in a joint statement with national environment minister Greg Hunt.

The statement said no commercial forestry will be permitted in the World Heritage-listed area.

The Tasmanian forest, added to the World Heritage list in 1982, "constitutes one of the last expanses of temperate rainforest in the world", according to UNESCO. Conservation groups welcomed the UNESCO report and government commitment not to log the Tasmanian wilderness.—*Reuters*

Koreans banned from re-entering Japan include rocket engine expert

TOKYO — The 22 people recently banned from re-entering Japan after visiting North Korea include a rocket engine expert with a doctorate from the University of Tokyo, a Japanese government source said Saturday.

That person, said to be an authority in rocket engine development, has ties to a North Korean company suspected of being involved in developing missile engines, according to the public security authority source.

Japan, South Korea, the United States and the UN Security Council all recently approved additional sanctions to punish North Korea for conducting a fourth nuclear test in January and the launch last month of a rocket, widely seen as a pretext for testing long-range ballistic missile technology.

he 22 people on Japan's own newly complied no reentry list include officials of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, commonly known as Chongryon, and five members of an association of Korean scientists and engineers living in Japan, according to other sources.

The five association members include a researcher at the atomic energy research institute of a national university in western Japan, according to the public security authority source.—*Kyodo News*

OPINION

A show of unity and solidarity in reformation

Kyaw Thura

NOW that our country has a long-awaited national leader and a civilian president, what the incoming government needs to do is to adopt an inclusive political system geared to the specific needs of the economy and the education and health systems. In this respect, all the nationalities must accept their share of the responsibility to swim with the tide. All we have to do is to follow in the footsteps of the leaders whom we elected with the votes that came from the bottom of our hearts.

According to scientific research, some migrating birds flying in a V-shape formation bear a striking resemblance to the mechanism of government. It is argued that their V-shape flight is to save energy because they have to fly vast distances when migrating. However, this behaviour is more complicated and more impressive than we might imagine.

But scientists have stated that a bird produces a rotating vortex of air when it flaps, enabling other birds behind it to easily follow the path set by the leading bird. It is not that easy, though. Birds flying behind need to sense the upward and downward movements of their leaders' wingtips and adjust their own flapping patterns. Any bird leaving the flock will no doubt experience a hard flight.

Therefore, flying in a V-shape formation involves flapping at the right time and staying in the right place. The leader bird has to make strenuous efforts to set the pattern for its followers to follow. In this process, the second and third leader birds are ready to take the place of their leader when it becomes tired from a long haul. After all, keeping pace with a farsighted leader on the journey to where our dreams can come true is a case in point.

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.

A Quick Look at Aing-chin Poems in Myanmar

Maung Phyo (WYU)

Aing-chin is a Myanmar literary genre flourished from early Nyaung Yan Era to Kongbaung Era in Myanmar. It is pastoral by nature. It was closely associated with the rural class in ancient Myanmar. It falls into two different categories such as Thone-daunt aing and Yapyae aing. Discrepancy among the categories largely belongs to region of origin, chronological distinctiveness and the class it represents. Thone-Daunt-aing is so termed owing to its origin: Thone-Daunt Village. Yapyae-aing derived from the fact that it was created in commemoration or coincidence with the year 1100 Myanmar Era. It is thought that the paddy-planting maidens chanted Aing-chins to relieve themselves of their fatigue while at work.

As for the theme of the aing-chin, Dr. Hla Pe put them under the category of lament or song of lament. It is, he said, because an aing-chin, as its name suggests, is lamentation usually of a girl over her misfortunes.

As it is primarily for the village-folks, its rhyming scheme is comparatively loose. Rhyme is mostly internal in many cases. It always starts with the phrase ''ချစ်တဲ့သူငယ်လေ သူငယ်ချင်းကောင်းယောက်မတို့လေ'' which could be literally translated into English as 'O Dear Friends and Sisters''. It is primarily written by the female poets or poetesses like Taungdwin Shin Nyein Me and Mae Khwe. Of the aing-chin poetesses, Taungdwin Shin Nyein Me has contributed so many to the world of Myanmar poetry that her name is inseparable from aing-chin in Myanmar. Her style is pleasantly amusing and sounds virtually cheerful even when the theme is agonistic. The tone is somewhat jolly and sometimes sarcastic but always subtly done. It can also be said that its appearance rightly opportune with its historical panorama.

In essence, it carries feminine nostalgia. However, the male poets also composed aing-chins both in Nyaung Yan and early Kongbaung Era. In the light of the textual references available so far, aing-chin poets cover Taungdwin Shin Nyein Me, Me Khwe. King Wun Min Gyi, Lay Daung Maung Hla, consort of Razadarit (whether he is a king or a courtier is not yet clear) and anonymous poets. It was in Nyaung Yan and Kongbaung Periods that aing-chins had been in vogue among the rural mass. Aing-chins associate very closely with human nature and his environment. It reads very pleasant with the use of explicit lexes. It is in total free from equivocal tone. It is found to be able to tune into the heart of both the composers and the chanters at ease.

To begin with the historical background, the Nyaungyan Era is full of military activities. Such historical significances are traced in the poems. Albeit the poem is perfumed with romance between the village lad and lass, its romantic singularity is always coated with a call of duty. The heroes in the poem proved to be very simple and straightforward but at the same time, responsible and accountable. The heroines themselves might turn out to be very crude in nature but at the same time, understanding and shrewd judge of character. The female characters in the poems are sheer critics of their alter egos. They are blunt and directive in speech. They are ready to shower praise on an act of valor and also come forward to condemn cowardice in any form. For instance, in the following ancient aing-chin,

''စုန်မည်ဆိုလည်း စုန်မည်ရက်ကို
ဆက်ဆက်မဆို
ဆန်မည်ဆိုလည်း ဆန်မည်ရက်ကို
ဆက်ဆက်မဆို
တီးသည်စောင်းနှင့်
လောင်းသည်ကြက်ကို
ဖက်ကာငို့သည်
မောင့်ကို
ကုန်သွားထည့်သလားတော်''

The lass in the poem seemed to feel impatient about her lover's indetermination or disheartenment towards an assigned duty. In this respect, she blurted out like

''Never say, you, when to sail down
Never say, you, when to sail up,
Embracing your favorite harp
and fighting cock,
You cry and mourn.
Is it you to be traded for?''

Sometimes, she felt encouraged by her lover's bravery and duty-consciousness. On this vein, she tended to remark like,

''သူများမောင်မှာ စစ်သံကြားလျှင်
နာများဥပါယ်ခိုကြတယ်
နမလေး မယ်တို့မောင်မှာ
စစ်သံကြားလျှင် ဇွေခါးပိုက်ကာ
အိုးစားဖက်ကို လိုက်လို့ရွာသည်''

In English, it should be like

''Upon duty-call to military
service,
Others' lovers evade,
Lo! with his sword,
My darling always fling into it
Searching for his comrades.''

Aing-chins are very simple in the description of character. They adhere to no pretense in order to dramatize the characters and the plot. Aing-chins stands very close to Nature. It never attempts to deviate from the human nature in the composition as it is. Such is the beauty of it.

