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DOOR TO PEACE OPENED

C-in-C of Defence Services expresses his commitment to achieving peace within five years

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing voiced his plan that the Tatmadaw and the government will make efforts to achieve peace in the five-year term.

"I want eternal peace. That's what I said to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We'll make efforts to achieve peace in this five year term," said the Senior General yesterday when meeting with media at Bayintnaung Yeiktha in Nay Pyi Taw.

"The door is open to those who wish to sign the peace agreement. I've been saying so from time to time. We're treading on the democratic path," said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing regarding the attitude of the Tatmadaw towards peace.

"If we don't protect the administrative machinery, we will be, I'm sure, in great trouble. We protect Our Three Main National Causes. We protect the lives and property of the people. If an institution of the administration is attacked, we cannot stay aloof with our arms folded," he added.

The Tatmadaw has to fight, regardless of whoever the attacker is because the very duty of the Tatmadaw is to defend against internal and external enemies, he said.

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Senior General Min Aung Hlaing speaking at a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw.
PHOTO: MYAWADY

Licence issuance for LPG importers, distributors and sellers set for completion before this July

THE issuance of business licences for import, storage, distribution and sale of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is set for completion before this July in conjunction with educative talks, according to a press conference of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 May.

Business licences will be issued to companies meeting the prescribed rules following tours of

inspection of teams from the ministry, said Daw Khin Khin Aye, Assistant Secretary of the Energy Ministry.

Under a plan to make sure that retail LPG shops across regions and states can legally operate their businesses in a systematic way and ensure fire prevention, the ministry has introduced five types of business licenses for import, storage, distribution and sale of LPG, added

the assistant secretary.

According to the ministry, business licence (Category A) that allows the importing, storing and distribution of LPG with the use of terminals and jetties had been issued to seven private firms and business licence (Category B) that allows importing, storing and distributing LPG with the use of storage tanks and cylinder warehouse to six companies.—*Thein Ko Lwin*

Security team to be formed for safety of foreign dignitaries in Yangon

Ko Moe

YANGON Region Chief Minister said that a security team of international standards will be formed to ensure VVIP security for leaders of foreign countries during their visits to Yangon.

It is because the Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon International Airports are used to welcome international leaders, said the

Chief Minister.

"It is required that we set up a security team that can keep abreast of international standards and protocols. If not so, we will be asked to allow foreign security guards to perform this security task."

Regarding a budget for the establishment of the security team,

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Three ministries submit proposal for US\$200 million loan from World Bank

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday heard union ministers explaining why a US\$200 million loan should be taken from the World Bank to be spent on emergency recovery projects dedicated to rehabilitating damaged infrastructure, public and private property caused by the passage of the Cyclone Komen in July last year.

Construction Union Minister U Win Khaing said that his ministry would use \$105m on the reconstruction of disaster-resistant transport infrastructure in disaster-hit areas in several states and regions.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Thu asked for \$70m to be spent on renovation work to rural transport infrastructure and the purchase of machinery.

Planning and Finance Union



Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Kyaw Win.

PHOTO: MNA

Minister U Kyaw Win said that his ministry would need \$15 million for its project management in emergency and recovery.

The World Bank's terms and conditions for the \$200m interest-free loan include a six-year concessional period with 32-year

repayment plus an annual service charge of 0.75%.

The country is US\$9.164b in debt, which the planning and finance union minister said is an amount regarded as moderate in terms of its level of debt resistance. The Cyclone Komen brought unusual rainfall last July, with two thirds of the country affected by unprecedented flooding and hundreds of thousands of people being left homeless.

The parliament passed a proposal for Myanmar's entry into the Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Convention.

On 17 May, the parliament will debate the World Bank's loan and the nomination of U Kyaw Tint Swe as union minister for the State Counsellor's office.—Myanmar News Agency

Cooperation with stakeholders needed to ensure rule of law, transformation of judicial sector

UNION Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo called for cooperation between law offices, courts, the Myanmar Police Force, parliamentary committees and international partners to realise the country's drive for ensuring the rule of law and the transformation of the judicial sector. He also called on all law officers at various levels to strive for ensuring the rule of law and justice inspired by the people in order to win public trust while meeting with region/state advocates-general in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his address, the Union

Attorney-General highlighted the importance of commitments of law officers to successful realisation of the government's reform process and its 100-day plan.

He emphasized the need for making the law society corruption free in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations and directives.

During the meeting, those present reported on ongoing works and future tasks and directors-general of the Attorney-General Offices made supplementary reports.—Myanmar News Agency

C-in-C of Defence Services expresses his commitment to achieving peace ...

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Regarding the fightings with the KIA, the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services said the Tatmadaw did not go there to attack their troops, but the Tatmadaw had to prevent KIA troops from committing aggressive acts as they entered the territory of the Tatmadaw.

"We really want peace. A democratic country is what the Tatmadaw wants most. Depending on the results of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, we have to continue to discuss peace. There are still some armed groups that haven't signed the NCA yet. Only after signing can they proceed to the next step of demanding political rights. Demanding rights without signing the NCA is impossible," the senior general said.

He also offered the olive branches to TNLA, AA and MNDAA, saying that the armed groups are required to give up their weapons. They should guarantee that arms will be exchanged for peace. If they don't abandon arms and come to the peace conference, what about

those who've signed the NCA, he added.

"We should be fair to the signatories. We won't use the term 'surrender' in order not to offend their dignity. But we just want them to abandon their arms," said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Regarding the term 'Rohingya', the Senior General said there is no such ethnic group recognised in the country. Former USDP party President U Thein Sein also, in his time as president, shared this sentiment.

"I'd unambiguously say our country has no such ethnic group as the Rohingya. We have only 'Bengalis'. We call them so because they come from Bangladesh.

The British brought these people into our country for different reasons," said the Senior General.

Asked if he has any plans to retire from the Tatmadaw this year, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing replied that he has no intention to retire and will continue to be in the Tatmadaw for as long as he is able.—Myawady

GAP certificates to be issued to qualified growers this year

THE Vegetables and Fruit Research and Development Centre (VFRDC) will offer Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certificates to eligible fruit and vegetable growers this year, its spokesperson said.

"We plan to provide the GAP certificates to mango and pomelo farmers first," said Daw Kyin Kyin Win, deputy director of the VFRDC.

The VFRDC is now accepting application letters sent by those wishing to receive a GAP certificate for 45 different kinds of fruits and vegetables. Members of the VFRDC are making a field trip to the applicants' farms. They mainly inspect and test the contamination of arsenic, mercury and lead in the earth.

The aims of issuing the GAP certificate are to reduce environmental impact upon farming as well as to promote food safety standard and worker's health.

The certificate verifies that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimise risks of microbial food safety hazards. The certificate holders will get a better price for their products, which are also expected to enter the international market. Many countries throughout ASEAN tend to use excessive amounts of pesticides on their crops, primarily due to lack of technical advice.

Roughly 10% of pesticide products used in Myanmar come across the border and are unreg-

istered and banned, according to a 2010 study by the Institute of Strategic International Studies (ISIS).

The same report calls for a crack down on the use of pyrethroids and organophosphates; the latter being noted as 'very highly toxic' in the report. But due to porous borders and lack of enforcement these compounds still make their way onto crops.

Pesticides are not only known to cause harm amongst humans and the environment, but can also have a negative impact on the agriculture economy of the exporting country, mainly through produce being destroyed due to high levels of pesticide in the food content.—Chan Chan

Mandalay's Mingalar Market fire victims call for major repairs

SHOP owners from the fire-gutted Mandalay Mingalar Market expressed their willingness to repair the market at a press conference yesterday.

"We are afraid of being relocated to new places from our original shops. We cannot afford to pay for the construction of a new market," they told the media, calling for only major repairs to the fire-ravaged market.

While meeting with the shop owners on Monday, U Khin Maung Tint, member of the Mandalay City Development Committee, sought to hear their

desires and concerns regarding whether to repair or replace the market, saying that the strength of the building has become weak due to the fire.

He also pointed out that the market building is not an earthquake resistant structure.

According to the MCDC, temporary shops for the fire victims are set to be built on a football ground and works are underway to kick off construction.

A fire that gutted the Mingalar Market on 22 March left 297 shops damaged.—Aung Thant Khaing



Shop owners from the fire-gutted Mingalar Market gather at their press conference. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Security team to be ...

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the regional government will seek help from the Union government if the budget it has is not enough, he added. Police Col Win Bo said that the Yangon Region Police Force holds coordination with respective embassies to ensure security for foreign dignitaries on their state visits. According to the Myanmar Police Force, there is a rate of one police officer per 1,274 population in Myanmar.

As the government's 100-day plan kicked off as of 1 May, 70 per cent of the police strength of 5,780 officers in Yangon Region are set to be used for security measures together with 200 additional police members from police battalions.

Religious titles conferred on monks who passed Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examinations

A ceremony to honour 79 monks who passed the 68th Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examinations organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture was held at Maha Pasana Cave in Thiri Mingalar Kaba-Aye hillock in Yangon yesterday.

Vice-President U Myint Swe, Union Ministers Dr Pe Myint and Thura U Aung Ko, Yangon Region Chief Minister

U Phyo Min Thein and officials presented religious titles and certificates to the monks.

During the ceremony, the congregation led by the Vice-President and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay offered provisions to the members of Sangha.

The Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examinations have been held in Myanmar for 68 years ago.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Vice President U Myint Swe seen offering title to a sayadaw. Photo: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers speech at the meeting of the Committee on Correctness and Accuracy of Statistics. PHOTO: MNA

Reliable statistics are essential for development policy formulation: Vice President

VALID and reliable statistics are essential for policy formulation, planning and implementation of undertakings and evaluation of development plans, said Vice-President U Henry Van Thio at a meeting of the Committee on Correctness and Accuracy of Statistics in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his address, the Vice President, who is also the patron of the committee, stressed the need for ensuring the validity and reliability of economic and social statistics that can reflect the real situation in the country as well as the timely collection of data.

He called on ministries and departments concerned to strive for compilation of health, education, forestry and land use statistics, saying that effective policies can be

formulated with the help of statistical accuracy and correctness.

He further stressed the need for improving the country's national statistical database and creating a platform involving all stakeholders that include departments concerned, businesspeople, NGOs and CSOs and the people.

Next, Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Kyaw Win said that the draft of a new legislation to replace the 1952 Central Statistical Authority Act had been sent to Parliament and the policies of National Statistical System had been delivered to ministries concerned.

Works are underway to implement the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics-NSDS through coordination

among respective sectors, added the Union minister.

