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MAKING USE OF SPACE

Idle industrial plots to be confiscated: regional minister

Ko Moe

INACTIVE industrial zone land plots in the region will be confiscated by the government, said a cabinet member of Yangon Region government yesterday.

The government will take back land plots with no devel-

oped operations underway within the prescribed timeframe in Yangon's industrial zones, said Minister for Electricity, Energy and Road Transport Daw Nilar Kyaw during a parliamentary session of Yangon Region Hluttaw.

According to the minister,

land plots where no operation was carried out within six months will be confiscated.

Four teams formed by the regional government have made inspection tours of nine industrial zones including Hlinethaya, Shwelinban and Ngwe Pinle industrial zones since 19 May, said

the regional minister.

During tours of inspections, some land plots were found to be currently lying empty or simply had warehouses built on them, she added.

U Tint Lwin of Mingalar Taungnyunt Constituency 1 said that some businessmen bought

land plots for property speculation, not for business use while others bought only for warehouse leases.

According to sources, there are 2,339 idle land plots and 1290 warehouses on the 4,418-acre of land in 29 industrial zones in Yangon Region.

Kyaukphyu SEZ land prices appreciating

THE presence of the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has appreciated the price of land along Rakhine State's Minpyin coastline to levels higher than that of land located within the town itself, according to Kyaukphyu real-estate agents.

The value of a 40 by 60 foot plot of land prior to 2014 on the aforementioned stretch of coastline would have set you back in the vicinity of K3-5 million, but prices have since risen dramatically to between K30-60 million.

"There's been a string of land purchases with fences being erected in expectation of the arrival of hotel and tourism projects. Trading of land has been particularly prevalent

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A jetty for oil tankers is seen in Kyaukpyu township, Rakhine state in October 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

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Private electrification companies in Yangon to go under review

Ko Moe

THE functions of private electrification companies in Yangon Region will be under review, according to Yangon Region government's Electricity, Industry and Transportation Minister Daw Nilar Kyaw.

According to the minister, some of these companies have been found to show less adher-

ence to contract terms.

Daw Nilar Kyaw told the Yangon Region Hluttaw yesterday that the matter would be brought to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy to review their contracts for any possible breach.

The Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation has hired some private companies to distribute power to select townships in the region.

Last fiscal year, the YESC bought 6,700 billion units of electricity from the national grid system and resold 5,913 billion units.

Yangon Region, as a commercial city, consumes 1,250 megawatts, which is more than half of the country's total electricity generation, and is still in need of 15 per cent more to satisfy its total demand.

Pyithu Hluttaw

Two emergency motions over Kachin disaster put on record at Pyithu Hluttaw

TWO emergency motions over disaster-related damage to transportation infrastructure and public property in Kachin State were put on record at the Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday.

U Zone Teint of the Chiphwe constituency tabled a motion calling for prompt repair of a road linking Chiphwe and Hsawtlaw townships. Some sections of the road were damaged in recent torrential rain, he said.

Another motion was concerned with the collapse of houses, landslides, damaged crops, difficult communications and shortages of food due to the incessant rain. U Ar Moe Hsi of Khaunglanphu constituency

proposed the motion urging the Union government and the local government to take prompt action to address the problems in Putao district, Kachin State. The region has undergone heavy rain since 18 February this year, he said.

In response to the motions, Construction Union Minister U Win Khaing promised to seek union funding of the 2016-17 fiscal year for the construction of five wooden bridges in the affected areas, saying that construction would start when the monsoon begins to withdraw.

Five bamboo bridges have been constructed in the areas as temporary replacements to ease



Pyithu Hluttaw is convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

access to the region.

Home Affairs Union Minister Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe spoke of ongoing measures for the repair of the damaged transportation infrastructure and the provision of foodstuff by local military commands. He added that local police were carrying out securi-

ty measures in partnership with military personnel in a bid to prevent possible outbreaks of crime and reinforce the rule of law.

Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said that assistance in cash and materials had been provided to flood victims in

two townships in Kachin State. According to the union minister, relief worth K18 million (US\$15,202) has been distributed to the victims in Hsawtlaw township and relief worth K53.8 million (US\$45,439) to the people in Khaunglanphu township. —Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hluttaw



U Zon Hlyal Htan. PHOTO: MNA



Dr Tun Win. PHOTO: MNA

Gov't plans to build dams, reservoirs in regions, states with abundance of water resources

THE government has a plan to build dams and reservoirs that can benefit the local people of regions and states that have abundant water resources including Rakhine State, said Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation at the Amyotha Hluttaw session yesterday.

In his response to a question on dam repairs in Rakhine State's Yathedaung Township, the deputy minister said that works to re-

pair Kampaing freshwater reservoir will be added to the regional government's priority queue for the 2017-2018 FY following a cost-benefit analysis and a feasibility study.

Likewise, the deputy minister replied to a question on water supply from Laibar dam to Falam stating that a project is being implemented to supply the town with water from Yawsel creek through a pipeline with the use of

K150 million from the regional funds of Chin State.

Upon completion, 1,188 residents in two urban wards will benefit from the project, he added.

During the 30th day Amyotha Hluttaw session, a Bill Committee member presented its report on a Bill Revoking Mandalay City Development Law to the parliamentarians. —Myanmar News Agency

Plans under way to collect data about natural resources use

PLANS are underway to collect data regarding the use of natural resources to speed up measures for environmental conservation, according to the Amyotha Hluttaw's Committee for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Representatives will collect data in their respective constituencies, Chairman U Kyaw Thiha said, adding that the initiative would involve making a list of extractive firms across

the country.

The chairman said that the measure was aimed at preserving resources in line with the law.

The committee is waiting for permission from the speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw, with its chairman stressing that initial data would be collected from both local and foreign companies engaged in coal mining, gems, oil and timber. —Thein Ko Lwin

Chin gov't to spend K150 m for water supply

THE Chin State government will spend K150 million from its budget on a project to supply drinking water to Falam Township through a pipeline, said Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Tun Win at a Amyotha Hluttaw session yesterday.

The pipeline that will carry water from Yawsel creek, 10 miles away from the township, will be installed to provide 1,188

residents in wards 1 and 2 with potable water.

Potable water will be available for Falam people shortly after completion of the water pipeline installation, said the deputy minister, adding that there will be 84 per cent of water supply coverage in Falam following the water supply of 2,000 gallons a day through the pipeline.

In his question, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Zon

Hlyal Htan stressed the need for adequate water supply for Falam Township which is facing potable water scarcity with the use of the President's special fund.

He called for the installation of a water pipeline from Libar dam in Chin State to Falam.

According to the existing water supply program a total of 8,789 people in four wards have been provided with 120,720 gallons a day. —Thein Ko Lwin

Digestive health talks to be held on 29 May

YANGON General Hospital will organise health talks to mark World Digestive Health Day which falls on 29 May at the UMFCI Office Tower on Min Ye Kyaw Swa Road in Lanmadaw Township, Yangon.

The talks are being held in partnership with the World Gastroenterology Organisation. Prof. Dr U Thein Myint, Head of Department of Gastroenterology in YGH will give talks on digestive health. —GNLM

Chief Minister meets activists, politicians for rule of law

MANDALAY Region Chief Minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung held talks with activists and members of political parties and civil society organisations in Mandalay Region at the regional government office yesterday.

In his address, the Chief Minister stressed the need of ensuring the rule of law in the region and invited constructive suggestions from those present at the meeting.

The National League for De-

mocracy is committed to working together with activists and politicians in its efforts towards national reconciliation and the rule of law, said the Chief Minister.

It is required that we form a committee with a focus on monitoring judicial activities in the country, said Advocate U Thein Than Oo from Lawyers' Network in Mandalay, calling for participations of all including the government, parliament, CSOs and law-

yers' associations in forming the committee. During the meeting, attendees presented their suggestions on a wide range of matters including delayed trials, the fight against narcotic drugs in Meiktila and the removal of shops selling alcohol near Taungtaman Lake.

Those present called for the formation of a committee aimed at solving any problems in the region through collaborative efforts at the meeting. —Aung Thant Khaing

Union Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets Vietnamese Deputy FM

UNION Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held talks with Mr. Vu Hong Nam, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam on bilateral relations and further cooperation in trade, invest-

ment and the hotels and tourism sectors in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call the deputy minister presented an invitation letter by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Mr.

Pham Binh Minh to the Union minister to attend the 9th Myanmar-Viet Nam Joint Commission on bilateral cooperation scheduled to be held in Viet Nam.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Mr. Vu Hong Nam, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers speech at the opening ceremony of the National Trade Portal and Trade Repository Website in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar launches National Trade Portal and Trade Repository Website

VICE-President U Henry Van Thio called for the real-time cooperation of ministries concerned to ensure availability of timely and accurate information on the website in order to comply with ground situations at a ceremony to launch the National Trade Portal and Trade Repository Website in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Acknowledging the efforts of the departments concerned and USAID to launch the website, the Vice-President called on the agency to continue technical provisions to the national information portal. In his address, the Vice-President said that the National Trade Portal which fea-

tures all trade-related information in the country was successfully launched in partnership with the USAID in order to link the ASEAN Trade Repository.

The trade portal will boost transparency in trade policies and practices and minimise the unwanted effects of uncertainty in trade, added the Vice-President.

Next, US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Scot Marciel extended greetings followed by a presentation on the National Trade Portal and Trade Repository Website and words of thanks given by Union Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Information Minister meets Director of NBC Myanmar, party from the CLD

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint received Director Mr. Audun Aagre of the Norwegian Burma Committee (NBC Myanmar) and Executive Director Mr. Toby Mendel and party from the Centre for Law and Democracy separately at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During talks with the representative of NBC Myanmar

discussions were held on cooperation in the media sector and matters relating to ensuring freedom of media in Myanmar.

In his meeting with the delegation of Centre for Law and Democracy the two sides discussed points to be included in the country's revised Law on Broadcasting and development of broadcast industry.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Attorney-General meets British Council delegation

ATTORNEY-General of the Union U Tun Tun Oo received a delegation from the British Council led by Mr. Peter Viner at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting the two representatives held discussions on ongoing cooperation with the British Council in judicial and legal reforms, English Pro-

ficiency and Case Management courses being opened at region/state law offices, legal assistance to the people in My Justice Project and future works.

