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EMBRACING PUBLIC SERVICE

State media to connect people and government: Dr Pe Myint



A printing press rolls out dailies at the joint-venture English-language newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar. The Myanmar government also owns two dailies in Myanmar language and the Myanma Radio and Television broadcasting service. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

INFORMATION Minister Dr Pe Myint presented the new government's stance on state media at a seminar in Yangon yesterday, stressing that state media will function as a channel of communication between the people and the government by publishing news that provides room for public voices and the expression of dissenting views on government's policies.

The seminar, the second in a series, was held at the Kandawgyi Palace Hotel under the heading 'Policy Dialogue'. As part of the government's media reform campaign, the Union minister explained that state media are fully responsible for paying heed to public voices and responding to their queries and complaints.

"For a country to become developed, the parliament and the government must fulfil the ambitions of the people. We are trying to create public-service media," he said.

The seminar focused on media development, state media in transition and broadcasting media. Other topics included difficulties facing ethnic-minority media, training in journalism, the development of data journalism in Myanmar and gender equality in the media profession.

The first seminar took place on 21 February in Yangon and was jointly organised by the Myanmar Press Council, Mizzima Media Group and Action Aid Myanmar, in partnership with the Swiss embassy. —Myanmar News Agency

Low pressure area in Bay of Bengal to intensify into depression: DMH

A LOW pressure area over the southwest Bay of Bengal off the Sri Lankan coast is expected to intensify into a depression within 24 hours, according the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

Yesterday's 4pm announcement said the low pressure could move northwest when it becomes a depression.

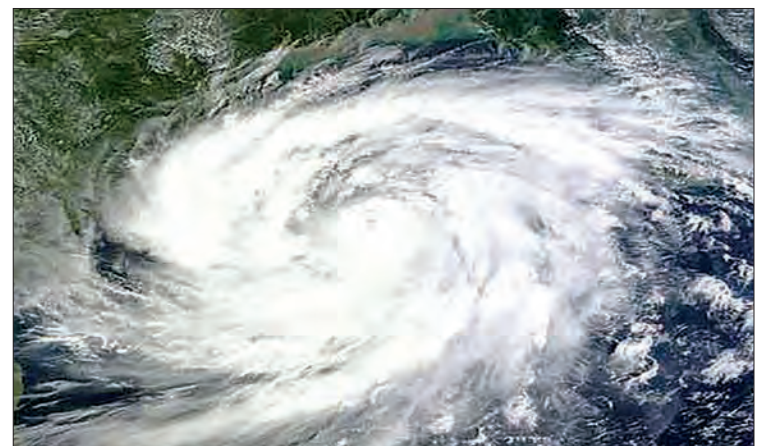
The depression might cross the coast between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, India, on 19 May, according to private weather forecaster Skymet.

At present, all three Indian seas, including the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, are turbulent, giving rise to several weather systems.

Rain is expected during the

next 24 hours over some areas in Taninthayi, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Kachin, Shan, Kayin, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah and Mon states and in Nay Pyi Taw with an 80 -per cent degree of certainty, the Myanmar weather bureau forecast said.

Yangon will be cloudy today, according to the weather bureau forecast.—GNLM



The satellite image of a low pressure. PHOTO: SKYMET WEATHER

Over K170 million allocated to Mandalay Department of Social Security

THE Department of Social Security has made it known they have allocated K179.1 million for a welfare fund to service the social security needs of workers in Mandalay Region.

“Just as one who has registered is eligible to free treatment at social security clinics and hospitals, they are also receive entitlements. For this, we need to allocate a social security insurance. As such, we have budgeted K179.1 million as insurance as part of the hundred day initiative.” said U Hla Myint, from the Mandalay Region Department of Social Security.

As such, in the manner of normal inspection of operations, field trips are being conducting throughout townships and educational awareness talks being given, while it has been anticipated that 88 official registration departments will be opened which will be able to provide services for over three thousand new workers.

“Every worker that registers



A worker makes a bamboo hats in Mandalay. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

with the Department of Social Security must make contribution payments to the department. The contribution of such payments allows for the availability of social

security benefits.” added U Hla Myint.

Furthermore, it is known that the deputy head of the Mandalay Region Department of So-

cial Security will play his part in ensuring the objective is fulfilled by conducting the registration of workers.—Myitmakha News Agency

Mandalay hospital sees thousands of leprosy patients annually

IT is known about 3,000 patients annually seek treatment at the Yaynatha Leprosy Hospital in Mandalay Region's Madaya township.

“We're still giving treatment to leprosy patients. People still suffer with leprosy as we're always having to give treatment. I doubt all leprosy suffers in the whole of Myanmar can access good hospital treatment. We are pondering why

leprosy hasn't properly been eradicated in Myanmar yet,” said Dr Mya Thida, head of the Yaynatha Hospital.

Leprosy is the contagious diseases that affects the skin and nerves of the body, defined by a lack of sensation to pain to one's limbs. Despite leprosy being eradicated in much of the world, 1 in 10,000 still suffer from the disease in Myanmar. There are current-

ly 96 leprosy sufferers receiving treating at the Mandalay hospital.

“The possibility of leprosy infection is less now. Leprosy patients cannot bear the high temperatures, to the point where some patients fainted last year. Lucky, nobody here has died as a result of extreme temperatures yet,” Dr Mya Thida continued.

Although there is currently no possibility of leprosy outbreak,

physical disfigurements and trauma mean that leprosy after often out-cast from society, unable to interact within their communities.

Despite the Minister of Health announcing in February 2013 that the country from devoid of leprosy, many people are still inflicted by the disease nationwide, according to the Mandalay hospital.—Myitmakha News Agency

Access to water initiatives in Kayin State to be tendered

TENDERS are to be called during the current 2016-17 fiscal year for the implementation of water access projects in 38 villages across Kayin State that are experience drinking water shortages, according to the state's Department of Rural Development.

Bids for an estimated budget of over K519 million (US\$444,350) worth of tenders will be called for the digging of artesian wells, earthen lakes and

other projects for the use of underground water reserves in a bid to allow for long-term, sufficient supplies of drinking water to an area of the country that has seen an annual decline in its drinking water reserves.

“We're currently providing assistance to those Kayin State villages suffering from El Niño-induced drinking water shortages. Also, under the new government's 100-day project initiative, we will

call tenders for all seven townships in the state during the 2016-17 fiscal year for water availability projects,” said U Nay Oo, head of the Kayin State Department of Rural Development.

Water availability projects will be implemented in a total of 38 villages: five in Hpa-an Township, seven in Hlaingbwe Township, six in Kawkareik Township, four in Myawady Township, five in Kya-in-Seikkyi Township,

eight in Thandaunggyi Township and three in Papun Township.

The Kayin State Department of Rural Development began carrying out access to water initiatives as part of the new government's 100-day initiative on April 8 to a total of 15 villages in Hpa-an Township that were deemed to be at risk of experiencing water shortages. As of 9 May, over half of the initiatives have been carried out.—Myitmakha News Agency

Taninthayi UCS allocates K1.08 billion for loans in 2016-17

THE Union of Co-operative Syndicates (UCS) for Myanmar's southern Taninthayi Region will allocate K1.08 billion (US\$924,658) for loans during the 2016-17 fiscal year, according to a regional syndicate. The value of the loan fund has been confirmed by the regional government.

“Credit will be lent to members the UCS. We'll issue loans according to set levels of individual syndicates,” said U Kyaw Moe

Tint, UCS officer for Taninthayi Region.

Those who want must first form a basic UCS at the village level with a system of collective responsibility that does not require collateral to be given in exchange for credit. A maximum of K100,000 can be borrowed per individual under this system.

“Ten per cent of money lent to members is collected as a kind of money saved for them by the

syndicate. The objective of such an approach is to save more when borrowing increases. A membership fee of K5,000 is required to become a UCS member. This sum will then be repaid at the end of year to members after calculating profit,” said U Kyaw Moe Tint.

A total of K3.8 billion (\$3,253,425) was lent between 2011-15 by the Taninthayi Region UCS, while loans are issued once every six months and repaid

six months later. In terms of the allocation of credit within Taninthayi Region this fiscal year, the amount for 28 associations of UCS in Dawei District, which comprises 1,757 association members, is K291.6 million; K634 million for 78 associations of UCS in Myeik District, comprises 4,061 members; and K157.42 million for 15 associations of UCS in Kawthoung District, comprises 1,194 members.—Myitmakha News Agency

Police officer shot dead during Dawei manhunt

A POLICE officer was shot and killed during a manhunt for a drug dealer in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, on 14 May, following a tip-off to police.

The local drug squad said a man named Thiha Nang gunned down a policeman named Tun Thein in an attempt to escape arrest while the police raided his property in Dawei.

The fugitive was arrested with an M-32 pistol with two bullets and a magazine. After the arrest, a police search led to the discovery of four other suspects and the seizure of 530 stimulant pills and K308,000 (US\$264) in cash.

Police have filed charges against all five suspects.—Myanmar News Agency

Proficiency course aims to promote women's economic empowerment

PROFICIENCY trainings will be conducted in some townships of Mon State under the state's poverty reduction programme implemented by local authorities with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank.

The programme is a part of the Economic Empowerment of the Poor and Women programme in the East-West Economic Corridor project, which is scheduled to be implemented between 2016 and 2019.

Mr Winfried F Wicklein, director of the ADB, said the new programme will help reduce female poverty and improve women's wellbeing. Under the programme, the ADB will support economic empowerment trainings for women in Mawlamyine, Mudon, Kyikhe-to and Ye townships.

There are many new tourist destinations in Kachin, Shan and Kayah states and in Taninthayi and Mandalay regions. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is planning to develop community-based tourism in those areas, as well as in Bagan.

The programme also covers market promotion plans to develop small and medium-scale enterprises as well as establishing necessary infrastructure in Mandalay and Mawlamyine through international loans in order to promote tourism businesses in the country.—Zar Zar

Three Myanmar migrant workers rescued from slave-like condition in Thailand

THREE migrant workers from Myanmar were rescued on Saturday from slave-like conditions on a fishing boat in Thailand, according to the Myanmar Association in Thailand (MAT).

The three workers have been identified as U Tin Shwe, 35, U Aung Ba Khin, 42, and U Tun Maung Thein, 42. All three are from Rakhine State.

The three migrant workers had been working on the fishing boat for five months without re-

ceiving any salaries, said U Tun Maung Thein.

Acting on a tip-off from a migrant worker, the MAT rescued the workers. "Making documents and passports for migrant workers in order to stay in Thailand does not play an important role in fighting the human trafficking," said U Kyaw Thaung, director of MAT, calling for the Thai government to take serious action against the main causes of human trafficking. —Soe Win(SP)



(From left to right) U Tin Shwe, U Aung Ba Khin and U Tun Maung Thein are seen after being rescued. PHOTO: MAT

Introduction of new kindergarten syllabus postponed to next academic year

A NEW curriculum encouraging creative thinking among kindergarteners has been postponed to be introduced in the 2017-18 academic year, according to the Ministry of Education.

"The major challenge of the programme is a lack of funds to expand room facilities for kindergarten students under the new system. The ministry needs to construct over 70,000 special rooms on a national scale," said Union Education Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi at a meeting in Mandalay on Saturday.

He added that it has been difficult to launch the new syllabus, which is designed with child-

centred teaching methods, including lessons on painting, drawing and handcrafts, this academic year.

The ministry also needs more primary level teachers.

A headmistress at a basic education high school in Mandalay said: "There are not enough teachers to educate many kids in the schools as we have only three teachers who have already received special training to teach kindergarten students."

The Ministry of Education has been trying to change the education system over the last few years to provide improved education services to citizens. Currently,

students receive primary-level education for five years, middle school for four years and high school for two years.

There are approximately 500,000 primary school students, over 300,000 middle school students and around 950,000 high school students across Mandalay. The pupil-teacher ratios in the region are 1:23 at the primary level, 1:28 for middle school and 1:21 for high school.