During the meeting, those present reported on measures for the compilation of sector-wise statistics and evaluating them, the acquisition of technology in cooperation with foreign experts and development partners and capacity building of statistical staff.

According to the meeting, the NSDS being implemented by National Account Statistics, Survey Coordination and Statistical Standard, Social and Vital Statistics, Agriculture and Rural Sector Statistics, Energy and Environment Statistics and Trade and Investment Sector Statistics in cooperation with World Bank, ADB and IMF is set for completion this June.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Minister for Information meets editorial team of GNLM

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint held a meeting with the editorial team of the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) in Yangon yesterday, discussing issues relating to editorial freedom and ethical reporting.

The Union minister said public sector editors can enjoy complete editorial freedom under his ministerial direction, but advised caution, warning that the editorial board should be ethical when reporting on sensitive issues concerning politics, religion and racial affairs.

The minister added that news reports should be unbiased, agreeing with editorial staff that views from both sides of an argument should be reported in an authentic and fair manner. The minister expressed particular concern that the GNLM, as a representative of the government, should take special care not to incite instability.

The minister was briefed on

newsroom management and the progress of circulation by office staff before engaging with the editorial board on the issues of editorial freedom of reporting and the elimination of censorship.

GNLM's editorial board expressed their desires to freely report based on their own in-house editorial policies recently drafted to apply to international standards. The editorial policy was presented to the Minister as a gesture that care and discretion will be used when reporting on sensitive issues.

Discussion on extending GNLM's reportage out into ethnic areas was addressed with the Minister to ensure that the paper will serve the public. It was noted this will take time as the staff body builds its capacity.

The Global New Light of Myanmar is a joint venture between the News and Periodicals Enterprise and the Global Director Link Co Ltd.—*Myanmar News Agency/GNLM*

Eyes on new government to solve IDP woes

POLITICAL parties and organizations involved with assisting internal displaced persons (IDPs) have called on the new government to resolve the issues facing IDPs who have fled their homes because of fighting.

This coming 9 June 2016 will mark five years since the renewal of fighting in Kachin State. As such, calls are being made to the new government to resolve the problems of 120,000 IDPs from Kachin and Shan States and 20,000 from Rakhine State currently seeking shelter in IDP camps, who are likely to experience livelihood and mental difficulties from living in temporary accommodation for extended periods of time.

"There are people throughout Rakhine State that have fled their homes because of their proximity to the fighting. The public and political parties are starting to raise their voice towards the new union government as to how they are going to control these issues. President U Htin Kyaw led government has inherited responsibility

to display how they are going to practically implement change. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's side is yet to give any recommendation towards [how to resolve] the current incidents taking place in Kachin and Rakhine States," said Dr Aye Maung, chair of the Arakan National Party (ANP). International assistance to IDP camps has waned of late which could see IDPs seeking long term shelter in these camps experience difficulties with their livelihoods.

"IDPs are hopeful they will be able to return during the term of the new government. But in order to return home, it's imperative their villages are safe and free from danger. Those seeking refuge for long periods of time acquire needs. We're hopeful the new government can work for the affairs of IDPs and an end to continued fighting," said Gunsaw Aung, program coordinator of the Metta Foundation, a provider of assistance to IDPs camps in Kachin and Northern Shan States.

There are roughly 50,000 IDPs who are seeking shelter

along the Kachin – Chinese border, while the numbers of IDPs living in urban centres in Kachin and Shan States is numbered at over 100,000.

"We are in need of food rations. Since we can't return home we've to go off to find work as day labourers, living in temporary shacks that we erect ourselves. The monastery doesn't have the capacity to fit anymore IDPs as there's already over 800 here, so we have to live in a shack. People seeking shelter say they want the new government to urgently bring peace to the region," said U Aung Myat, a staff from an IDP camp which sits alongside the Lashio – Muse highway. There are over 160 IDP camps spread across Kachin and Northern Shan States. Staff at these camps wish to call on the new government to resolve difficulties with food rations, allow for IDP children to be able to attend school when schools reopen for the new academic year, and repair the roofing of IDP camps which has been damaged.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Rural people receive vocational skills



Rural people attending a basic computer course. PHOTO: TUN TUN NAING

THE rural people of Kyaukse have received vocational skills at a one-month training course conducted by the local Rural Area Development Department.

The training, which is part of the Emerald Green project, be-

gan on 2 May. Ten villagers are attending the training course.

"We emphasise basic computer courses but we are also conducting other vocational training courses like agriculture and livestock breeding. This

course is only for the people from one village. So, people from other villages can attend such courses next time," said U Soe Myint,

staff officer from Kyautse Township Rural Development Department.—Tun Tun Naing

Car accident kills one person, seriously injures six



The car seen crashing into a house. PHOTO: 085

A SIX-wheel vehicle crashed into a house on Kopin-Thagaya road near Warseitmyaung village, Hsinpaungwe township, Magwe region on Tuesday leaving one dead and six injured.

The vehicle, carrying fire

wood and being driven by one Zaw Zaw, 30, with four passengers onboard crashed into the home of U Thaug when the driver lost control between mileposts 61/1-2. The accident killed one Ko Htway on the spot while three

passengers from the vehicle, two people inside the house and the driver were seriously injured. The injured were rushed to Chaung Kauk hospital. The driver Zaw Zaw has been charged by the police.—085

Police arrest two people for mortgaging fake gold

LOCAL police have filed charges against two people on suspicion of mortgaging fake gold at a shop in Peinzalok town, Nyaunglebin township, Bago region on Monday.

One Ma Khin Lwin said she wanted to get K1 million for mortgaging a gold chain and a

bracelet.

U Toe Win alias U Ti checked her gold wares and returned them upon finding that they were fake. He then informed the police and followed her.

The police arrest Ma Khin Lwin while she was talking to a

stranger who fled the scene. The police later arrested the man at a school in Peinzalok town.

The police identified the man as U Khin Maung Zaw, 30, from Thongwa township, Yangon region. The police have filed charges and taken action against them.—Peinzalok—Thein Nyuut

Crime NEWS

Yaba seized

A LOCAL anti-drug squad in Hpa-an seized 7,108 yaba pills from one Ma Nan Hnin Myaing with a motorcycle at a public resthouse in Kawdan-Hlaing Gaba village, Hpa-an township on Tuesday.

Similarly, a combined team comprising officers and staff from Mong Rai police station seized 1,958 yaba pills from

motorcycle driver Sai Leik in ward 3, Mong Rai town on 11 May.

Local police seized 880 yaba pills from one Ma Aye Aye Mon in Minglataungnyunt township. Police have filed charges against all suspects under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force



Ma Aye Aye Mon. PHOTO: MPF

Illegal logs seized in Wuntho Township

A COMBINED team comprising officers and staff from Wuntho police station found an abandoned vehicle containing illegal logs on Wuntho-Pinlebu-Kawlin road on Tuesday.

The police seized the illegal logs weighing 4.8 tonnes

and with a street value of K1,223,400.

The forestry staff took the seized logs and vehicle to the Wuntho Forestry Department. The police from Wuntho township are still investigating the case.—U Ye (Katha)



Illegal logs seized in Wuntho Township. PHOTO: U YE (KATHA)

Young boy drowns in Dala

A 15-year-old boy was drowned while swimming at a motor sampan jetty in Thamada Kanchay, Dala township on the Yangon river on Monday.

"I tried to save the boy when I heard a villager shouting for help. But when I dived down he was already dead. We

sent his corpse to Dala hospital" said Saliman who piloting a boat nearby at the time of the accident.

The police identified the victim as Maung San Htway, 15, from Thamada Kanchay ward. Police are still investigating the case.—Than Htay (Dala)

LOCAL Business

Public Bus Co opens new ticket centres along routes



A BRT Bus seen plying.
PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG WIN

ANYPAY ticket centres have been installed at crowded bus stops along routes BRT buses are running said Dr Maung Aung, chairman of the Public Bus Company.

The major aim is to provide better services to commuters facing ticket problems, he added. Previously, the company appointed staff for ticket sale at bus stops.

The company established eight tickets centres at bus stops near Botahtaung, Thamada Cinema, Myanmar Plaza, 8th-mile junction, Wireless, Mala Hostel, Myenigon and Sawbawgyigon.

With the exception of Sunday, commuters may use this service between 7 a.m and 7 p.m daily.

With the aim of fulfilling the demands of commuters the company will soon open another five bus stops along its routes.

A total of 12 buses imported from neighbouring countries will be arriving this month and another eight buses are scheduled to be imported next month.

On 7 February, with a fleet of 18 buses imported from China, the company launched its services along the first route of Bus Rapid Transfer (BRT), which has 23 stops running from Htauk-kyant to Pyay Road and Bogyoke Aung San Road to 8-mile junction via Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road.

The second route has 27 stops running Pyay Road, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Botahtaung Pagoda Road and Strand Road.

The Public Bus Company began its business with K10 billion worth shares owned by the government and K15 billion worth shares owned by public companies.—200

Foreign investment in Myanmar's power sector reaches 19.6 bln USD as of April

FOREIGN direct investment in Myanmar's power sector reached 19.6 billion U.S. dollars as of April, accounting for 30.89 per cent of the total, according to Myanmar Investment Commission Friday.

The power sector stands second in the country's foreign investment line-up after oil and gas.

U Htein Lwin, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, said that as the ministry spent so much to meet the country's power demand in producing electricity, it is considering encouraging foreign investment in the country's power sector without affecting national interest.

The power consumption of the country increases annually 15 per cent or 300 megawatt. More power plants are needed to meet the demand. The country's main power resources are gas and hydro power.

At present, only 3.7 million households can use electricity out of 10 million. The per capital power consumption was about 222 kilowatts while in neighboring Thailand it was 2,500 kilowatts in 2015, he added.—Xinhua

Moringa seed price soars due to demand from China

THE price of Moringa seeds are currently soaring reportedly because of China purchasing the product as raw materials for Chinese traditional medicine.

Moringa seeds were selling at K5,000 per viss (a viss is approximately 1.6 kilograms) in 2015 but have now soared up to K20,000 per viss. "We have never seen such a high price. A total of 100 moringa pods sells for just K700", said a grower from Magwe Region.

A moringa tree is a biennially yielding tree that gives between 200 and 500 moringa pods

per harvest. The yield dropped 50 per cent last winter due to infection by pests. The moringa trees yielded regularly this summer despite the impact of El Nino, according to a grower.

A hundred moringa pods sells for K700 while the price of dried moringa pods is K2,000 at market. The prevailing price of dried moringa seeds is K20,000 per viss.