In the following aing-chin, a surge of dissatisfaction towards her lover's inefficiency was brought to the fore in the poetess' curse spelt upon a village old hag,

''ချစ်တဲ့သူငယ်လေ
သူငယ်ချင်းကောင်း
ယောက်မတို့လေ
ရှင်လူထွက်သစ် ဆယ့်သုံးနှစ်က
ချစ်တဲ့သူကို
အယူတခြား ဖိထွေးများက
ဆီးတားဆို
ရစ်ကိုထောင်ကာ ထားရတယ်။
နွမ်းနယ်တစေ့ ရေးကာပါ
ကြမ္မာဒွေကြောင့်
မတွေ့ရတာ ကြာတောင့်ကြာမှ
သူလည်းအလာ မယ်သာအမျော်
နေ့ငင်ကျော့
ဒွေးတော်ခြံပါး တောင်နားဆီသို့
ယာဘွားပို့ပြန်
စောင်းလျားခြံနှင့် လက်ပံပင်ရှေ့
ကျဉ်းမြောင်းကွေ့ တွေ့သောအခါ
မယ်ကပေးတဲ့ ပိုးသေးမည်းပါ
ပုဆိုးပြာလည်မှာရစ်လို့
ဖွင့်လှစ်ကယမဆို
မယ့်ကျောပြင်ဖက်
လက်တင်ယှက်လို့
မတ်တပ်ကယ်ဝိုသည်
မောင့်ကို စိမ်းကား မယ်နှမ
ကဆိုသလား။
တို့ချစ်ခြင်းကို ကွင်းအောင်တစေ
နေ့တိုင်းမွေ့တဲ့
သက်ကြီးပန်တို့ မြင်တိုင်းမုန်းစရာ
ကုန်းမအို
ရေလိုမမ်းခြောက်ပါစေသား။''

''O Dear Friends and Sisters!
My Mi Htwes objected,
As they disagree to our love,
Since puberty we fostered,
So have the spin I kept,
Leaning it against a corner,
And, weaving I ceased.
As if fated, we haven't met for
long,
Thus, for each other's face so we
mourn.
We came across today,
At a narrow corner in front of Letpan tree,
Near the carambola plantation,
On my return from the southward
of Dwaydaw's farm,
Scarfing a blue longyi with black
pattern,
That I presented him,
He made no speech but wept.
He blurted, putting his arms
around my shoulders,
"Everything was over between us?
So did you say?"
O Old hag!! Hateful and a source
of disgust,
You sought to separate us each and
every day.
Then, in return, I say,
''May you dehydrate to death!''"
(Translated by the author)

Traditional beliefs and superstitions are reflected in some poems. The rural folks were open-minded and outspoken in social dealing and plain and lucid in their way of life. They were conformists to the traditions, rituals and even superstitions. However, the poetess' beautiful imagery can be traced in her use of red flower epitomizing virginity. She proved as tactful and witty as William Blake's ''The Sick Rose'' personified by virginity or civilization. Blake composed it round about 1789 and was thus far more modern than Shin Nyein Mae who had pioneered the floral personification very senior to her English Counterparts. See the following poem,

''ပန်းနီနီမပန်လေနဲ့''
ချစ်တဲ့သူငယ်လေ
သူငယ်ချင်းကောင်း
ယောက်မတို့လေ။
နှောပင်ကြီးမှာ နှောသီးကြွေလျှင်
လေပွေတိုက်လို့ဂဲတတ်တယ်။
တံစက်ရေနှင့်တွင်းရေအတူ
ရေစက်မိုးနဲ့ရေချိုးသူ
ညင်းဖြူပြီးခေါ်ကြစို့တတ်တယ်။
စနေပြိုလဲစား ကြုံခဲ့ကိုးများမှာ
ချစ်ရာသစ်ပင် စိုက်ပျိုးလျှင်
အင်ခွင်ညစ္စာ နည်းတတ်တယ်။
ပန်းနီနီမပန်လေနှင့်
အမယ်မှာသည့် နှတ်ပန်းပွင့်တဲ့
အတင့်ငယ်မှ ရဲချင်
ပျော်လိုအားနှင့်ခေါင်းဖျားတင်မူ
အရင်လူနှင့်လွဲတတ်တယ်။
မိဘစကား နားပမပင်
ထီမထင်ဘဲ ကြုံပင်ကြီးမြောက်
ပိတောက်ပင်တောင်
ပသောင်ပင်ရေ့
နေမလှန်းတဲ့ ပန်းလွင်လွင်ကို
ရွှင်လို့မြူးလို့ ကစားလို့၍
ဂါဆိုဦးက ပန်ဖူးတယ်
အမယ်လေး
သည်မယ်မှာ
အရင်လူနှင့်လွဲရတယ်ရှင်
အပျိုဖြူ ငယ်ကမျှမိုးပါတဲ့
လွမ်းတုံတင်လေး။''

"Dear Friends and Sisters….
Don't ever wear red flowers.
Mother said: "They are fairy
flowers".
If you choose to be daring
And, setting your heart on a frolic,
Put them on your head,
You will be parted from your first
love.
To the words of my parents and
grand parents,
I did not pay heed;
Yes, I slighted their warning.
North of the great gyo-tree,
South of the Paduak-tree
"At the foot of the great banyan
tree,
Coming back from the paddy
planting,
By the Htein tree pool
I saw it as I came,
The bright gleaming flower sheltered from the sun.
In sport with mirthful intent
At the beginning of lent,
I decked myself with it.
Alas! Woe is me!
Before the month of Tawthalin,
When the Yin-ma tree was in
flower
And the rainy season had
Changed into the winter of that
year
I was parted from my first love."
(Translated by Dr. Hla Pe)

Aing-chins are unique in their originality in Myanmar Literature. They are purely native to Myanmar. They are not followers of Sanskrit verses like others. It can be regarded that they have been born out of the locals' poetic urge. Artistic elements in aing-chins are wonderful. Description of the village maidens always carries both physical and mental images. Folk elements, memories and cultures are always pleasantly recalled. Simple and short-to-the-point language use looks remarkable. Therefore, aing-chins should be termed as ideals of the Myanmar poems.

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I am the child

POEM:

I am the child who goes to bed without food
I am the child who goes to work without salary,
I am the child who is abused everyday
With little or no available law protecting me.
I am the child who dies every day a million death
Through poverty, discrimination, despair and hunger.
I am the child who is raped on the street corner,
I am the child who contracts diseases from my torture masters.

I am the child who gets you the nice carpet,
On which your pet Tobby is resting by the cozy fire.
I am the child who makes the T-shirt
That your partner admires!
I am the child who stitches those jeans
That attracts your suitors.
I am the child who makes those sports gears
And you make millions using them.

I am the child who is tortured to serve my omnipresent master,
I am the child who is made into suicide bomber.
I am the child who can be exploited for your sexual desires,
I am the child who is made a child soldier.
I am the child who can be tortured at your sweet will,
I am the child who fuels your brick kilns.
I am the child who powers your garment factories
I am the child who is pivotal beyond your economic power,
But again I am the child who is squashed under your speeding car tire.
I am the child for whom you stage national protest
For saving my childhood,
Yet I am the child who warms your bed of desires and perversions.

I am the child for which you voice your concern,
Yet I am the child inflicted with most harm.
I am the child that fuels the accounts of your NGO firms,
Yet I am the child who does not have any clothes
To cover my tiny exposed body from heat, cold or rain,
Or to cover myself from your evil eyes of desires and prejudices.
I am the child whom you tried to exterminate,
But I am the child that has survived the test of time and torture.
I am the child whom you killed many times,
But I am the child who was born a million times.

Saikat Kumar Basu

Mineral exports decline in 2015-16 FY

MYANMAR earned over US$950 million from exports of mineral extractions, including jade, this financial year, which is about one fold less than the country earned during the same period last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 April 2015 and 11 March this year, the private and public sectors earned $445.8 million and $505 million respectively, compared to last year's $979.875 million in the public sector and over $459 million in the private sector.

The public sector saw a drop, while the private sector saw a rise in mineral exports, said a spokesperson of the ministry.

The country normally receives a vast amount of foreign currency from jade exports, a major mineral export, and China is the largest trade partner for Myanmar, followed by Hong Kong and India.

The private sector mainly exports agriculture products, aquaculture products and animal products.

The government sector mainly carries out exports for the rest groups, including mineral products, forest products and industrial finished goods.