Also present were Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint, Director-General Daw Khin Cho Ohn and deputy directors-general.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Safeguarding Law revoked

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw signed the Law enacted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to Revoke the Law to Safeguard the State Against the Dangers of Those Desiring to Cause Subversive Acts yesterday.

The 1975 Law to Safeguard the State Against the Dangers of Those Desiring to Cause Subversive Acts (1975 Pyithu Hluttaw Law No.3) was revoked with this Law signed by the President.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance appointed

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw appointed U Maung Maung Win as Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance with the release of President Office's Order No (44/2016) yesterday.

The Order said that appointment of the deputy minister was carried made in accordance with provisions stated in article 234 (a) and (d) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and section 16 (b) (9) of the Union Government Law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Kyaukphyu SEZ land prices ...

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in the areas of Launggyo and Wahmyaung." said U Maung Gyi, a local real-estate agent.

Urban 40 by 60 foot plots of land within the town of Kyaukphyu, however, are currently fetching approximately K20-30 million on the real-estate market,

it is known.

"The real-estate market within the town is stable. A lack of trade has kept prices as they are. A better price for land can be had outside of the town." said Daw Thandar Lin, a local real-estate agent.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Road upgrades earmarked to boost Indian export trade

THE Ministry of Construction has said it will carry out upgrading initiatives of major roads that connect Rakhine and Chin states and Sagaing Region with neighbouring India in an effort to boost trade.

"Good road infrastructure to the Indian border is vital to exports to the country. We're currently commencing the upgrading of roads in Rakhine, Chin and Sagaing, which border India. This includes repairs to a total of 69 bridges located along these roads," said Minister for Construction U Win Khaing.

A total of US\$500 million has been allocated for the up-

grading initiative, while a project is also underway along the Kaladan River to allow for the export of products via waterways, according to the Ministry of Construction.

"These repairs are a good thing. We're working to allow for three times more trade to be exported. India will also carry out repairs to existing warehouses to allow for a goods storage system that will reduce export-related expenses to be utilised. We need good roads that can be used to transport goods," said Minister of Commerce Dr Than Myint.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Course on “Production of Horticulture Crops and Irrigation”



Trainees from course on “Production of Horticulture Crops and Irrigation” being seen. PHOTO: ISRAEL EMBASSY

AS part of the bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Israel in the framework of various training activities in agriculture and other sectors, two Israel experts from MASHAV—Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, conduct the course and workshop on “Production of Horticulture Crops and Irrigation”, sharing Israel’s knowledge and experi-

ence this field with Myanmar.

The program is collaboration between MASHAV, the Embassy of Israel and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Irrigation in Mandalay Region, which has taken place on May 23rd-27th at Nyaung U District Agriculture Office.

The opening ceremony of the course was held on 23rd May at Nyaung U attended by Mrs.

Kasa Bainesay Harbor (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Israel) and U Htay Naing (District Chief Officer, Department of Agriculture, Mandalay Region), and delivered the opening remarks.

Altogether, about 45 officials from agriculture department, as well as farmers attended the course and workshop.—GNLM

BFM provides Parahita societies with water bowzers

WHILE supplying drinking water to water scarce areas across the country, KBZ’s Brighter Future Myanmar foundation-BFM provided water bowzers to non-governmental societies as part of efforts to speed up its nationwide water supply project.

A water bowzers was handed over to a towns elder in Myittha through the Kanbawza Bank branch in Myittha on 22 May for use in supplying water to local people. Meanwhile, BFM also provided the Kalay Lwinpyin Parahita Society in Kalay with a water bowzers on Monday.

The foundation has also donated a 3,000-gallon water tanker

to the Myittamon Parahita Association, which is carrying out social welfare services in Natogyi.

Since early April 2016, the foundation has supplied more than 800,000 gallons of drinking water to a population of 60,000 in arid areas. As part of its efforts to combat water scarcity problems, KBZ’s Brighter Future Myanmar foundation has asked communities currently facing drought and/or a scarcity of fresh water to contact the foundation and arrange for fresh potable water to be delivered.

The foundation plans to build a fleet of up to 42 water bowzers. — GNLM



A BFM water bowser being seen. PHOTO: KBZ

Crime NEWS

Yaba, heroin seized in Shan State and Yangon

A COMBINED team comprising Anti-Drug Squad Unit-23 of Tachilek searched a home



Maung Maung Oo. PHOTO: MPF

owned by one Sai Thein and Ma Nan Phaung in Monghi village, Mongkoe village-tract of Tachilek township on Monday.

The police found Ma Nan Phaung, 55 and Jimmy Sai, 26 in the house and searched them. 150 yaba pills were discovered in the purse of Ma Nan Phaung, and 14 yaba pills were discovered under the floorboards. Police confiscated a total of 164 yaba pills from the house.

On that same day a combined team including Anti-Drug Squad Unit-42 based in Yangon West District searched a man namely Hammad alias Myoe Min Oo walking in front of a Chevrolet showroom and confiscated 255 yaba pills. Simi-

larly, members of the office of Kengtung District Police Force Commander searched a man named Thomas alias Arsoe, 37 who was staying at the Shwe Lucky Guest House in Kengtung and seized 201 yaba pills.

A combined team comprising Anti Drug Squad Unit-27 based in Loilem stopped and searched a Probox taxi on the Paunglaung- Lechar road and discovered 21 grams of heroin and 3000 yaba pills from a passenger identified as Maung Maung Oo.

Police have filed charges against all suspects under the Psychotropic Substances and Anti-Narcotic Drugs law. —Myanmar Police Force

Police arrest drug dealer for exchanging heroin for Buddha images

POLICE searched a man who was walking along Aung Hsan road, Ward 8, Kyaukme town and seized heroin weighing 0.3 grams.

When interrogated, Thaik Tun alias Aung Kyaw Zan alias Aik Mhan admitted that he had received the heroin from Tun

Aung after exchange it for two Buddha images.

According to a connected investigation, the police searched the home of Tun Aung from Pan Maung village and seized two Buddha images. The police have taken action against them.—Thein Than (IPRD)



Buddha images being seen with the dealers.

PHOTO: THEIN THAN (IPRD)

Cluster collision of three vehicles occurs in Kyimyindine

A CLUSTER collision of three vehicles occurred on Kannar road, Bargaya road, Kyimyindine township on Tuesday.

According to an investiga-

tion two vehicles crashed into a container when the container stopped abruptly. A man sustained minor injuries in the accident.—Shwe Taing Lwin

Man struck by the train in Pyinmana

A MAN was struck by a train between mileposts 225/21-22, Ywar Kauk ward, Pyinmana township, Nay Pyi Taw at 5:30pm, on Wednesday.

A witness, Aung Lin Swe, 19, said U Maung Gyi alias Maung Maung, 42, from Ohphoe ward, ran to lie down on the railway when the train was approaching milepost 225.

The police sent his corpse to the local hospital. The case is still under investigation.—Myo Zayar (Pyinmana)



LOCAL Business



An old IWT vessel being seen cruising in the river. PHOTO: IWT

Old IWT vessels to be sold through open tender

THREE applicants have been received so far for participating in sales of old vessels with an open tender, according to the Inland Water Transport.

Thirty-five old vessels that are no longer used by the Inland Water Transport (IWT) will be sold through an open tender, said an official from the IWT, which is under the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

The department has accepted applications as of May 17.

These more than 70-year old vessels and barges are not operable, so they will be sold in an open tender system on 7 June.

The department also sold 70 vessels through an open tender last year.

“Among those who competed in the tender sales, majority wanted to get some parts of water crafts.

Just some wanted to run again after repair” said a Deputy General Manager of the IWT.

These old vessels are from the five branches of the Inland Water Transport. The IWT has been operating the vessels on 11 routes from the delta branch, two routes from the Ayeyawady branch and one route each from the Chindwin, Rakhine and Thanlyin branches.—Zaw Gyi

Eleven aviation fuel sub stations to turn to JV

ELEVEN aviation fuel sub stations of the Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise (MPPE) will form a joint venture with a private company for technical expertise and capital investment. The founding of the JV is expected to meet international quality standards of the aviation fuelling business.

Myanmar is not currently able to exercise international rules and regulations of aviation fuelling business. Quality control is of vital importance to aircraft fuelling and so QC is being carried out as

the first priority, said a responsible person from Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise.

Currently, the aviation fuelling businesses will continue to be jointly conducted with the National Energy Puma Aviation Services Company Limited. The joint venture is believed to be helping overcome budget constraints. The JV may result in the raising of the salaries of staff depending on their professional qualifications and skills.

Over last month aviation fuel sub stations in Mingaladon were

jointly operated by the National Energy Puma Aviation Services Company Limited which has 49 per cent of the shares. The remaining 51 per cent of shares from the Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise is owned by the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

These aviation fuel sub stations are located in Bagan, Tachileik, Kyaukphyu, Sittwe, Myeik, Mawlamyine, Pyinmana, Heho, Dawei, TadaOo and Myitkyina. These joint ventures will be formed by July.—200

Ye betel nut price aligns with the rise in imported price of Thai betel nut

THE price of betel nuts in Ye town, Mon State has aligned with the price rise of those imported from Thailand to the domestic market of Mon State, according to the betel nut depots in Mon State.

The price of betel nut rose from K4,250 up to K4600 in the third week of May because of the rise in the price of Thai betel nuts. During these two days, the

price of betel nuts has declined to Ks100 because the local betel nut sellers have had to reduce their prices following the decline of the price of Thai betel nuts. This being so, the price changes of the betel price are positively related to those of Thai betel nut, said a broker from a betel nut purchase depot of Ye Township.

Thousands of betel nuts bags are being imported from Thailand

whereas only 200 bags of betel nuts from Mon State are seen at the market, according to the betel nut brokers.