China offers the prevailing market price for high quality moringa seeds whereas poor quality moringa seeds have not seen rising demand.—SS/Union Daily

Share price of MTSH on YSX likely to increase

THE share price of the Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Company is estimated to rise when the company commences trading on the Yangon Stock Exchange on 20 May this year, share traders say.

Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Limited is a public company in Myanmar with 17,000 shareholders. The company received listing approval from YSX on 6 May.

The share value of the MTSH has gone up six fold in

just under two years.

A director of the MTSH urged the current shareholders to register their name at the company to legally trade on the YSX.

The country's first Yangon Stock Exchange launched operations on 9 December at the former Central Bank of Myanmar and headquarters of Myawady Bank in downtown Yangon.

The First Myanmar Investment Co Ltd started selling its shares on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSE) in March, fol-

lowed by Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings this month.

The six companies permitted to sell stocks on the YSX are the FMI, First Public Bank, Myanmar Citizen Bank, the MTSH, Great Horkhan Public and the Myanmar Agribusiness Public.

The Thilawa Special Economic Zone, the biggest commercial city of the country, is located 14 miles (23 km) South-East of Yangon, where the MTSH has carried out development tasks since late 2013.—Zar Zar

Seintalone to be exported to South Korea

SEINTALONE mangoes (diamond solitaire mango) will be exported to South Korea by way of manufacturing the fruit into frozen sliced mango pieces and mango paste as well as selling whole fruits, according to the Thazin New Company which signed a contract with a Korean company to export the mangoes.

Currently, Seintalone are mainly exported to China at the moment. The MOIKO Company South Korea will purchase Seintalone mangoes at the end of May. Seintalone will be exported inside the cold-storage containers to South Korea via sea trade.

Seintalone will be exported to South Korea only until June because the businesses involved are not sure of the yield. As a result, there is no prescribed export volume of tonnes of mangoes in the contract. The export volume



A man buys Seintalon Mango at a vendor in Yangon. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

will be positively related to the supply, said an official from the Thazin New Company.

The townships mainly producing Seintalone are Kyaukse, Meikhtila and Yamethin. These

townships were hit by gales and hailstorms which caused over 80 per cent of the Seintalone crop in those areas fail. Recovered mangoes will be manufactured into mango paste.—200

Thailand's opposition muted ahead of referendum

KHON KAEN, (Thailand) — In northeast Thailand, once a hotbed of opposition to Thailand's junta, troops patrol university campuses in Humvees and hold "attitude adjustment sessions" at military camps for those who don't toe the line.

Two years after a military coup, the constrained opposition is struggling to mount a campaign against a 7 August referendum on a junta-backed draft constitution, its first test of popularity since the May 2014 coup.

The junta has imposed restrictions on even debating the draft constitution, which critics say could enshrine military power for years to come.

"The soldiers have successfully built fear here," said Jatupat Boonpattaraksa, a law student at Khon Kaen University in the northeast and member of Dao Din, an anti-coup group.

"Referendum or no referendum, they've won."

Jatupat and 13 others were detained for nearly

two weeks last year after demonstrating against the military government. The group now limits its activities to composing anti-junta songs, he said.

The military has overseen the drafting of a constitution to replace one it discarded after seizing power.

Critics, including major political parties, say it will enshrine the military's influence and is unlikely to end political strife.

The charter would have an appointed upper house Senate, with a portion of the seats reserved for the military and police.

The junta has said this clause is necessary to oversee a five-year "transitional period" before full civilian rule is restored.

The military has kept Isaan in the northeast under tight control since seizing power. Thailand's largest region is a stronghold of "red shirt" supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Thaksin and his allies have commanded the ballot



Jatupat Boonpattaraksa, a law student and member of Dao Din, an anti-coup group, speaks during an interview with Reuters in Khon Kaen, on 5 May, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

boxes this century, helping to elect a series of populist governments that chafed against institutions aligned with the royalist elite: the military, the bureaucracy, the middle class.

Thaksin, ousted by the army in 2006, remains hugely popular among the poor and rising middle-class farmers and la-

bourers in the northeast. While in power, he poured money into developing the region and paid generous subsidies to farmers.

But critics accused him of enriching himself at the expense of the state. He remains in self-imposed exile to avoid corruption charges in Thailand.

His sister Yingluck

was removed from office in May 2014, days before the coup that overthrew the remnants of her government.

She is on trial on corruption charges stemming from a state rice subsidy scheme. Yingluck, who denies wrongdoing, faces up to a decade in jail if found guilty.

Authorities have also moved swiftly to quell anti-junta and anti-constitution protests in recent weeks in Bangkok.

In March, the junta gave soldiers expanded powers of arrest and detention, which allows the military to seize assets, search premises and arrest and interrogate civilians.

Following the decree, the US State Department urged the government to limit the role of the military in internal policing.

The United States has scaled back its deep ties with Thailand since the coup, amid uncertainty about when it will return to civilian rule.

Critics say the crack-down on free expression sows doubts about the military's intention to hold a free vote on the August referendum followed by national elections next year.

Junta spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvaree denies that. "People can discuss so long as they do so in an inoffensive manner," he said.—Reuters

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China, US should manage South China Sea differences constructively: Chinese general



Chief of the general staff of China's People's Liberation Army Fang Fenghui. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — China and the United States should manage their differences over disputed waters in the South China Sea constructively, one of China's top military officials has said.

Fang Fenghui, a member of China's Central Military Commission, told General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the two sides should "refrain from actions detrimental to the relations between the two

countries and the two militaries", state news agency Xinhua reported on Friday.

Fang and Dunford discussed the South China Sea in a video link-up on Thursday, it said.

The discussion comes at a time of heightened tension between China and the United States, which have traded accusations of militarizing the South China Sea as China implements large-scale land re-

clamation and construction on disputed features while the United States has increased its patrols and exercises.

On Tuesday, China scrambled fighter jets as a US navy guided missile destroyer sailed close to a disputed reef in the South China Sea and denounced the patrol as an illegal threat to peace.

The US defence department said the latest "freedom of navigation" operation was undertaken to "challenge excessive maritime claims" by China, Taiwan, and Viet Nam that were seeking to restrict navigation rights in the South China Sea.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year.

The Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims.

Fang said China was not to blame for tensions with the United States in the South China Sea and urged the two sides "to bear the overall situation in mind and manage their differences in a constructive way", Xinhua report-

ed early on Friday.

Xinhua quoted Dunford as calling for restraint in the South China Sea, and saying the United States was willing to work with China to establish "an effective mechanism on risk control so as to maintain stability in the South China Sea by peaceful means".

The South China Sea was also discussed at a separate meeting between Sun Jianguo, an admiral and deputy chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army, and Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, vice chief of the Australian Defence Force.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull backed the United States on Thursday in its latest South China Sea patrol. Australia has consistently supported US-led freedom of navigation activities there. China's Defence Ministry said Sun told Griggs the South China Sea was not and should not become an issue between China and Australia, and that Australia should not do anything that "harms regional peace and stability or Sino-Australia ties".—Reuters

Philippines' cash-strapped cops cheer new crime-buster president

MANILA — The police force in Manila is so underfunded that officers say they have to buy their own bullets and it is not uncommon for funeral service cars to give cops a lift along to murder scenes because they have no vehicles of their own.

Enter Rodrigo Duterte, who won this week's presidential election in the Philippines on a single-issue campaign of crushing crime, corruption and drug abuse. He has pledged to raise policing standards to the level of Davao, the once-lawless city in southern Mindanao, where he has been mayor for 22 years and the only one in the country that runs its own 911 emergency call service.

Duterte's message, unpolished and peppered with profanities, tapped into popular alarm over a drug-fuelled jump in crime. In 2012 the United Nations said the Philippines had the highest rate of methamphetamine, or "shabu", use in East Asia. The US State Department said 2.1 per cent of Filipinos aged 16 to 64 were using shabu, the main drug threat in the Philippines along with marijuana.

Reported crimes in the Philippines more than doubled from



Members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) inspect motorcycles during a checkpoint along a main street of metro Manila in the Philippines, on 12 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

319,441 cases in 2010, when President Benigno Aquino took office, to 675,816 last year, according to national police data. Roughly half of those were serious crimes, and rape cases

jumped 120 per cent over this period.

Police officials say the figures overstate the problem because reporting of crimes has risen with the introduction of

closed-circuit TV cameras in many urban areas and SMS messaging for filing complaints.

Still, Duterte says he intends to be a 'dictator' against forces of evil. He told Reuters on the cam-

paign trail five criminals should be killed a week and promised if he became president the fish in Manila Bay would grow fat on the bodies of all the "pushers, hold-up men and do-nothings" dumped there.

Rights group say death squads have operated with impunity in Davao, killing some 1,500 people since 1998. "Duterte Harry", as he is known, denies ordering extrajudicial killings, but he doesn't condemn them.

If the police station Reuters visited this week in the capital, Manila, is any measure, then Duterte has much to fix.

Captain Rommel Anicete, chief of the Manila police district's homicide division, told Reuters he and his men have been buying their own bullets since the 1990s.

They split the cost of getting two air-conditioners serviced and, while they do share a couple of ageing computers, they are always short of paper for their printer and have no photocopier.

There aren't enough police cars to go around and Anicete said one colleague uses a motorbike to do his policing duties, paying for fuel and repairs out of his own pocket.—Reuters

Aussie leaders to go head to head in first election debate

SYDNEY — The first week of a drawn out Australian election campaign is set to culminate with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull going head to head against opposition leader Bill Shorten in a "people's forum" debate in Western Sydney on Friday night.

Both candidates will take questions from 100 carefully selected undecided voters, and the questions will range from local issues to national ones involving the economic outlook and tax reform that have featured heavily in local media.

The biggest issue Australian voters are considering in the 2016 Australian election is the nation's economic outlook, according to a poll from Australia's national broadcaster, with industrial relations — the reason for calling the 2 July double dissolution election — ranking close to the bottom. The online survey of 250,000 people by the ABC saw education ranked 2nd priority, with healthcare and the environment, two issues that have plagued the Abbott/Turnbull government, equal third.

Abbott was elected Prime Minister in 2013, however a backroom party coup in September 2015 saw Turnbull installed as leader.—Xinhua

Modi reforms flicker in rural India, other big challenges remain

RAMPARA KISANA, (India) — For Indian farmer Sompal Singh, the light bulb that flickers outside his mud hut home is a symbol of progress: the first time electricity from the grid has reached his remote village since independence in 1947.

It is also a big deal for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has promised to provide electricity to every village before the end of 2018 and is trying to woo the huge rural population ahead of a key election in Uttar Pradesh state next year.