According to one education consultant, there are approximately 1.5 million kindergarten students across the nation.—Aung Thant Khaing



A classroom with good pupil teacher ratio. PHOTO: ATK

Adolescents caught purchasing narcotics entrusted back with parents

TWENTY-five adolescents caught on their way to purchase narcotics in a cave on Kyauk Phyu mountain, located in the proximity the Hpa-an township Tawpon village, Kayin State, have been reinstated with their parents under permission of the Kayin State Minister.

Chief of Police for Kayin State Kyi Lin, explained that if blood and urine tests were to have been taken and charges pressed against the twenty-five individuals caught, they would be facing prison terms of between 3-5 years. It was agreement of the Minister of Kayin State to a proposal submitted to him wishing the adolescents to be rehabilitated rather than imprisoned that has resulted in the adolescents being handed back to their families.

"These kids weren't caught with any tablets on them but if they were to have their blood and urine tested then they'd be facing three to five years in prison. In this instance, we're going to try a method of rehabilitation rather than pressing

legal charges. We'll hold their identity cards and they'll sign a pledge [not to partake in such activities again] which will have to include the signatures of their parents and the local authorities as well. The Minister has said he agrees [with this course of action]," said Chief of Police Kyi Lin.

The police monitored the aforementioned cave after receiving a tip-off that an individual residing within side the cave was selling illegal substances. The twenty-five adolescents were all caught over the course of two days between May 9-10 when they arrived to the cave in small groups with the objective of purchasing narcotics. After their arrests it is known the police were able to illicit names of other users from the group. Saw Aung Htut (aka) Taung Gyi Ko, was arrested on Tuesday after which it was realised that he was the pupil of Zarni Aung, educator-cum-cave dwelling narcotics peddler.—Myitmakha News Agency

Silt-clogged irrigation canals to be dredged

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation has announced it will dredge the country's silted-up irrigation canals as part of the new government's 100-day project initiative.

The clogging up of irrigation canals with silt has starved summer crops of water and will likely be the catalyst for flooding during the imminent rainy season, experts have said.

"Myanmar has many irrigation canals, but upon observation, there aren't many that pro-

vide any extraordinary support to the country. When thinking about how to make sure these dams work at their full capacity, we realised they're all between one and three decades old and are all clogged up with silt. The extent to which these dams can store water decreases once they become silted up," said Dr Htun Win, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

However, a budget has yet to be calculated for the implementation of the dredging activities.

"We'll calculate a budget, but we won't be able to proceed anymore in the manner in which we operated in the past. We'll only conduct our activities after thorough scrutiny [of expenses]," added Dr Htun Win.

The absence of negotiations with local residents in the construction of dams has rendered some dams devoid of any benefit to the local populace.

"They built a dam near our village in the name of enabling us to plant summer paddy. But its

construction had adverse effects; not only did it not have any benefit for locals, but some people even became more impoverished as a result.

The dam construction company ordered us to plant summer paddy, which was unsuccessful, and upon objection to continue planting, we were told to hand over our land to them, which we did. They then instructed their staff to cultivate the land, which also proved unsuccessful, so they entrusted the land back to the

government, who then returned it to us. Many farmers have suffered great losses as a direct result of this dam," said U Win Thein, a farmer from Rakhine State's Gwa Township.

Myanmar currently boasts around 500 irrigation canals, but they have not resulted in any distinct developments for the country's agricultural sector, as 90 per cent of the country's arable lands are still cultivated with rain water, according to Dr Htun Win.—Myitmakha News Agency

Myanmar Police Force donates water to water-scarce communities

THE Myanmar Police Force is helping to provide clean water to the people facing water shortages due to high temperatures brought on by El Niño.

Members of Traffic Police Force Unit-117, based in Tachilek, supplied 3,500 gallons of water for drinking, bathing and washing and 600 gallons of purified drinking water to the residents in Tachilek

Township, Shan State, on Monday, 9 May.

Similarly, Police officers led by the Commander of the Kayah State Police Force distributed 9,000 gallons of clean water and 2,700 gallons of drinking water to the residents of Loikaw Township on 13 May. On 14 May, members of the Yamethin Township Police Force donated 1,200 gallons of

water for drinking, bathing and washing to local communities, and members of the Yaygyi Township Police Station supplied 350 gallons of clean water to residents of the townships.

The Myanmar Police Force has donated a total of 346,452 gallons of clean water between 25 April and 14 May, according to the police force. —Myanmar Police Force



Police officers distribute clean water. PHOTO: MPF

Crime NEWS

Five killed, nine injured in car accident

FIVE people died on the spot while another nine were injured during a car accident on Saturday afternoon on the road between Monywa and Ye U.

According to investigators, a public transport vehicle carrying about 15 passengers crashed into a large tree beside the Monywa-Ye U road near Seikthakan Village in Butalin Township, Monywa District, when the driver lost control of the car.

Five passengers from various villages in Ye U and Tantse townships were killed on the spot. The rest were taken to the nearest hospital after the accident.

The driver is facing charges by local police under Criminal Law. —Myo Win Tun



The aftermath of the crash on the Monywa-Ye U road.

Smuggled beers seized on train

CUSTOMS police on Friday confiscated beers in a cargo carriage on Mandalay-Myitkyina Train No 937 on which duties were not paid. The train was conducted by U Kyaw Lin Htun and U Than Soe,

Acting on a tip-off, local au-

thorities searched the train and found a variety of illegal beers worth K124.5 million in carriage SMB 45283 and confiscated them.

According to a police investigation, U Ko Ko Lay, who resides in Mandalay, sent the il-

legal beer packages to U Thein Win, 51, in Myithitkyi Ward, Myitkyina Township, who rode the train on Thursday night.

Charges have been filed against U Thein Win under the Excise Act. —Min Yaza

China-made hand grenades seized from drugs smugglers



Sai Kyaw and U Lon Hwan pose with the cache of heroin and hand grenades found in their possession.

LOCAL authorities on Thursday arrested two men who were found in possession of a cache of heroin and China-made hand grenades.

Acting on a tip off, a combined police team searched a house in Nabyine Village-tract in Mong Rail Township in northern Shan State. They discovered 24 grams of heroin and two hand grenades from house owner U Lon Hwan, 50, together with Sai Kyaw, 41, and arrested them.

Both suspects have been charged under the related laws on drug dealing and holding explosive materials. —Zarni Aung

Heroin, yaba pills seized in Shan State, Yangon Region

OVER 1,000 yaba pills and nearly 25 grams of heroin were seized by local police from drug dealers in Yangon Region and Shan State in a single day.

Acting on a tip-off, an anti-drug squad on Friday searched a motorbike driven by Ma Louk Phain near a forest along the Kutkai-Kaungkha road in Shan State and 24 grams of heroin and 975 yaba tablets in her possession.

A similar case occurred in Thingangyun Township in Yangon on the same day. Aung Than, who was walking along Thanthuma Road near Ngamo-

eyeik Ward, was arrested by police after he was found in a possession of a cache of nearly 50 yaba pills. Afterward, police seized another drug dealer named Myo Min Naing who had 390 Yaba pills with him.

Local authorities also confiscated 150 yaba pills after they searched a house owned by Tayoke (aka Thant Zin Oo) in North Dagon Township in Yangon on that day.

All people involved in these cases are being charged by police under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. —Police Information



Ma Louk Phain poses with the drugs found in her possession.

Young man dies after lightning strike in Nawngkhio

AN 18-year-old man has reportedly been killed by what was believed to be a lightning strike when he was listening to the music through his mobile phone on Saturday.

Wai Lin Oo, who was wearing earphones to listen to mu-

sic, died on the spot after being struck by lightning when he was collecting garbage in a canal near a sugarcane plantation in Nawngkhio Township in northern Shan State.

Police are still investigating the case. —200

LOCAL Business

Breeding of edible nest swiftlets thriving in Myeik

WITH the price of edible birds' nests rising, the number of breeders of edible nest swiftlets (*Collocalia fuciphaga*) has increased along Kanna Road in Myeik Township.

Edible nest swiftlets are introduced into making nests using bird-noise techniques at houses along the Strand Road in Myeik. This breeding business has become popular in the region, and many breeders are thriving, said breeders.

"Previously, we had to find nests on the walls of the mountain. Later, the experimental breeding at the houses achieved success, allowing breeders to earn handsome profits," said U Ngwe Maung, a businessman who breeds swiftlets.

"Two types of nests are sold at the market: those from islands and those collected from breeding houses. The edible nest swiftlets naturally make their nests here without the use of imitated voice. The price of nests ranges from K1.6 million to K2 million per viss, depending on the variety and quality of the nest," said U Maung Maung Oo from Kanna Road in Myeik.



Edible nest swiftlets (*Collocalia fuciphaga*).

However, the prevailing price of the nests from the islands can reach K6 million for 10 ticals after purification, while the price of nests from houses along Kanna Road is K800,000 for 10 ticals.

"To maintain the ecosystem of the islands, two islands in Myanmar's marine territory have

been designated as sanctuaries.

The period of collecting lasts around three months a year, up to the first week of November.

The period for working permits is up to the end of November," said U Tin Thein, the director of the Forestry Department of Taninthayi Region.—200

IFC to invest in private sector development

THE International Finance Corporation (IFC) has announced that it will invest in private sector development programmes.

The World Bank and the IFC plan to invest US\$70 million in private sector development programmes in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. They are preparing to make capital investments of US\$7.5 million in Myanmar, according to the announcement.

The investment is mainly targeted at SMEs to effectuate the development of local businesses. A Singapore-based emerging markets investment consulting company will supervise the investments. The IFC will seek to meet the needs of the businesses in which it invests and to provide assistance to office automation systems.

Investments will be priori-

tised for stable, strong companies. The IFC will consider whether the long-term investments will effectuate the companies' long-term development before investing.

The IFC has decided to extend its investment in the Myanmar Industrial Port upgrading project, as well as in Myanmar retail enterprises such as City Mart Holding Co Ltd.—PPN/Union Daily

Solar drying machines to be installed in Mandalay

Drying machines will be installed in Mandalay Region in order to be used in drying agriculture and fishery products.

"The project, called 'We Care', will install solar drying machines in order for products to meet international quality standards. Sun-drying is time consuming and causing losses and wastages," said Mr Mathieu Vergez, the manager of the project.

"Solar drying machines are

required to be applied effectively and efficiently for the products to be marketable. Currently, the drying machines have already been installed in Pindaya, Wundwin and Myittha townships, and they will be installed in other townships, too," he said.

It takes only two days to dry crops using the solar drying machines, while it takes five days to dry crops in the sun.

The crops can be dried with-

out causing any losses or wastages when the drying machines are installed.

When farmers dry 10 baskets of crops in the sun, only around eight are usable after the process is completed.

A drying machine costs about K20 million, and the warranty period is 15 years. The machines have polycarbonate sheets and can dry any category of farm products.—Zar Zar

Price of 1300-CC cars expected to rise by K1 million

THE price of cars with 1300-CC engine power is expected to rise by between K1 million and 1.5 million in the local car market if income taxes are levied in advance when imported cars are registered, according to car dealers.

An advanced payment of the income tax will be conducted by One Stop Service (OSS) centres, according to the Road Transport Administration Department (Nay Pyi Taw).

This service will be available at the Road Transport Administration offices in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay starting from 1 June.

Vehicles imported with old vehicle exchange receipts, vehicles imported under the allotted budget of the union and regional governments, donated vehicles, vehicles provided for particular purposes, vehicles used in funeral services, fire engines and vehicles used only for religious purposes, imported vehicles for embassies and diplomats, vehicles imported by UN organisations and imported cars during the exemption period set by the Myanmar Investment Commission are not entitled to pay the tax. All the taxes collected are required under the Union Tax Law.—200

UNIDO helps SMEs tap international loans

THE United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) will seek to enable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to access loans from the international organisations, said UNIDO technical advisor Michele Boario.