Thai betel nuts are K200 cheaper per viss (a viss is approximately 1.6 kilograms) than Ye betel nuts. There are also betel nuts sent from Myeik archipelago of Taninthayi Region and Kyarinn-Seikgyi of Kayin State at the market in Mon State.—200

Eighteen more companies received piling licences

EIGHTEEN companies have received licences for piling Yangon’s buildings through recommendations from the Supervisory Committee for Quality Control of High-rise Building Projects, according to the announcement of Engineering Department (Building) of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

This committee recommended the companies to be engaged in piling to ensure

they obey rules, and operate in an eco-friendly manner without damaging buildings, roads, streets ditches or platforms and that they take responsibility for these activities. The companies that received the licences include Hein Lin Khant Company, GEOLAB (Myanmar) Co Ltd and Aryon-Oo Construction Ltd.

Previously, YCDC granted piling licences to 25 companies.—200

Cars selling well in Kengtung

CARS worth around K10million (US\$8,518) are selling well in Kengtung Township in eastern Shan State, according to the car dealers there.

“All types of cars at a value of around K10 million each are being sold. Some buyers sell their cars to exchange with other car models and offer to pay the difference if the value of the new car is higher,” said U Kyaw, a car dealer from Kengtung.

The cars in Kengtung are mostly imported from Thailand, Laos and China. The prices

of the cars vary depending on whether they run on diesel or petrol and on whether they have Yangon or Shan State licence plates, a car dealer said.

The most popular cars in the Kengtung car market are the 2009 Honda Fit, which sells for K9 million, the 2010-2011 Honda Fit with a Yangon licence plate, which sells for between K10.5 million and K11 million, the 2001 Pajero, which sells for K13 million, and the 2001 Pajero diesel-powered model, which sells for between K15 million and K16 million.—200

Billionaire lottery tickets to be sold in June 2017

AUNGBARLAY lottery tickets are slated to be sold for K500 each in June 2017 with a jackpot prize of K1 billion, according to the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

“We’ve been preparing to sell the lottery tickets at a val-

ue of Ks500 next year,” said U Min Htut, the director-general of the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Other prizes in the Aungbarlay lottery include K500 million, K100million and K50 million.—200

Pedigree seeds to be distributed to four districts of Sagaing

PEDIGREE seeds of peanut and pigeon pea will be distributed to eight townships through the four districts of Sagaing Region before cultivation time, said a responsible person from the regional agriculture department.

If the pedigree seeds are cultivated systematically and efficiently they can produce an abundant yield. With this knowledge the department has planned to distribute pedigree seeds in a timely manner before cultivation.

The department will distribute 30 bushels of pigeon

peas seeds each to Monywa, Butalin and ChaungOo townships respectively and 60 bushels to Sagaing Township, Sagaing District while 30 bushels of pigeon pea seeds and 15 baskets of peanut seeds will go to Myinmu Township.

30 bushels of pigeon pea seeds are slated to be distributed to Kani Township, Yinmabin District and Diyein Township of Shwebo District while 30 bushels of pigeon pea seeds and 15 baskets of peanut seeds will go to Wetlet Township, Shwebo District.—200

Three islands in south Thailand shut down to save coral reef

BANGKOK — Three islands off Phuket in south Thailand were closed to tourists to protect endangered coral reefs, Thai Marine officials said on Wednesday.

The tiny islands off Phuket's east coast covering totally 246 rai of coral reefs, namely Koh Khai Nai, Khai Nok and Khai Nui, were shut down with all facilities and structures used for tourist activities since about 80 per cent of coral reefs in the area have been destroyed.

Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) pointed out that the islands usher in at least 60 speedboats per day. More and more restaurants and shops settle down in the wake of the arrival of an increasing number of tourists, who

often spend at least three hours feeding fish and snorkeling.

The area has been suffered from coral-bleaching, which does occur naturally but can be exacerbated by human interaction with coral reefs.

Meanwhile, other activities include boats anchoring on the corals, people walking on coral while playing in the water, people collecting coral and taking away with them as a trip souvenir, also cause a negative impact on the maritime ecosystem.

Local government will send more officials to monitor the tour operators and tourists in these areas to prevent them from engaging in any activities that will damage the coral-reef ecosystems. —Xinhua

G7 agrees need strong message on South China Sea, China says don't 'hype'



From left, Eikei Suzuki, Governor of the Mie Prefecture, European Council President Donald Tusk, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US President Barack Obama, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, French President Francois Hollande, British Prime Minister David Cameron, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, participate in a tree planting during a visit the Ise Jingu shrine in Ise, Mie Prefecture, Japan, on 26 May 2016, as part of the G7 Summit. PHOTO: REUTERS

ISE-SHIMA, (Japan) — Group of Seven (G7) leaders agreed on Thursday on the need to send a strong message on maritime claims in the western Pacific, where an increasingly assertive China is locked in territorial disputes with Japan and several South-east Asian nations.

The agreement prompted a sharp rejoinder from China, which is not in the G7 club but whose rise as a power has put it at the heart of some discussions at the advanced nations' summit in Ise-Shima, central Japan.

"Prime Minister (Shinzo) Abe led discussion on the current situation in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Other G7 leaders said it is necessary for G7 to issue a clear signal," Japan's Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshige Seko told reporters after a session on foreign policy affairs.

At a news conference late on Wednesday, Abe said Japan welcomed China's peaceful rise while repeating Tokyo's opposition to acts that try to change the status quo by force and urging respect of the rule of law — principles expected to be mentioned in a statement after the summit.

The United States is also increasingly concerned about China's action in the region.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua

Chunying retorted in Beijing that the South China Sea issue had "nothing to do" with the G7 or any of its members.

"China is resolutely opposed to individual countries hyping up the South China Sea for personal gain," she said.

US President Barack Obama called on China on Wednesday to resolve maritime disputes peacefully and he reiterated that the United States was simply concerned about freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.

Obama on Thursday pointed to the risks from North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes, saying the isolated state was "hell bent" on getting atomic weapons.

But he said there had been improved responses from countries in the region like China that could reduce the risk of North Korea selling weapons or nuclear material.

"It's something that we've put at the centre of discussions and negotiations with China," Obama told reporters.

The global economy topped the agenda earlier in the day, when G7 leaders voiced concern about emerging economies and Abe made a pointed comparison to the 2008 global financial crisis. Not all his G7 partners appeared to agree.

The G7 leaders did agree on the need for flexi-

ble spending to spur world growth but the timing and amount depended on each country, Seko told reporters, adding some countries saw no need for such spending. Britain and Germany have been resisting calls for fiscal stimulus.

"G7 leaders voiced the view that emerging economies are in a severe situation, although there were views that the current economic situation is not a crisis," Seko said.

Abe presented data showing global commodities prices fell 55 per cent from June 2014 to January 2016, the same margin as from July 2008 to February 2009, after the Lehman collapse.

Lehman had been Wall Street's fourth-largest investment bank when it filed for Chapter 11 protection on 15 September, 2008, making its bankruptcy by far the biggest in US history. Its failure triggered the global financial crisis.

Abe hopes, some political insiders say, to use a G7 statement on the global economy as cover for a domestic fiscal package including the possible delay of a rise in the nation's sales tax to 10 per cent from 8 per cent planned for next April.

Obama ripped into Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, saying the billionaire had rattled other G7 leaders and that his statements

were aimed at getting headlines, not what was needed to keep America safe and the world on an even keel.

Trump has been accused of racism, misogyny and bigotry for saying he would build a giant wall to keep out illegal Mexican immigrants, would temporarily ban Muslims from the United States and after he made a series of comments considered demeaning to women.

Summit pageantry began when Abe escorted G7 leaders to the Shinto religion's holiest site, the Ise Grand Shrine in central Japan, dedicated to sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami, mythical ancestress of the emperor.

On Wednesday night, Abe met Obama for talks dominated by the arrest of a US military base civilian worker in connection with the killing of a young woman on Japan's southern Okinawa island, reluctant host to the bulk of the US military in Japan.

The attack has marred Obama's hopes of keeping his Japan trip strictly focused on his visit on Friday to Hiroshima, site of the world's first atomic bombing, to highlight reconciliation between the two former World War II foes and his nuclear anti-proliferation agenda.

The G7 groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.—Reuters

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New Philippine president to face early test over food security

MANILA — While Philippine elections this month were dominated by talk about crushing crime, the next president faces another critical early test: ensuring there is enough rice for the country’s more than 100 million people.

The Philippine crop is suffering mounting drought damage, just as the country’s big Asian rice suppliers also suffer from an El Niño weather pattern.

In a country where rice accounts for about a quarter of the expenditure of the poor, any supply disruptions are extremely sensitive. Big purchases by the world’s third-biggest importer can also send shockwaves through markets.

There are now concerns that potentially vital imports may be delayed as the incoming administration of Rodrigo Duterte, who campaigned on making food available and affordable, looks to overhaul policies and review existing state purchase plans.

“Now is the right time to import as prices are starting to trend up,” said Bruce Tolentino, deputy director general for communication at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

In 2008, lower Asian rice output also due to an El Niño prompted India to ban exports, sparking panic measures in the Philippines — including ordering troops to supervise subsidized rice sales and asking fast food chains to serve half-portions.

Manila also had to scramble to import more rice in 2014 after prices shot up due to typhoon crop damage.

On 13 May, Duterte’s campaign spokesman Peter Lavina said an April plan to allow the state buy-



Different rice varieties are pictured at a food stall in the mountain resort of Baguio city in northern Philippines on 17 April, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

er to import an additional 500,000 tonnes this year would be reviewed and the administration would immediately talk to Viet Nam, Thailand and Cambodia on new deals.

Lavina said the aim was to make the country self-sufficient in rice within one to two years, but would still allow imports until this was achieved.

Duterte’s choice for agriculture minister, Emmanuel Pinol, has said the administration will bar private traders from importing rice and put the task entirely in the hands of the

state grains agency, the National Food Authority (NFA), a move that some traders say could stall imports.

“Many traders were expecting the Philippines to make the large 500,000 tonnes purchase shortly after approval was received, but no deals have happened, and this is really adding some intrigue to the market,” said James Fell, an economist at the International Grains Council in London.

NFA spokesman Angel Imperial said there was no urgent need to import

given ample stocks. April stocks can meet 99 days of consumption, up from March’s 87 days, after the delayed arrival of some rice imported last year.