"The (electricity) supply is erratic but we are happy that there has been a start," said Singh, a 37-year-old father of three, who employs a bullock to work the fields in Rampara Kisana, six hours' drive east of New Delhi.

"We feel we have not been forgotten."

As Modi approaches the halfway point of his five-year tenure, the leader of the world's biggest democracy has not had it easy.

Key economic reforms are stalled, his "Make in India" push to turn the country into a manufacturing powerhouse has floundered and sizeable minority groups blame him and his party for pushing a Hindu nationalist agenda at their expense.

Yet his government has made progress elsewhere, most notably in the power sector where change is reaching distressed rural communities in Uttar Pradesh who will go a long way to deciding the

outcome of the 2017 ballot.

It was the prospect of tangible change that voters chose in 2014, propelling Modi to a landslide election victory won on the bold promise that "the good days are coming" for 1.3 billion people and by tapping dreams of a more modern India.

While many promises remain unrealised, power reforms and the creation of tens of millions of new bank accounts have helped Modi maintain his popularity.

In a February poll for *India Today* magazine, 40 per cent of respondents chose him as the best candidate to be next prime minister, more than any other politician.

Modi is personally stepping up pressure on ministers and bureaucrats to deliver results on everything from financial inclusion to infrastructure and electricity to jobs.

One senior government source said Modi warned individual ministers this month that he was personally monitoring the performance of each ministry to shake them into action, as his impatience with underperformance grows.

He is also expected to unveil a reshuffle of ministers within weeks, and underperformers could lose their jobs.

Underlining the scale of his ambition, Modi has told power officials he wants to announce that every village has been electrified at his next federal budget

in early 2017, 18 months ahead of the original target, a senior official told Reuters.

That would allow him to tell voters he had beaten his own target on a flagship policy.

"This government's job is to focus its energies on development, to take it (electricity) to every home, not like the erstwhile years where if the power reached ... a few homes in the village the government thought the work was over," Power Minister Piyush Goyal said in a recent interview.

The prime minister's office declined to comment for this article.

Modi, 65, has plenty to boast about; economic growth outstrips China's, foreign direct investment grew by a quarter in the 2015 financial year over the previous year and inflation has nearly halved since 2013.

Still, recent state election defeats punctured his aura of invin-

cibility, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has seen ratings slip.

The India Today poll showed a BJP-led coalition would win 286 parliamentary seats if there had been an election in February from 336 in 2014.

Key economic reforms on land and tax remain blocked in parliament, where the opposition controls the upper chamber, and two consecutive droughts hit rural India hard.

The government must also find employment for around a million people joining the workforce every month, another major preoccupation for Modi and his team.

At a cabinet meeting earlier this year, Modi assessed progress on some key infrastructure projects and asked ministers to focus on those that would sustain the most jobs, a close aide to Modi said.—Reuters



A worker of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rides his bicycle past the party's campaign billboard featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi outside their party headquarters in New Delhi, India, on 10 February 2015. The billboard reads: 'One India, Best India'. PHOTO: REUTERS

Opinion

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Let's put our kids on the path to success

Kyaw Thura

IF it takes a village to raise a child and the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow, the logical conclusion is that we have no alternative but to invest in the development of early childhood education as an effective means of assuring a high rate of return. Education researchers have argued that children under five years of age must enjoy easy access to quality education in order to reap the benefits.

The news of the start of the brand-new kindergarten system has thrilled parents whose children are going to start kindergarten this academic year. Education enthusiasts across the country have hailed this initiative as a welcome change.

In addition, we have heard adults remark in jest, but with an air of seriousness, how happy they would be if they were allowed to restart the newly-established

kindergarten.

Pictures of kindergarten teachers actively participating in training in classroom activities have gone viral, with users commenting favourably on the new approach.

In the past, schools kept the lid on children's enthusiasm and curiosity. It is safe to assume that children possess inquisitive minds by nature and by inclination. There is no need to force

them to learn simply because these natural impulses to find out their burning intuition and try out their personal judgement are unstoppable.

All things considered, all we have to do is to encourage children to do the best they can do and be the best they can be. In fact, the education reform in progress will no doubt give our younger generation a chance to dream big.

Commitment into Action, "Leave No One Behind"

Dr. Khine Khine Win

AFTER tense negotiations with many stakeholders, 193 countries have agreed the next set of development goals, which will seek to end poverty, achieve gender equality and ensure food security in every corner of the globe by 2030. The United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the "Transforming our world: 2030 agenda for sustainable development" by UN member States in September 2015. It is a new compact for people and planet anchored in 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The Goals and targets stimulated the action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.

This new agenda officially came into force on 1st January 2016 across the world. Introduction of new agenda states "we pledge that no one will be left behind". Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society.

The 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development offer a historic opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty and ensure no one is left behind. Here we need to ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities. Yet, too many

people have been left behind, trapped in cycles of poverty, disease, and injustice. And while there has been much progress, it has been uneven due to the ongoing and universal challenge of inequality and injustice, which hamper development efforts. You can see easily many inequalities around you even in your country and/or others regarding ethnicity, gender, disability, race or other status for the time being. From my point of view "Leave No One behind" is the key feature of all the goals and the idea is 'no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone'.

However, "the idea of 'none left behind' meant different things to different people. Some countries thought it was about leaving no country behind, whereas others focused on traditionally-excluded groups such as LGBT, women, older people, and those with disabilities said Helen Dennis, Christian Aid's senior adviser on poverty and inequality, who co-chaired the Beyond 2015 Coalition,

Whenever I met people and had a chance to talk about SDGs I always ask them, Do you believe the word "Leave no one behind" by 2030? The answer is no. They said it is not the easy task. If you look back at MDGs, you can see clearly. Though MDG process (only 8 goals and 18 targets) led to significant progress, the result is uneven across regions and countries exacerbated by conflict, gender inequality, poverty and environmental threats they said. My

perception is same as them. Achieving SDGs is difficult and tough one as SDGs are intended to be universal including without doubt well developed countries, least developed countries and small island developing states. What do you think? Can we get same result from those countries having different cultural, political and economic background?

Serra Sippel, President of the Center for Health and Gender Equity, said the SDGs did not go far enough to reduce existing inequalities. Reducing existing inequalities in all over the world is critical. Can we reduce all existing inequalities within 15 year timeframe? I doubt. Again, financing is considered the linchpin for the success of the 2030 agenda. From financial perspective, the UN has estimated that the new goals could cost as much as \$172.5tn over the 15 year time frame. Estimates of annual investment requirements in for example infrastructure – water, agriculture, telecoms, power, transport, buildings, industrial and forestry sectors – amount to \$5 to \$7 trillion globally. UNCTAD has also estimated that the total investment needs in developing countries amounts to \$3.3-4.5 trillion annually, with current investment at \$1.4 trillion implying an investment gap of \$1.9-3.1 trillion per year. Despite there is an agreement, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, provides a foundation for implementing the global sustainable development, the question is how to implement

effectively this agenda worldwide?

Let us see from another perspective, indicators. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of progress made in the process of implementing the SDGs, which requires quality, accessible and timely data collection. Adopting so many indicators – viable and otherwise – could end up harming the larger SDG agenda to "Leave No One Behind." This is because many of the countries for which little to no data exist are the very countries that require special attention from the global community to move the needle forward.

UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) established Interagency and Expert Group on SDGs indicators (IAEG-SDG) and IAEG-SDG adopted 230 global indicators on March 2016. After UNSC, there need to be approved by ECOSOC and UNGA on June 2016 and on September 2016 respectively. Here there is an issue. Take, for example indicator 1.1.1 on the proportion of the population below the international poverty line. Seventy-two of the 193 UN member states report no data for this indicator since at least 2000. Interestingly, these countries fall into three broad categories: 10 conflict or fragile states, 19 small-island nations, and 45 high-income countries. (Some countries fall into multiple categories). This dearth of data points to potential problems for both the "Leave No One Behind" focus and the universality

agenda. (<http://www.cgdev.org/230-indicators-approved-sdg-agenda>). In this regard, UN and its member states are need to prepare to advance an agenda with 17 goals, 169 targets, and 230 indicators, they must also be prepared to bring the same level of ambition and resolve to monitoring and implementation. Here is the question: Is it possible to make people have same level of ambition within different countries? Can we establish timely, accurate and high quality data to achieve and measure sustainable development and to monitor progress and assess whether targets are being met by all peoples and all segments of society?

Despite many great challenges being along the way to implement worldwide, on September 2015, world leaders commit to work tirelessly for the full implementation of "Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda". In this regard, we have to make sure that no one is left behind by 2030. Can We? I do hope the world leaders commitment will become a reality. I do hope world leaders will work tirelessly to show the word "Leave no one behind" become true. I do hope all the people in the world are living happy, prosperous and peaceful lives by 2030. I do hope world leaders clearly understand what they need to do to achieve 17 goals for their people. I do believe they will change their commitment to action for their people focusing to leave no one behind by 2030.

MCA training deaf chefs



MCA training deaf chefs. PHOTO: SOE WIN (SP)

THE Myanmar Chef Association (MCA) has been training deaf chefs who have now become professional chefs in international standard hotels like Novotel and others. MCA has already produced 25 chefs between the age of 20 and 35, all of whom are from Marry Chapman's School

for the Deaf and the Dumb.

This is the fourth course made for the deaf. The courses are jointly conducted by MCA and My Red Elephant of Italy. A new course is planned to open soon. "As they are deaf, they can concentrate more on the lessons, which makes them faster at

catching up. We will continue to teach the educated deaf other vocational skills," said Mr. Maurizio from My Red Elephant, who is in charge of the chef training.

International cuisines such as Thai, Chinese, Korean, European, and Italian are included in the curriculum. —Soe Win (SP)

Mangoes festival held to help find foreign markets

A MANGO festival at a restaurant in Yangon displaying more than 110 species grown in Myanmar has attracted exporters, local and international mango lovers.

The third festival, which will be held until Sunday, is aimed at assisting growers find local and foreign markets as part of efforts to uplift the socio-economic conditions of growers.

During the festival, agricultural experts will give talks on mango farming.

On 15 May, the mangoes displayed at the festival will be sold at auction.

Myanmar exports about 4 tonnes of mangoes worth around US\$13.5 million every year, said U Kyaw Thu, Secretary of the Myanmar Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association.

Currently, exporting man-



Mangoes being displayed at the festival. PHOTO: AUNG THURA

goes to Japan and China is under negotiation.