The Ministry of Mines' scrutinising and supervising committee for mining licences allows private mining companies owned by citizens in the Mongshu, Namyarseik, Kandi, Mohnyin, Mawlu and Mawhan areas in accordance with existing laws.—*May Lwin*

Fertiliser plant to be established in Thilawa SEZ

A FERTILIZER plant will soon be established in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, located 25 kilometres southeast of Yangon. It is estimated to begin commercial operations by 2017.

The project will be implemented by Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO) in cooperation with the Japan-based Mitsui Co and Singapore-based Behn Meyer Co with the use of US$10.5 million.

The plant can produce 100,000 tonnes of fertiliser per year, with one of the project implementers saying it is estimated to start production in May next year.

In order to implement the cooperation with the MAPCO, Mitsui and Behn Meyer agreed to establish a BMM Venture (S) Pte., Ltd (BMM-V), planning to set up Agri First Co Ltd (AEC) in the future to serve as a major importer of fertiliser in the country.

MAPCO and BMM-V will begin their joint venture business with 50 per cent shares owned by the BMM-V and 40 per cent of shares possessed by the Myanmar side.

The country needs one million tonnes of fertiliser per year, most of which have been imported from foreign countries. —*May Lwin*

MPA has erected navigation marks. PHOTO: NAVY

Sunken Vietnamese cargo vessel to be saved

THE Myanma Port Authority (MPA) is planning to save a Vietnamese cargo vessel, the MV Dong Then Phu Silver, which sank into the Yangon River.

"We are coordinating with organisations to fix the shortage as quickly as possible, as it may cause a danger to other ships. The shipping company is in discussion with the insurance company on the saving of the sunken ship," said U Aung Kyaw Htoo, chief of the Maritime Department at the MPA.

The discussion focuses on hiring equipment from other countries as Myanmar does not have enough to save the ship. The Department of Marine Administration has urged the shipping company to save it and carry out necessary inspections.

For the safety of ships and vessels, the MPA has issued a warming and erected navigation marks near the place where the ship sank. The Vietnamese ship, which carried cement, sank into the Yangon River after breaking anchor and colliding with an oil tanker, the MT Ocean Osprey, on January 25.—*Ko Moe*

Cuba casts aside rancour to welcome Obama on historic visit

Tourists pass by images of US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro in a banner that reads ''Welcome to Cuba'' at the entrance of a restaurant in downtown Havana, on 17 March 2016.
PHOTO: REUTERS

HAVANA — President Barack Obama arrives in Cuba yesterday for a 48-hour visit, making history by venturing into what was once enemy territory and sparking enthusiasm among Cubans who have seen their Communist government vilify 10 previous US leaders.

The visit, the first by a US president in 88 years, would have been unthinkable until Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro agreed in December 2014 to end an estrangement that began when the Cuban revolution overthrew a pro-American government in 1959.

Plainclothes police have blanketed the capital with security while public works crews have busily laid down asphalt in a city where drivers joke they must navigate "potholes with streets."

Welcome signs with images of Obama alongside Castro popped up in colonial Old Havana, where Obama will tour on Sunday afternoon shortly after landing.

Since rapprochement the two sides have restored diplomatic ties, signed commercial deals on telecommunications and scheduled airline service, and expanded cooperation on law enforcement and environmental protection.

"Obama has been brave for agreeing to relations with Cuba," said school teacher Elena Gonzalez, 43.

Major differences remain, notably the 54-year-old economic embargo of Cuba. Obama has asked Congress to rescind it but has been blocked by the Republican leadership. Instead, Obama has used executive authority to loosen trade and travel restrictions.

Cuba also complains about the continued occupation of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, which Obama has said is not up for discussion, and US support for dissidents and anti-communist radio and TV programmes beamed into Cuba.

"There are many years of mistrust and we are not going to change our system, our values," said Ileana Valdes, 55, a nurse. "Although one must highlight that there are no longer invasions."

The Americans in turn criticise one-party rule and repression of political opponents. Cuban police briefly detained more than 200 activists in the days before the visit, dissidents said.

Little progress on such issues is expected when Obama and Castro meet on Monday or over state dinner that night.

Instead, the highlights are likely to be Obama's speech on live Cuban television on Tuesday, when he will also meet dissidents and attend a baseball game between the Cuban national team and the Tampa Bay Rays.

"Times change and it's great that we have relations with the United States, even though they still impose the embargo," said Barbaro Echevarria, 28, a medical student. "But we can't blame all our problems on the US embargo."—*Reuters*

Popular sleeper train Cassiopeia makes last run to Sapporo

SAPPORO — East Japan Railway Co.'s flagship sleeper train Cassiopeia completed its last run from Tokyo to Sapporo yesterday, marking a near end to its regular service ahead of the opening later this month of the Hokkaido Shinkansen Line.

The new shinkansen line will open on 26 March, using the same long undersea tunnel utilized by the overnight limited express that connects the main island of Honshu and the northernmost main island of Hokkaido.

Cassiopeia will officially disappear in its current form after its final return run from Sapporo to Tokyo, with its 17-hour journey set to end at JR Ueno Station in Tokyo on Monday morning.

Late Sunday morning at Sapporo Station, about 400 enthusiasts greeted the arrival of the locomotive-driven silver sleeper cars. Some held up signs saying "Goodbye" and "Thank You."

"Railway buffs waved from platforms at every station as they watched the train leave. That was touching," said Takako Yamazaki, 42, who travelled in the train to Sapporo with her husband and three children. The resident of Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture, said she will miss the flagship overnight train.

Cassiopeia debuted in 1999 and has been popular with travellers and enthusiasts, with its suite, dining and lounge cars offering a premium feel.

Its disappearance comes after other similar overnight express services using sleeper cars — often painted blue, hence the nickname "Blue Train" — were discontinued amid a dwindling number of passengers as more people opt to travel by air or the faster shinkansen.

Train operator JR East, however, plans to start using Cassiopeia sleeper cars as a chartered service for package tours in June, with the name intact. —*Kyodo News*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Two Israelis killed in Istanbul blast were US nationals — Israel

JERUSALEM — Two Israeli citizens killed in a suicide bombing in Istanbul on Saturday were dual nationals, holding US citizenship as well, an Israeli official said on Saturday.

Asked whether he could confirm the two victims, whose names have not been released, were dual Israel-US nationals, Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon said "yes." —*Reuters*

Prince Charles visits Serbian church, returnees in Prizren

PRIZREN — Britain's Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall on Saturday visited the Cathedral church of St George in Prizren, Kosovo-Metohija, where they were welcomed by Bishop Theodosius of Raska and Prizren and the abbot of the Visoki Decani monastery, Sava Janjic.

Bishop Theodosius informed Prince Charles that many Serbian Orthodox churches were destroyed in the 17 March, 2004 pogrom against Kosovo Serbs, showing him images of the resulting devastation.

Afterwards, the Easter troparion was sung for Prince Charles, the RTK2 reported.

The Prince of Wales also met with a group of Serb returnees in Prizren.

They told him that they want to remain in their ancestral homes, to which he responded that he will pray for them.—*Tanjug*

North Korean leader Kim observes military landing exercises

BEIJING — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected landing and anti-landing exercises by the country's army, navy and air force, official state media reported yesterday.

While the report did not mention when the inspection took place, the drills may have been intended as a show of force in response to a massive landing exercise conducted jointly by US and South Korean troops on a southeastern coast of South Korea earlier this month.

The North Korean operations involved artillery units of an infantry division, surface ships of the navy and fighter planes of the air force, according to the Korean Central News Agency report.

Kim, the Korean People's Army's supreme commander, "expressed his great satisfaction over the successful drills," the agency said. The leader stressed "the need to elaborate the workable combat operations" of an amphibious battle to neutralise the enemy's anti-landing movements, it said.