Nonetheless, there are concerns that time is running out for deals to safeguard stocks in the lean harvest season beginning in July as the new government will not officially take office until the end of June.

“It will create supply problems if they don’t buy until the end of June,” said a Singapore-based trader, who declined to be named as he was not authorised to speak to media.

Local rice prices have largely been stable in recent months, after authorities aggressively boosted state reserves following price spikes in 2014.

But the first-quarter rice harvest shrank nearly 10 per cent from a year earlier to 3.9 million tonnes.

“Some of the NFA’s imported stocks are more than six months old so there’s also a need for them to immediately unload and then replenish,” said Jaime Magbanua, president of the Grains Retailers Confederation of the Philippines.—Reuters

Direct flights between Japan and Cambodia to commence on 1 September

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia and Japan announced on Thursday that a bilateral aviation agreement signed last year has come into effect, allowing Japanese airlines to begin direct flights to Cambodia from 1 September.

“The agreement will open the way for the two countries to operate direct flights and air transport services, thus contributing importantly to the promotion of economic ties, particularly in the tourism sector,” said Chum Sounry, spokesman for Cambodia’s Foreign Ministry.

Currently, tourists from Japan need to transit in other Asian nations, such as Thailand or Singapore, before travelling to Cambodia.

The number of Japanese visitors to Cambodia in 2015 totaled 193,330, putting Japan in seventh place in the table of numbers of tourists visiting the country. Japan’s All Nippon Airways announced in January that it will begin operating a daily route between Tokyo and Phnom Penh on 1 September. Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhon and Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia Yuji Kumamaru exchanged notes in Phnom Penh on the agreement on air services, originally signed in Phnom Penh on 14 January, 2015, the spokesman said.—Kyodo News

Australia to study three new pieces of debris for link to missing MH370

SYDNEY — Three new pieces of debris thought to be from missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 have been found washed up on Indian Ocean beaches and will be examined in Australia, the transport minister said on Thursday.

Two of the pieces were found in Mauritius while the third was found in Mozambique. The minister, Darren Chester, said in a statement all three items would be investigated in connection with the disappearance of MH370.

“These items of debris are of interest and will be examined by experts,” he said.

Flight MH370 disappeared in March 2014 with 239 passengers and crew on board shortly after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing, in what has become one of the world’s greatest aviation mysteries.

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off the plane’s transponder before diverting it thousands of

miles off course over the Indian Ocean.

A first piece of the Boeing 777, a wing part known as a flaperon, washed up on the French island of Reunion in July 2015. Malaysia and French authorities confirmed it was from the aircraft.

Two pieces of debris discovered later in South Africa and the Mauritian island of Rodrigues were almost certainly from the jetliner, Malaysia’s transport ministry said this month.

Chester said Malaysia was arranging to collect the three new pieces and would send them to Australia, which has been leading the search for the aircraft in the Indian Ocean.—Reuters

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Date 27 May 2016

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(7 / 2016)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-008(16-17)	Piston Rubbers for F-1600 Rig Pump Ex ZJ 70 L Drilling Rigs (3) Items	US\$
(2)	IFB-009(16-17)	4” ERW Steel Line Pipe, API 5 L, Grade A 10,000 MTR	US\$
(3)	DMP/L-007(16-17)	Server Computer (DAQ) and UPS (2 KW) (2) Items	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time - 16-6-2016, 16:30 Hr
Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 23TH May, 2016 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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

Opinion

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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.

Night buses are as important as daytime buses

Kyaw Thura

HUNDREDS of thousands of people in Yangon commute between work and home by bus, spending two or three hours a day travelling. That's why the buses have become the bedrock of the city's public transport system as their fares are affordable.

It is clear that lowly paid workers see buses as a reliable and affordable means to get around and also a viable

alternative to own cars. People with low incomes spend a high proportion of their salary on their commutes.

Bus fares are not a problem in the daytime, but they get higher at night as there is no official night bus service in the city. Daytime buses stop running at around 8pm. People who work late have to rely on illegal private buses and have to pay a double fare for the same journey. High bus

fares have become the burden upon them. Its impact is unnoticeable on a daily basis, but how much they have spent on the night-time commutes will alarm them at the end of the month.

As night buses are as equally important to lowly paid workers as daytime buses, parliamentarians should adopt policies for night bus services and make them work for the people to whom they

owe a great debt of gratitude.

It is, therefore, important for the Central Supervisory Committee for All Private Bus Lines to meet the needs of the passengers in recognition of the public transport system as national concern. And the government should invest more in public transport and become aware that buses matter a lot to ordinary commuters in their everyday lives.

Firing up Myanmar's Economy through Private Sector Growth

Sjamsu Rahardja and Charles Schneider

MYANMAR'S reintegration into the global economy presents it with a unique opportunity to leverage private sector growth to reduce poverty, share prosperity and sustain the nationwide peace process.

For much of its post-independence period, Myanmar's once vibrant entrepreneurialism and private sector was stifled by economic isolation, state control, and a system which promoted crony capitalism in the form of preferential access to markets and goods, especially in the exploitation of natural resources. Reflecting this legacy, private sector firms are still burdened with onerous regulations and high costs, dragging down their competitiveness and reducing growth prospects.

Since 2011, Myanmar has returned to the global market place – sanctions have been lifted and the economy is increasingly opened for trade and investment. Between 2011 and 2014, export and import trade increased by 11 percent per year and approved foreign direct investment soared by 98 percent each year, both starting from a very low base. Global buyers in apparel are stepping up purchases from Myanmar's textile industry, bringing expansion to this labor-intensive sector. Myanmar's successful liberalization of the telecommunications sector has lowered the cost of phones, texting and internet access for people and businesses.

After decades of debilitating restraints, Myanmar's determined business owners and operators remain intent on pushing forward to overcome bureaucratic and technological frustrations, emboldened by the spirit of social change

and now economic reform.

"Reform is happening," said one Yangon importer who launched his business in 2012. "We need to smooth the process, not lose hope."

This businessman talks about the frustrations and obstacles he confronts almost daily, such as the lack of automation at the customs agency that delays import licensing, and complicated payment transfers that disrupt shipments. He hasn't given up, he will keep working to change procedures because he's confident his business will prosper.

What more can be done?

Making rules and regulations in trade and investment transparent and predictable. Myanmar's nascent private sector will respond to emerging opportunities if the playing field is level. Passing the draft Investment Law prepared by the government in close consultation with stakeholders from the private sector and civil society will help build investor confidence while balancing the need for clear investor protections and the provision of regulatory space for the government. Passing the draft Companies Law will help ensure that key rules related to incorporation, management of companies' affairs, financial reporting and audit requirements, share capital and capital raising, and the duties of directors are addressed using well-tested and modern approaches. This legal and regulatory framework is central to Myanmar's market reform process.

Further telecommunications reforms and investment. Opening the telecommunications sector has helped attract foreign investment, and is connecting people and businesses through afforda-



Workers seen at a garment factory. PHOTO: WORLD BANK

ble internet access. Consumer choice has increased and an ecosystem for digital innovation is developing. Next steps: Adopting the Telecommunications Sector Master Plan, the eGovernment Master Plan and establishing an independent sector regulator to help Myanmar leapfrog into the digital age.

The government too, can install information communication and technology platforms at trade-related agencies to speed the clearance of goods across borders. A World Bank Group study suggests that these measures could reduce trade costs by 0.6 percent to 1.3 percent of cargo value.

Investment in better port logistics, and improved trade facilitation. Myanmar can leverage its unique geographical and comparative advantage by building its connectivity with its neighbors. Currently Myanmar's logistics performance index lags last among ASEAN countries. Port terminals in Yangon suffer from congestion, long cargo-clearance processes, and regulations that in-

centivize traders to keep containers at port as long as possible. Cargo vessels entering the port are limited by the river tide and the lack of night navigation along the river channel. Myanmar borders on countries with the highest economic growth rates in the world and with markets that make up to 40 percent of world population. Removing logistics constraints and opening up ports can unleash the private sector's potential – to become the engine of Myanmar's economic growth.

Engaging the private sector in a dialogue over the economic reform agenda. The government can send a strong signal of commitment to improve the business regulatory environment by coordinating inter-agency reform progress and integrating feedback from the private sector into the process. Establishing a structured policy dialogue between Government and private sector, such as a Myanmar Business Forum, can help establish trust between the parties. Vietnam, for example, instituted its Doi Moi Policy of economic reforms that included a

well-coordinated open reform process with a high level of government leadership and private sector participation through a well-functioning Public-Private dialogue platform, the Vietnam Business Forum. Similarly, Malaysia established a high-level inter-ministerial body, PEMUDAH, responsible for driving a continuous economic reform program and facilitating private sector dialogue.

While the challenges are great, Myanmar can be as successful in its transformation as its peers, and ultimately, benefit from the great economic potential of Myanmar's natural resources, its geographic advantage and its people.

Myanmar has a history of ethnic conflict, so the successful expansion of private sector activities and the opening of the economy will depend on consultations with local communities, especially in conflict-prone ethnic-minority areas. Only with the participation and inclusion of these groups can the economic transformation effectively complement the ongoing peace process.

Achieving all of this is a tall order—but doable with strong leadership and public-private dialogue and cooperation. Progress in economic reforms can help to transform Myanmar into a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive country, with a thriving private sector, high levels of employment and low levels of poverty.

This blog is based on the World Bank Group's policy note "Breaking Business as Usual: Fostering Competitiveness and a Dynamic Environment for Private Sector Growth." Sjamsu Rahardja is senior trade economist at the World Bank and Charles Schneider is senior operations officer at the IFC.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Thai PM

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing held talks with Thailand's Prime Minister

General Prayut Chan-o-cha yesterday over issues related to domestic peace, fighting against illegal smuggling including armed

smuggling and drug trafficking and cooperation in the investment in cultural and tourism sectors.

During the meeting, Thai Prime Minister said the real situation of Koh Tao murder case is being reviewed as a third country has become involved in the issue.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also met with Privy Council President of Thailand General Prem Tinsulanonda.

The Myanmar delegation visited Thai Bev Group Industry (Oishi Group) in Bangkok on Wednesday.