The Yangon Region Government is building a fruit and veg-

etable wholesale market helping producers to meet international standards in Insein Township.—Aung Thura

Anti-human trafficking awareness campaigns to be carried out under hundred day project initiative

THE Myanmar Anti-Trafficking Task Force (ATTF) will carry out nationwide educational campaigns between May 15 and August 8 of this year as part of the new government's hundred day project initiatives, it is known.

The main objective of the initiative is to mitigate against the increase in human trafficking and effectively stop human trafficking brokers from being able to operate, in which this will sought to be achieved by holding educational awareness talks distributing out information pamphlets. "The hundred day project will be conducted across the country. We're currently in consultation with police sections

throughout the country. We've been consulting with our power bases as these initiatives will be carried out together with local manpower," said Deputy Police Chief Min Naing of the Naypyidaw ATTF.

The educational activities will be conducted in busy markets between May 15—16; car and bus depots between May 17-18; train stations and boat terminals between May 19-20; and airports and boarder check points between May 21-22, it is known. Moreover, educational talks will be conducted in relevant wards and villages between May 25 and June 19 and within factories and workshops be-

tween June 20 and July 1. "Activities can't be conducted effectively within a hundred days, it's a long process. It's no easy task to completely eradicate human trafficking. It's really encouraging to see authoritative state leaders, government departments and civil society organizations become involved in the way they are now. This isn't an issue that can be changed by one group or individual. If a collective effort can be conducted effectively, and with momentum, then I expect we could reach our desired goal in shorter period of time," said actor and anti-children trafficking ambassador Khine Hnin Wai.—Myitmakha News Agency

Security ramped up within Naypyidaw Union Territory in bid to reduce crime

A TOTAL of 24 police outposts will be opened and 51 CCTV cameras erected within Naypyidaw Union Territory (NUT) in a bid to reduce crime as part of the new government's hundred day project initiatives.

"The primary objective is to successfully and effectively carry out security measures, the rule of law and reducing crime within the NUT," said Police Chief Ko Ko Aung of the Naypyidaw Police Department.

The Naypyidaw Police Department gave an explanation on the forthcoming activities during a ceremony on rule of law and crime reduction initiatives as part of the hundred day project that was held on May 12 within the NUT.

"We have changed to a twenty-first century police force, from existing and conducting affairs as a separate entity to co-operation and team work with a multitude of different actors in order to protect and guard the public. We need to build the trust of the nation's citizens. We also need conduct relations in a fair and impartial manner within society," said Myanmar Police Brigadier General Win Htun.

Nearly all of the 51 CCTV cameras have been installed and will operate a round-the-clock 24 hours a day service within the NUT in a bid to reduce crime rates.

Over 100,000 people live

within the territory is it known, with a police presence numbering over a 1,000 officers - a ratio of one officer providing security to every 700+ residents.

"Relevant department will inclusively carry out security, rule of law and crime reduction initiative as their roles dictate. We'll cooperate together with the police force to be effectively successful in the public education awareness campaign side of the initiative. There will be collective participation to ensure practical and effective system of service driven policing," said Dr Myo Aung, chair of the Naypyidaw Council, the executive body that administers the NUT.

It is known alliance organizations the Police Department will work together with as part of the crime reduction initiative include the General Administration Department (GAD); Department of Law; Law Courts; Department of Information; Department of Health; Special Branch (SB); Department of Immigration and National Registration; Department of Overland Transports; Department of Information and Public Relations; Department of Forestry; Municipal Development Committee; Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicles; Auxiliary Fire Service; Non-government social organizations; town and village elders; and the media.—Myitmakha News Agency



Jerdon's Babbler (*Chrysomma altirostre*) was rediscovered at U Do Grassland in 2014 after 75 years, which was old historical record around Sittaung River Basin. Again it was rediscovered in Ayeyawady Delta on 5, May, 2016 during in grassland and wetland survey period.

THIS IS NEW RECORD FOR AYEYARWADDY REGION. ©NAING LIN(WCS)

US Navy fires commander of sailors who were held by Iran



Iranian students re-enact a scene from the arrest of American sailors by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, during a ceremony marking the 37th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, in Tehran on 11 February, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The US Navy said on Thursday that it had fired the commander of the 10 American sailors who wandered into Iranian territorial waters in the Gulf in January and were briefly held by Iran in an incident that risked becoming an international crisis.

The Navy said in a statement that it had lost confidence in Commander Eric Rasch, who was the executive officer of the coastal riverine squadron that included the 10 sailors.

Rasch became the first person to be publicly singled out after a preliminary investigation into the incident that occurred

near Farsi Island in the Gulf.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the commander of Navy forces in the Middle East had also taken non-judicial action against other sailors involved in the incident but declined to provide details.

Such administrative forms of punishment can include things like letters of reprimand and verbal counseling.

The Navy has not yet released the results of its investigation, but in February the military said the Americans had been intercepted on 12 January after the diesel engine in one of their boats developed a mechanical problem.

Two SIM cards were also pulled from the sailors' satellite phones. Iran's supreme leader awarded medals to navy commanders for capturing US sailors. Iranian media broadcast videos of the detainees, including scenes in which Revolutionary Guards personnel trained weapons on the sailors as they knelt.

Some 15 hours later the Americans were freed after US Secretary of State John Kerry intervened with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, averting a diplomatic crisis days before implementation of the Iran nuclear deal and the lifting of international sanctions on Tehran.—*Reuters*

Russia tops agenda for White House visit by Nordic leaders

WASHINGTON — The leaders of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland will be treated to the pomp of a White House state visit on Friday, a summit where Russia's military aggression will top the agenda.

President Barack Obama will welcome the leaders for talks focused on pressing global security issues, including the crisis in Syria and Iraq that has led to a flood of migrants in Europe.

Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014 alarmed Russia's Nordic and Baltic neighbours. With NATO considering ways to try to deter further Russian aggression, the White House wants to show support for its northern European allies.

"It is a way of sending a signal that the United States is deeply engaged when it comes to the security of the region, and we will be actively discussing what steps we can collectively take to improve the situation," said

Charles Kupchan, Obama's senior director for European affairs.

Kupchan declined comment on specific measures the White House hopes to emerge from the summit. Obama will be limited in what he can promise by the political calendar, given that his second and final term ends next year

on 20 January. Americans are set to hold presidential elections on 8 November.

The visit will culminate in a star-studded state dinner in a tent with a transparent ceiling, with lighting, flowers and ice sculptures evoking the northern lights.—*Reuters*



A segway tour stops in front of flags of the Nordic nations hanging from the Eisenhower Executive Office Building beside the White House in Washington, on 11 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lightning strikes kill 32, injure 25 in Bangladesh

DHAKA — At least 32 people, including children and women, were killed and 25 injured after being struck by lightning in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka and 10 other districts on Thursday evening, local officials and police confirmed Friday.

According to local media, tropical storms brought lightning strikes to Bangladesh, with the northwest of the country being the worst hit.

It is thought the number of casualties could rise, as further victims may be found in more remote areas.

As well as lightning, the storms brought heavy rain to the country from Thursday afternoon.—*Kyodo News*

EU border agency says migrant arrivals in Greece drop 90 %

BRUSSELS — The number of migrants arriving in Greece dropped 90 per cent in April, EU border agency Frontex said on Friday, in a sign that a deal with Turkey to send back those who make the sea journey between the two countries is working.

Frontex said 2,700 people arrived in Greece from Turkey in April, most of them from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq, a 90 per cent fall from March.

Under the deal with Turkey, all migrants and refugees, including Syrians, who cross to Greece illegally across the sea are sent back. In return, the EU takes in thousands of Syrian refugees directly from Turkey and rewards it with more money, early visa-free travel and faster progress in EU membership talks.—*Reuters*

Mexico says unhappy with Egypt's response to 2015 attack on tourists

MEXICO CITY — Mexico said on Thursday that it was not satisfied with the Egyptian government's response to an aerial bombing in Egypt last year in which eight Mexican tourists were killed.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement on its website that it had sent a letter to the Egyptian embassy to express its "surprise and dissatisfaction" with the government's failure to thoroughly investigate the case, penalize the perpetrators and compensate victims.

Last September, an Egyptian army aircraft fired on a group parked for a barbecue near a tourist site, thinking they were militants. In addition to the eight Mexicans, four Egyptians were killed. Six Mexicans were wounded.—*Reuters*

China-Europe political parties forum to be held next week

BEIJING — Chinese and European political party representatives will meet in Beijing next week to discuss green development and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Some 80 delegates from over 30 political parties and the European Parliament will attend the fifth China-Europe High-Level Political Parties Forum from 17 to 18 May, according to the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

The delegates will also visit Zhengzhou City, capital of Henan Province, to promote practical cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.—*Xinhua*

Four people back safe to Malaysia after missing 10 days at sea

KUALA LUMPUR — Four people, including one Chinese national and two Spanish tourists, were brought back safe to Malaysia Friday after missing at sea for ten days.

Two Spanish David Hernandez Gasulla and Martha Miguel, Lam Wai Yin Tommy from China as well as local Armella Ali Hassan were greeted by their families as they arrived in Kota Kinabalu, the state capital of Malaysia's Sabah state on North Borneo.

The four were later sent to hospital for medical treatment. Malaysia maritime officials said all were in stable condition when found in Vietnamese fishing trawlers on Thursday.

They went missing on 2 May when they travelled on a speedboat in Sabah Kudat area, but failed to arrive at the destination. An engine suspected from their ship was found later, raising fear that the ship has sunk.—*Xinhua*

Street protests magnify political crisis in Baghdad after deadly bombings



Supporters of the prominent Iraqi Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr shout slogans during a protest against security forces, whom they claim is not able to protect them at the site of car bomb attack yesterday in Baghdad's mainly Shi'ite district of Sadr City, Iraq, on 12 May, 2016. The banner reads, "My City Bleeds Again". PHOTO: REUTERS

BAGHDAD — A day after the year's deadliest attack in the Iraqi capital, supporters of a Shi'ite cleric took to the streets of Baghdad on Thursday to denounce the government for failing to protect them, escalating political confrontation that could doom the ruling coalition.

Suicide attacks on Wednesday killed at least 80 people and wounded more than 110 others, including civilians and security forces. Two more blasts claimed by Islamic State on Thursday left two policemen dead west of Baghdad.

The highest death toll was in Sadr City, a bastion of powerful Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who has led protests in Baghdad since February de-

manding Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi replace politically-affiliated ministers with independent technocrats.

Hundreds of demonstrators protested in the poor district on Thursday, carrying placards denouncing Abadi, his predecessor Nuri al-Maliki and other top political figures, arguing that the entrenched political class had left them undefended.