The inspection was also attended by Hwang Pyong So, director of the KPA's General Political Bureau, and Ri Myong Su, chief of the General Staff of the military.—*Kyodo News*

Islamic State rocket kills US Marine in Iraq: Pentagon

WASHINGTON — A US Marine who was part of the coalition fighting Islamic State was killed in a rocket attack by the militant group in northern Iraq, the Pentagon said in a statement on Saturday.

It was the second combat death of an American service member in Iraq since the start of the campaign to fight the militant Islamic State group.

The Marine, who was providing force protection fire, died in the rocket attack at a base near Makhmur, a town between the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said.

Cook did not identify the Marine who had been killed. He said several other Marines had been wounded and were being treated for injuries.

A US defence official said two rockets had been fired. One did not cause any damage.—*Reuters*

Turkey's Davutoglu vows to continue fight against 'centres of terrorism'

ISTANBUL — Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu denounced the suicide bombing that killed five people and wounded 36 in Istanbul on Saturday as "inhumane" and said Turkey would continue its struggle against "centres of terrorism".

"No centre of terrorism will reach its aim with such monstrous attacks," he said in a written statement. "Our struggle will continue with the same resolution and determination until terrorism ends completely."—*Reuters*

‘I was a suicide bomber’: Paris suspect charged in Belgium

BRUSSELS/PARIS — The prime surviving suspect for the 13 November Paris attacks planned to blow himself up at a sports stadium with fellow Islamic State militants but changed his mind, he told Belgian investigators on Saturday.

The admission by Salah Abdeslam came a day after he was shot in the leg and captured during a police raid in Brussels, ending an intensive four-month manhunt.

“He wanted to blow himself up at the Stade de France and ... backed out,” said the lead French investigator, Francois Molins, quoting Abdeslam’s statement to a magistrate in Brussels before he was transferred to a secure jail in Bruges.

The gun and bomb attacks on the stadium, bars and a concert hall killed 130 people and marked the deadliest militant assault in Europe since 2004. Molins told reporters in Paris that people should treat with caution initial statements by the 26-year-old French national. But his capture and apparent urge to talk marked a major breakthrough for investigators after the trail had seemed to go cold.

Abdeslam’s lawyer said he admitted being in Paris during the attacks but gave no details. He told reporters his client, born and raised by Moroccan immigrants in Brussels, had cooperated with investigators but would fight extradition to France.

Legal experts said his challenge was unlikely to succeed but would buy him weeks, possibly months, to prepare his defence.

Belgian prosecutors charged Abdeslam and a man arrested with him with “participation in terrorist murder”.

Belgian police officers secure an access to the federal police headquarters in Brussels, on 19 March 2016, after Salah Abdeslam, the most-wanted fugitive from November’s Paris attacks, was arrested after a shootout with police in Brussels on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Abdeslam’s elder brother Brahim, with whom he used to run a bar, was among the suicide bombers. Salah’s confession suggested he was the 10th man mentioned in an Islamic State claim of responsibility for the attacks, after which police found one suicide vest abandoned in garbage.

Abdeslam’s family, who had urged him to give himself up, said through their lawyer that they had a “sense of relief”.

Authorities hope the arrest may help disrupt other militant cells that Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said were certainly “out there” and planning further violence. French security services stepped up their measures at frontier crossings after a global warning from Interpol that other fugitives might try to move country.

“We’ve won a battle against the forces of ignorance but the struggle isn’t over,” Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said. The case has raised tensions with France but Michel and French President Francois Hollande, who was in Brussels for an EU summit when Abdeslam was arrested, praised each other’s security services. Hollande was attending an international soccer match at the Stade de France when the bombers struck. A man using false papers in the names of Amine Choukri and Monir Ahmed Alaaj was also charged with terrorist murder. As Choukri, he was documented by German police in the city of Ulm in October when he was stopped in a car with Abdeslam. French prosecutor Molins said Abdeslam traveled widely to prepare the attacks. A third man in the house when the pair were arrested was charged with belonging to a terrorist organisation. He and a woman who was present were charged with concealing criminals.

Police had sought Abdeslam since he called two acquaintances in Belgium in a panic, hours after the attacks, to have them collect him and bring him home. Suspected to be as far away as Syria, it seems he was in Brussels all or most of the time.

Failure to complete his mission could have limited his access to any support from Syria-based Islamic State; the chief Belgian investigator on the case said he had instead relied on a network of friends, family and neighbours with whom he had a history of drug trafficking and petty crime.

Security agencies’ difficulties in penetrating some Muslim communities, particularly in pursuit of Belgium’s unusually high number of citizens fighting in Syria, have been a key factor in the inquiry.

As Parisians, and families of the victims, voiced relief at the arrest, French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said after an emergency cabinet meeting that a trial could answer questions for those who suffered in the attacks.

“Abdeslam will have to answer to French justice for his acts,” he said. “It is an important blow to the terrorist organisation Daesh (Islamic State) in Europe.”

A trickle of people came to a makeshift memorial in central Paris, near the scene of much of the bloodshed, to pay their respects.

“It’s really a relief,” said Emilien Bouthillier, who works in the neighbourhood. “I can’t wait for Belgium to transfer and return him to France so he can be tried the way he should be.”

Friday’s armed swoop came after Abdeslam’s fingerprints were found at an apartment following a bloody raid on Tuesday in which an Algerian was shot dead and police officers wounded. Later, local media said, a tip-off and a tapped telephone led police to a mobile phone number used by Abdeslam and, by triangulating the device’s location, established where he was. At his nearby newspaper store, a vendor named Dominique said Abdeslam had been well known and liked in the community: “He was a very nice lad before,” he said. “How can things go this far?”—*Reuters*

Sinai attack kills at least 13 Egyptian policemen

CAIRO — At least 13 Egyptian policemen were killed in the Sinai Peninsula when Islamist militants fired a mortar round at a security checkpoint in the city of Arish, security and medical sources said on Saturday.

Islamic State claimed responsibility on several websites for the attack, and Egyptian state media later confirmed it. Ambulances were subjected to heavy gunfire as they attempted to reach the wounded, the sources said. Eyewitnesses reported hearing a massive explosion and said the city’s entrances and exits had been closed off by security forces.

Security sources said government forces were later able to kill five of the militants who carried out the attack. Egypt is battling an insurgency that gained pace after its military overthrew President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt’s oldest Islamist movement, in mid-2013 following mass protests against his rule. The insurgency, mounted by Islamic State’s Egyptian branch Sinai Province, has killed hundreds of soldiers and police and started to attack Western targets within the country. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the former military chief who led Mursi’s ouster, describes Islamist militancy as an existential threat to Egypt, an ally of the United States. Islamic State controls large parts of Iraq and Syria and has a presence in Libya, which borders Egypt.—*Reuters*

Dozens killed in air strikes on Syria’s Raqqa

BEIRUT — Dozens of people were killed in a series of air strikes on the city of Raqqa in northern Syria on Saturday, a monitoring group and activists said, as Damascus and Moscow waged attacks on areas controlled by Islamic State.

A cessation of hostilities in Syria took effect three weeks ago, reducing violence but not halting the fighting as peace talks take place in Geneva. The deal does not include al Qaeda or Islamic State militants, whose de facto capital in Syria is Raqqa.

Russia has been pulling out its attack aircraft after announcing a partial withdrawal from Syria, where its air campaign in support of President Bashar al-Assad has turned fighting in his favour.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that at least 39 people had been killed and dozens more wounded in the raids on Raqqa.

An activist group with sources in Raqqa, called Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, said more than 40 had been killed, and that separate strikes hit areas in the north of Raqqa province.

The Observatory said the dead included seven women and five children. It said it was not clear whether Syrian or Russian warplanes had conducted the air strikes.—*Reuters*

Italy rescues 910 boat migrants, nearly 600 saved off Libya

MILAN/TRIPOLI — Italy’s coast guard said more than 900 migrants were rescued in four separate operations in the Strait of Sicily on Saturday, while Libyan authorities said they had rescued nearly 600 migrants from four boats, one of which sank.