Oishi group, which is a subsidiary of Thai Beverage Group, produces around 75 million assorted cans of soft drink per month including green tea.

The group is planning to produce non-alcoholic beverages.—Myawady



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing being seen holding talks.

PHOTO: MYAWADY

Foundation Laid for Japan Funded Housing Project

A Foundation laying ceremony for a low-cost housing project for poor and vulnerable families in Dagon Seikkan Township took place Wednesday.

The Government of Japan funded UN-Habitat to provide the housing and basic services facilities for families in the vicinity of the project area.

The housing project is designed to be made up of 12 units of 5 storey buildings for 240 vulnerable families.

The foundation laying ceremony for the first batch of 6 buildings was jointly officiated by Counsellor Mr. Matsuo Hideaki of the Embassy of Japan, Deputy Director U Sai Thet Naing Moe of the Department of Urban and Housing Development, UN-Habitat Country Programme Manager Mr. Bijay Karmacharya, Director Dr. U Toe Aung of the Urban Division

of the Yangon City Development Committee, U Aung Kyaw Oo Integrated Apartment Users' Committee (IAUC) Chairperson, Van Lizar Aung Director of Women for the World, U Saw Htwe Zaw of S&A Co Ltd, and U Ohn Myint, Managing Director of Civil Tech Co Ltd.

In his opening remarks Mr. Bijay Karmacharya, Country Programme Manager of UN-Habitat Myanmar stressed that this was a pioneering pilot project which will contribute to defining approaches to solving housing problems faced by poor and vulnerable families.

Counsellor Mr. Matsuo Hideaki of the Embassy of Japan in his remarks on the occasion noted that this was an auspicious first time that the Government of Japan had made available grant assistance for the purpose of housing construction

for the poor and vulnerable in Myanmar.

On behalf of the beneficiaries the chairperson of the IAUC U Aung Kyaw Oo expressed deep gratitude to the Government of Japan and to UN-Habitat for their assistance in building for the vulnerable.

Dagon Myo Thit (Seik Kan) township is located in the eastern part of the commercial capital Yangon. The town was established in the 1990s and was planned as an industrial zone. At present, it has a population of about 166,000.

Construction will initially cover 6 units. The families were chosen following a process of social mobilisation and arduous beneficiary selection based on vulnerability criteria. Land for the housing project was made available by the Ministry of Construction.—GNLM



Foundation being laid for Japan Funded Housing Project.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY FOUNDATION LAID FOR JAPAN FUNDED HOUSING PROJECT

Hyundai Motor Myanmar Showroom offers instalment plans, discount sales

THE Hyundai Motor Myanmar Showroom is participating in the Korea Expo 2016 from today until Sunday at the Tatmadaw Convention Hall in Yangon.

The sole agent for Hyundai brands in Myanmar has exhibited Hyundai Sonata, SantaFe, Tucson, Elantra, Grant i-10, H1 and

H100 and has also offered to sell some models at one to three year installment, with 20 percent initial payment.

It has also offered special discount to cash down payment.

Visitors test drive a Hyundai Tucson during the exhibition.—GNLM



Hyundai Motor Myanmar Showroom seen at the Tatmadaw Hall.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY HYUNDAI MOTOR MYANMAR SHOWROOM

A Bridge Not Too Far

Aung Myint Oo

“LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT....” those are not military drill commands but noting of my steps in my mind while running. Yes, I have been trying to be aware of each step in my mind while running. It helps me maintain the desired pace and the correct posture while keeping me away from wandering thoughts. It also helps me calibrate my steps to the most comfortable landing of my foot so that lowering risks of injuries to my joints and tendons. Before doing that, I used to experience wrong steps or inconsistent pace or inappropriate postures which can make my run slower or faster than I wanted it to be. Besides that, every now and then I sustained some minor injuries which forced me rest for a few days to weeks. As a result, on several occasions I felt like quitting my running totally.

When looked back, I have also tried a few other ways e.g. listening music or daydreaming while running, to be able to distract my mind from the negative thoughts of tiredness and pain which sometimes make me feel giving up of my runs prematurely before reaching the destiny, as a goal to achieve. Although those techniques may also keep me away from negative thoughts to a certain extent, they did not help me much in my effort to concentrate on my pace, strides and posture.

Then, one day, while I was contemplating the idea of “listening to your body before running” which I shared as a safety tip for regular runners regardless of recreational or competitive in one of my earlier notes titled “Never too much and too fast” published on the Global New Light of My-

anmar on 5 May 2016. At that time, a thought of extending this seemingly simple but amazingly beneficial practice to the whole-run in addition to using it as a pre-run assessment came into my mind. That's where and how a big challenge began. Initially it was extremely tough and demanding on my both body and mind which often rendered my steps out of sync. After a few weeks of trial and error, I was beginning to be able to catch the rhythm of steps in tandem with the breaths.

Following those moments, eventually it became a breeze and part of my running. I was aware of the spring-ups of my legs before moving forward and the moments of their landing on the surface of track underneath. Flexion and extension of the muscles along the legs together with the force of impact on the joints acting as shock absorbers of a motor vehicle were being felt too. I have even learnt to switch the point of impact between knee and hip joint depending on the texture of the surface and the level of tiredness of my legs. Someone with the experience of walking meditation can understand what I have described above. Of course, the level of concentration must have been much lower than that of the one enjoying the bliss of deep meditation although it still produces sheer amount of joy and satisfaction.

Today like any other day, after usual pre-workout warm-up, I started off my routine running in conjunction with mindfulness of the movements of my legs, body and the breath. With my body, mind and soul in sync, the destination of my usual run which is a bridge with a distance of 6.5 kilometres from the starting point becomes “A Bridge Not Too Far”



A placard which reads 'closed, dried up' is seen at a petrol station in Savenay, France, on 25 May. PHOTO: REUTERS

French strikers seek to tighten grip on energy supplies

PARIS — The hardline CGT union sought to tighten its grip on France's energy supplies and transport network on Thursday as its stand-off with the government over planned labour reforms continued into a day of nationwide protests.

Signals were mixed, though, over how much success it was having in its bid to kill off reform plans it fears remove too much worker protection. French nuclear power capacity was cut by at least 4 gigawatts (GW) as part of a rolling nationwide strike, grid operator RTE showed on its website. That is equivalent to about 6 per cent of the country's total production capacity.

A report on France Inter radio's web site cited a CGT delegate saying the union had the ability to cut off a fuel pipeline from the port of Le Havre supplying Charles de Gaulle airport outside Paris.

The SNCF state railway company said many rail connections were less harshly hit than during stoppages last week.

Power industry experts have said the nuclear plant strike is unlikely to provoke blackouts due to legal limits on strike action in the nuclear industry and power imports from abroad.

France has also mobilised its strategic oil and fuel reserves to keep fillings stations running as

the strike action disrupts refinery production and deliveries from depots.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls has vowed not to withdraw the reforms that make hiring and firing easier and which he says will boost jobs and growth.

He launched a strongly worded attack on the action on Wednesday saying; "The CGT does not rule this country."

On Thursday, Laurent Berger, head of the moderate CFDT union which is backing the reforms, called for a truce.

"The political and industrial relations climate has turned hysterical ... let's calm things down," he said on France Info.—Reuters

Eight protesters arrested at Trump rally in California

ANAHEIM — Some 100 people staged a boisterous but largely peaceful demonstration outside a Southern California rally by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, at times taunting his supporters before police moved in and arrested eight people.

The activists carried signs such as "Stop Nazi Trump" and "Dump Trump," and beat a pinata made to resemble the presumptive Republican nominee outside a convention centre in Anaheim, just a few blocks from Disneyland, before they were driven from the scene by police on horseback.

A spokesman for the Anaheim Police Department said seven adults and one minor were arrested on charges ranging from selling T-shirts without a permit to unlawful assembly.

The arrests came one day after a Trump event in Albuquerque, New Mexico, erupted into chaos after hundreds of protesters tried to swarm the convention centre where Trump spoke, knocking

down barricades, waving Mexican flags and hurling rocks and bottles at police officers in riot gear. Police responded with smoke bombs and pepper spray.

Albuquerque police said they made arrests both outside and inside the rally, where demonstrators continually interrupted Trump's speech. The police department's Twitter feed said officers were treated for injuries caused by thrown rocks.

In a Twitter post on Wednesday, Trump called the protesters in Albuquerque "thugs who were flying the Mexican flag."

"The rally inside was big and beautiful, but outside, criminals!" he said.

In Anaheim, police warned in advance that they would take "swift" action if protests got out of hand, and the roughly 150 officers and sheriffs deputies on hand may have outnumbered the protesters.

Inside, Trump was interrupted by hecklers as he spoke, including one man who waved a Mexican

flag. "Do not hurt him," Trump said as a man was led out of the arena. "I say that for the television cameras. Even though he is a bad person."

Many of those who protested outside the arena expressed anger over Trump's views on immigration, at one point ripping apart a piñata resembling the candidate and spearing the paper-mache head on top of a flagpole with a large Mexican flag.

Police largely stood by watching the demonstration, which became tense at times when anti-Trump protesters surrounded smaller groups of his supporters. At one point a brief shoving match broke out.

As Trump's campaign event neared its conclusion inside, outside a police helicopter circled overhead, ordering the throng to disperse or face arrest. Officers on horseback then drove the crowd from the scene, where several people were taken into custody for failing to disperse.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian marine Girone can head home — India's top court

NEW DELHI — India's Supreme Court on Thursday said an Italian marine under investigation for the killing of two fishermen is free to go home while international arbitration into the case goes on.

Salvatore Girone, who has been living in the Italian embassy in New Delhi, was one of two marines arrested in 2012 on suspicion of killing the fishermen during an anti-piracy mission on an Italian oil tanker. The other marine is already back in Italy after suffering health problems.

The Supreme Court ruled that Girone can return to Italy while an international tribunal decides on a jurisdictional issue between India and Italy.

The marine must surrender his passport when he arrives in Italy and will be required to return to India within a month of an order from the tribunal, the court said in its order.—Reuters

NZ parliament in lock down after security threat ahead of budget

WELLINGTON — New Zealand's parliament was in lock down on Thursday after a security threat, but the annual 2016 budget would proceed as planned.