"Investment plays a vital role in allowing businesses to flourish because businesses cannot thrive only on technological expertise without investments.

Therefore, UNIDO will be involved in the negotiations with international organisa-

tions to enable SMEs to access loans," he said.

UNIDO will petition the international organisations to put a certain amount of investment capital in local banks so that they can guarantee loans for SME entrepreneurs.

Local SMEs have achieved success over the past year, but the growth rate of businesses is still behind compared to other ASEAN countries.

Thus, UNIDO is aiming to assist SME entrepreneurs to get loans from the international organisations.—200

Germany to import Myanmar teas

LOCAL tea producers recently joined hands with Germany-based TeeGschwendner to bring Myanmar teas to Western European markets.

Mr Daniel Marck of TeeGschwendner said his company prefers Myanmar's high-quality specialty teas because of their delicious taste.

"The teas give a sparkling amber infusion and have a light, peaty taste," he said.

Local green tea manufacturers already export their products to several ASEAN coun-

tries and to the US.

"Exporting native green teas to Germany will bring better prospects for the country's tea industry. It is a chance to promote our made-in-Myanmar product to the international consumers," said Daw Nila Oo, a member of a local group of tea producers.

Myanmar is home to 200,000 acres of tea plantations and produces 40,000 metric tonnes of green, black and oolong teas annually, according to a survey.—Chan Chan

Beijing blasts Pentagon report on Chinese military as damaging trust

BEIJING — China condemned the US Defence Department's annual report on the Chinese military on Sunday, calling it deliberate distortion that has "severely damaged" mutual trust.

In its annual report to Congress on Chinese military activities, the US Defence Department said on Friday that China is expected to add substantial military infrastructure, including communications and surveillance systems, to artificial islands in the South China Sea this year.

China's Defence Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun expressed "strong dissatisfaction" and "firm opposition" to the Pentagon report and said it has "severely damaged mutual trust", state news agency Xinhua reported.

The report "hyped up" China's military threat and lack of transparency, "de-

liberately distorted" Chinese defence policies and "unfairly" depicted Chinese activities in the East and South China seas, Yang was quoted as saying.

"China follows a national defence policy that is defensive in nature," Yang said, adding that the country's military build-up and reforms are aimed at maintaining sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and guaranteeing China's peaceful development.

It is the United States that has always been suspicious and flexing its military muscle by frequently sending military aircraft and warships to the region, Yang said.

Despite its calls for freedom of navigation and restraint for peace, the US has pushed forward militarization of the South China Sea with an "intention to

exert hegemony", Yang added.

The Pentagon report said the planned addition of military infrastructure would give China long-term "civil-military bases" in the contested waters.

It estimated that China's reclamation work had added more than 3,200 acres (1,300 hectares) of land on seven features it occupied in the Spratly Islands in the space of two years.

The report said China had completed its major reclamation efforts in October, switching focus to infrastructure development, including three 9,800 foot-long (3,000 metre) airstrips that can accommodate advanced fighter jets.

Yang, the spokesman, defended the construction, saying it serves mostly civilian purposes and helps fulfill China's internation-



China's President Xi Jinping (L) and US President Barack Obama depart at the end of a joint news conference in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington in 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

al responsibilities and obligations by providing more public goods.

The Pentagon report comes at a time of heightened tension over maritime territories claimed by China and disputed by several

Asian nations. Washington has accused Beijing of militarising the South China Sea while Beijing, in turn, has criticised increased US naval patrols and exercises in Asia. The US report renewed accusations against

China's government and military for cyber attacks against US government computer systems, a charge Beijing denies. The Pentagon said attacks in 2015 appeared focused on intelligence collection.—Reuters

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Thai king, in hospital for a year, has swollen lung — palace

BANGKOK — Thailand's 88-year-old King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who has been in hospital for a year, has a swollen lung and knees and is recovering from a fever, the Royal Household Bureau said in a statement on Saturday.

King Bhumibol, the world's longest-serving monarch, has been treated for various ailments during

hospitalisation in the Thai capital. He was last seen in public on 11 January, when he spent a few hours visiting his Bangkok palace.

Nervousness over his health and the succession has formed the backdrop to more than a decade of political crisis in Thailand, where the military took power in a coup two years ago. On 11 May, King Bhu-

mibol suffered a fever, low blood pressure and swollen knee joints, the palace said. An X-ray taken the following day also showed swelling in his right lung.

His temperature, pulse and blood pressure returned to normal on Friday with the administration of antibiotics and oxygen, the palace statement said.

News about the royals

is tightly controlled in Thailand, where laws protecting the royal family from insult make it a crime to defame, insult or threaten the king, queen, heir to the throne or regent. Updates on King Bhumibol's health are typically made public once he is recovering. The palace last issued a statement on his health three months ago.—Reuters

Bangladesh police arrest key suspect over murder of LGBT magazine editor

DHAKA — The Bangladeshi police said on Sunday they have arrested a key suspect in connection with the murders of an editor and his friend, for which a "Bangladesh branch" of al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent claimed responsibility.

"The suspect, Shariful Islam Shihab, was detained from a western Bangladesh district early on Sunday," Deputy Inspector General of the Bangladesh Police, Monirul Islam, told reporters.

Islam could not tell immediately whether Shihab is one of the five killers who were captured by a closed-circuit camera while they were fleeing the

crime scene.

The footage from the camera at a nearby building showed five men running in an alley.

But Islam confirmed the his (Shihab) involvement in the murders.

"We're question him to have further details and nab all the killers," said Islam, also head of the police Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit.

At least five machete-wielding assailants forcibly entered the house of Xulhaz Mannan who used to edit "Rupban," Bangladesh's first magazine for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community, on 25

April in central Dhaka's Kalabagan area.

The assailants stabbed the USAID local staff Mannan and his friend Tonoy Fahim indiscriminately, leaving them dead on the spot.

During the primary interrogation, Islam said the arrested admitted that Mannan, who previously worked as a protocol officer in the US embassy in Dhaka, and his friend were killed for their alleged anti-Islamic activities.

A number of secularist writers, bloggers and publishers in Bangladesh have been killed or seriously injured in attacks perpetrated by Islamist extremists since 2013.—Xinhua

North Korea frees Russian yacht, crew detained

MOSCOW — North Korean authorities allowed a Russian yacht to continue its journey two days after detaining it and its five crew in coastal waters, Russian media reported on Sunday.

The yacht was en route from the South Korean port of Pusan to Vladivostok in Russia's Far East on Friday when it was seized 80 miles (130 km) off the coast of North Korea's economic zone. News agency RIA on Sunday cited Russia's consul general in Chongjin as saying North Korea had detained the yacht "by mistake".—Reuters

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Annual Aoi festival held in Kyoto



People in ancient Japanese court-style attire participate in the annual Aoi Matsuri, one of the three main festivals of Kyoto, in the western Japan city on 15 May, 2016. Around 500 participants, dressed as nobles of the Heian Period (794-1185), walked with decorated ox carts and horses around an eight kilometre course from Kyoto Imperial Palace to Shimogamo and Kamigamo shrines, during the ancient capital's major festival, which dates back 1,400 years. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Gov't to reflect female concerns in evacuation centre operations

TOKYO — Following a number of problems and complaints by women living in evacuation centres after powerful earthquakes in southwestern Japan last month, the government will draw up plans to reflect female concerns and viewpoints in the operation of such shelters, a government source said Sunday.

The government will urge municipalities across the country to conduct special training for workers in charge of disaster prevention by March 2017, with an eye to having each local government draw up its own manual on evacuation centre operations reflecting women's concerns and needs, the source said.

According to the Cabinet Office, women living in evacuation centres in Kumamoto Prefecture have complained that there are no areas enabling them to

breast-feed their babies or change clothes in seclusion.

Female evacuees also say they feel reluctant to hang up their laundry to dry in spaces they have to share with men, the office said, adding such problems are believed to increase the stress female evacuees feel. Under the special training programme, the government will note the need to include more women in the units in charge of disaster prevention and reflect their views in their emergency plans, the source said.

Specifically, it is expected to recommend that taskforces be set up at each evacuation centre to attend to women and decide where to install female changing rooms and nursing rooms. The government plans to distribute its training program to each municipality in the near future, the source said.—Kyodo News

Pakistan opposition leader Imran Khan admits using off-shore company

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani opposition leader Imran Khan, who tried to oust Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a row over off-shore wealth, has acknowledged using an off-shore company to avoid paying British tax on a London property sale.

Analysts say the admission is likely to ease the pressure on Sharif's government from a Panama Papers data leak that showed Sharif's children had used off-shore companies to buy London properties. Last month the government bowed to opposition demands for a review by an independent commission.

Khan's PTI party initially denied media claims that he bought a property in London through an off-shore company in 1983, when he was playing cricket in England. But late on Friday, Khan said he set up the company to legally avoid paying British taxes.

"Because I was not a British citizen, an offshore flat was

bought. When I sold that flat in 2003, I did not have to pay the taxes in UK," Khan told reporters at London's Heathrow Airport. "There is nothing illegal in it."

PTI and Khan did not respond to requests for comment.

Khan, long revered as a cricketing hero, had relentlessly needed Sharif over the Panama Papers revelations and railed against people who use off-shore companies to dodge tax.

Media commentators and Nawaz supporters quoted back at him his Twitter comment from last month: "Only reason ppl open offshore accts through Panama is to either hide wealth, esp ill-gotten wealth, or to evade tax or both."

Umar Cheema, a Pakistani reporter who collaborated with the International Committee of Journalists (ICIJ) on the Panama Papers leak, said Khan's use of an off-shore company in 1983 pre-dates anything found in the

Panama Papers about other Pakistanis.

Khan "is pioneer in offshore company formation, among Pakistanis. Not only the oldest, his company remained operational for the longest period," Cheema said on Twitter.

Mohammad Zubair, the privatisation minister, said Khan should prepare to face a parliamentary grilling. He added Sharif does not own any off-shore companies.

Sharif's daughter Maryam, who is alleged to have owned an off-shore company used to buy a flat in London, also waded in.

"The 'PIONEER' of offshore companies The TRAILBLAZER award goes to Mr. Khan. #Hypocrisy," she said on Twitter.

One political analyst said the opposition was likely to keep using the Panama Papers to pillor Sharif but Khan's revelations will help blunt those attacks.—Reuters

G-7 ministers pledge to address int'l issues through education



Japan's education minister Hiroshi Hase (R) speaks alongside education ministers from the Group of Seven countries and the European Union at a press conference in Kurashiki, western Japan, on 15 May 2016, as they wrap up a two-day meeting. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

OKAYAMA, (Japan) — Education ministers from the Group of Seven industrialised countries agreed Sunday to work together to address global issues including refugees and widening income inequality as they wrapped up a two-day meeting in Okayama Prefecture in western Japan.

Representatives from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the European Union agreed to cooperate in providing quality education to children of refugees and immigrants at a time when European countries are seeing a huge influx of Syrian refugees.

The G-7 ministers said in a joint declaration released after

the meeting in Kurashiki that education plays a significant role in maintaining peace in the international community.

It also emphasized the importance of conveying core values such as democracy and the rule of law to young people to prevent them from becoming radical extremists. The ministers also agreed to ensure equal opportunities for young people in poverty and women, and promoting science and math education.

The outcome of the two-day meeting, chaired by Hiroshi Hase, the Japanese education minister, will be passed on to the G-7 summit to be held 26 and 27 May in the central Japan prefecture of Mie.—Kyodo News

Australia charges five men over plot to sail to join Islamic State

SYDNEY — Australian police have charged five men suspected of planning to travel to Syria to join Islamic State via a journey that would start in a small motor boat taking them to Indonesia and the Philippines.

The men, aged between 21 and 31, were charged on Saturday with preparing to enter a foreign country "for the purpose of engaging in hostile activities," an offence that carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Australian Attorney-General George Brandis told reporters on Sunday "their intentions to travel to the Middle East to engage in terrorist war fighting were known to the authorities," and that their passports had earlier been cancelled.

The five, who were not named, were arrested on Tuesday after towing the seven-metre motor boat almost 3,000 km (1,865 miles) from Melbourne to Cairns in northern Queensland state, police said.

The men, in custody since

Tuesday, will appear in court on Monday.

Brandis said that when it became clear to the men they could not leave "in an orthodox way, they remained under surveillance so that if they attempted to leave the country in this very unusual way they would be able to be stopped and they were."

There is "an unusual character to the plot, I know it has been ridiculed, but these are serious crimes," he said.—Reuters

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

No dialogue, no peace

Kyaw Thura

A CONFLICT is, to a great extent, an unscrupulous duel in which two powerful opposing sides are stuck, a foreign journalist once remarked in his news report. The future stability of our country rests solely on the willingness of the conflicting sides to bring about changes for the betterment of the country through dialogue, which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi described 20 years ago as a key

to a happy resolution of the long-festering problems.

With the dramatic changes in democratic reform progressing alongside the emergence of a civilian government, our country's potential to rise above its humble status in the international community is beyond question. Despite this, we all need to be well aware of malicious plots to hinder the efforts to bring together all ethnic groups to the ne-

gotiating table. Some people exploit social media to spread hate speech with the intention of orchestrating communal violence and unrest.

It is absolutely vital for all the ethnic groups to remain united and determined to continue to work harder together by taking on the mantle of our forefathers, who held a particular vision in mind: to work together for the betterment of the

people and the country as a whole. Therefore, discussions and negotiations among stakeholders must accommodate the needs of innocent victims in conflict-affected areas.

For peace and reconciliation to become a reality, negotiation—to seek a compromise rather than a perfect solution—must be unconditional. Sometimes, there is a notion that might is just intolerance in disguise.

Glimpses of Life on the Farm across Myanmar and image of MADB in the past

U Thein Myint

Myanmar's farmers have very close ties with Myanma Agriculture Development Bank (MADB) since it was established by the country's founding fathers 60 years ago and the relationship has now reached down to their grandchildren who inherited the farm. Of course, over the decades, different rulers and governance systems did come and go but MADB has always been going on, providing cultivation loans without collateral and with affordable interest to the 2 million individual farmers every season throughout the period.

In those days, all farmers worthy of their names must own full set of farm implements, such as plough, ploughshares and harrows, enough quality seeds of paddy, sesame, beans etc of their own, stored in large bamboo baskets, as well as organic fertilizers gathered on the farm, all set ready for the coming crop seasons. Land preparation was done by family members with own or hired cattle. Those who could buy power tillers also hired out to neighbors who wanted to finish in good time. The money borrowed from MADB was mainly for costs of hired labor in transplanting and for buying NPK fertilizers and pesticides, if needed. Reaping and harvesting were done by neighboring farmers and relatives who took turn on one another in good spirits. No wages. After the day's work, all enjoyed a big meal cooked by the host's wife. Work was tiring and sweat, mud and dirt were all over their bodies but their hearts remained clean and their spirits sweet. Farm cattle with whom they toiled in the mud and dirt, were regarded as benefactors and accordingly taken care of with love and attachment just like family members.

Loan disbursements and collections were done in the village at no cost to the farmers. The MADB staff who came to the villages were treated as kins. Their faces were familiar in the area and villagers took care of their security and ensured no harm whatsoever fall on them in their jurisdictions. Where no public transport was available they would send on own bullock carts or small boats to the main centres. Where there are no food shops in the villages, staff need not skip meals. They were not allowed to go home without having an impromptu meal cooked in rural style.

After harvest, just a portion of the crop would be sold for cash, in order to repay MADB loans. They did not need to worry for fresh loans for the coming crops because they knew MADB, unlike private moneylenders in many cases, never failed and let them down. Also, nobody would like to carry their debt to their graves and no one ever did, knowingly. Even in cases of sudden deaths the children would clear their parent's debts.

The surplus crops, after setting aside enough quantity for consuming on the farm before the next crop, for alms to the monks and for visiting relatives, were then sold out to the best buyers. With this earning from the soil, rich and poor alike would seek to gather as much good merits as they can. In years of good harvest and better prices families may find a bride for the unmarried son, or hold a big novitiation ceremony by erecting a big pandal and offering meals to comers from all corners for some seven days. Those who could afford more would renovate or build local monasteries and pagodas so that they could claim highly coveted religious titles like in Buddha's times. What an adorable way of life and a simple but noble outlook. And no harm done whatsoever to



A farmer working on tobacco plantations. PHOTO:GNLM

mankind.

Of course farming is a hazardous business always prone to the vagaries of weather, destructive pests and the highly volatile crop market. Low yields due to erratic rainfall, damages due to floods or draughts, loss due to pest attacks suffered by some farms were not uncommon. In such cases friends and neighbors always pitched in by helping the affected families to hold on until the next season. Only in cases of no harvest at all around the area, a crop failure is registered by the authorities. Always good friends, MADB would come in the face of such disasters with offers of rescheduling loan repayments, cancelling the due interest, and or issuing new loans. No bad feeling and no love lost between clients and creditors. Farmers reciprocated en masse by repaying all due instalments and MADB could steadfastly maintain a near 100% repayment records for decades, unrivaled in the region and even around the world.

At the same time MADB cultivated savings habit among farmers in both voluntary and loan tied programs. In addition to seasonal credit for 23 types of crops, a vari-

ety of loan products, both short term and medium term, were offered and many farmers in need of draft cattle, bullock carts, pump sets, power tillers benefited with such loans. Loans for livestock raising and fish ponds were also introduced later.

However, bad luck has befallen on MADB since the transfer of its management in 1996 to another Ministry. Just to mention a few-- The loan disbursement in the village system was arbitrarily cancelled and farmers have to come to town to receive loans, incurring cost of travel, meals and loss of working days. Deductions from loans for several nontransparent reasons reduced the real value they need to use on the farm. This sent many farmers unwillingly to the moneylenders for supplementary cash, on which they have to pay very high interest thus defeating the aim and spirit of the government. Inevitably, the productive function and repaying capacity of farmers declined resulting in large number of nonperforming loans for the once proud and prestigious MADB. The warm and close ties and long time relationship nurtured between debtors and creditors

withered. In addition, all other crop loans with the exception of paddy were stopped without any explanation. All short and medium term loans were withdrawn and no new loans given. Repayment date for paddy loans were arbitrarily set and reset many times, often forcing farmers to sell their crops when prices were at the lowest. The trust built between farmers and MADB as reliable partners became weaker. The worse came in 2012 when all farmers were ordered to come and take out all their savings they have put at MADB for many years, instantly making all farmers without savings and also resulting in a cash crunch and operating fund loss of K 8 billion at MADB. This was in a way cutting the crucial link between the clients and their banker. Never seen or heard of such a phenomenon in banking around the world.

What a divide and what a damaging divide that had been created on the relationship between the rulers (bank authorities) and the people (farmers) they were supposed to serve. Nevertheless, under this new government today with a humane heart and a peoples first approach, divides can be bridged, and wrongs can be corrected at no time, by reintroducing good governance and accountability, by putting the professional staff in their rightful places, by adhering to sound banking principles and best practices and by reestablishing the warm and cordial relationship between the clients and their bankers and above all else, by giving due respect and genuine concern to our 2 million farmers, especially at the change mode like now. The adorable farm life and values in Myanmar as well as the private-public partnership built between farmers and government institutions like MADB, will certainly flourish once again.

Mon State government revenue exceeds estimates

TAX and revenue collections from the 2015-16 fiscal year have proven the most fruitful yet for the Mon State government in the last five years, exceeding anticipated collections by nearly 50 per cent, according to the Internal Revenue Department of Mon State.

“The amount of collected tax and revenue differs each year. Compared with the last five years, last year saw a greater amount of tax collected. Our department is holding a tax and revenue education awareness event this month to help the public understand the concept of what we do. If people can understand why everyone must pay their taxes in this era of democracy, then it will allow for

more tax to be collected,” said U Win Khaing, assistant director of the Mon State Internal Revenue Department. The amount of tax collected between the 2011-12 and 2014-15 fiscal years ranged between K669.5 million and K898.9 million. An initial projection of K850.1 million was made for the amount of tax that would be collected during the 2015-16 fiscal year, though the actual figure collected was K1.47 billion.

The Mon State Internal Revenue Department currently collects tax under five different categories: trade, special freight, income, stamps and lottery.

Of all revenue collected during the previous fiscal year,

income tax amounts for the majority, amounting to nearly K200 million, with the second largest amount of revenue coming from duties on trade.

It is known that trade duties and income tax were paid by a total of 10 entrepreneurs in Mon State during the 2015-16 fiscal year while other businessmen are still in arrears.

The Mon State Internal Revenue Department will hold an educational awareness event on 24 May in the Mon State Hall on the newly enacted Union Revenue and Special Freight Duty Laws in a bid to inform the public on matters relating to tax and revenue. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

ATM payroll system to be implemented at some Mandalay schools

AN ATM payroll system for school teachers will be implemented in some schools in Mandalay next month, said Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi at a recent meeting.

He added: “We will monitor the pilot project, which is expected to produce successful outcomes within six months. The important part of the project

is that teachers get their money when they want it with the use of automated teller machines.”

“No teacher can complain that salaries are released late after the new payroll system is implemented,” he said.

The pilot project targets five basic education high schools, including BEHS Nos 1, 4, 8, 14 and 16, in Mandalay.

Some teachers expect to receive their full salaries without any reductions from fees after the system comes to their schools. The current bank interest rate for savings account is 8.25 per cent per annum. Local banks will visit those schools to offer necessary ATM-related services in early June.

— *Aung Thant Khaing*

Service-oriented policing workshop held in Myintkyina



Deputy Police Chief Police Brig-Gen Thein Oo discussing at the service oriented policing workshop in Myitkyina. PHOTO: MPF

A WORKSHOP on service-oriented policing organised by Police Force of Kachin State took place in Myitkyina, with the opening speech given by Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung on Friday, 13 May.

In his speech, Dr Khet Aung said police provide a public service and provide security for the people, and police force, in carrying out their duties, will need the cooperation of public in line with rules and regulations. To effectively

carry out the new government’s 100-day plan for public security, rule of law and crime suppression, police need harmonious participation of people and governmental personnel.

Deputy Police Chief Brig-Gen Thein Oo listed the aims of police procedures: understanding theories of service-oriented policing methods and practices; effectively and successfully carrying out tasks in practice; possessing the appropriate characteristics of police; car-

rying out basic policies of police procedures; measuring the development of police procedures; and offering transparency to the public.

Commander of the Kachin State Police Force Police Col Maung Soe explained public security, the rule of law and crime reduction strategies, and he responded to queries raised by attendees at the workshop. A total of 250 departmental personnel attended the event. — *Ye Zarni*

Promotion indeed in need

Aung Myint Oo

When we talk about health, these three pillars, viz. promotive, preventive, curative are universal. Prices for them are in ascending order while cost-effectiveness goes opposite way. So, logically it is no brainer as to what should be the top priority. However, life is not always logical. Governments around the world may or may have to give priority to curative and then preventive as opposed to promotive. Even though it’s not the priority, what is important is there must be well-developed strategies with clear-cut paths and its destinies as a result of political commitment and strong will from the governments.

What one can reckon from the past in Myanmar as far as health promotion is concerned; it’s done next to none. Governments may have had some health promotion programme on paper, but little had become visible and tangible. Since the government itself was not convinced there’s no one else pushing the community actively and effectively to adopt the healthy lifestyles as existence and roles of civil societies that truly represent the community are very limited in the past.