A spokesman for Libyan naval forces, Ayoub Qassem, said the bodies of four dead women had been recovered, and some migrants were still missing. Italian emergency services recovered one corpse during their rescue operations. Now into the second year of its worst migration crisis since World War Two, Europe has seen more than 1.2 million people arrive since the beginning of 2015, most of them from Africa and the Middle East. Italy’s coast guard has continued to pick up migrants in trouble in the stretch of water between its southern coast and North Africa, although most people seeking a better life in Europe have taken less dangerous routes to Greece.

Libya has been in turmoil, and smuggling networks that send migrants across the Mediterranean towards Europe are deeply embedded there. The EU has warned that Libya could be the source of a new escalation of Europe’s migration crisis. Those rescued off the coast of western Libya on Saturday included migrants from sub-Saharan African countries and from Bangladesh, Qassem said.

More than 550 other migrants had been rescued in other operations between Wednesday and Friday, and 17 saved on Thursday had been seriously injured when their boat caught fire, he said.

The Italian coast guard said it had rescued 378 migrants in two separate operations on Saturday.

Another 112 migrants were picked up by a vessel operated for the European Union border agency Frontex and another 420 people by a ship under the EU’s EUNAVFOR mission in the Mediterranean. The coast guard gave no details on the nationalities of the victim or those rescued.—*Reuters*

Iran's leaders offer different economic visions for coming year

DUBAI — Iran's two most powerful figures offered contrasting visions for the economy in speeches marking Iranian new year yesterday, with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calling for self-reliance and President Hassan Rouhani urging cooperation with the world.

In Nowruz speeches, Khamenei and Rouhani looked back on the past year, which saw sanctions on Iran lifted under a nuclear deal with world powers, and agreed the economy should be a top priority in the new Iranian year.

But while Rouhani said further engagement with other countries was the key to economic growth, Khamenei reaffirmed his commitment to the concept of a "resistance economy" centred on self-sufficiency.

The competing messages underscore differences between the two leaders, who both subscribe to the principles of the Islamic Republic but have divergent ideas about how it should engage with the global economy and in particular Western powers.

"I am sure that with cooperation and effort inside the country, and constructive engagement with the world, our economy can bloom and develop," Rouhani said on the first day of the Iranian year 1395.

Khamenei declared 1395 the year of "the Resistance Economy: Action and Implementation", and said the Islamic Republic should take steps to reduce its vulnerability to the designs of its "enemies", meaning the United States and its allies. The 76-year-old cleric, Iran's highest authority, has consistently warned against allowing any form of Western influence to enter the Islamic Republic, and recently said the economy had not benefited from an influx of Western business delegations to Tehran.—*Reuters*

Bank Holiday

All banks will be closed on 23rd March (Wednesday FULL MOON OF TABAUNG 2016, being public holidays under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

Protestors hold signs during a campaign rally by Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump in Fountain Hills, Arizona on 19 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Anti-Trump protesters block Arizona road; march in New York

NEW YORK — Demonstrators briefly shut down an Arizona highway leading to a campaign rally for Donald Trump on Saturday while protesters rallied outside of Trump Tower in Manhattan to voice their opposition to the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination.

Television news footage of the demonstration outside Phoenix showed dozens of protesters blocking traffic while holding signs that read "Dump Trump" and "Shut Down Trump."

The demonstrators eventually started marching down the highway. Later, some were seen nearing the rally at Fountain Hills, Arizona, before Trump arrived.

Three people were arrested, according to police in Maricopa County, where Joe Arpaio, a well-known critic of US immigration policy and an ardent Trump supporter, serves as sheriff.

Video posted on news website Arizona Central's Facebook page showed a truck driving through a large group of protesters. Officers from the county police department worked to clear demonstrators from the motorist's path.

A woman is seen crying and shouting for officers to take responsibility to stop the vehicle, while a deputy sheriff shrugs at the suggestion.

Later at a rally in Tucson, Arizona, Trump said the protests were "disgraceful," and thanked police.

"They arrested three people and everybody else left... They left!" Trump said to roaring cheers from the audience.

"I love our police, but we should do a little bit more of that, you'd have a lot less protesters, you'd have a lot less agitators," said Trump, who is favored to win his party's nomination for the 8 November presidential election. Several demonstrations also broke out during the later rally, prompting police to escort out a number of people.

Footage of the Tucson rally shows an attendee punching and kicking one demonstrator who is being escorted out. The clip also shows police removing the attacker.

Trump has come under fire from rivals for fueling unrest with his rhetoric. This week, he warned of riots if Republicans denied him the nomination at the party's convention.

In Trump's home city of New York, about 1,000 demonstrators marched from Central Park to Trump Tower, the billionaire developer's signature building on Fifth Avenue.

The crowd of mostly young people chanted and carried placards denouncing Trump. Some said police used pepper spray on them as they marched from the park.

Police were seen taking at least one person into custody. A spokesman for the New York Police Department could not immediately confirm whether any arrests were made or whether pepper spray was used.—*Reuters*

Syria aid charities urge Cameron to help them navigate anti-terror laws

LONDON — The British government must do more to reduce the negative impact of anti-terror laws on Syrians' access to crucial humanitarian supplies, charities said yesterday.

In a letter to the prime minister, David Cameron, 12 UK-based aid organisations said "ambiguous" legislation was slowing down or blocking the flow of funds to Syria as it was encouraging some banks to become more risk averse.

"Regulators should proactively clarify the (anti money-laundering) regulations and ensure that banks act in a proportionate manner," the letter said.

Last month a Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation revealed the extent to which Western anti-terror laws were forcing aid agencies in Syria to avoid communities controlled by extremist groups.

In a survey, 21 aid organisations operating in Syria said banking regulations were making it harder for their staff to deliver vital supplies, leaving people vulnerable to radicalisation.

Despite a widespread truce that has lasted three weeks, Syria's government has refused to give permission for aid convoys to enter six areas under siege by its forces, a UN humanitarian adviser said on Thursday.

On Friday the UN World Food Programme said some Syrians in the besieged areas of Daraya and Deir al-Zor, under siege by government forces and Islamic State respectively, had been reduced to eating grass because food supplies were cut off.

Charities acknowledge that, in the wake of successive militant attacks in the United States and Europe, controls are needed to track the financing of groups such as Islamic State, including through SWIFT, the most widely used platform for bank transactions.

But in their letter, shown exclusively to the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the *Sunday Times* ahead of publication, the charities said a balance needed to be struck that encourages due diligence by banks without denying support to legitimate charities doing vital work.

Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron attends the donors Conference for Syria in London, Britain on 4 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

The letter was signed by the bosses of Islamic Relief, Christian Aid, Syria Relief, Responding to Conflict, Mercy Corps UK, Care International UK, CAFOD, Sawa Foundation UK, Muslim Charities Forum, Muslim Aid, Hand in Hand for Syria and BOND, a consortium of more than 400 charities.

It recommended the British government build on its "laudable humanitarian leadership" by bringing banks, aid agencies and the umbrella group, the British Bankers' Association together to find a way forward.

"Our politicians must act to ensure that life-saving funds can continue to reach those most in need," the letter concluded.—*Reuters*

Zanzibar holds disputed re-run vote amid tight security

ZANZIBAR — Tanzania's semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago went to the polls yesterday amid ramped-up security in a re-run of disputed elections that have been boycotted by the main opposition party.

Zanzibar's electoral authority annulled a previous ballot on 25 October on grounds of fraud. The opposition Civic United Front (CUF) says it won those elections and it has warned of violence on the Indian Ocean islands if Sunday's ballot goes ahead.

The CUF has urged its supporters to boycott the presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections in a move that could mean a shoo-in for the ruling CCM party.

Other smaller opposition parties are taking part in the vote, but elections in Zanzibar are usually tight two-horse races between the CCM and CUF.