New Zealand police said a man had been arrested in relation to the incident and that a vehicle at the centre of the threat had been cleared and will be removed from the parliament forecourt.

"The security situation is contained, however Parliament remained locked down. #Budget2016 proceeding as planned," NZ Parliament tweeted. New Zealand will present its annual budget at 0200 GMT.—Reuters

EU's Tusk urges global solidarity on refugee crisis

BERLIN — European Council President Donald Tusk said on Thursday he would like the global community to show solidarity regarding the refugee crisis and recognise it is a global problem.

Tusk said he would seek G7 support and commitment to increasing global assistance for the immediate and long-term needs of refugees.

"We are aware that because of geography, most of the responsibility (regarding the refugee crisis) has been and will be placed on Europe," said Tusk.

"If we (G7) do not take the lead in managing this crisis, nobody would." Tusk was speaking at a briefing held shortly before the Group of Seven summit kicked off later on Thursday. The G7 groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. —Reuters

Belgian police detain four on suspicion of belonging to terrorist group

BRUSSELS — Belgian police searched houses in the city of Antwerp on Wednesday and detained four people on suspicion of belonging to a terrorist group and trying to drum up recruits to fight with Islamist militants in Syria or Libya, state prosecutors said.

Two were formally arrested while the other two were given a conditional release.

"They are suspected of trying to recruit individuals to travel to conflict zones in Syria or Libya," a prosecutors' statement said.

It said no weapons or explosives were found in the house searches and there was no apparent link with the 22 March suicide bombings at the international airport and on the metro in Brussels which killed 31 people.

But it said some of the four planned to join the Islamic State militant group and a preliminary investigation showed they may also have been planning attacks in Belgium.—Reuters

Three killed, 28 injured in factory blasts in India

NEW DELHI — At least three people were killed and 28 others injured on Thursday in blasts inside a chemical factory in the Indian state of Maharashtra, officials said.

The blasts occurred at Dombivli in Thane District, about 40 km north of Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra.

"Two blasts inside a chemical factory today killed three people and injured 28 others," an official said. "Following the blasts in factory's boiler, a fire broke out." All the injured, according to officials, were rushed to the nearest hospital. Television reports, however, put the number of injured in blasts over 100.—Xinhua

Afghan Taliban appoint a new leader, Kabul urges peace

KABUL (Pakistan) — The Afghan Taliban named an Islamic legal scholar who was one of former leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour's deputies to succeed him on Wednesday, after confirming Mansour's death in a US drone strike at the weekend.

Within an hour of the announcement of Haibatullah Akhundzada's appointment, a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a shuttle bus carrying court employees west of the Afghan capital, Kabul, killing up to 11 people and wounding several others, including children.

The new Taliban leader was named in a United Nations report last year as former chief of the sharia-based justice system during the Taliban's five-year rule over Afghanistan, which ended with their ouster in 2001.

Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of a feared network blamed for many deadly bomb attacks in Kabul in recent years, and Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, will serve as deputies.

The announcement, following a meeting of the Taliban's main shura, or leadership council, ended days of confusion during which the Taliban declined to confirm the death of Mansour in a drone strike in Pakistan on

Saturday. "All the shura members have pledged allegiance to Sheikh Haibatullah in a safe place in Afghanistan," a Taliban statement said. "All people are required to obey the new Emir-al-Momineen (commander of the faithful)."

Akhundzada, believed to be around 60 years of age and a member of the powerful Noorzai tribe, was a close aide to Omar and is from Kandahar, in the south of Afghanistan and the heartland of the Taliban.

An official Taliban account on Twitter posted an undated photograph it said was of Akhundzada, informally known as Mullah Haibatullah, with a white turban and long, greying beard.

The post listed his full title as Emir-ul-Momineen Sheikh ul Quran, or "commander of the faithful, scholar of the Koran".

The Taliban movement banned human images for breaching their strict interpretation of Islam when they governed Afghanistan.

Under their rule, women could only appear in public under a heavy veil and accompanied by a male relative, and they were denied a formal education. Public executions were staged and sports banned.

Senior members of the in-



A man reads a newspaper containing news about Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in Peshawar, Pakistan, on 23 May. PHOTO: REUTERS

urgent group had been keenly aware of the need to appoint a candidate who could bring disparate factions together and repair the splits that emerged last year when Mansour was appointed.

"It was much quicker than most people expected, including myself. It shows that the Taliban are keen not to have a new conflict," said Thomas Ruttig of the Afghanistan Analysts Network.

According to two members of the council present when the decision was made, Akhundzada was appointed after both Haqqani and Yaqoob were ruled out,

adding pressure on the group to select a leader who could unite it.

They said it was feared that Haqqani's record as the leader of one of the most violent groups in the insurgency would bring unwelcome problems for the Taliban, while Yaqoob was considered too inexperienced, despite the prestige of his family name.

Mansour, a former deputy to Omar named as leader in 2015 after the Taliban announced their founder had died more than two years earlier, faced widespread anger that he had deceived the movement by covering up his

predecessor's death.

However, there was no sign the appointment would lead to any shift in the stance of the Taliban, which under Mansour gained more territory than at any time since being driven from power in 2001 and ruled out joining peace talks with the government.

"Prospects for the Afghan peace process remain poor," said former CIA official and White House advisor Bruce Riedel, now at the Brookings Institution.

"The Taliban leadership including the new commander Mullah Akhundzada believe military victory is only a matter of time."

An audio statement purporting to be from Akhundzada rejected peace talks, but the Taliban's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid later said the message was not authentic and did not come from the new leader. The Afghan government called on the new Taliban leader to end the war, or face dire consequences.

"Latest developments offer Taliban groups opportunity to end violence and resume peaceful life; else they will face the fate of their leadership," President Ashraf Ghani's deputy spokesman Sayed Zafar Hashemi said in a tweet.—Reuters

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Euro zone, IMF reach compromise deal on Greek debt relief

BRUSSELS — Euro zone governments on Wednesday offered Greece debt relief in 2018, but left key details for later in a bid to bridge Germany's view that no immediate action was needed and the International Monetary Fund's call for decisions now.

The late-night compromise spared the battered European Union the risk of another Greek crisis this year, less than 12 months after Athens was on the brink of ejection from the currency area by rejecting austerity measures and defaulting on an IMF loan.

After talks that lasted into early Wednesday, Eurogroup ministers agreed to release 10.3 billion euros (7.8 billion pounds) in new funds for Greece in recognition of painful fiscal reforms pushed through by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's leftist-led coalition, subject to some final technical tweaks.

But the bigger step forward was the debt relief deal because it provided investors with more certainty that their money in Greece would be safe, paving the



A protester waves a Greek flag during a demonstration outside the parliament building in central Athens, Greece where lawmakers were discussing controversial tax and pension reforms on 8 May. PHOTO: REUTERS

way for a return to market financing for Athens in 2018 and for foreign direct investment.

Markets received the deal with enthusiasm even though it is still highly conditional.

"The possible debt relief will be delivered at the end of the programme in mid-2018 and the scope will be determined by the Eurogroup on the basis of

a revised Debt Sustainability Analysis," a statement by euro zone ministers said.

Greece's 10-year bond yield fell to a six-month low of 7.09 per cent and 2-year yields slid below 7 per cent. Yields on Spanish, Italian and Portuguese government bonds also dropped.

"The Eurogroup ... provided a road map on

debt relief, which is credit positive as it signals a growing consensus among euro area member countries and the institutions, namely the IMF and the European Commission, on debt relief," Moody's Investors Service said in a statement.

The agreement on debt is a political victory for Athens and could bring the IMF to participate in

the latest Greek bailout, so far shouldered by the euro zone alone.

It is also a major concession on the part of the IMF, which insisted on debt relief decisions upfront. The Fund will now analyse the terms agreed by euro ministers to see if they would guarantee long-term Greek debt sustainability.

If they do, the IMF's management will recommend to its board by the end of the year to join the Greek bailout. There was no discussion at the meeting of the possible length of the new IMF programme for Greece or its size, officials said.

The vague wording of the debt agreement, however, was key for Germany, which holds general elections next year and where financial help for Greece is a highly controversial issue.

"We have no major changes to the (Greek) programme, so there is no need for a prior vote of the Bundestag," German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble said, calling it a good result.—Reuters

Italian navy says migrant boat flipped, five dead

ROME — A large wooden fishing boat overcrowded with migrants capsized off the coast of Libya, the Italian navy said on Wednesday, with some 562 people rescued and five found dead.

Photographs show the blue fishing boat rocking violently before capsizing, sending migrants tumbling into the sea. Some then climbed onto the hull of the overturned vessel, while others swam for life boats or towards the navy ship. Navy swimmers are also shown pulling migrants in lifebelts towards safety, according to the navy pictures. Women and children were among those rescued, but no details of the migrants' nationalities have been given. The Italian navy patrol boat Bettica saw that the vessel was in difficulty and approached it to hand out life jackets, but before it could begin a rescue the boat flipped over due to the sudden movement of the passengers, a statement said.—Reuters

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Clinton email server broke government rules, watchdog finds

NEW YORK — Hillary Clinton broke government rules by using a private email server without approval for her work as US secretary of state, an internal government watchdog said on Wednesday.

The long-awaited report by the State Department inspector general was the first official audit of the controversial arrangement to be made public. It was highly critical of Clinton's use of a server in her home, and immediately fuelled Republican attacks on Clinton, the Democratic front-runner in an already acrimonious presidential race.

The report, which also found problems in department record-keeping practices before Clinton's tenure, undermined Clinton's earlier defences of her emails, likely adding to Democratic anxieties about public perceptions of the candidate. A majority of voters say Clinton is dishonest, according to multiple polls.

The report concluded that Clinton would not have been allowed to use the server in her home had she asked the department officials in charge of information security. The report said that staff who later raised concerns were told to

keep quiet. Several suspected hacking attempts in 2011 were never reported to department information security officials, in breach of department rules, it said.

"She's as crooked as they come," Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential candidate, said of Clinton at a campaign rally in Anaheim, California, adding that the report's findings were "not good" for her. Clinton's campaign disagreed, saying the report rebutted Republican's criticism.