"There needs to be a serious stance against all failed, corrupt security commanders who didn't protect the lives of innocent civilians and their property," said Ali al-Mahamdawi, 28, a protester and religious student.

"They protect and fortify the Green Zone but not their

own sons," he said, of the heavily-secured sector on the banks of the Tigris that Iraq's government inherited from occupying US forces.

Security has improved somewhat in the capital in recent years, even as Islamic State fighters seized swathes of the country almost reaching Baghdad's ramparts.

But the prospect raised by this week's carnage that Baghdad could return to the days when suicide bombings killed scores of people every week adds to pressure on Abadi to resolve the political crisis, or risk losing control of parts of the capital even as the army fights Islamic State in the provinces.—Reuters

Aid convoy denied entry to besieged Syrian town

BEIRUT — An aid convoy was refused entry to a besieged Syrian town on Thursday, the Red Cross and United Nations said, blocking what would have been the first supplies to its residents for more than three years.

The organisations said their joint delivery was stopped at the last government checkpoint on the way into Daraya, on the outskirts of Damascus. The town is held by rebels and besieged by government forces.

The United Nations said this month that Syria's government was refusing UN demands to deliver aid to hundreds of thousands of people.

"Despite having obtained prior clearance by all parties that it could proceed," the convoy was not allowed through, a statement from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UN said.

"Daraya has been the site of relentless fighting ... and we know the situation there is desperate", said Yacoub El Hillo, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria.

"Civilians trapped here are in need of humanitarian aid. We were hoping that today's delivery of life-saving assistance would have been a first step and lead to more aid being allowed in."

The ICRC's Syria head, Marianne Gasser, said it was "tragic that even the basics we were bringing today are being delayed". The supplies included medical aid, nutrition items for children and hygiene kits.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group, said government forces shelled parts of Daraya on Thursday. There was no immediate comment from the government.

The town borders a military

airport used by Russian planes which have been conducting air strikes since September to support President Bashar al-Assad in the five-year-old civil war.

UN experts estimate around 4,000 civilians are trapped there, senior UN official Jan Egeland told reporters in Geneva on Thursday, before news emerged of the blocked convoy.

The United Nations was hoping to send assessment teams into other besieged areas across Syria in coming days, but was struggling to reach people caught up in new crises still emerging in the conflict, he added.

Teams had also so far failed to reach the al Waer suburb of the city of Homs, which Egeland said seemed to meet the criteria for a siege: full military encirclement, no humanitarian access and no movement for the civilian population in or out of the area.

"Al Waer is one of these places where heartbreaking things happen, where we have a convoy fully loaded, standing for days as it did last week, with supplies that we know there is a desperate need for. And then in the end you are told you have to unload," he said.

In total, UN aid convoys still did not have government permission to reach around half the 905,000 people they want to help, Egeland said.

In one small step forward, a UN de-mining assessment mission had visited the central city of Palmyra, recently re-taken from Islamic State, and de-mining might soon be allowed, Egeland told reporters.

The United Nations had also received a conditional green light to go into Arbin, Zamalka and Zabadin, but with supplies for fewer people than were in the towns, he added.—Reuters

Eight Turkish soldiers, 21 militants killed as violence widens in southeast

ISTANBUL — Eight Turkish soldiers and 21 militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) were killed on Friday, according to the military and media reports, as violence in the largely Kurdish southeast widened a day after two bombings.

After the collapse of a ceasefire between the PKK and the government last July, Turkey's southeast has seen some of its worst violence since the height of the Kurdish insurgency in the 1990s.

Six soldiers were killed and eight were wounded in clashes with militants in the southeastern Hakkari Province, the military said in a statement.

Two more soldiers were killed in a separate incident when a military helicopter crashed in Hakkari due to a technical fault, the military said. Six PKK militants were also killed in an operation in that region, it said.

Fifteen militants were killed in clashes in Sirnak Province, broadcaster NTV reported, citing the Turkish military.

On Thursday, four suspected bomb makers were killed and 17 people wounded when an explosion ripped through a village in the southeast as PKK militants loaded explosives onto a small truck, the government said.

That blast was just hours after an explosives-laden car blew up

near a military base in Turkey's biggest city, Istanbul, wounding six soldiers and a civilian.

No one has claimed responsibility for Thursday's bombing in Istanbul.

Turkey has suffered a series of bombings this year, including two suicide attacks in tourist areas of Istanbul blamed on Islamic State and two car bombings in the capital, Ankara, which were claimed by a PKK offshoot.

The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) says it has split from the PKK, which has waged a three-decade insurgency against the Turkish state, but experts who study the two militant groups say they retain close links.—Reuters



Police forensic experts examine a scene following a vehicle explosion near a military facility in Istanbul, Turkey, on 12 May, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Brazil's Temer calls for unity, confidence for Brazil recovery

BRASILIA — Brazil's interim President Michel Temer called on his country to rally behind his government of "national salvation," hours after the Senate voted to suspend and put on trial his leftist predecessor, Dilma Rousseff, for breaking budget laws.

Temer, a 75-year-old centrist now moving to steer Latin America's biggest country toward more market-friendly policies, told Brazilians to have "confidence" they would overcome an ongoing crisis sparked by a deep economic recession, political volatility and a sprawling corruption scandal.

"It is urgent we calm the nation and unite Brazil," he said, after a signing ceremony for his incoming cabinet. "Political parties, leaders, organisations and the Brazilian people will cooperate to pull the country from this grave crisis." Brazil's crisis brought a dramatic end to the 13-year rule of the Workers Party, which rode a wave of populist sentiment that swept South America starting around 2000 and enabled a generation of leftist leaders to leverage a boom in the region's commodity exports to



Brazil's interim President Michel Temer addresses the audience during his first public remarks after the Brazilian Senate voted to impeach President Dilma Rousseff at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia, Brazil, on 12 May, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

pursue ambitious and transformative social policies.

But like other leftist leaders across the region, Rousseff discovered that the party, after four consecutive terms, overstayed its welcome, especially as commodities prices plummeted and her increasingly unpopular government failed to sustain economic growth.

In addition to the downturn, Rousseff, in office since 2011, was hobbled by

the corruption scandal and a political opposition determined to oust her.

After Rousseff's suspension, Temer charged his new ministers with enacting business-friendly policies while maintaining the still-popular social programmes that were the hallmark of the Workers Party. In a sign of slimmer times, the cabinet has 23 ministers, a third fewer than Rousseff's.

A constitutional scholar who spent decades in Brazil's Congress, Temer faces the momentous challenge of hauling the world's No. 9 economy out of its worst recession since the Great Depression and cutting bloated public spending. He quickly named respected former central bank governor Henrique Meirelles as his finance minister, with a mandate to overhaul the costly pension system.—Reuters

World's biggest plane set to draw 50,000 onlookers in Australia

MELBOURNE — Up to 50,000 aviation enthusiasts are expected to flock to the West Australian (WA) capital of Perth to watch the arrival of the world's largest plane, the Antonov An-225 Mriya.

The Ukraine-built aircraft has now left Voclav Havel Airport in Prague, and is due to touchdown at Perth Airport on Sunday morning.

The 600-tonne six-engine plane — with a wingspan twice the width of regulation football field at 88 metres — will be greeted by a huge crowd of aviation enthusiasts, travelling from all parts of Australia.

The enormous plane, once used to move a Russian space shuttle on top of its roof, is carrying a 117-tonne generator on-board, ordered by an unnamed WA resources company. Aviation Association of WA President David Eyre told News Corp that it was unlikely the plane would ever return to Australia, and expected people to make the most of the very rare event.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity for everybody so that's why every-

one's so excited about it," Eyre said on Friday.

"It's planned at the moment (that) it will come in from the north, but if the wind swings around on the day, it could come in from the south."

Event organisers believe the arrival of the European aircraft this weekend could draw the largest aviation-related crowd in Perth since the Concorde supersonic airliner landed in the 1980s.

Signs have been set up around Perth Airport directing patrons to vantage points near terminal 1 and 2. The plane is scheduled to land in Turkembashi, Hyderabad and Jakarta for refueling, before arriving in Australia to offload its cargo.

Due to its mammoth size, the Antonov An-225 Mriya has to be refuelled every 4,000 kilometres.

DB Schenker, a worldwide logistical company, is coordinating the aircraft's arrival in WA.

In a prepared statement, DB Schenker said the plane would remain in Australia for two days — until 17 May — before returning home.—Xinhua



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Cuba and US officials to meet next week to deepen detente

HAVANA — Cuba and the United States will meet next week for a third round of talks on improving relations, Havana said on Thursday, adding that the two former Cold War foes were not yet negotiating their multibillion-dollar claims against one another.

A bilateral commission will meet next Monday in the Cuban capital to evaluate the progress made in putting their decades-old conflict behind them, and to identify new areas of cooperation, said Gustavo Machin, the deputy director for US affairs in the Cuban foreign ministry.

"We will set the agenda for the rest for the year," Machin told a news conference.

"We are not yet negotiating the topic of claims even if there is a recognition on both sides that these exist."

Cuba and the US reestablished diplomatic relations a year ago and have signed agreements on issues of common concern such as the environment, postal services and direct flights.

Many differences remain however. Machin reiterated Cuba's demands for the return of the Guantanamo naval base and lifting of the US trade embargo.

Cuba complains that some of the policy changes the US has carried out, such as relaxing currency restrictions against the island, have had little real impact given the persistent fear among US institutions of risking government sanctions.

The White House said in March it would allow US banks to process dollar transactions for Cuba as long as neither buyer nor



Cuba's deputy chief of North American affairs Gustavo Machin, standing in front of pictures of Cuba's President Raul Castro (L), former Cuban leader Fidel Castro (C), and rebel leader Ernesto Che Guevara giving a speech at the United Nations in 1964, speaks to reporters in Havana, Cuba, on 12 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

seller were US entities.

"Until now, no bank transactions have been carried out in US currency," Machin said. "There is still a great fear."

Cuba has said it will only lift a 10 per cent tax on cash dollars once it is clear US banks are processing dollar transactions for the Communist-ruled island.

The issue of reparations is another sticky point. Late last year, Cuba and the US outlined their respective claims, with the

former demanding at least \$121 billion in reparations for the US trade embargo and other acts it describes as aggressions against the Caribbean country.

The Americans meanwhile are seeking upwards of \$10 billion in compensation for nationalized properties.