Security was tight around polling stations. Zanzibar elections have previously been marred by violence.

"Polling stations in all the seven constituencies in our district opened at 7am (0400GMT) and voting is going on smoothly. People are turning out to cast their ballots peacefully in good numbers," Maalim Khamis Mussa, an election supervisor in the Zanzibar West B district told journalists. Zanzibar authorities temporarily banned passenger ferry services between the semi-autonomous islands and mainland Tanzania yesterday, in what officials said was a move aimed at making sure there were no disruptions to voting.—*Reuters*

"Somei Yoshino" cherry blossom that bloomed in the central Japan city of Fukuoka seven days earlier than usual on 19 March 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

'Cherry blossom front' begins tour north through Japan archipelago

TOKYO — The annual "cherry blossom front" began its journey Saturday as this spring's first blooming of the "Somei Yoshino" variety was reported in parts of Japan, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

Saturday's bloom in Fukuoka, in southwestern Japan, was four days earlier than usual and in Nagoya, central Japan, it was seven days early, the agency said, attributing the early efflorescence to the warm weather. The weather agency and weather companies in Japan provide cherry blossom reports throughout the season, which usually begins in southern parts of Japan before proceeding northward.

The timing of the blooming is a source of interest for the tourism agency, not only because of cherry blossom-loving Japanese, but also as foreign tourists hope to travel to see the trees in full bloom.—*Kyodo News*

Brunei mulls public transportation terminals in 'strategic places'

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN — Brunei's Ministry of Communications is planning to establish passenger terminals in every strategic place in a bid to improve public transportation in the sultanate, local daily *Brunei Times* reported yesterday.

During the 12th Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting, Minister of Communications Hj Mustappa said that the country needs an alternative form of transportation that is efficient and offers various connectivity.

"The increasing number of private cars in the country indicates the need for an alternative form of transportation that is efficient and sufficient for domestic connectivity," he said.

"The implementation of passenger terminals could improve the standard of public transport in the country."

The minister said that under the passenger terminal concept, buses will stop at strategic places such as airport, government buildings, hospitals, hotels and some interesting places for the public and tourists.

He said that the bus station in the capital should not be there and should be turned into a passenger terminal instead.

"We want buses to keep moving instead of taking long breaks at the station in the capital," he added.—*Xinhua*

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(4 / 2016)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-091(15-16)	Skid Mounted Crude Transfer Pump (300GPM x 500PSI) with Engine (1) Set	US$
(2)	IFB-092(15-16)	Skid Mounted Crude Transfer Pump (200GPM x 150FT HD) with Engine (1) Set	US$
(3)	IFB-093(15-16)	Spares for NKK Compressor KJB2 with Waukesha L7042 Gas Engine (24) Items	US$
(4)	IFB-094(15-16)	Spares for NKK Compressor KB2 with Waukesha H2475 Gas Engine (21) Items	US$
(5)	IFB-095(15-16)	CNG Filling Dispenser (2) Units	US$
(6)	IFB-096(15-16)	Spares for P9390GL Waukesha Engine / Cooper MH64 Compressor and Ariel JGk4 Compressor (26) Items	US$
(7)	IFB-097(15-16)	Spares for Ajax DPC600 Compressor (20) Items	US$
(8)	IFB-098(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha 12VAT 27GL Engine (42) Items	US$
(9)	IFB-099(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha L 7042 GSI Engine and Ariel JGK4 Compressor (9) Items	US$
(10)	IFB-100(15-16)	Spares for Waukesha F2895 Engine and Ariel JGE2 Compressor (53) Items	US$
(11)	IFB-101(15-16)	Spares for FLC504 Derrick Shaker Unit (7) Items	US$
(12)	IFB-102(15-16)	Coalescing Gas Filters (Horizontal Type) (2) Nos	US$
(13)	IFB-103(15-16)	Maintenance and Inspection Requirements for Ywama Gas Distribution Station (1) Lot	US$
(14)	IFB-104(15-16)	Maintenance and Inspection Requirements for PLC (Daw Nyein) (1) Lot	US$
(15)	DMP/L-018(15-16)	HP Ao Copier / Plotter and Digital Multi Function Colour Copier (A3) for Geological Use (2) Items	KS
(16)	DMP/L-019(15-16)	M.S Plate, M.S Rod & Angle Iron for Craft Boats (6) Nos Repairing Job	KS
(17)	DMP/L-020(15-16)	M.S Plate, M.S Pipe, M.S Rod & Angle Iron for River Craft MTB-5 Repairing Job	KS
(18)	DMP/L-021(15-16)	Air Compressor (4" x 4" Reciprocating with 12-13HP Diesel Engine) (4) Sets	KS
(19)	DMP/L-022(15-16)	Water Transfer Pump with Motor and Water Transfer Pump with Engine (2) Items	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 28-4-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 21st March, 2016 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph . +95 67 - 411097 / 411206

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Obama visit an 'opening act' for Rolling Stones concert in Cuba

Rolling Stones production manager, Dale 'Opie' Skjerseth, talks with the media next to the stage to be used for the Rolling Stones' free outdoor concert on 25 March at Ciudad Deportiva de la Habana sports complex, Havana, on 19 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

HAVANA — The Rolling Stones were meant to play a rock 'n' roll show in Havana yesterday but were delayed five days because of the inconvenient arrival of another foreign visitor: US President Barack Obama.

Obama lands yesterday for a 48-hour visit 15 months after he reversed more than half a century of US policy on Cuba and started normalising relations with the former Cold War adversary.

The Stones' Latin American tour happened to roughly coincide and the band was at first set to play Havana yesterday, but organisers then learned of the Obama trip and postponed the show until Friday, the band's production manager said.

"At one point we thought he (Obama) was coming to the show," Dale "Opie" Skjerseth told reporters on Saturday from the outdoor sports complex where the Stones will play.

"He's our opening act," Skjerseth joked.

The Stones added the free show to the end of a Latin American tour, becoming the first major international rock stars to play Cuba.

"They like to be the first of everything," Skjerseth said.

He said the band members were also aware their music and that of the Beatles and Elvis Presely were once banned by the Communist government as "ideological deviation."

"They figured they'd like to come here and give it (rock) to them," Skjerseth said.

Havana is preparing for Obama with an extraordinary street-paving campaign and restricting areas he will visit for security reasons. At the same time, the groundwork for the Stones production has also been impressive if not unprecedented for Cuba.

The band brought in 61 shipping containers with an estimated 500 tonnes of equipment such as the stage, speakers, lights and video screens, Skjerseth said. A Boeing 747 arrived on Friday from Mexico carrying the last of the equipment, he said.

A crew of 140 Stones employees and at least 80 Cubans have set up on grounds including a football field and adjoining baseball fields with room for hundreds of thousands of spectators, who are invited to arrive for free on a first-come, first-served basis.—*Reuters*

I dyed my hair first time when I was 9: Kylie Jenner

LOS ANGELES — Reality TV star Kylie Jenner has revealed she first changed her raven-coloured locks when she was merely nine-year-old.

The model, 18, took to Twitter to share a throwback picture of her hair.

"I begged my mom for a year to dye my hair and finally at 9-year-old she let me do this and only this! Changed everything," she wrote alongside the photo.

The "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" star is still experimenting with her tresses but she has admitted there is one trusty hair piece she always turns to.

"My favourite is the plain black one with bangs. When my hair's been braided or it just doesn't look good. I'll wear it for the day, which is so easy."

"I've never been shy about the fact that I wear wigs, so I thought it would be really fun to show everybody my whole collection. I've got 15 altogether," she said.—*PTI*

DiCaprio receives 'wonderful gift' from Russian filmmakers

Leonardo DiCaprio, nominated for Best Actor for his role in "The Revenant," arrives at the 88th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California, on 28 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Leonardo DiCaprio has received a customized version of Oscar from a group of Russian filmmakers celebrating his performance in "The Revenant".