The inspector general's office examined email record-keeping under five secretaries state, both Democratic and Republican. John Kerry, the current officeholder, and predecessors Madeline Albright, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice all agreed to speak to the inspector general's investigators. Clinton was the only one who declined to be interviewed, as did her aides.

The report contradicted Clinton's repeated assertion that her server was allowed and that no permission was needed.

Several other inquiries continue, including a US Justice Department investigation into whether the arrangement broke laws.

The inspector general's



US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks at the University of California Riverside in Riverside, California, US, on 24 May. PHOTO: REUTERS

report cited "longstanding, systemic weaknesses" with State Department records that predated Clinton's tenure, and found problems with the email record-keeping of some of her predecessors, particularly Powell, that failed to comply with the Federal Records Act.

But it singled out Clinton for her decision to use a private server in her home in Chappaqua, New York, for government business.

"OIG found no evidence that the Secretary requested or obtained guidance or approval to conduct

official business via a personal email account on her private server," the report said, using an abbreviation for the office of inspector general.

The report said Clinton should have discussed the arrangement with the department's security and technology officials. Officials told investigators that they "did not — and would not — approve her exclusive reliance on a personal email account to conduct Department business." The reason, those officials said, is because it breached de-

partment rules and presented "security risks."

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said he would not "challenge" those findings. He told reporters the department was aware of hacking attempts on Clinton's server, but had no evidence that any were successful.

When two lower-level information technology officials tried to raise concerns about Clinton's email arrangement in late 2010, their supervisor in Clinton's office instructed them "never to speak of the Secre-

tary's personal email system again," the report said. Their supervisor told them that department lawyers had approved of the system, but the inspector general's office said it found no evidence this was true.

Brian Fallon, a Clinton spokesman, said the report rebutted criticisms of Clinton made by her political opponents.

"The report shows that problems with the State Department's electronic recordkeeping systems were longstanding and that there was no precedent of someone in her position having a State Department email account until after the arrival of her successor," he said in a statement.

He did not address the report's criticism of Clinton's use of a private server, something no other secretary of state has done.

Democrats, including fundraisers for Clinton's campaign, said the report revealed nothing new. "It's digging and digging and digging," Amy Rao, the chief executive of data company Integrated Archive Systems and a Clinton fundraiser, said in an interview, comparing the investigation to probes the Clintons faced in the 1990s. "Trust me: There's no there there. It's Whitewater."—Reuters

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Cuban president voices hope to meet North Korean leader

BEIJING — Cuban President Raul Castro told a high-level delegation from North Korea that he wants to meet with leader Kim Jong Un, Pyongyang's official media said on Thursday.

Castro, who was re-elected last month to serve as the Cuban Communist Party's leader for another five years, was quoted by the Korean Central News Agency as telling the delegation this week in Havana that he "wholeheartedly respects" the North Korean leader and hopes to "meet him without fail in future."

"The relations between the two countries are the comradely and fraternal ones proved by history," Castro said, according to KCNA. "It is the firm stand of the party and government of Cuba to further develop the friendly and cooperative relations (with

North Korea)." Kim has yet to travel overseas or meet any world leaders since inheriting power following the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, in late 2011.

The delegation, headed by Kim Yong Chol, a vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, met with Castro on Tuesday.

Kim handed a personal letter from Kim Jong Un to Castro, who told the delegation that the current North Korean leader is "identical to" Kim Il Sung, the country's state founder and his grandfather, and his writing style as shown in the letter "clearly proves that he is full of wisdom and enthusiasm," the report said.

Kim Jong Un, who gained the new title of party "chairman" this month, is seen as making efforts to copy the look and the

governing style of the state founder, who died in 1994, rather than his own father.

The official media of the Communist Party of Cuba said on Tuesday that both sides agreed, in a "fraternal atmosphere," to continue developing the historic relations between the two nations. It also published a photograph of Kim Yong Chol and Castro talking in front of their national flags.

North Korea and Cuba have a history of diplomatic ties dating back to 1960, with each nation having an embassy in the other's capital. The ties came under scrutiny in 2013, when a North Korean vessel was detained in Panama, where it was found to be carrying military aircraft and weapons from Cuba.

Since the party's first congress in 36 years ended 9 May, North Korea has been increasing diplomatic activities.—Kyodo News



PHOTO: REUTERS

Katy Perry going on tour in 2017

LONDON — Singer Katy Perry is set to go on a musical tour in 2017.

The 31-year-old “Roar” hit-maker has also hinted at her new album, reported Digital Spy.

“I’m touring in 2017,” Perry said.

When asked about her new album she said, “I’m working on it.”

The singer’s fourth studio album will serve as the follow-up to 2013’s Prism, which topped both the UK and US chart.

The album had popular songs including “Unconditionally,” “Dark Horse,” “Birthday” and “This Is How We Do.” —PTI

Young spellers face off in Scripps National Spelling Bee finals

MARYLAND — About four dozen young spellers will face off on Thursday in the finals of the Scripps National Spelling Bee under tougher rules aimed at preventing a third consecutive tie in the long-running contest.

The winner emerging from spelling rounds through the day and a championship final televised by ESPN at 8pm EDT will take home a \$40,000 cash purse, along with other prizes.

The finalists in the contest at National Harbour, Maryland, a Washington suburb, were winnowed from 285 spelling whizzes after two days of written and oral tests. The Bee, which has been a US institution since it started in 1925, has toughened rules to bar ties for winners. Of the five ties in its history, one was in 2014 and another was last year,

when eighth-graders Gokul Venkatachalam of Chesterfield, Missouri, and Vanya Shivashankar of Olathe, Kansas, were co-winners.

The new rules call for the last three contestants to spell up to 25 words correctly. Judges can turn to tougher words if they think the spellers are getting through the first few too easily.

Under previous rules, the final contestants faced a championship list of 25 words. A winner, or co-winners, emerged after spelling only about 10 words at most from the list.

Thursday’s spellers are the cream of 11 million students who took part in Bee contests in the 50 US states, the District of Columbia, US territories, Defence Department schools in Europe and six foreign countries, including Jamaica and Japan. —Reuters

Amber Heard files for divorce from Johnny Depp: media

LOS ANGELES — Actress Amber Heard has filed for divorce from husband Johnny Depp after just 15 months of marriage, several media outlets reported on Wednesday.

Heard, 30, filed the divorce petition in a Los Angeles court on Monday, citing “irreconcilable differences” with the 52-year-old Depp, the A-list actor who starred in “Pirates of the Caribbean,” according to a copy of the court documents uploaded online by celebrity news website TMZ.

Reuters could not independently verify the report. Representatives for the two did not return calls or emails seeking comment.

The couple got married in February of last year after meeting when they

appeared together in the 2011 film “The Rum Diary.”

The pair began dating after Depp split from his longtime partner, French actress Vanessa Paradis. Depp and Paradis are the parents of two teenage children, a boy and a girl.

Depp and Heard made global headlines last year when they ran into legal trouble for bringing their Yorkshire terriers, Pistol and Boo, into Australia as Depp was filming the latest “Pirates of the Caribbean” movie, breaching the country’s tight biosecurity laws.

Heard was charged with two counts of illegally importing the pets and one count of producing a false document last July. A magistrate judge in April filed no conviction for Heard but issued a formal order

to stay out of trouble for a month or face a A\$1,000 (\$767) fine. A videoed deadpan apology by Depp and Heard for the offense, gleefully dubbed the “war on terrier” and “terriergate” by the Australian media, later went viral.

Depp gained fame in the late 1980s after appearing in the popular TV series “21 Jump Street” and later starred in “Edward Scissorhands” and “Alice in Wonderland.” Depp stars in the sequel, “Alice Through the Looking Glass,” released in theaters on Friday. Heard most recently appeared in the film “The Danish Girl.” —Reuters

Jennifer Lopez designs t-shirt for her squad

LOS ANGELES — Singer Jennifer Lopez took to social media to share her newly designed tank top that reads “lucky to have these curves,” a t-shirt made for everyone in her squad.

The 46-year-old “Feel the Light,” hit-maker took to Instagram to share her selfie in which she is wearing the t-shirt.

“I designed this limited edition tank top just for my squad, you included. Get yours before they’re all gone.”

The “lucky to have these curves” top will be on sale for only two weeks. The prices go from USD 22.99 to USD 24.99 depending on the style of the shirt. —PTI

PHOTO: REUTERS



Disney to make live-action version of ‘The Little Mermaid’

LOS ANGELES — Disney is in talks to make a live-action version of Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid”.

Production chiefs recently heard a new take and are currently evaluating whether to proceed with the idea, reported Deadline.

Initial discussions have also taken place with major producers, including some with a strong connection to the studio.

If Disney executives

decide to move forward, they’ll compete against an existing live-action project being led by Working Title and set up at Universal.

The Universal project has Chloe Moretz attached to star and Rebecca Thomas set to direct from a script by Richard Curtis.

Following the recent success of “The Jungle Book”, Disney is moving forward expansively with its live-action slate in general.

Its upcoming movies include “Alice Through the Looking Glass”, “Pete’s Dragon” and “Beauty and the Beast (2017)”.

Emma Stone is set to star in “Cruella”, Ava DuVernay will direct “A Wrinkle in Time”.

Dwayne Johnson will star in “Jungle Cruise”, Tim Burton will direct “Dumbo”, and Rob Marshall will direct Emily Blunt in “Mary Poppins”. —PTI



Cast member Johnny Depp and his actress wife Amber Heard arrive for the premiere of the British film “Black Mass” in London, Britain in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

France helps Syrian archaeologists fill in the cracks

HOMS (Syria) — Young Syrians tasked with restoring their country's world famous archaeological heritage, ravaged by five years of war, are getting a helping hand from French experts.

Syria's antiquities chief, Maamoun Abdulkarim, has already moved thousands of artifacts from the ancient city of Palmyra — some of whose temples were dynamited last year by jihadist group Islamic State — and other historic sites into safe-keeping. He has now invited the experts to spend a year training Syrian architects and archaeologists in restoration techniques.

The French team visited the 900-year-old Krak des Chevaliers castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site, on Tuesday to discuss the damage and deliver advice.

The castle, which sits on a hill overlooking Lebanon, was overrun by rebels for three months in 2014 and damaged by mortar fire.

Fighting has also left much of the old cities of Homs and

Aleppo in ruins.

"Sadly there is really a lot of work to do," said Jacques Seigne, Emeritus Research Director at France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

"Restoration work requires techniques and financing, of course, but one of the greatest aspects of restoration work is the human element...People have to be trained to know what they are doing and why they are doing it," Seigne said.

Seigne is working with Sawa Consulting, which works on cultural projects in conflict zones, to deliver the training across accessible parts of Syria.

Sawa Consulting's Nicolas Edmet said the company is also discussing how to begin restoration projects across Syria with antiquities chief Abdulkarim, including in Palmyra, which United Nations cultural organization UNESCO has called one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world. Islamic State was driven out of the city by Syrian government and allied forces in March.—Reuters



Experts gather as they discuss the restoration process of the Crusader castle of Crac des Chevaliers, in Homs Province, Syria, on 24 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Tunnel of lights, animal lanterns illuminate Sydney festival



SYDNEY —An arched tunnel made of tens of thousands of LED light globes and animal-shaped lanterns are among creative displays at this year's Vivid Sydney festival, an annual event of illuminated installations and music in the Australian city.

The 70-metre long tunnel,

dubbed the "Cathedral of Light," stands at Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden. Large lanterns in the shape of animals including a rhinoceros, an elephant and turtles are among items on display at Taronga Zoo. Vivid Sydney kicks off on 27 May and runs until 18 June.—Reuters

Tourism surges in South Africa in Q1

CAPE TOWN — South Africa saw a strong rebound in tourist arrivals in the first quarter of this year, Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom said on Wednesday.

The surge supports expectations that the tourism sector in South Africa is in for a bumper year, Hanekom said in his latest update on tourist arrivals.

Arrivals for the first three months of 2016 grew by 18.7 per cent, compared to the first quarter of 2015. In March alone, the number of tourists who visited South Africa improved by 23.4 per cent, compared to the same period last year, the minister cited figures provided by Statistics South Africa this week.

Hanekom said the persistent surge in arrivals boded well for the potential of tourism to stimulate a range of economic activity and create jobs across the industry's diverse value chain.

"The remarkable increase

in arrivals recorded in March could be attributed to the Easter holiday falling in March this year, while it was in April last year.

"But the spectacular overall growth in tourism is part of a trend which started towards the end of last year and played out strongly during our high season. It shows that tourism in South Africa has the enduring capacity to support and grow our national economy. Our task now is to maintain the positive trend by improving our performance throughout the year," Hanekom said.

The United Kingdom continued to be the main source of overseas arrivals in the first quarter of 2016. UK arrivals increased from 129,220 in 2015 to 147,639 in 2016, a growth of about 14.3 per cent.

Arrivals from China in the first quarter of this year grew by

65.2 per cent compared to last year, and arrivals from India grew by 16.9 per cent during the same period.

Hanekom said the growth from China indicated that the decision of the South African cabinet to implement a revised visa application process for China has paid off immensely. Accredited Chinese travel companies can now apply for visas on behalf of their clients, making the process much easier for travellers to South Africa.

"The current exchange rate has benefitted tourists from several source markets. They are finding incredible value in visiting South Africa," said Hanekom.

He urged all spheres of government, its partners in industry, entrepreneurs and communities to continue working together to make the best of the bumper year as expected.—Xinhua



Entertainment Channel

(27- 5-2016, Friday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

6:20 pm

- Cartoon Programme
- Aladdin (Part- 1)

7:10 pm

- International Drama Series

7:40 pm

- International Drama Series

8:30 pm

- Music Programme

8:50 pm

- A Night of Dancing With Phoe Chit

9:20 pm

- International Movie Songs

9:30 pm

- The 110th Anniversary of Yangon Zoological Garden

9:40 pm

- Music Programme

10:00 pm

- Myanmar Video

From 26-5-2016 (Thursday) 6:00 Pm
To 27-5-2016 (Friday) 6:00 Pm



Myanmar International

(27-5-2016 07:00am ~ 28-5-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes "Bwe"
07:53	Am	A Girl Guide
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Caves of Myanmar
08:51	Am	Kayah Style
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Orchidologist Dr. Saw Lwin
09:49	Am	Amazing: May Phoo Han
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	School For the Blind (Kye Myin Dine)

10:52 Am Coin Collectors

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Thursday 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
07:25	Pm	A visit to Htam Hsan Cave A Miraculous Place
07:52	Pm	A Nun's Creation in Fruit Carving
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part-1)
08:51	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass "Aung Thiha"

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

United and Chelsea haggle over Mourinho's image rights

LONDON — Jose Mourinho is expected to be named Manchester United's new manager either later today or tomorrow, after the tangled issue of who owns his name — and, crucially, is licensed to exploit it commercially — is resolved.

The unusual sticking point has prevented the widely trailed formal announcement that Mourinho will succeed Louis Van Gaal in the Old Trafford hot-seat. Mourinho is understood to have agreed a three-year contract, reportedly worth 36 million pounds.

But British media are also reporting that Chelsea are demanding United pay a sum running into millions of pounds to sign over three separate trademarks of Mourinho's name, one of which the club have owned since 2006, during his first spell in charge.



Jose Mourinho walks to his house in London, Britain, on 23 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Although the trademarks are limited in scope — reports say they cover secondary items like computer games and teddy bears — the area is important enough to United, who have a diverse portfolio of global sponsorships,

to require resolution.

The delay has surprised sports rights experts. They have questioned why Mourinho apparently signed over his own image rights, which are a huge driver of revenue.

"It is pretty uncommon for a manager of his stature not to have full control over the rights to his name and image, and pretty rare for a club to retain rights independently of a manager," Julian Moore, a sports rights lawyer at Pinsent Masons, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

Chelsea believe they are entitled to compensation for allowing United to market their new manager on specific items. A similar conflict arose when Mourinho first left Chelsea in 2007 to join Inter Milan and then Real Madrid, but the London club allowed their former manager's name to be used by those clubs under licence.

The Times reported that Chelsea had two further trademarks on Mourinho granted by the European Union's intellectual property office in 2013. Although owning his name is now

of little value to them, the club are believed to feel a direct commercial rival like United should pay for the privilege of using it.

The subject has formed part of extended negotiations between United Chief Executive Ed Woodward and Jorge Mendes, Mourinho's agent. Also requiring resolution are potential conflicts of interests between United's extensive list of commercial sponsors and Mourinho's personal endorsement deals, with cars, casinos and watchmakers reportedly requiring clarification.

"United will want to ensure they have cleared all rights because they have a complex web of interests around the world. They will want all rights sorted before hiring someone of this type," Moore said.

United and Chelsea did not respond to requests for a comment on Wednesday. —Reuters

Nara defeated by Ivanovic in French Open 2nd round

PARIS — Japan's Kurumi Nara has been knocked out in the second round of the French Open for the third straight year on Thursday after losing 7-5, 6-1 to Ana Ivanovic of Serbia.

Nara showed resilience in recovering from 3-0 down to tie 4-4 in the first set, fending off four break points in the fourth game

as she moved inside the baseline and struck deep. But Ivanovic, the 2008 champion, claimed the set with her second break in the 12th game. Nara, ranked 91st in the world, faded in the second set and Ivanovic, the 14th seed at Roland Garros, eased to a straight-sets win and improved to 2-0 in their career meetings.—Kyodo News

Bacsinszky stops Bouchard to reach third round

PARIS — Swiss eighth seed Timea Bacsinszky recovered from a shaky start and survived a nervy finish to beat Canada's Eugenie Bouchard 6-4, 6-4 in the French Open second round on Thursday.

Bacsinszky, who reached the semi-final at Roland Garros last year, fell 4-1 down in the opening set as 2014 runner-up Bouchard came out firing, then bagged 10 games in a row as her 47th-ranked opponent melted down on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Bouchard, who also reached the 2014 Wimbledon final and climbed as high as fifth in the world before slumping, clawed back from 0-5 down in the second set but a relieved Bacsinszky finally sealed victory.

While it was disappointing defeat for Bouchard, who suffered a head injury when slipping over in the locker rooms at the 2015 US Open and has struggled for form since, there were glimpses of the form that took her to consecutive major finals.—Reuters



Timea Bacsinszky returns the ball at the French Open tennis championships in Paris, on 26 May. PHOTO: REUTERS

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo stands in front of reporters after a training session at Madrid, Spain on 24 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Ronaldo fit and ready to fire Real to more European glory

BARCELONA — Cristiano Ronaldo says he will be "100 percent" in Saturday's Champions League final as he attempts to fire Real Madrid to a record-extending 11th European Cup and further torment their city rivals, Atletico.

The prolific Portuguese set alarm bells ringing on Tuesday when he ended training prematurely with a knock but was fit to train again the following day.

Although Ronaldo scored the final goal in Real's 4-1 extra-time win over Atletico in the 2014 final in Lisbon, he has admitted he was far from at his best due to a hamstring problem and is determined to put in a better performance at Milan's San Siro on Saturday.

"Cristiano always appears in the games that matter. I'll be at 100 per cent. On Saturday, I'll be in better form than I was in Lisbon," Ronaldo told Spanish television channel La Sexta. "In Lisbon, my hamstring was hurting me. It was pretty bad. It was terrible because you know that in certain moments you could give more but you can't because your body doesn't respond."

Ronaldo has scored -- and been on the winning side -- in both the Champions League finals he has played in, having also won in 2008 with Manchester United.

He is top scorer in this season's tournament with 16 goals and is one strike away from

equalling the record tally of 17 he set in 2013/14.

Real's all-time top scorer also gave the club a lift before the final by declaring he wants to stay at Real for the long term.

"Real Madrid would be making a smart decision if they offered me a new contract," he added.

Zinedine Zidane's men are without defenders Raphael Varane and Alvaro Arbeloa for the game, while Atletico have a clean bill of health.

It's a far cry from the dishevelled state in which Diego Simeone's team arrived at the 2014 final, when they struggled with fitness after a long season and suffered key injuries.—Reuters