The third bilateral commission will be led by Josefin Vidal, the Cuban Foreign Ministry's chief of US affairs, and Kristie Kenney, counsellor for the US State Department.—Reuters

Canadian oil producers warn of supply shortfalls after wildfire

WANDERING RIVER, (Alberta) — CNOOC Ltd's Nexen is the latest Canadian oil sands company to warn customers it may not be able to fulfill supply contracts in the wake of a massive wildfire, as producers scramble to get facilities back online.

Nexen has issued a force majeure for all of its May production of Canadian heavy crude, two sources said on Thursday. Four major oil firms have now declared force majeure, a contract clause to remove liability for unavoidable catastrophes.

The fire that blazed through oil sands hub Fort McMurray, forcing the evacuation of about 90,000 people last week, has moved into sparsely populated woodlands further east.

It spans 241,000 hectares (596,000 acres), growing much more slowly than before, but still posing a threat. Cool temperatures are helping contain it, but hot, dry weather is expected



Alberta Premier Rachel Notley speaks during a news conference after meeting with oil company executives about the Fort McMurray wildfires at the Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 10 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

starting Saturday, said Chad Morrison, Alberta's senior wildlife manager. "We're long from over in this fight," he said on a conference call with other officials.

Nexen's Long Lake facility, located south of the community known as Fort Mac, sustained minor damage from the fire, Alberta

officials said this week. Three major oil firms warned last week they will not be able to deliver on some contracts for Canadian crude.

BP Plc and Phillips 66 alerted customers some grades of Canadian crude would not be available, while Suncor Energy, Cana-

da's largest producer, warned clients that some supplies from the region would be disrupted by the fires.

While downtime has crimped supplies, Enbridge Inc said late Wednesday it had restarted its 550,000 bpd Line 18 pipeline, and Royal Dutch Shell Plc has also

partly resumed operations in the area.

Roughly 1 million barrels per day (bpd) of output were shut down during the fire, about half the oil sands' usual daily production. Alberta holds the world's third-largest crude reserves and is the No. 1 exporter of crude to the United States.

No oil sands sites are under immediate threat from the fire, which is burning about 15 kilometres (9.3 miles) from the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan, Morrison said.

US oil prices dipped on Thursday after jumping to six-month highs, when buying on a forecast for tighter global supplies gave way to selling. [O/R] Travel to Fort McMurray is restricted to essential services, including workers, supplies and equipment for oil sands operations. Suncor workers are expected to begin returning to shuttered facilities on Thursday. Hundreds of people lined up around the evac-

uee center in Lac La Biche, Alberta, on Thursday to collect provincial government debit cards loaded with C\$1,250 per adult and C\$500 per dependent.

"I just think for government, this could have been organised better," said Wanda Anderson of Fort McMurray, about the debit card distribution, standing in line wrapped in a purple blanket as morning temperatures hovered just above freezing.

Even so, Anderson, who is staying in a trailer park with her family, said they have been well cared for with meals, and her kids are enrolled in local schools.

Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Danielle Larivee said the idea behind the debit cards was to give residents immediate access to cash. The Canadian Red Cross is also distributing C\$50 million (\$38.93 million) in donated funds, or C\$600 for each adult and C\$300 for each child. —Reuters

Colombian government, rebels agree peace deal to be constitutionally binding

HAVANA — Colombia's government and leftist FARC rebels agreed on Thursday on a series of legal mechanisms to ensure any peace deal agreed at negotiations will be constitutionally binding if approved by Colombians in a proposed referendum.

The two sides have been in peace talks in Havana, Cuba, since late 2012 to end Latin America's longest war that has displaced millions and killed hundreds of thousands. "We have arrived at a deal to give the final deal juridical security and stability,"

the two sides announced in a joint statement read in Havana, the site of peace talks for the past three years.

A deadline for a final accord was missed in March, but Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said on Wednesday his government hoped to conclude a peace deal with the FARC rebels "in the very near future".

The government's top negotiator, Humberto de la Calle, reiterated Bogota's position that any deal would be submitted to a referendum.

He said the FARC, long wary of a referendum given that many Colombians harbour deeply anti-rebel sentiments, was warming to the idea. "The head of the FARC delegation opened the door to a popular referendum a few days ago," de la Calle said. "We see this as positive."

Many proponents of a peace deal say the referendum is key because without popular backing, the political opposition might try to stall its implementation in the courts.

De la Calle added that both sides were continuing

to work on a deal for a bilateral ceasefire and rebel disarmament.

The Colombian government has been addressing the FARC's concerns about their safety in the even of a disarmament in recent weeks. Bogota is stepping up its offensive against crime gangs which formed after a 2006 peace accord with right-wing paramilitaries failed to absorb many into society.

In the 1980s hundreds of former FARC soldiers were killed by paramilitary groups when they laid down their weapons to join



Colombia's lead government negotiator Humberto de la Calle speaks to the press in Havana, on 15 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

democratic politics.

Fears of a repeat have hardened the guerrillas' resolve not to disarm until they feel sure of their safety.

Colombia's defence minister said last week

armed forces will launch air raids on crime gangs involved in drug trafficking and illegal mining.

Government air attacks against the FARC are currently suspended. —Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV TOVE MAERSK VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV TOVE MAERSK VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.5.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PANGAEA VOY NO (0289)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANGAEA VOY NO (0289) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.5.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T-3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S CHUN AN SHIPPING PTE

LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV NAVIGATION OL VOY NO (001)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV NAVIGATION OL VOY NO (001) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.5.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T-4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Spice Girls record new song



Spice Girls. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — The Spice Girls have reunited to record their first song in 16 years.

Geri Horner, Mel B and Emma Bunton joined forces for a secret music session at London's Deep Play studios this week, working on new material for the first time in almost two decades, reported Daily Mirror.

But their bandmates Mel C and Victoria Beckham were noticeably absent.

Teasing the new project that the trio are working on, the Spice

Girls' former producer Eliot Kennedy tweeted, "Now that was a day for the history books. Like 20 years had never happened. Proper friendship! Hit Song."

Mel also shared a picture of the group on Instagram and wrote, "And I say oohhhh LALA (sic)."

A new single and album are expected to be released later this year, while the Spice Girls have been tipped to play a number of dates in both London and Los Angeles next year.—PTI



A man carries a figure of Homer Simpson in front of a Christmas tree at the main square of Santiago in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Live from Springfield, it's Homer Simpson!

LOS ANGELES — During his 27-year tenure as the bumbling patriarch of Fox's animated series "The Simpsons," Homer Simpson has achieved many impossible things, from space travel and becoming a superhero to destroying Springfield and winning a Pulitzer Prize.

But one thing he has yet to do is appear live on air. Until now. At the end of Sunday's 595th episode entitled "Simpvised," Homer will answer fan phone calls live on air during both the East Coast and West Coast airings, the first time an animated show has ever attempted the feat.

"He's going to take questions for 3 minutes, talk about events of the day — I'm sure Donald Trump is going to say something stupid, so the material's already written," said Al

Jean, executive producer of "The Simpsons."

The animation magic comes courtesy of motion capture technology, which will track the head and arm movements of actor Dan Castellaneta, the voice of Homer, and immediately animate them for broadcast across the United States and several international markets. A 7-second delay will prevent pranksters from asking inappropriate questions live on air, Jean said.

Since its 1989 premiere on Twenty-First Century Fox Inc's Fox Broadcasting, "The Simpsons" has become the longest-running sitcom and primetime scripted series in US history. The family's members — Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie — are globally recognised figures of popular culture.—Reuters

Miley Cyrus regrets bleaching her hair

LOS ANGELES — Singer Miley Cyrus is lamenting her bleach blonde hairdo.

The 23-year-old "Wrecking Ball" hitmaker said she "learned a valuable lesson in this meaningless process."

"Bleached my natural healthy hair rebelling out of boredom while dealing with a consecutive amount of time off on the Woody project (2 months ago). Something inside told me I'd regret it," Cyrus wrote on Instagram.

"...Not to mention I felt like a self obsessed psycho while real issues are out there in the world needing to be dealt with I was sitting in front of a mirror going thru strand by strand like my hair and what it looks like actually f**king

matters!," she continued.

The songstress, who is back with Liam Hemsworth, has been playing sober since the reconciliation. "So please fellow humans next time you feel that tickle in your belly while making a decision listen to what it says and know the true you can never be replicated or replaced you are the one and only you," the Grammy-nominated singer concluded.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Angry Birds maker Rovio bets nest egg on 3D movie

HELSINKI — Finnish smart-phone games maker Rovio Entertainment Ltd is hoping to revive the cool of its widely-known but aging Angry Birds franchise with an animated 3D Hollywood film financed out of its own pocket.

The original Angry Birds, launched in 2009, remains the top paid mobile app of all time. But its creator's fortunes have dwindled after it failed to create new hit games; last year Rovio cut a third of its staff, hived off non-core businesses and booked a nearly \$15 million annual loss. Now the company is pinning its hopes on "The Angry Birds Movie", which premiered this week in France and French-speaking Belgium. "The whole (movie) project will have a positive impact on all of our business operations," Rovio CEO Kati Levoranta

told Reuters, adding that the company was expecting to return to profits this year.

Rovio bank rolled the \$73 million feature film itself.

"It's a question of risk and reward, but it's also about creative control," Mikael Hed, executive producer and chairman of wholly owned subsidiary Rovio Animation co, told Reuters. "The one who pays the bill gets to decide what's in the movie."

The movie expands on the origin story of what made the birds so angry — that green pigs had stolen the birds' eggs. The characters may have a fresh look, but for its legions of fans, it has plenty of references to the original game where players use a slingshot to fire angry bird bombs at the pigs. The movie was directed by veteran animators Clay

Kaytis and Fergal Reilly, known for their work with Disney and Sony Pictures, respectively. The voice-over cast features Sean Penn and 'Game of Thrones' star Peter Dinklage.

Rovio launched a movie-based Angry Birds Action! game sequel in April and has signed up promotional deals with the likes of McDonald's and Hennes & Mauritz. Sony Pictures is handling the movie's marketing and distribution.

"The challenge for the movie will be to see how loyal those original fans are and whether the movie can bring in new fans to both the movie, and then back to the games," said analyst Jack Kent from research firm IHS Technology. Ultimately, however, Rovio must find new hit concepts.—Reuters



(L-R) Actors Timur Rodriguez and Omar Sy, tv host Raya Abirached and actor Maccio Capatonda pose during a photocall for the animated film 'The Angry Birds Movie' on the eve of the start of the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, on 10 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

World's oldest person dies in New York City, aged 116

NEW YORK — The world's oldest living person, 116-year-old Susannah Mushatt Jones, died on Thursday in New York City, a research group said.