The trophy the 41-year-old actor has received, holds a Choron instead of a sword, in a substitution symbolising peace.

DiCaprio shared the picture of the "wonderful gift" on Instagram.

"Thank you to the people of Yakutia for this wonderful gift, especially all of the women who gathered and donated the materials that went into creating the statue.

"As they wrote in their letter, Yakutia is home to the coldest inhabited place not only in Russia, but also on Earth — and the region is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Rising temperatures pose a major threat to its people, their way of life and their natural habitat," he wrote in caption.

Local women from Yakutia, among others were asked to give half of their jewellry for the statue.—*PTI*

Victoria Beckham opens second fashion store

LONDON — Singer-turned-fashion designer Victoria Beckham unveiled her second fashion store in Hong Kong.

The former Spice Girl launched the flagship store for her eponymous label in London in 2014, and she has now expanded her brand by opening a second retail space, which has been designed by the same architect Farshid Moussavi, in the region's upmarket Central district, reported Contactmusic.

Beckham, 41, flew into Hong Kong earlier this week to put the finishing touches to her store, and she said she has been involved in all aspects of the project.

"The process wasn't easy... Opening a store is a huge project. Together with my team, I've worked really hard to get to this point," she said.

"It's important to me that I'm part of the decision making in all areas, whether that's deciding what the changing rooms look like, to what fragrance we use in store, to what the receipts look like.

I enjoy all of that, and I'm a perfectionist. I believe it's all in the details.—*PTI*

Prince set to write memoir titled 'The Beautiful Ones'

LOS ANGELES — Musician Prince has announced he is writing a memoir, due for release in fall 2017.

Tentatively titled "The Beautiful Ones, the book will be published by Spiegel & Grau, an imprint of Random House.

Prince officially announced the book at a music industry event, telling the audience he intends to start from his first memory and hopefully go all the way up to the Super Bowl, said the Hollywood Reporter.

"This is my first (book)," Prince said.

"My brother Dan is helping me with it. He's a good critic and that's what I need. He's not a 'yes' man at all and he's really helping me get through this."

"We're starting from the beginning from my first memory and hopefully we can go all the way up to the Super Bowl," the singer added.

The official press release for the book said it promises to "take readers on an unconventional and poetic journey through his life and creative work.—*PTI*

Sydney among first cities to switch off lights for Earth Hour

SYDNEY — Cities on Australia's east coast were among the first in the world to turn lights out on Saturday for the 10th annual Earth Hour, a global lights out event designed to highlight the threat from climate change.

The Sydney Opera House, normally brightly lit, switched off its lights at 8:30pm (0930 GMT), along with the Sydney Harbour Bridge and dozens more buildings across the city and Australia.

More than 350 landmark buildings across the world including the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building and Taipei 101 will follow suit.

This year's theme is a celebration of "Places We Love," such as beaches, forests, reefs, snow-capped mountains and rivers which could be at risk from climate change.

Organisers hope this year's Earth Hour can tap a "new momentum" in climate action following world leaders' Paris agreement in December.

That agreement set a course for global carbon emissions reduction to a net zero by 2100, shifting from fossil fuels in favour of greener energies such as solar and wind power.

Average global temperatures last month were 1.35 degree Celsius (2.4 Fahrenheit) above normal for February, the biggest temperature excess recorded for any month against a baseline of 1951-80, according to NASA data released last weekend.

The Sydney Opera House can be seen after its lights were switched off for Earth Hour in Sydney, Australia, on 19 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Earth Hour Global executive director Siddarth Das, said in a statement that the world is at a "climate crossroads".

"From living rooms to classrooms and conference rooms, people are demanding climate action," he said.

"Earth Hour reminds us that while people are on the frontline of climate change, they are also our first line of defence."

"Our actions today, as individuals and the global community, have the power to transform what the world will look like for generations to come."

Earth Hour began in Sydney in 2007 as an initiative of conservation group WWF and went global in 2008, attracting 50 million people, organisers say.

This year organisers say events will be held in 178 countries and territories.—*Reuters*

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(21-3-2016, Monday)

6:00 am
- Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw

7:35 am
- People's Talks

8:35 am
- Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society)

9:35 am
- Documentary (ASEAN)

10:35 am
- Weekly Entertainment News

11:15 am
- Documentary

11:35 am
- MRTV's Youth Programme

12:35 pm
- TV Drama Series

1:20 pm
- Tasty Trip

2:00 pm
- Gitadagale Phwintbaohn

3:35 pm
- MRTV Job Opportunity Programme

4:35 pm
- University Distance Education (TV Lecatures) — Second Years (Psychology)

5:35 pm
- Socio Economic Scenes

6:35 pm
- Year or No Talk Show (Season-1, Epsode-5, Final Part-2)

7:15 pm
- TV Drama Series

8:00 pm
- News / International News/ Weather Report
- Analysis For Myanmar Movie

9:00 pm
- News
- TV Drama Series
- Documentary (Part-1)

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Indian boy spells 'philhellenism' to win Japan spelling bee

TOKYO— Twelve-year-old Sidaarth Kumarevel correctly spelled "philhellenism" to win a spelling bee competition in Japan held Saturday in Tokyo, winning a ticket to the US annual contest in May.

Kumarevel, an Indian boy studying at Tathva International Secondary School in Tokyo, beat 37 other contestants aged 8 to 14 years. He earned a place to represent Japan at the Scripps National Spelling Bee to be held in National Harbor, Maryland.

Describing his feeling of winning the *Japan Times* Bee as "overwhelmed," Kumarevel told reporters, "I know the word and just used it this morning."

Philhellenism means "the love of Greek culture."

The 12-year-old, whose prizes included a book written by US Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy, said he practices spelling by using Quizlet, a website learning tool to help studying of English words.

His father Thirumananseri Kumarevel said his son studied "so hard" with no parental guidance for about two months before the competition.

Students compete to spell difficult English words, and once students misspell a word they are eliminated. Contestants are allowed to ask the presenter to define the word, provide its origin and to use it in a sample sentence.

After roughly three hours of competition, the final round pitted Kumarevel, competing in the bee for the first time, against runner-up Vishwag Paleri, 12, from India International School in Japan.—*Kyodo News*

Sidaarth Kumarevel, a 12-year-old Indian boy living in Tokyo, holds the trophy after winning a spelling bee on 19 March 2016 organised by The Japan Times. A total of 38 participants aged eight to 14 competed in the event. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

mitv Myanmar International

(21-3-2016 07:00am ~ 22-3-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Myanmar Delicate Artistic Creations- Gem Stone Painting
07:45	Am	Colourful Threads
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Pa Khan Traditional Nat Festival In Ku Ni Village (Part- III)
08:44	Am	Myanmar HR Conference (Part- II)
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	A Tour in South Korea (Part- III)
09:37	Am	MONASTERY (Bargayar Kyaung)
09:52	Am	Parents' Day
10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	Products Of Myanmar - Stone Of The Heavens
10:52	Am	Writer

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

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:27	Pm	Food Trip (EP-4) (Part-2)
07:52	Pm	Kyaikhteeyoe: Bamboo Guns
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Shan- Flat-Rice-Noodle Soup)
08:42	Pm	Kid's Home
08:47	Pm	Entrepreneur "Nan Ei Ei Zar"

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

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

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

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

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(21-3-2016, Monday)

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

7:50 pm
- Korea TV Drama Series

8:40 pm
- Cartoon Programme "BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE (Part-XV)"

9:00 pm
- Music Programme

9:20 pm
- A May Yay Yin Nat Festival (Part – 2)

9:40 pm
- International Movie Songs

9:50 pm
- Dances

10:00 pm
- Myanmar Movie

Midnight
- Close Down.

From 21-3-2016 (Monday) 6:00 Pm
To 22-3-2016(Tuesday) 6:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

13th Waxing of Tabaung 1377 ME | Monday, 21 March, 2016

Rosberg wins dramatic season-opener in Melbourne

MELBOURNE — Nico Rosberg won a dramatic Australian Grand Prix yesterday after a bungled tyre strategy dashed Sebastian Vettel's chances of a season-opening triumph and Fernando Alonso survived a spectacular crash that left his McLaren wrecked.

Rosberg's 15th Formula One victory was also his fourth in succession after the German Mercedes driver won the final three races of last season.

Pole-sitter Lewis Hamilton battled back to secure a Mercedes one-two after the defending world champion recovered from a chaotic start that pushed him back to sixth at the first turn to finish eight seconds behind his team mate.

Four-times world champion Vettel came third for Ferrari after leading for much of the race, but the German's victory hopes faded with an aggressive tyre strategy that fell flat after the race was halted due to Alonso's crash.

"The strategy was crucial today, so I'm really thankful the team did a good job on that," ecstatic German Rosberg told reporters.

"The car's just been unreal today... We've got to keep an eye on the red guys (Ferrari), they are very close as you saw today."

Ferrari enjoyed a brilliant start, with Vettel able to carve through the front-row occupying Mercedes duo on the run to the first turn.

His Finnish team mate Kimi Raikkonen also got off to a flyer and he darted up the side to claim second place as Rosberg's rear left tyre made contact with Hamilton's front wing.

Vettel appeared poised for an unlikely win but the race turned on its head when Alonso crashed into Haas driver Esteban Gutierrez at high speed going into turn three of the 18th lap.

The Spaniard's car careened into a barrier and was smashed to pieces before it flipped, rolled and flew end-over-end into another barrier.

Alonso walked away from the wreckage but the red flag came out to halt the race for around 10 minutes as track staff swept away debris and repaired the barriers.

During the break, Mercedes opted to run both cars on medium compound tyres and rode them to the finish, while Ferrari took the more aggressive route, sticking with their super-softs, which were quicker but ultimately required another stop.

The mistake proved costly and was compounded when Vettel's next tyre change was botched, while Raikkonen's race was over on lap 23 when an engine failure forced him out and he reached the pits with flames shooting out of the top of his car.

Mercedes F1 driver Nico Rosberg (L) celebrates after winning the Australian Formula One Grand Prix as third-place Ferrari F1 driver Sebastian Vettel looks on in Melbourne on 20 March 2016.
PHOTO: REUTERS

"Obviously the red flag didn't help us," Vettel said.

"We went for the aggressive route but maybe with hindsight we may have gone with something else," the German added of the tyre strategy.—*Reuters*

Crystal clear as leaders Leicester march on

LONDON — Indomitable Leicester City stayed bang on course for the Premier League title as Riyad Mahrez scored the only goal at Crystal Palace on Saturday to open up an eight-point lead with seven games left.

Third-placed Arsenal, 11 points behind with a game in hand, made a timely return to form with a 2-0 win at Everton and Tottenham Hotspur can reduce the gap to five on Sunday.

But any hopes that the two London rivals and fourth-placed Manchester City harbour of Leicester imploding are fading fast.

Leicester's 3,000 fans were chanting "We're gonna win the league" long after their side's 1-0 win at Selhurst Park and while manager Claudio Ranieri refuses stubbornly to acknowledge his side are favourites, few would bet against the Foxes completing the job now.

"I think now we are close to achieving the Champions League," was as far as Ranieri was prepared to venture when addressing reporters afterwards.

"That is a great achievement, but it is step by step," the Italian, whose side need 18 points to be guaranteed the most unlikely of titles, added.

"It sounds good, our fans are singing a very good song about that, but we need to stay calm."

Leicester's 13th league victory this season by a single-goal margin came courtesy of the outstanding Algerian Mahrez.

With 34 minutes on the clock, England call-up Danny Drinkwater fed Jamie Vardy and his precise cross was an open invitation for Mahrez which he accepted with glee.

Palace did hit the bar late on through Damien Delaney but Leicester hung on for a fourth win in five league games.

"You can see they play with confidence, they have momentum, a great balance to the team. They will be difficult to catch," Palace boss Alan Pardew said. "They would be worthy champions."

West Ham United's hope of barging into the top four suffered a late setback at Chelsea where they were denied victory by Cesc Fabregas's dubious late penalty.

Substitute Andy Carroll had put West Ham 2-1 ahead and had it stayed that way, they would have moved above Manchester City into a Champions League berth.

But Fabregas, who also scored Chelsea's first equaliser with a free kick, left them frustrated and angry after converting from the spot after Ruben Loftus-Cheek tumbled in the area despite being clipped outside it.—*Reuters*

Mourinho signed Manchester United pre-contract in February

LONDON — Jose Mourinho signed a pre-contract in February to take over as manager of Manchester United in place of Louis van Gaal at the end of the season, Spanish newspaper El Pais reported yesterday, citing sources close to the Portuguese.

Former Chelsea, Real Madrid and Inter Milan coach Mourinho has been persistently linked in the media with the Old Trafford job since departing Stamford Bridge for the second time in December.

Under the terms of the agreement, the report said, United would have to pay Mourinho five million pounds if they did not offer him a full contract by 1 May and another 10 million pounds if they failed to give him the job by 1 June.

Van Gaal signed a three-year contract in May 2014 but is not expected to see out the deal with fans unhappy with the style of play and the club in sixth place in the Premier League going into Sunday's Manchester derby. The report, which cited a source with links to the company run by Mourinho's agent Jorge Mendes, said United wanted a flexible deal because of a split in the Old Trafford board as to whether the 53-year-old was the right choice for the club. —*Reuters*

Djokovic to meet Raonic in Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS — Defending champion and top seed Novak Djokovic moved a step closer to a fifth title at Indian Wells with a 7-6(5), 6-2 victory over long-time rival Rafa Nadal in the semi-finals of the BNP Paribas Open in California on Saturday.

Djokovic and Nadal treated the fans to several compelling rallies at the sun-baked Indian Wells Tennis Garden but the Serb, for the most part, held the upper hand and broke his opponent twice in the second set to secure victory.

After a protracted encounter that lasted nearly two hours, Australian Open champion Djokovic booked his place in Sunday's final where he will meet Canadian Milos Raonic, a 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 winner against Belgian David Goffin.

"There were things that I could have done better but I finished off the match very well and I am very pleased to get through to the final," Djokovic told ESPN in a courtside interview after improving his record against Nadal to 25-23.

"The first set was very close and decided by one or two points in a tiebreaker and I was just fortunate to get through that one."

"The second was back and forth and midway through I managed to make that crucial break that allowed me to start playing more aggressive. Overall, it was a tough match but that is what you expect when you play Rafa."

Breaks of serve were traded in the second and third games of an eagerly awaited showdown, before Nadal later squandered a set point in the 10th game when he netted a forehand.

Though the Spaniard came from 2-5 down in the tie-breaker to level at 5-5, Djokovic edged ahead 6-5 after a strong first serve before clinching the set after a little more than an hour when his opponent netted a backhand.

Nadal came under increasing pressure to hold serve in the second set as Djokovic dominated their baseline exchanges and the Spanish left-hander finally cracked in the sixth game when he dumped another forehand into the net to trail 2-4.

Serving at 2-5, Nadal clawed his way back from 0-40 and saved five match points in all before another tired shot from the baseline sailed long to hand victory to Djokovic.

Earlier, big-serving Raonic overcame a second-set wobble against the 15th-seeded Goffin to reach his third ATP Masters 1000 final.

"I lost my way a little bit (in the second set), I got into his rhythm," the towering Raonic said after sealing victory in two hours to improve his record for the year to 14-1.

"But I really went for it in the third set and it came together. The most important thing for me was to stick to my identity and it was great to play here in my second (successive) semi-final and make the most of it."—*Reuters*

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