However, since 1 April 2016 Myanmar has entered into a new era led by a new government with a very strong mandate from the people of Myanmar. “Time for change”, being a slogan of the new government, strategies and journeys ahead should not be the repetition or reiteration of what have been seen or done before, unless there are good reasons to do so. Health sector shouldn’t be spared in that regard. In fact the change should take place in social sector such as health much earlier than the rest as changes in social sectors very much depend on change of attitudes and behaviours which usually re-

quires much longer time to see its impact.

Having said all above as rationale and background and the fact that the new health minister has briefly mentioned about some health promotional initiatives of health ministry to be carried out jointly with the department of sports and physical education which has become part of the family of the health ministry, there is little doubt that health promotion will be back in the limelight. Enhancing health promotion activities will be the right strategy for the health ministry to attain the millennium goals as everyone knows that curative approach is extremely costly and not efficient and yet unable to eliminate the health problems which are nowadays mostly lifestyle-related.

Although health ministry can be the leading agency, health promotion should be regarded as a national movement which requires a strong political commitment from the whole of government, full support from other agencies regardless of being a public or private and last but not least active participation of the community. Ultimately, setting up a dedicated independent body e.g. “Health Promotion Agency” with all necessary support from the government might be a good start to be able to launch community-based preventive and promotive activities without much of red tapes.

While hoping positively for the government’s initiatives, to be in line with the slogan of the new government which is “Time for change”, I would like to urge fellow citizens to start adopting healthy lifestyles in view of our journey to a happy, healthy and prosperous Myanmar. I also have a little tip to add for those who might need a role model to motivate themselves which is to be envious of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s perfect health reflecting her more-than-perfect physique at her age of seventy years.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

The SAARC and ASEAN member nations need to include a common agreement for introducing Joint Conservation Initiative (JCI) across all the member nations to prevent poaching, prevent wildlife trade, trafficking and underground wildlife markets operating in the region. This could help in broadening the scope of successful conservation of vulnerable wildlife and forests in South and SE Asia. Transboundary introduction of related species, protection of animal migration corridors, strict regulation on poacher and wildlife traffickers, captive breeding of endangered species and their introduction to the wild, artificial breeding of rare wildlife and forest plants, exchange of expertise and useful conservation techniques and knowledge could thus be facilitated among the participating nations.

Thanking you
Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu

Trump has a history of questionable behaviour with women: NY Times

NEW YORK — Interviews with dozens of women who have worked for Donald Trump or interacted with him socially reveal a pattern of often unsettling personal behaviour by the Republican presidential candidate, *The New York Times* reported on Saturday.

The *Times*, which said it based the article on more than 50 interviews, quoted women who recounted episodes in which he treated women as sexual objects and made comments about their bodies.

But some women said Trump had encouraged them in their careers and promoted them within his businesses, often in positions in which women tended to be excluded.

When asked about the unflattering incidents described in the article, Trump either denied that they took place or disputed the details, the newspaper said.

"A lot of things get made up over the years," Trump told the *Times*. "I have always treated women with great respect."

A Trump representative did not immediately respond to a request by Reuters for comment.

Barbara Res, who oversaw construction of Trump's Manhattan business headquarters, said he would sometimes interrupt meetings with comments about women's figures.

During a job interview for a Los Angeles project, for example, Trump made a random aside about Southern California women. "They take care of their asses," Res recalled Trump saying.

Years later, when Res says she had gained weight, she said Trump told her: "You like your candy."



US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign event at the Indiana Theater in Terre Haute, Indiana, US, on 1 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Even so, Res, who worked for Trump for 12 years before quitting and then came back as a consultant for six more, said she was grateful to Trump for her professional opportunities, though she said he frequently called her "Honey Bunch," the *Times* reported.

Trump also earned a reputation for being seen with beautiful women dating back to his days at a New York military-style boarding school where he was named "ladies' man" in the yearbook, the *Times* reported.

Barbara Fife, a deputy New York mayor in the 1990s, recalls Trump telling her at her City Hall office that he was in a hurry because he had "a great date tonight with a model for Victoria's Secret," she told the *Times*.

"I saw it as immature, quite honestly," Fife was quoted as saying. As a candidate, Trump has made frequent references to his record in business as evi-

dence of how American women would benefit if he is elected. He has often said that no one "cherishes" or "respects" women more than him.

Some of those interviewed praised Trump for giving women positions of power.

"I think there are mischaracterizations about him," Jill Martin, assistant counsel at the Trump Organisation, told the *Times*. "For me, he's made it a situation where I can really excel at my job and still devote the time necessary for my family."

The story comes less than two weeks after the last of Trump's Republican rivals dropped out, all but assuring him the party's presidential nomination this summer.

Throughout his improbable campaign, Trump has managed to deflect criticism about his attitude to women, fueled by verbal insults he lobbed at Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly and former Republican candidate Carly Fiorina.—Reuters

Three killed as ethnic rivalries fuel brawl at Moscow cemetery

MOSCOW — Three people were killed and two dozen were wounded on Saturday in a mass brawl at Moscow's largest cemetery that witnesses said was sparked by rivalry between ethnic groups battling for control of the burial service business.

About 200 people, some armed with guns and other weapons, took part in the clashes at the vast Khovanskoye cemetery in southwest Moscow and more than 90 people were detained after riot police broke up the brawl, police and witnesses said.

Moscow's city health department said three people were killed and 23 were hospitalised, four of whom were seriously injured.

Pictures posted on social

media showed young men wielding iron rods, spade shafts and baseball bats as they rushed into the fighting.

Reuters witnesses saw a young man's body lying on the pavement near an overturned car as a forensic expert bent over it. About 10 mainly young men lay handcuffed on the ground while police armed with Kalashnikov rifles looked on.

The RIA news agency quoted a cemetery official as saying people from Russia's North Caucasus regions of Chechnya and Dagestan had attacked migrants from ex-Soviet Uzbekistan and Tajikistan working there, attempting to take over their jobs.

With Russia's economy bat-

tered by Western sanctions and low prices for its oil exports, migrants struggle to find work and ethnic criminal groups add to social tensions.

Quoting a police source, TASS news agency said ethnic Chechens, Dagestanis, Uzbeks and Tajiks were among those detained.

Tajikistan's Interior Ministry will send to Moscow its top expert in battling organised crime in the former Soviet Union to help investigate the incident, Russian news agencies quoted Russian police spokeswoman Irina Volk as saying.

Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on his Twitter account that none of those responsible would go unpunished.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

German police find pig's head outside Merkel's constituency office

BERLIN — Police found a pig's head bearing a written insult against German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the entrance to her constituency office in the northeastern town of Stralsund on Saturday, state police said.

Police declined to provide further details about the insult when contacted by Reuters, saying an investigation had been launched.

Merkel's popularity has waned due to her liberal migrant policy. More than a million migrants arrived in Germany last year, many of them fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa, and concerns about how Europe's largest economy will be able to integrate them are now rife. An INSA poll published on Wednesday showed that almost half of Germans did not want her to stay in office for a fourth term after an election next year.—Reuters

EC: No 'modification' of requirements for Serbia

BRUSSELS — The European Commission on Saturday dismissed claims that it is "mildly modifying" its requirements for Serbia due to Croatia's blockade of Serbia's EU accession talks, noting that the conditions for opening Chapter 23 in the talks remain unchanged.

"Our position remains the same," European Commission spokeswoman Maja Kocijancic told Tanjug.

Quoting an internal document of the German Federal Foreign Office, Deutsche Welle recently reported that Brussels is "mildly modifying" its position and that it will be accommodating to Croatia in terms of opening Chapter 23 with Serbia. Croatia is the only EU member state that has refused to give the green light for opening the chapter due to its reservations over a law on Serbia's regional jurisdiction in trying war crimes, guaranteed parliamentary seats for the Croat minority in Serbia and Serbia's full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.—Tanjug

Two injured by gun shots in Denmark

COPENHAGEN — Two persons were shot and injured Saturday night in a shooting incident in Elsinore, north of Copenhagen, in Denmark — a nordic country which is regarded as one of the safest place to live in.

"We received a report at 0:29 Sunday (2329 GMT) that shots had been fired in a stairway of an apartment building on the street of Sydvej in Elsinore," North Zealand Police said in a press release.

According to the police, one man was shot in the chest and both legs, while the other in one leg. Neither victims was in a life-threatening condition. No one has been arrested yet in connection with the incident, and police investigation into the shooting incident is under way. "It is still too early to say what underlies the incident," Deputy Police Inspector Finn Bernth Andersen said, adding that they are investigating the shooting motives and other relevant factors.—Xinhua

Chinese police busts gang selling HK identity cards

SHENZHEN — Shenzhen police said on Sunday that they have arrested five members of a gang selling Hong Kong identity cards in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province and Hong Kong.

According to an initial investigation, the identity cards sold by the gang were used in crimes related to credit cards, money laundering, telecom fraud and illegal business.

The police seized 815 ID cards. Two of those detained are from Hong Kong and three from Guangdong. Investigation showed the chief of the gang Hong Kong resident Guo, 56, has a previous criminal record for fake IDs and fraud. The other suspect from Hong Kong has a record for drug-dealing, theft, gambling and other crimes. Further investigation is underway.—Xinhua

UAE military plane crashes during training, crew killed

DUBAI — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) General Command of the Armed Forces in Abu Dhabi said on Sunday noon a military aircraft crashed during a training flight in the country, Emirati state news agency WAM reported.

The accident resulted in the death of the crew which consisted of a pilot and an instructor, said the report, adding that the authorities are investigating the cause of the accident. No further details about the type of the plane or the crash site are released. The UAE air force is part of a Saudi-led pan-Arab military coalition which has been fighting Yemen's Shiite Houthi group since March 2015.—Xinhua

IS attacks at factory north of Baghdad kill 11

BAGHDAD — Bomb attacks claimed by Islamic State against a state-run cooking gas factory in Baghdad's northern outskirts on Sunday killed at least 11 people, including policemen, and wounded 21 others, police sources said.

A suicide car bomb went off at the entrance of the facility in Taji at around 0600 local time (2300 EDT), allowing another vehicle carrying at least six attackers with explosive vests to enter the facility where they clashed with security forces, the sources said. A spokesman for Baghdad Operations Command said three of the facility's gas storages were set alight amid the violence before security forces were able to bring the situation under control.

A factory employee who lives nearby said after hearing a powerful blast he saw flames and black smoke coming from inside the factory.

Dozens of police and army vehicles rushed to the facility where shooting lasted for about an hour, he said.

Amaq news agency, which supports Islamic State, said the group's fighters were behind the attack. The jihadist militants, who control swathes of the country's north and west, have carried out bombings this week that have killed around 100 people.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Saturday the militants were taking advantage of a political crisis in the country, sparked by his attempt to overhaul its quota-based governing system, to conduct bombings in areas under nominal government control. A US-led coalition backing the Iraqi government in its fight against Islamic State has been training army forces for months at a military base located in Taji.—Reuters



Smoke rises from gas storage tanks after a bomb attack against a state-run cooking gas factory in Taji at Baghdad's northern outskirts, Iraq on 15 May, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Islamic State suicide bombing kills at least 10 recruits in Yemen

ADEN— A suicide bomber blew himself up in the southern Yemeni city of Mukalla on Sunday in an attack claimed by Islamic State, killing at least ten recruits and wounding 15 as they lined up at a police headquarters, a security source said.

It was the second deadly blast to hit the city, which was a hub for al Qaeda before the group was pushed out in a military offensive last month.

In a message on its online news agency Amaq, Islamic State said the attacker was a "martyrdom-seeker" who had detonated his explosive belt.

Al Qaeda militants took advantage of more than a year of war in Yemen to carve out

a mini-state stretching across much of the southern coast but an attack by government troops backed by the United Arab Emirates reversed many of their gains.

Their militant rivals in Yemen's branch of Islamic State rose last year and have launched a series of suicide attacks on all parties to Yemen's tangled conflict.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Arab countries intervened in Yemen's civil war in March 2015 in support of the internationally recognised government, which had been swept into exile by Yemen's Houthi movement, an ally of Iran.

The mostly Gulf Arab military coalition fear the Houthis are acting as proxies for Tehran

— something the group denies — and their fight has split Yemen's army and enabled militant groups to carry out dozens of bombing and shootings.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State view the Arab coalition as a pawn of the West and see the Shi'ite Muslim Houthis as apostates deserving death.

The US military announced last week it had deployed a small number of personnel to Yemen to aid in the fight against AQAP, its first troop presence in the country since the Houthi takeover, though its campaign of unmanned drone attacks on AQAP members continued unabated throughout the war.—Reuters

Syrian forces retake Deir al-Zor hospital after 'major' Islamic State offensive

BEIRUT— Syrian government forces retook a hospital in Deir al-Zor after Islamic State attacked it on Saturday following a dawn offensive by the militants on the besieged eastern Syrian city, a war monitor and state media said.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors Syria's five-year-long war, said Islamic State had killed at least 35 members of the Syrian armed forces and detained some medical staff from the hospital.

The fighting in and around the hospital also killed at least 24 Islamic State fighters, the Observatory said.

Islamic State's Amaq news

agency said its fighters staged a "major offensive" on the southwestern edge of Deir al-Zor on Saturday, storming the Assad Hospital and cutting the supply route between the a Syrian army base and the airport.

Islamic State controls most of Deir al-Zor province and has laid siege since March last year to the remaining government-held areas in the city of the same name, which is close to Syria's eastern border with Iraq.

Deir al-Zor province links Islamic State's de facto capital in the Syrian city of Raqqa with territory controlled by the militant group in neighbouring Iraq.

Islamic State also said it had taken control of a check point,

a fire station, university accommodation, grain silos and some territory near the al-Tayyam oil fields, in the vicinity of the state-held military airport on the city's southern edge.

Russia's RIA state news agency on Saturday reported a source within the airbase on the southern edge of the city as saying an Islamic State attack had been repelled.

The Observatory and Amaq said there were ongoing fierce clashes between government forces and Islamic State in the area of the attack. Islamic State said it killed at least 80 government troops, took three prisoner and destroyed a number of armoured vehicles.—Reuters

UN experts accuse Congo general of aiding attacks on civilians

UNITED NATIONS — A Congolese general recruited, financed and armed elements of a Ugandan Islamist group to kill civilians while he was in charge of a military operation targeting the rebels, according to a confidential report to the United Nations Security Council.

A panel of UN experts, who monitor sanctions on Democratic Republic of Congo, said "it has become clear that FARDC (Congolese army) officers were involved in recruiting and supplying armed groups involved in the killings (of civilians)."

More than 500 people have died in a wave of attacks in eastern Congo since October 2014, rights groups say. The Congolese government has blamed most of those on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Brigadier General Muhindo Akili Mundos was in charge of the offensive against the ADF — named Sukola, or "cleanup" in the local Lingala language — between August 2014 and June 2015.

"The Group knows of eight individuals that were approached in 2014 by General Mundos to participate in the killings," the experts wrote in the report, seen by Reuters.

Three members of the ADF-Mwalika, a splinter group of the core ADF, told the experts that before the killings began Mundos had persuaded elements of their group to merge with other recruits.

"According to them, Gen-

eral Mundos financed and equipped this group with weapons, ammunition and FARDC uniforms.

He came to their camp several times, sometimes wearing an FARDC uniform and sometimes in civilian clothes," the experts said.

"Although it is unclear if they knew what the objective was initially, these three ADF-Mwalika elements were eventually given the order to kill civilians," they said.

Mundos told Reuters on Saturday that the accusations against him were false and the killings had continued after he left the operation.

The UN report also contains accusations of links between other Congolese army officers and the ADF. The Congolese army and the Congolese government did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Saturday.

The UN experts said that while the number of killings had decreased since Mundos was transferred from the Sukola operation in June 2015, "the killings of civilians have continued by armed elements throughout 2015 and early 2016."

In March, Jason Stearns, a former coordinator of the UN panel of experts who now heads the Congo Research Group at New York University, accused Congolese soldiers of taking part in at least three deadly attacks on civilians.—Reuters

India approaches Halkbank to handle oil payment to Iran

NEW DELHI — India has approached Turkey's Halkbank to facilitate the payment of \$6.5 billion to Iran, which it owes for crude oil imports, Iran's Fars news agency quoted India's ambassador to Tehran as saying on Saturday.

"The Indian government is seeking to pay the \$6.5 billion debt and is looking to prepare the banking activities.

The receiving bank for this money will be Turkey's Halkbank, and the money will be paid in euros," Fars quoted Saurabh Kumar as saying.

Halkbank officials were not immediately available for comment.

India is one of the biggest customers of Iranian crude, and is set to import at least 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) from Iran in the year from 1 April, but built up a backlog of payments when Iran was under sanctions.

Since most international sanctions on Iran were lifted in January, India has reached an agreement to send payments to Iran via European banks, India's oil minister told Reuters last week.

Although most restrictions



A worker walks atop a tanker wagon to check the freight level at an oil terminal on the outskirts of Kolkata, India in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

on Iran have been lifted, the United States maintains some sanctions and a trade embargo. This means banks cannot use the dollar for any deals with Iran, while US

banks are barred from doing business outright.

While the US embargo does not in theory prevent non-US banks from dealing with Iran, in

reality many remain hesitant to do so because they faced hefty fines in the past and are wary of the US sanctions that remain in place.—Reuters

Leader of Colombia's FARC rebels invites ex-president to meet

BOGOTA — The leader of Colombia's FARC rebels group invited ex-president Alvaro Uribe, a vocal critic of the guerrillas' peace process with the current government, to meet with him in an open letter on Saturday, in a bid to bolster the peace talks.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) leader Rodrigo Londono, better known by his nom de guerre Timochenko, said he would meet Uribe in Havana, Cuba, where the negotiations are being held, or in another location to discuss "the future of our nation."

Uribe, president from 2002 to 2010 and now an opposition senator, has vehemently objected to the peace process, which he says will usher terrorists into government without justice for victims.

Uribe, whose government dealt heavy blows to the FARC with support from the United States, recently called for a "civil resistance" to the partial accords reached so far at the talks with the government of President Juan Manuel Santos, once his protégé.

"It is not fair to conclude with so much ease that accords reached without your presence constitute a betrayal of the country," Londono said in the letter, published on the FARC's website. "Nor should you continue to stoke rancor and revenge in the minds of a large portion of Colombians." The letter comes two days after the FARC and the government announced a deal on a series of legal mechanisms meant to ensure any peace deal will be constitutionally binding if approved by Colombians in a proposed referendum.

Colombia's five-decade-long conflict has killed more than 220,000 people and displaced millions. Uribe has not yet responded to the letter.—Reuters

US warns of China's expanding use of contested South China Sea islands

WASHINGTON — China has increased the amount of land it has reclaimed in contested areas of the South China Sea more than sixfold in the past year and the facilities it has built will allow it to "significantly" boost its presence there, the US Defence Department said Friday.

The surface covered by Chinese reclamation in the disputed Spratly Islands topped 3,200 acres, or nearly 13 square kilometres, as of late 2015, the Pentagon said in its annual report on China to Congress. The figure is up more than sixfold from "about 500 acres" in last year's report.

The Chinese outposts "include harbours, communications and surveillance systems, logistics

facilities and three airfields," it said. While the document did not specify the locations of the three airfields, China has built such facilities on artificial islands it has created in the Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief reefs in the Spratlys.

"China will be able to use its reclaimed features as persistent civil-military bases to enhance its presence in the South China Sea significantly," the report said. China is currently involved in territorial rows with Southeast Asian nations such as the Philippines and Viet Nam over the Spratly Islands.

The Chinese Defence Ministry issued a statement Saturday claiming that the US report "exaggerates" the notion that China may

be a threat and "distorts (China's) lawful acts in the East and South China seas."

China announced in March 2015 that its defence outlays in the year came to \$144 billion, but the Pentagon challenged the claim, saying it estimated the real amount to be \$180 billion.

"China's published military budget omits several major categories of expenditure" such as research and development and the procurement of foreign weapons and equipment, the Defence Department report said.

What Washington views as China's aggressive behavior and militarization of contested areas in the sea has been a key topic in recent bilateral talks.

US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping remained apart over the maritime issue in their talks in March in Washington.

"In the near-term, China is using coercive tactics short of armed conflict, such as the use of law enforcement vessels to enforce maritime claims," the report said.

But it said China is still seeking to avoid direct and explicit conflict with the United States.

Washington has said it does not recognise Chinese claims to some islands and submerged reefs in the seas and has sent destroyers into what Beijing claims to be its territorial waters around them, saying the areas are in international waters.—Kyodo News

UK's Cameron struggles to make Britons believe his EU message: poll

LONDON — Prime Minister David Cameron is struggling to convince voters he is telling the truth about why Britain should stay in the European Union and his main "Out" rival Boris Johnson is doing a better job, an opinion poll found.

Only 21 per cent of respondents in the survey carried out by polling firm ComRes agreed that Cameron was more likely to tell the truth about the EU than Johnson while 45 per cent said Johnson was more believable than Cameron.

With less than six weeks to go

until the 23 June referendum on Britain's EU membership and voters evenly split on how they intend to cast their ballots, the rival camps have stepped up campaigning.

Cameron has warned of the risk of a hit to Britain's economy from a decision to leave the world's biggest trade bloc. Johnson says Britain would flourish outside the EU if allowed to make its own rules, strike its own trade deals and spend its EU budget contributions at home.

The ComRes poll, conducted for the *Sunday Mirror* newspaper and the Independent website,

found 33 per cent of respondents believed they would be better off if Britain stayed in the EU, only slightly more than the 29 per cent who thought they would be better off if Britain left.

ComRes interviewed 2,043 adults online on Wednesday and Thursday.

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney warned on Thursday of the risk of a sharp slowdown in Britain's economy, and possibly a short recession, if the country left the EU. The ComRes poll did not ask voters how they intended to vote on 24 June.—Reuters



British Prime Minister David Cameron delivers a speech to supporters of the 'Stronger In' campaign event in Witney, Oxfordshire, Britain, on 14 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Climate activists in New York, Washington state protest fossil fuels

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of climate change activists in Washington state and New York mobilised on Saturday as part of a global protest against fossil fuels, event organisers said.

The so-called Break Free 2016 is a 12-day protest event seeking to call attention to climate change and demanding a transition to clean energy, according to the organisation's website. Events are planned on six continents.

Hundreds of activists were holding a protest in Anacortes, Washington, after about 150

demonstrators spent Friday night occupying railroad tracks leading to Tesoro Corp and Royal Dutch Shell refineries some 70 miles (113 km) north of Seattle.

Tesoro spokeswoman Destin Singleton said operations at the refinery were not affected. A Shell representative could not immediately be reached.

Break Free Pacific Northwest organiser Ahmed Gaya said, "Break Free is about pressuring the system so we get the change we need, but it's also about imagining an alternative."

Gus Melonas, a spokesman for BNSF Railway Co, said train service had been shut down for the day on the Anacortes tracks leading to the refineries. He added however that rail officials were planning with local authorities to have the protesters removed.

"Obviously these people can voice their opinion, but we ask that they do it off our property," Melonas said. "We can only put up with it for so long."

Skagit County Department of Emergency Management

spokeswoman Kathy Watson said there had been no arrests made by Saturday afternoon.

In Albany, New York, about 1,500 people gathered to protest against trains carrying crude oil into the Port of Albany, said Break Free Albany spokeswoman Aly Johnson-Kurts.

She said organisers expected that 40 people would spend Saturday night at an encampment set up on train tracks leading into the port to blockade the oil shipments.

Earlier on Saturday, two activists were arrested after sus-

pending themselves from a railroad bridge over the Watervliet Reservoir in nearby Guilderland and stopping a train, Johnson-Kurts said.

New York authorities could not immediately be reached for comment on Saturday. Representatives for the Port of Albany were also not immediately available. Other actions were planned for Saturday in Colorado and Los Angeles, as well as in Ecuador, South Africa and Germany, according to the organiser's website.—Reuters

Japanese high school wins award in model UN confab

NEW YORK — A Japanese high school won an award Saturday at a model UN conference drawing more than 1,000 students from about 25 countries to discuss global issues in a simulation of real UN sessions.

Azabu High School in Tokyo was among six Japanese schools that sent delegations to the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference for 2016, which was held for three days from Thursday.

Delegates to the event, who play the parts of diplomats representing a country assigned by the organiser, were asked to engage in negotiations with their counterparts as in actual UN procedures. Students from Japan were asked to represent Kuwait.

Kento Nakamoto and Yuki

Nishijo, both aged 16, were recognised for their contributions to discussion at the simulated UN General Assembly session to eradicate poverty.

"The draft resolution we have pushed for was not adopted but we garnered support from many delegations. We are pleased with the outcome," Nakamoto said.

"I was overwhelmed at the beginning as we had to communicate in English throughout the session... but it's been a wonderful experience to have such high-level talks with my peers abroad," Nishijo said.

Students from Nada High School in Kobe in western Japan and Toin Gakuen in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture near Tokyo, also attended the conference.—Kyodo News



Kento Nakamoto (L) and Yuki Nishijo (R), students at Tokyo's Azabu High School, pose for a photo with officials of the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference for 2016, at the UN headquarters in New York on 14 May 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Netanyahu tells France's Ayrault he still opposes peace conference

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told France's foreign minister on Sunday that Israel remained opposed to a French initiative for an international conference to try revive peace talks. Palestinians welcomed the proposal but Israel is concerned an international forum would try to dictate terms for a peace deal. In public remarks to his cabinet after meeting France's Jean-Marc Ayrault, Netanyahu said: "I told him the only way to advance genuine peace between us and the Palestinians is through direct negotiations between us and them, without preconditions."

Anything other than bilateral talks would give the Palestinians an "escape hatch" through which to avoid meeting his demand that they recognise Israel as the "nation state of the Jewish people", he said.

Israel made the same arguments in the formal response it

gave last month. France hopes an international conference would set out a framework for peace negotiations after US efforts to broker a two-state deal collapsed in April 2014. After meeting Netanyahu, Ayrault travelled to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank to discuss the initiative with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Neither spoke to reporters. An international gathering, planned for 30 May in Paris, is set to include the Middle East Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations), the Arab League, the UN Security Council and about 20 countries, without Israeli or Palestinian participation.

Diplomats say that meeting will package all economic incentives and other guarantees that various countries have offered in previous years to create an agenda for a peace conference in the autumn.—Reuters

Nepal's forest cover area increases by over 5 % 44.74 %

KATHMANDU — A latest survey conducted by Nepal's government said that out of the total 141,718 square kilometres area of Nepal, forest takes 44.74 per cent.

Another similar research organised in between 1997 to 1998, however, showed that there was only 39.6 per cent of forest area in this Himalayan nation.

According to Nepal's national news agency RSS, the Department of Forest Research and Survey, under the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, and National Forest Products Survey Project conducted jointly this five-year survey in between 2010 to 2014.

This recently released report

showed that Nepal's mid-hill area is greener than other regions while the lowest forest cover of 6.9 per cent falls on the Tarai, a plain region in the southern Nepal where over half of whole population of the country lives there.

Keshab Raj Gautam, spokesperson of the department told media that successful implementation of protection programmes and massive migration from rural areas to urban areas are the main reasons behind the rapid growth rate.

For example, with a theme "One house one tree; one village one forest; one town several parks", Nepalese government announced 2014-2023 as the forest decade a few years ago to make

this country greener.

At the same time, an increasing people has been migrating to urban areas from remote regions. As a result, more urban centres emerge.

In 2015, the government declared 133 new municipalities, bringing the number of municipalities in Nepal to 191.

But the incidents of forest fire may easily counteract the nation's endeavor to protect and expand forest area.

Since February this year, over 500 wildfire-related events have been reported across the country, causing a total of 350,000 hectares of forest burnt down, local media reported.—Xinhua

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Ukraine's Jamala. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukraine's Jamala takes home Eurovision crown with song about war

STOCKHOLM — Ukraine's Jamala struck a surprise gold in the Eurovision Song Contest on Saturday with a song "1944" about war-time deportations of Crimean Tatars by the Soviet Union in one of the most controversial winners in the competition's history.

In a show known down the years for its playfulness and camp, 32-year-old Jamala

struck a sombre tone with her lyrics about strangers coming to "kill you all", in reference to the forced removal of ethnic Tatars by Josef Stalin during World War II.

Jamala, herself a Tatar, stood on the Stockholm stage singing "you think you are gods" against a blood-red backdrop. She said her great-grandmother was one of the Crimean Tatar victims of Stalin who deported the group en masse to Central Asia after accusing them of sympathizing with Nazi Germany. Many of the

200,000 deported died on the way or in exile.

Jamala pleaded for "peace and love to everyone," when collecting the trophy ahead of Australia in second place and Russia in third spot. Despite being far from Europe, Australia attended the competition for the

second time after an invitation from organisers. While the Eurovision voting has long been tainted by political alliances among competitor countries, songs are not allowed to be political but Jamala's entry seemed to come close to breaking that rule.

Event organiser, the European Broadcasting Union, said Ukraine's offering did not contain political speech and therefore did not break Eurovision Song Contest rules. "The song refers to a historical fact and Jamala makes reference to a story that happened in her family," EBU Director General Ingrid Deltenre told Reuters after the show.

She said the song referred to what happened in 1944 and not recent events. Crimea was annexed from Ukraine by Russia in 2014.

At a press conference, Jamala appeared to struggle with tears when she talked about a close relative that the song was about. "I would prefer that all these terrible things did not happen at all to my great-grandmother and I would even prefer this song not to exist," she said.—Reuters

Kristen Stewart to take a break from acting

CANNES — Actress Kristen Stewart has revealed she is taking a break from acting the former "Twilight" star is quite happy about her decision.

The 26-year-old "Still Alice" star is thrilled she has chosen to step behind the camera for the next few months to

work on a short film about the power of women, reported People magazine.

Speaking at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, Stewart said, "I just did like five movies over a two-year period, and I think it's a very good decision for me right now to stop acting

in movies for just a moment, and I've never really done that, I've never changed my appearance."

"I've always really stayed neutral since I was like 10 years old, so I was like, 'I'm gonna direct a short, and I'm gonna mess up my hair'."—PTI

Jennifer Lawrence may star in 'Ocean's Eleven' reboot

LOS ANGELES — Actress Jennifer Lawrence is among the names shortlisted for an upcoming reboot of 2001 heist comedy "Ocean's Eleven", which starred George Clooney and Brad Pitt.

If she gets on board, the 25-year-old actress will star opposite Sandra Bullock and reunite with "The Hunger Games" director Gary Ross in the film touted as 'female centric', reported Aceshowbiz.

Bullock, 51, has been courted to lead the pack in the Warner Bros movie while Lawrence is touted to play Bullock's right-hand woman.

Beside directing and producing, Ross is writing the screenplay with "Queen & Country" scribe Olivia Milch. The plot is currently unknown but it's expected to center on Bullock as Danny Ocean's sister.

Rumour has it, the untitled Ocean's Eleven project will be more of a spin-off than a reboot, thus making it possible for the cast from the Steven Soderbergh-directed film to make an appearance.

The project itself reportedly was the brainchild of Soderbergh, late Ocean's producer Jerry Weintraub and the 2001 film original cast Clooney. Filming is scheduled to start next fall but no release date announced yet.—PTI

I don't like to try on clothes while shopping : Gigi Hadid



Gigi Hadid. PHOTO: REUTERS

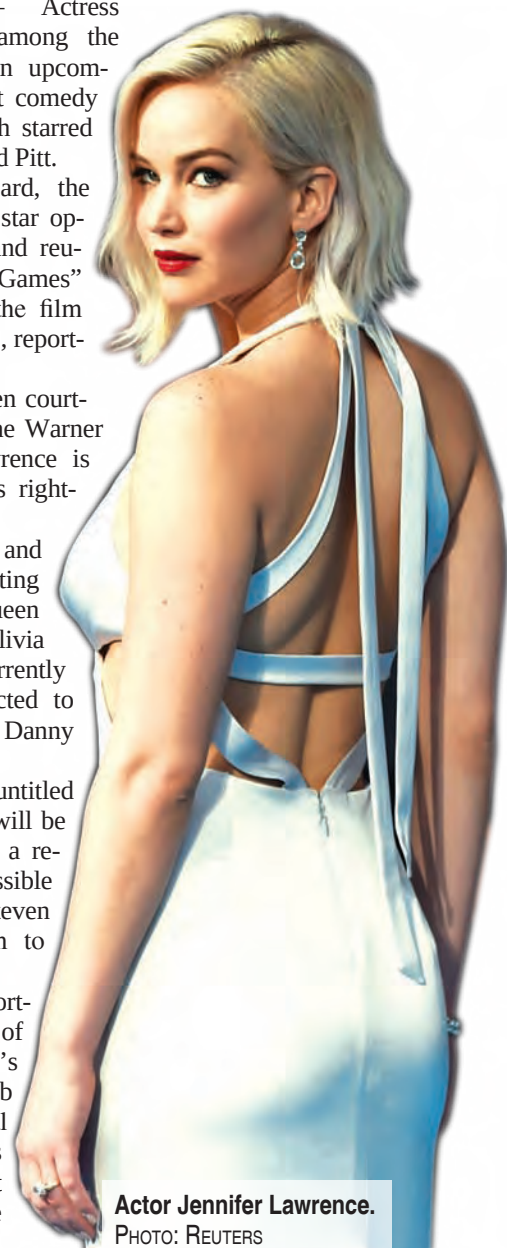
LONDON — Model Gigi Hadid has admitted she dislikes trying on clothes whilst shopping because she doesn't like to wait in queues for the changing rooms.

The 21-year-old model said she would rather just purchase the item and try it on at home, reported Female First.

"Honestly, I'm not a big shopper. I guess it's because it's my job to try things on. I love window shopping and I love shopping without having to go to the dressing room or take what I'm wearing off."

"That's why I love glasses and bags. I buy a lot of [those], because I don't try them on. Like, Topshop [dressing room] lines are not even funny."

"I'd much rather go into Topshop [and buy something], go home, try it on, and then return it than stand in line for three hours," Hadid said.—PTI



Actor Jennifer Lawrence. PHOTO: REUTERS

World's oldest cat Scooter dies

HOUSTON — A 30-year-old Siamese cat full of “energy and playfulness” who was recently crowned as the world’s oldest living feline by the Guinness Book of World Records has died.

Born on 26 March, 1986 when US President Ronald Reagan was in the White House, Scooter had been undergoing medical testing and treatment after breaking his leg in October 2014.

“He was so special. I don’t think I’m ever going to get over this,” said his owner Gail Floyd from Mansfield, Texas.

Floyd said Scooter, who had travelled with her to 48 of the 50 US states, died by the time Guinness had conferred its title on 8 April.

She said Scooter’s playfulness was the reason for his longevity which is equivalent to 138 years in human

terms. “He likes to see new places and he likes people,” Floyd, said recently while describing Scooter as “an active cat, full of energy and playfulness”.

“Scooter is quite an amazing cat, with a strong will to live,” the cat’s veterinarian was quoted as saying by the ‘Daily Express’.

As a playful kitten, Scooter liked nothing better than playing with his owner’s hair and riding on her shoulders.

He had taken the world’s oldest cat title from a 26-year-old American tabby called Corduroy, who lives in Oregon. Scooter, however, was not Guinness’ oldest cat of all time. That record belongs to a fellow Texas cat Creme Puff who lived to a grand old age of 38 years, more than double the average life expectancy of the species.—PTI

Singers, actors, riders to honour Queen Elizabeth in birthday pageant

LONDON — Britain’s Queen Elizabeth is due to attend a celebration of her 90th birthday on Sunday featuring some of the leading stars of show business and almost 1,000 horses.

Pop performers Kylie Minogue and Jess Glynne, opera singers Katherine Jenkins and Andrea Bocelli and soul singer Beverley Knight are scheduled to take part in the pageant in the grounds of her Windsor Castle residence, near London.

Actors including Helen Mirren, John Boyega, Martin Clunes, Damian Lewis, Imelda Staunton and comic Jennifer Saunders will also take to the stage, according to British broadcaster ITV which will televise the event.

The queen, who has been on the throne for 64 years and is the oldest monarch in British history, mingled with crowds during a walkabout near the castle



Britain’s Queen Elizabeth speaks to Commander Lucy D’Orsi during a garden party at Buckingham Palace in London, Britain, on 10 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

when she turned 90 on 21 April.

Sunday’s concert is the highlight of a four-day pageant at Windsor which also includes equestrian

displays involving around 900 horses ridden by riders from around the world to mark the queen’s passion for the animals.

Further events will

take place around her official birthday on 11 June, including a street party for 10,000 guests close to Buckingham Palace.—Reuters

Bright lotus flowers blooming in Taipei’s Palace Museum



TAIPEI — A bee collects honey on a lotus at a lotus pool in Taipei’s Palace Museum, southeast China’s Taiwan, on 13 May 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

Christie’s’ Impressionist and modern art sales fail to make bright splash

NEW YORK — The spring art sales ended with a bit of a whimper in New York on Thursday at Christie’s’ muted auction of Impressionist and modern art.

The sales took in \$141.4 million against a pre-sale estimate of \$134 million to \$197 million for the 51 lots on offer. All but seven found buyers.

Christie’s officials declared themselves pleased with the result, saying they had tailored the sale to the tastes of the current market and that bidding from across the globe, particularly Asia, helped drive bidding.

After years of soaring

prices, both Christie’s and rival Sotheby’s assembled markedly smaller sales this season, with no works carrying estimates much beyond \$40 million. In recent seasons several works have broken the \$100 million mark.

“This was a sale that took place against a backdrop of some uncertainty,” said Jussi Pyllkanen, Christie’s’ global president. “The proof was in the pudding,” he added, in light of the sale making its estimate and even setting some records.

Emblematic of the results’ mixed signals vis-

a-vis a seemingly flagging market was Frida Kahlo’s “Dos desnudos en el bosque (La tierra misma),” which set a record for both Kahlo and any Latin American artist when it fetched \$8 million.

But the price barely made the low estimate. The work had been expected to sell for as much as \$12 million.

Similarly, the top-priced lots, Monet’s “Le bassin aux nymphéas” and Modigliani’s “La Jeune femme a la rose” each barely made their low estimate. The Monet water lilies sold for \$27 million while the

Modigliani portrait made \$12.8 million. Strong prices were achieved by George Braque’s “Mandoline a la partition” and Barbara Hepworth’s “Sculpture with Colour” which soared to nearly four times its estimate, fetching \$5.4 million. The Braque sold for \$10.2 million.

Officials at both Christie’s and Sotheby’s said the New York results, which were far stronger for both houses for contemporary and post-war art, will be looked at closely as they assemble their upcoming London sales next month.—Reuters



Entertainment Channel

(16- 5-2016, Monday)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6:00 pm | region (Myeik - Kawthoung)” (Part-2) |
| • Weather Report | 9:20 pm |
| • Pyi Thu Ni Ti | • International Movie Songs |
| 6:20 pm | 9:30 pm |
| • Cartoon Programme “ Cars ” (Part- I) | • Dances |
| 7:40 pm | 9:40 pm |
| • International Drama Series | • Those Who Never Give Up |
| 8:30 pm | “Aung Thamar Di Gold Shop” |
| • Music Programme | 10:10 pm |
| 8:50 pm | • Myanmar Video |
| • Travelogue “To the coastal | |

From 16-5-2016 (Monday) 6:00 Pm
To 17-5-2016 (Tuesday) 6:00 Pm



Myanmar International

(16-5-2016 07:00am ~ 17-5-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| 07:03 | Am | News |
| 07:27 | Am | Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations- Lacquaware Making |
| 07:52 | Am | Distinguished Myanmar Ladies “Tin Moe Lwin” |
| 08:03 | Am | News |
| 08:26 | Am | A Bike Ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Ep-1) |
| 08:45 | Am | A Way of Life: Karate-do |
| 09:03 | Am | News |
| 09:26 | Am | Those Who Never Give Up (Ep-6) In Pursuit of a dream |

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|-------|----|---|
| 10:03 | Am | News |
| 10:27 | Am | Mesmerizing Scenes or Image of Japan (Part-1) |

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

Prime Time

- | | | |
|-------|----|--------------------------------------|
| 07:03 | Pm | News |
| 07:27 | Pm | Food Trip (EP-6) |
| 08:03 | Pm | News |
| 08:26 | Pm | Taste of Myanmar (Glass Noodle Soup) |
| 08:45 | Pm | Entrepreneur “Nan Ei Ei Zar” |

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

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

Hat-trick hero Suarez leads Barca to title glory

BARCELONA — A ravenous Luis Suarez bagged a third hat-trick in five games as defending champions Barcelona won 3-0 at Granada to clinch their 24th La Liga title on Saturday.

The Uruguayan converted Jordi Alba's low pass in the 22nd minute to give Barca the lead. He then headed in Dani Alves' cross in the 38th before tapping Neymar's pass into an empty net in the 86th.

"We were on top of the table for many weeks and the most consistent team wins the title," coach Luis Enrique told a news conference.

"We will celebrate this, we enjoy our team and the style in which they play. We must value each title win because it is worth a lot."

Suarez finished the season as La Liga's top scorer with 40 goals, breaking Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi's grip on the honour since 2009.

Barca ended with 91 points, one ahead of Real Madrid who won 2-0 at Deportivo La Coruna.

Ronaldo scored twice for Real to reach 50 goals in all competitions for the sixth consecutive season.

He was substituted at half-time after hurting his foot but there is no suggestion he could miss the Champions League final against Atletico Madrid in two weeks' time.

Goals from Fernando Torres and Antoine Griezmann gave Atletico Madrid a 2-0 win over Celta Vigo while Athletic Bilbao beat Sevilla 3-1.

Atletico finished third on 88 points and Bilbao secured a place in the Europa League by ending up in fifth spot.

With attention on Wednes-



Barcelona's Luis Suarez (L) celebrates his third goal with team mate Neymar during Spanish Liga BBVA at Los Carmenes stadium, Granada, Spain on 14 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

day's Europa League final against

Liverpool, Sevilla coach Unai Emery put out a heavily-rotated team.

Gerard Pique came close to giving Barca an early lead against Granada when his header was tipped away by goalkeeper Andres Fernandez who also saved well from Messi.

Fernandez was powerless to stop Suarez's opener, however, the Uruguayan tapping the ball home at the far post.

The second goal was delightful. Javier Mascherano launched a long diagonal pass towards the byline and Alves raced to meet it before hooking a cross for Suarez to nod in from close range.

Suarez nearly laid on a third for Neymar but the Brazilian was

denied by Fernandez.

Neymar then generously played in Suarez to complete his hat-trick before the end.

"This title tastes great after so much hard work throughout the year and suffering right until the end," said Barca captain Andres Iniesta.

"The league is the tournament that tests your consistency throughout the year and it's the one we want to win every year."

Real got off to an ideal start at Deportivo when Gareth Bale manoeuvred his way past a defender on the left and cut the ball back to Karim Benzema who squared it for Ronaldo to score in the seventh minute.

The Portugal striker's second in the 25th minute had an element of good fortune, his header from a corner bouncing off De-

portivo's Pedro Mosquera on its way into the net.

Ronaldo also hit the post and the crossbar before being replaced by James Rodriguez although there was no suggestion he had an injury two weeks before the Champions League final against Atletico Madrid.

Real ended a campaign that has witnessed upheaval and managerial change by picking up a 12th consecutive league win but their revival came too late to catch Barca.

"We're a little disappointed after the effort we made," said coach Zinedine Zidane. "After 38 league games we can't change the fact Barcelona are champions."

"They deserved to win the league but I take my hat off to my lads."—Reuters

Djokovic and Murray to face off in another final

ROME — Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray will face off in a second claycourt final within eight days at the Italian Open after the two in-form players proved on Saturday that they will be the ones to beat at the season's second grand slam in Roland Garros.

Murray made it through to his first Rome final with a clinical 6-2, 6-1 win over unseeded Frenchman Lucas Pouille while world number one Djokovic showed his staying power in a 2-6, 6-4, 7-6(5) victory over Japanese sixth seed Kei Nishikori.

"Any time you get the chance to play the best players, especially right before a slam, is great preparation," Murray, who has won just one of his past 13 matches against Djokovic, told reporters.

Serena Williams moved within sight of a fourth Italian Open triumph when she brushed aside Irina-Camelia Begu to set up an all-American showdown with young compatriot Madison Keys.

Williams, who looks in fine form for the defence of her French Open title which begins next weekend, overpowered her Romanian opponent 6-4, 6-1.

The world number one will now be a hot favourite to land the 70th career title of her storied career on Sunday when she faces the 24th-ranked Keys, who defeated Spain's Garbine Muguruza 7-6(5), 6-4 in the other semi-final.—Reuters

Park turns to CAS in bid to overturn KOC ban

SEOUL — Former Olympic swimming champion Park Taehwan has asked the Court of Arbitration for Sport to "mediate" with the Korean Olympic Committee, the KOC said on Saturday, after he was left off the team due to a controversial doping ban.

Park, who has already served an 18-month doping ban imposed by world governing body FINA, is fighting to overturn a KOC regulation that has tacked on an additional three-year suspension, which would rule him out of the Rio Olympics.

Critics of the regulation say it punishes an athlete twice for the same offence but the KOC says it is aimed at keeping Korean sport free of doping. World sport is facing an unprecedented drug crisis and this week's World Anti-Dop-

ing Agency's (WADA) foundation board meeting was rocked by yet another string of doping bombshells involving Russian athletes.

"Park asked CAS for mediation, and CAS notified the KOC and the swimming federation that such a request came in," a KOC spokesman said on Saturday.

He added that while Park had requested an interview with the KOC and a meeting had been scheduled for 25 May, the committee had not shifted its position.

"There is no change in the KOC stance that doping should be dealt with zero tolerance."

Park's management agency said on Saturday he had filed his appeal with CAS on 26 April but asked the sporting tribunal to suspend it two days later until he

had received a final decision from the KOC. "We are still waiting," said a Team GMP spokeswoman by telephone, emphasising they would only proceed if the KOC did not provide a "positive resolution". Park won gold in the 400 metres freestyle at the 2008 Beijing Games to become the first Korean to win an Olympic swimming medal. But his reputation was shattered when he tested positive for testosterone ahead of the Asian Games in September 2014. The 26-year-old attributed the failed test to an injection he received at a local clinic, where he said he was being treated for a skin complaint.

Despite the KOC ban, Park entered national trials this month and won all four of his races in Olympic qualification times.

However, his name was not included on the Korea Swimming Federation's preliminary list of athletes who will have a shot at making the squad for Rio. A recent public opinion survey by a prominent local polling company suggested most South Koreans thought Park deserved a second chance, while some experts have suggested the KOC could be in trouble with the International Olympic Committee if it upholds the ban.—Reuters



China's gold medalist Qiu Bo. PHOTO: REUTERS