Jones' death makes Emma Morano-Martinuzzi, a 116-year-old woman in Italy, the oldest living

person, according to the Gerontology Research Group.

Jones, who was born in the southern US state of Alabama in 1899, was the daughter of sharecroppers and granddaughter of slaves.

After graduating from high school she moved

north in 1922 to New Jersey and then New York, where she worked as a housekeeper and child-care provider, according to Guinness World Records and the Vandalia Senior Center in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, where she lived.

Jones, who retired in

1965, had said that lots of sleep is the secret to her longevity and that she had never smoked or drank alcohol.

The oldest verified person was Jeanne Calment of France, who died in 1997 at 122 years and 164 days, the research group said.—Reuters



Susannah Mushatt Jones (C), known as "Miss Susie" is wheeled into a celebration for her 116th birthday with family members, local dignitaries, and friends in the Brooklyn borough of New York, on 7 July 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Italy's violin-makers struggle to hit profitable note



Violins made by students hang to dry at a laboratory of the Antonio Stradivari institute of higher education in Cremona, Italy, on 22 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

CREMONA (Italy) — Making violins is a passion in Cremona, the ancient Italian town that has been producing them since the 16th century, but turning passion into profits has not been easy. Cremona, in northern Italy, has more than 100 workshops making violins and other stringed instruments for musicians worldwide, following in the tradition of its great violin-makers which have included Antonio Stradivari and Nicolò

Amati. Many of the town's "liutaia" specialise exclusively in master instruments in the tradition of Stradivari, each taking months to produce and costing around 20,000 euros each. Some liutaia make as few as six or seven violins a year.

Edgar Russ, an Austrian who came to Cremona in 1984, says it is tough to make a living by crafting only master instruments and that the town's violin-makers need to change. "At the

end of the day, you work for free," he says. Russ offers various levels of craftsmanship, a model he says does not sit well with Cremona's traditionalists. But he believes it is a way of prospering and ensuring it remains a thriving centre of violin-making in the long-term. His workshop makes violins for beginners as well as his "Linea Macchi" line for professionals who cannot afford a master violin. He also makes a handful of master

instruments each year.

Only the masters are made by his hands alone.

"The real energy comes from the passion for this kind of work. It makes me happy to create something which does not have any straight lines. Even if you don't play, you love to hold it in your hand. It's beautiful to look at, it shows all your personality and your ability and your craftsmanship. "And it makes a beautiful sound."—Reuters

Japan aims to attract more overseas visitors to rural areas

TOKYO — The Cabinet on Friday approved a white paper to boost rural travel destinations as Japan aims to increase the annual number of overseas visitors to 40 million by 2020.

The white paper on tourism cited an estimate that the number of travellers around the world will grow to 1.8 billion by 2030 from 1.18 billion in 2015 against the backdrop of economic growth in Asia. But while taking advantage of the trend to boost overall visitors, the government hopes to boost rural destinations to tackle the overconcentra-

tion of tourists in big cities.

The government views tourism as an engine to realise its target of raising nominal gross domestic product to 600 trillion yen (\$5.5 trillion) and sees room for growth as the tourism sector's contribution to GDP at 7.5 per cent is low compared with major Western countries. Cultural assets and natural parks that have been targeted for preservation should be better utilised and steps taken to beautify towns, following similar measures taken in France and Spain.—Kyodo News

Rare vivid blue diamond goes on auction in Geneva

GENEVA — The 'Oppeheimer Blue' is one of the rarest diamonds available on the market and the largest ever blue diamond to ever be offered on a public sale that will go under the hammer in Christie's semi-annual auction in Geneva in one-week time.

Estimated between \$38-45 million, the rectangular-cut diamond weighs 14.62 carats, and has been graded by the Gemolog-

ical Institute of America (GIA) as "fancy vivid blue", meaning its blue colour ranges from medium to dark in tone, and from strong to very strong in saturation, without the presence of any other tint, like gray for instance which is commonly observed in blue diamonds.

"This diamond is all the more rare than in nature only 0.5% of all diamonds extracted do present a blue colour.—Reuters



Entertainment Channel

(14-5-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- Music Programme

6:30 pm

- Archery Session (from Ramayana Play)

6:50 pm

- Music Programme

7:00 pm

- Cassette Recordings

8:20 pm

- Music Programme

* 03 : 30 Pm Live: Actor Star FC Vs Music FC

* 05 : 30 Pm Live: Model FC Vs Comedy FC

From 14-5-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 Pm
To 15-5-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 Pm

8:30 pm

- Pa Khan Traditional Nat Festival in Ku Ni Village (Part-II)

9:00 pm

- International Movie Songs

9:10 pm

- U Kyaw Thu: From Artist to Philanthropist (Part-I)

9:50 pm

- Myanmar Movie



Myanmar International

(14-5-2016 07:00am ~ 15-5-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon- The Exhibition Hall of The Great Chronicle of Buddha
07:53	Am	Paper Flower
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Myanmar Traditional Festival
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Conflict & Solution Between Man & Elephant
09:43	Am	Colourful Threads
09:52	Am	Graffiti: Portraiture

10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar Prehistory
10:51	Am	Egg Shell

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	A Journey To Southern Shan State (Ep-2)
07:47	Pm	Today Myanmar: Online Shopping- Food Delivery Service
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Sai Htee Hseng or An Exceptional Music Star From Shan Plateaus(Ep-1)
08:52	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: 3D

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

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



Zlatan Ibrahimovic celebrates scoring the first goal for Paris St Germain during UEFA Champions League Round of 16 First Leg at Parc des Princes, Paris, France on 16 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Clubs ready cheque books as 'king' Ibrahimovic bids PSG adieu

STOCKHOLM — Sweden's larger-than-life captain Zlatan Ibrahimovic will play his final game for Paris Saint Germain on Saturday, he said in a social media post that is likely to send clubs around the world reaching for their cheque books.

With an ego in keeping with his imposing physique, the ageing but still prolific striker announced his departure in typically flamboyant style.

"I came like a king, left like a legend," he said on Facebook, confirming expectations he would seek to add a new chapter to a glittering career after saying in March that only a statue of him erected in place of the Eiffel Tower would persuade him to stay.

The 34-year-old Swede joined PSG in 2012, adding four Ligue 1 titles to an already impressive trophy cabinet, though some questioned his decision to compete against teams of lesser means in France, rather than move to England or back to Italy.

He rattled almost a goal a game in establishing the star-studded PSG as the dominant force in

French football, and his scintillating domestic and Champions League form this season saw his name again linked with a host of clubs.

MLS side LA Galaxy are now widely rumoured to be leading the race for his signature, and Ibra has also been linked to clubs in the Premier League, the Middle East and China.

Sweden coach Erik Hamren believes he could still deliver in England, despite his advancing years.

"He has a fantastic physique," he recently told Reuters. "If Zlatan is motivated mentally, then he can stay at the top for several more years."

Having famously said that the World Cup in Brazil wouldn't be worth watching because he wouldn't be playing, Ibra is set to lead Sweden at this summer's Euro 2016 finals in France.

With Saturday's cup final against Marseille set to be his last for a club side on French soil, he will be hoping for a few more electric performances for Sweden before he finally saying "adieu" to the country that has been his home for four years.—*Reuters*

Tomic 'too busy' to represent Australia in Rio

SYDNEY — Bernard Tomic ruled himself out of representing Australia at the Rio Olympics in August due to his "extremely busy" playing schedule.

Tomic, who was warned by Australia's Olympic chef de mission Kitty Chiller he was among a group of athletes whose behaviour was being monitored to judge their suitability for the Rio team, will instead play an ATP tournament in Mexico.

"With a heavy sense of regret, I have made the difficult decision to not play with the Australian tennis team as they pursue an Olympic medal in Rio," the world number 22 said in a statement.

"I have always proudly represented my country in Davis Cup and given my all when wearing the green and gold.

"But on the basis of my extremely busy playing schedule and my own personal circumstances, I am regrettably unable to commit to this year's tournament."

Tomic drew heavy criticism last week following his exit from the Madrid Open when, on match point against Fabio Fognini, he held the racquet by the strings and did not offer a shot to the Italian's serve.—*Reuters*

Federer out, Serena overcomes dog-food illness

ROME — Roger Federer said 'time was ticking' in his battle to recover form and fitness for the French Open after he lost to rising Austrian Dominic Thiem 7-6(2), 6-4 in the third round of the Italian Open on Thursday.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic had an unexpected stumble at the start of his match, losing the first set to Thomaz Bellucci to love, before recovering to beat the Brazilian 0-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Women's top seed Serena Williams won through to the quarter-finals despite falling ill after tasting her pet dog's dinner in her Rome hotel.

Her Yorkshire terrier Chip had been served a salmon and rice dish and Williams told followers on social media she had been tempted by the look of it, saying: "I ate a spoonful. Don't judge me."

The food tasted "a little bit like a house-cleaner thing," Williams said in a video posted on Snapchat, adding that she had made an urgent trip to the bathroom a few hours later.

"I don't think it's consumable for humans. They should have wrote that," added Williams, who

showed no lingering ill effects in beating fellow American Christina McHale 7-6(7), 6-1.

Former world number one Federer still looks way short of his best after knee and back injuries and struggled to get to grips with the 22-year-old Thiem at the Foro Italico, a week after withdrawing from the Madrid Open.

Thiem, ranked 15th, recovered from an early break and streaked into a 6-2 lead in the tie-break before taking the opening set with a backhand winner.

He broke the 34-year-old Federer's serve again midway through the second set as he claimed the 32nd victory of a breakthrough season that saw him rise to a career-high 13th.

Seventeen-times major champion Federer, who has missed 10 weeks of the season following knee surgery, shrugged off the defeat, saying his immediate priority was the French Open that begins on 22 May.

"This is like, 'who cares about the results here?'. It matters what comes now in the next couple of months," Federer told a news conference.

"Now obviously time starts

ticking more towards Paris. Clearly the way I'm playing right now is never going to be enough for a good run in Paris... I'm still confident I will be fine somehow."

Federer, a four-times finalist in Rome, missed last week's Madrid Open with a back problem

but said there had been some encouraging signs this week.

"For the first time maybe I could play a match really playing freely, trying out a few things," he added.

World number one Djokovic was on the wrong end of a love set for only the ninth time in

his career, picking up just eight points.

From there, though, he moved to a smooth victory over the 37th-ranked Bellucci and a quarter-final meeting with Rafael Nadal, who defeated Australian Nick Kyrgios 6-7(3), 6-2, 6-4.—*Reuters*



Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a shot to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France during Monte Carlo Masters at Monaco, on 15 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS