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State Counsellor and Union Foreign Affairs Minister meets with Bangladeshi PM's special envoy

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Special Envoy Foreign Secretary Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the talks the representatives held comprehensive discussions on further bilateral relations and cooperation.

Also present were Union Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Special Envoy Foreign Secretary Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Nay Pyi Taw Council to settle seized farmland cases 'within six months'

CASES of confiscated farmlands in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area will be settled completely within six months according to Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Myo Aung at a ceremony to hand over 211.46 acres of farmland back to its original owners in Zeyarthiri Township yesterday.

The farmlands returned to the original owners were among 321.39 acres seized in the time of the State Peace and Development Council in 2004-2005 FY for the construction of the Ministry of Information's newspaper buildings and printing houses.

During yesterday's ceremony the ministry gave back 211.46 acres of unused lands to local owners.

Scrutiny is still ongoing over ownership disputes over some farmland, said U Aye Maung Sein, member of the Nay Pyi Taw Council at the ceremony.

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Amber preserving feathers, bones, tissue of dinosaur-age birds found in Myanmar

BEIJING — Two chunks of amber unearthed in Myanmar preserving feathers, bones and tissue from nearly 100 million years ago could offer paleontologists a glimpse on the ancestry and evolution of birds, according to media reports Wednesday.

The translucent fossils, nicknamed "Angel Wing" and "Rose", contain not only feather fragments, but fully intact wing

parts complete with skin, flesh and plumage in an alternating pale and brown pattern.

"The biggest problem we face with feathers in amber is that we usually get small fragments or isolated feathers, and we are never quite sure who produced them," said Ryan McKellar of Canada's Royal Saskatchewan Museum. "We don't get something like this.

It's mind-blowingly cool."

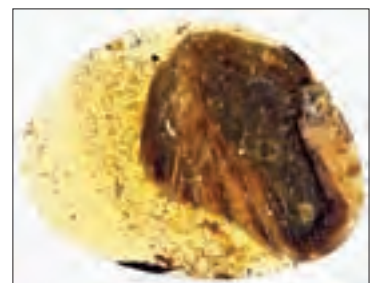
The wing feathers show an advanced degree of development with clearly discernible differentiation between primary asymmetrical flight feathers, secondary feathers, and covert feathers.

These 99-million-year old predecessors to modern birds already possessed flying gear comparable to those still in use

today by their distant successors.

Researchers identify the specimens with enantiornithines, a group of avian dinosaurs that became extinct at the end of the Cretaceous period.

They hope that this study will encourage scientists to turn to amber fossils more readily to find new insights into ancient organisms.—Xinhua



The undated photo shows an amber containing an impeccably preserved bird's wing tip. The tiny specimens of baby birds' wings entombed in amber were found in the Hukawng Valley in northern Myanmar and described in the journal "Nature Communications." PHOTO: XINHUA



သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမာန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Myanmar-Bangladesh bilateral ties maintain sound momentum; Senior General says

BILATERAL ties between Myanmar and Bangladesh has been maintained and the two BIM-STEAC member countries can enhance the good neighborly relations through constructive engagement, said Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday.

The Senior General expressed his view on the bilateral ties in meeting with Bangladeshi Prime Minister's special envoy Foreign Secretary Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque in Nay Pyi Taw.

In his address, the Senior General stressed the need for greater understanding and acceptance of reality, expressing his belief that constructive engagement will contribute towards ensuring greater friendship between the two nations.

During the call, they also held talks on further relations between the two Defense Services and greater cooperation between the two border guard forces in an effort to ensure border security and peace and stability. — Myanmar News Agency



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing posing for a group photo with Bangladeshi delegation. PHOTO: MNA

UN Special Rapporteur holds separate meetings with union-level officials



UN Special Rapporteur holds talks with Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe. PHOTO: MNA

UNITED Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Ms Yanghee Lee separately met officials of union-level organisations yesterday.

Ms Yanghee Lee met Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the meeting the two representatives discussed cooperation by the army in the process of organising the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference, the fight against the violation of human rights, humanitarian activities and measures being taken for the prevention of the recruitment and use of children for the armed forces together with the Country Task Force on Monitoring and

Reporting, a UN agency.

In her meeting with Union Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo, the UN special rapporteur discussed measures for law enforcement, legislation, the emergence of an independent judicial system and justice for the people.

Ms Yanghee Lee also had separate meetings with Ethnic Affairs Union Minister Naing Thet Lwin, Religion and Culture Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko and Union Education Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi.

She met Information Union Minister Dr Pe Myint in the afternoon. The two discussed challenges to the ministry's reform process, measures for the shift from the state to public media, reviews for the media law, the training programmes for spokespersons, the development of eth-

nic media, the involvement of women in media. They also exchanged views on how to counter hate speech on social media in the fashion of other countries.

Ms Yanghee Lee also met Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Union Minister U Ohn Win. In the meeting, they talked about the discontinuation of timber extraction, reforestation, and supervision of extractive companies. She also had a discussion with Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe, also Secretary of the Central Investigation Committee for Farmland and Other Land Confiscations. The discussion focused on the handover of seized land plots, compensations and existing land management policies. — Myanmar News Agency

Sub-Mekong countries, RoK discuss trade promotion in Yangon

THE 4th Mekong-ROK Business Forum named "Realising Investment Opportunities in the Mekong Sub-Region" took place in Yangon yesterday with the aim of trade promotion between the five sub-Mekong countries and the Republic of Korea.

Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Kyaw Win and first Vice-Minister Mr. Lim Sungnam of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RoK spoke on the occasion.

The forum focused on market potential of the sub-Mekong countries— Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand —and the RoK, building trade

fair networks and online business partnerships as well as organising business excursions to industries in Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam and Thailand and allowing for business-matching events.

Also present at the forum which was jointly-organised by the Myanmar Investment Commission, the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the RoK and the Mekong Institute, were officials from sub-Mekong countries and RoK delegation members.

Entrepreneurs from sub-Mekong countries and the RoK visited the Thilawa Special Economic Zone today. — Myanmar News Agency

Five-year plan to develop Ayeyawady Delta

THE Ministry of Transport and Communications has conducted development works in the Ayeyawady Delta under its five-year plan (2015-2020), said U Tun Lwin Oo, director-general of the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems.

Since May this year, a 43-member group including government staff and experts have implemented the project with a Ks117bn (US\$100m) loan from the World Bank. The new scheme is divided into three phases. "The first project covers economic and sustainable development of the delta region, establishment of a research centre for water-related information, improvement of systems for water resource development, capacity development programme," said Prof Daw Khin Ni Ni Thein, one of project directors.

International and local experts are invited to apply for construction projects already being

conducted by the project implementing body. "The second includes construction of weather facilities to provide updated weather information to people living in remote areas," said its project officer Daw Le Le Win.

A plan is underway to start a measurement of water flow of the Ayeyawady and Chindwin rivers through Magwe, NyaungU, Khani and Monywa camps at times when water levels rise.

U Nay Phone Latt, regional Hllutaw MP, suggested that SMS messages be sent to villagers with updated weather information.

"Improvement of transport routes along the rivers for economic development will be carried out in the third phase," said director U Aung Myo Khaing.

The department will finalise the report relating to the new project next year, with plans to upgrade services provided by the Meteorology and Hydrology Department by 2020.—Ko Moe

Nay Pyi Taw Council ...

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Many cases of confiscated farmlands still remain to be solved in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and works are underway regarding seized farmlands to determine returning lands or paying compensations, added the Council member.

cil member.

According to the Council, No (3) Form for the temporary use of farmland was issued to the farmers who got back seized farmlands at the ceremony and the farmers will also be given No (7) Form that allows farmers to own, inherit, sell, pawn,

transfer and have access to bank loans.

"I am very delighted to get back my lands in the time of the new government as I thought my lands would not be returned to me at all," said U Zaw Khin from Wegyi village. —Thein Ko Lwin

State Counsellor visits sports camp in Nay Pyi Taw

STATE COUNSELLOR Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited a sports camp in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, where she encouraged selected athletes undergoing training.

During her inspection tour of the Gold Camp, the state counsellor met the young volleyball players training for the 19th Southeast Asian Junior Men's Volleyball Championship to be held from 2 to 6 July in Nay Pyi Taw. After asking about the strengths and weaknesses of the volleyball teams, she urged officials to train the players both physically and mentally.

The state counsellor also inspected the Sports Medical Centre at the camp.—*Myanmar News Agency*



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visits sports camp in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Mandalay shopkeepers protest against reconstruction plan for fire-gutted market

MORE than 300 shopkeepers from the fire-gutted Mandalay Mingalar Market staged a protest against Mayor U Ye Lwin's plan regarding an entirely new construction project for the market yesterday.

"We demonstrated against the Mayor's plan as he has neglected our desires," said U Kyaw Soe who led the protest.

Protestors said that they will not allow the new model of the fire-devoured market as it has failed to meet their demands.

During a press conference on Wednesday the mayor promised the market reconstruction will be carried out in accordance with the consent of the majority of affected shop owners who voted in favour of rebuilding.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

Nay Pyi Taw gems expo earns 51.13m Euros in jade sales

THE 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw fetched 51.13 million Euros in sales of 684 lots of jade yesterday.

Total sales in jade lots sold under an open tender system and competitive biddings commencing on Tuesday amounted to 157.47m Euros at the emporium yesterday.

The expo, attracting local and foreign merchants, earned

3.12m Euros in sales of pearl lots and 3.29m Euros in sales of gems lots respectively.

According to inside sources, five foreign buyers who have visited the Myanmar gems emporiums for 54 times, 35 times, 25 times and 20 times in total over the years were presented certificates of honour yesterday.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Traders check pearl at the gems emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: AYE THAN

Myanmar addressing TIP issues as national priority

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday issued a press release on the US decision to drop Myanmar to Tier 3 with the release of its annual human trafficking report.

The following is the press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report of the US Department of State:

It is regrettable that the 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report of the US Department of State drops Myanmar from Tier 2 Watch List status to Tier 3 at a time when the new democratic government is stepping up its efforts to protect its migrant workers and victims of human trafficking and forced labour.

We understand that while Myanmar meets the criteria for the Tier 2 Watch List, having remained at that ranking for the last four years, a further extension is no longer possible. Therefore, Myanmar

has been moved to Tier 3. It is hoped that steps can be taken to ensure that restrictions associated with Tier 3 countries will not be allowed to hamper cooperation between Myanmar and the United States, particularly as Myanmar is working assiduously to alleviate poverty, a primary breeder of conditions that lead to human trafficking.

Myanmar has been addressing the TIP issue as a national priority and making tangible progress in various aspects. Elimination of forced labour through an ILO complaints mechanism is in progress. Extraction of forced labour by anyone is a criminal offence subject to stringent penalties both in law and in practice. Implementation work on the goal of prevention of underage recruitment and use of children in military with the United Nations Country Task Force is in its final phase. Myanmar

saved, sheltered and repatriated voluntarily in close cooperation with the country of origin, irregular migrants cast adrift in the Indian Ocean. Most of the irregular migrants who tried to sail across the Indian Ocean were proven not to have originated from Myanmar. Bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries, particularly on the protection of trafficked victims, is progressing well. A sound legal framework in line with international standards is in place and enforcement capabilities have been reinforced.

Myanmar will continue to step up its efforts with regard to anti-trafficking measures, seriously taking into account recommendations made in the 2016 TIP Report. The issue of human smuggling and trafficking will be addressed vigorously in close cooperation with international partners.—*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

CSOs appeal to government for inclusion

CIVIL SOCIETY Organisations are compiling a report to file to the government at the beginning of July in an attempt to strengthen relationships between the two groups. Equality Myanmar, Actionaid, Local Resource Centre and the EU are working on the project.

As well as government ministries, the suggestions will be sent to Pyithu and Amyotha Hluttaws, along with Hluttaw MPs personally, according to

CSOs. "This report is important especially since the government's excluded CSOs from its '100-day plan'. We've discussed how CSOs can cooperate together with the government and will send our suggestions to all government ministries at the beginning of July," said U Aung Myo Min, director of Equality Myanmar.

The EU's roadmap for engagement with CSOs aims to increase space for CSOs; devel-

op ties between CSOs and public institutions and improve their internal management. Myanmar boasts approximately 10,000 CSOs throughout the country.

"The suggestions include how to strengthen concerted efforts of CSOs and government, and are based on the EU roadmap. I hope it will have a positive outcome," said Daw Toe Toe Yi, executive director of the Local Resource Centre.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Kayah State provided with K100 ml fund for disaster preparedness



The donation handing over ceremony in progress. PHOTO: THURA LWIN

KAYAH State, which experienced deadly landslides in November last year, was provided with a disaster preparedness and response fund by a philanthropic organisation Wednesday.

The establishment of the K100 million-fund in Kayah State came after the KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar foundation's establishment of such a fund in Rakhine and Chin states as well as in Sagaing and

Magwe regions recently.

"The establishment of the fund is aimed at assisting a quick response to disasters by authorities," said Daw Ei Ei Khaing, KBZ's bank branch in Loikaw, at the ceremony in Loikaw to hand over the cash to the Kayah State Government.

Kayah State Chief Minister U El Phaung Shi accepted the donation and expressed thanks.

Following landslides which

occurred in a mountainous area in Mawchi last year that destroyed around 60 houses, displaced 360 people and killed around 17, the foundation carried out rescue and relief efforts.

The village is also equipped with two water tanks with a total storage capacity of 8,000 gallons and a pipe system to supply water to each home as well as one 100 KVA transformer for electrification. — Thura Lwin

Strand tram suspended

THE Yangon tram running along Strand Rd is to be suspended as of today due to the lack of passengers using it, according to Myanma Railways under the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

In the report it is said that the tram could potentially cause accidents.

"We ran the tram along the Strand Road to facilitate public transportation. But currently, we have only 45 passengers using the tram. Four days ago, the tram was driven with only 10 passengers on board. Also, the tram accidents occurred often in the overcrowded area. That's why we plan to stop it," said General Manager U Tun Aung Thin from Myanma Railways.

Adding, "We will keep the tram at the locomotive shed depot in War Dan. Although the tram is going to be suspended running, it will be made ready to run during heavy traffic. We are thinking of running the tram longer distances to get more passengers."

The tram consists of three coaches and can accommodate



Yangon tram being seen running along Strand Road. PHOTO: SOE WIN

250 passengers. Currently, the tram earns about Ks4500 per day while it costs Ks15,000 a day to operate.

Yangon circular trains will charge new ticket fares starting from July 1.

There are over 70,000 passengers who rely on the circular

trains in the raining season. Over 30,000 passengers are buying Ks50 tickets while only 400 passengers are buying Ks100 tickets, the latter being a higher class. Now, Myanma Railways is fixing the rate at Ks100 for 15 miles and Ks200 for the whole trip.—Soe Win

Amputees to receive prosthetic limbs for free

A local Kachin charity organisation will be providing amputees with artificial limbs for free with the area of focus being in Waingmaw township, Myitkyina. The aim of the campaign is to promote the lives of people who lost their legs due to different accidents.

"The organisation will do their best fitting artificial limbs to people," said a member of the NPO.

The foundation is compiling a census of those who need a prosthetic limb.

People in need of prosthetic

legs may dial 09 420 749 214 of U G Zong Hsaung, chairman of the NPO, or 09 781 892 639 - Daw Dwe Bu not later than 10 July. Exact date for the fitting of prosthetic limbs will be announced soon, said one of the NPO's member.—200

Crime NEWS

Yaba and Tramadol capsules seized in Myawady and Pyapon

ON 27 June Police seized 990 Yaba pills from a Saw Tu in Myawaddy, Kayah State and 3,000 Tramadol capsules from Aye Aye Min in Pyapon in Ayeyawady Region.

Similarly, a combined investigation team comprising officers and staff from Mandalay police station searched a motorbike driven by Aung Moe Khine with Ma Pa Pa Win and Ma Thin Thin Ye on board at Kanthayar ward, Chanmyathasi township, Mandalay.

They found 190 Yaba tab-



Ma Aye Aye Min. Photo: MPF

lets in the bike. Police have filed charges against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — Myanmar Police Force

Illegal betel nut worth Ks 3,700 lakh seized in Thaton

ACTING on a tip-off, police stopped and searched a semi-trailer truck, heading to Yangon, when they discovered 1,480 bags full of illegal betel worth Ks3m.

Police said the driver could

not produce evidence to prove that the betel was grown in Myanmar and believe that it has been imported from an unspecified country. Four drivers and four conductors were arrested.— That Oo (Thaton)

Faw vehicle plunges into ravine

A FAW vehicle plunged into a 170-foot-deep ravine between mileposts 74/5 and 74/6, on the Yangon-Sittwe road, Ann Township, Rakhine state on 17 June, leaving two injured and one killed.

According to an investigation, the Faw (Chinese made) was being driven by one U Sai Aung Thein, 36, with three passengers on board

when it plunged into a 170-foot-deep ravine when the driver lost control between Taung Sauk and Sin Kon Taing villages.

The accident killed U Win Zaw, 50, at the scene while U Aung Naing Win, 45 and Ma Ei Mon, 45, sustained minor injuries and are undergoing medical treatment at the local general hospital.— Township IPRD

Yaba worth Ks1 billion seized in Kunlong

ANTI-DRUG and township police in Shan State (North), acting on an anonymous tip-off, searched two vehicles along the Kunlong-Laukkai road where they discovered Ks1billion worth of yaba in an abandoned truck.

Police discovered 165 bags containing caffeine powder weighing 6,600 kgs worth

Ks4m, Hydrochloric acid weighing 1,820 liters worth Ks1m and Sulfuric acid weighing 280 liters worth Ks224,000.

Police also discovered 183 bags containing caffeine powder weighing 7,320 kilos worth Ks5m. The combined team handed over all of the Yaba related items to the Kunlong police station. — Myawady



Yaba worth Ks1billion seized in Kunlong . PHOTO: MMAL

LOCAL Business

IWT to extend ship lines

MYANMAR's Inland Water Transport (IWT) is extending new lines in order to enable passengers to travel and transport their goods at a cheaper rate, according to U Aung Than Myaing from IWT.

IWT has six divisions with 178 ships operating in the Ayeyawady and Chindwin Rivers. In delta area, the ships are operate between Labutta, Myaungmya, Pathein, Bogale and Mawgyun.

"It is needed to modernize the ships so that they can run in full capacity as the old ones cannot carry heavy loads, and they are very often causing the delays," said U Aung Than Myaing.

In Mandalay, Sagaing, Kachin State and Mon State, the passenger and cargo ships are operating in Mandalay, Bamo, Monywa, Kalewa, Homalin, Bilugyun and Nantmaw.

"Although there are plans to

extend the shipping lines, some routes have been suspended due to a decrease in the number of passengers and the volume of commodities. So, we need safe, strong and modern ships," added U Aung Than Myaing.—200



Two ferries are seen in the Yangon River. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

Yuan depreciation affects Myanmar pulses market as India negotiates pea exports

MYANMAR pulses market shakes down well with Yuan depreciation because Myanmar pea is selling well at a higher price, according to Mandalay Pea market.

The currency exchange rate of Yuan was 0.555 Yuan per Ks100 in mid June and drops down to 0.566 Yuan per Ks100 on 29th June.

"Sterling pound and euro hit 31-year low because of United Kingdom's withdrawal from European Union (BREXIT) and thus the neighboring countries of Asia have an adverse effect on their economy. However, Myanmar is not related to those currencies, and so, Myanmar currency has become hard. The dollar price

is also stable at Ks1,183 per dollar these days," said U Soe Win Myint, the brokerage owner.

Euro depreciation might affect the export market of pea, rice and fishery products that are being exported to European Countries. The price of green gram increased from Ks94,000 to Ks97,000 per

bag on 29 June. The price of chick pea (V2) also climbed up, from Ks116,000 to Ks120,000 per bag.

All this comes as Myanmar and India are negotiating a direct pea export as Myanmar merchants sell various peas through Singapore based companies. 5% of the value is to be paid in advance in direct export.

"There are cases of fixing the price and other difficulties," said a responsible person from Myanmar Pulses, Beans & Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

The authorities concerned between two countries have been coordinating; it is unlikely that direct pea export will begin this year. The commerce ministry

will utilise ways that will benefit local pea merchants and growers.

India is the main buyer of Myanmar mung bean, purchasing 70% of mung bean produce. India also purchases pigeon peas in competition with Chinese merchants. - *Min Htet Aung (Man Ko Pwar) & YCDC Daily*

State-owned factories to be privatised in four years

STATE owned factories are to be sold off in order to decentralise Myanmar's economic sector, allowing for competition to begin again in Myanmar. The list of privatization is not announced yet, and so, we cannot say which factories will be privatised, an official from the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Myanmar will try to effectuate industrial development through privatisation beginning in the 2016-17 financial year to 2020-21 FY.

"State-owned factories in Myanmar will be privatized in four years," said an official of the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

The industrial development plan includes extended manufacturing of value added products,

transformation of the state-owned industries, formulation and implementation industrial policies, training and development of industry-related human resources, development of technology and improvement of standardisation, reduction of production costs through energy-efficient use and reduction of glass house gases.

The ministry plans to help development of small and medium enterprises for improvement of private sector, enforce rules in the development of industrial zones, for the state-owned factories to co-operate with the private-owned ones and to collect the data and statistics of the industries.

The government is making effort to import technology, added the official of the Ministry.—200

India will provide technical assistance to promote bean exports

INDIA will provide Myanmar farmers with technical assistance to promote the bean export trade, said U Khin Maung Lwin, assistant secretary of the Ministry of Commerce.

The demand for all varieties of Myanmar bean

from India is annually high, but local cultivators and manufacturers cannot fulfill the requirements and specifications as demanded by Indian buyers, it is learned.

India has, therefore, shown interest in cooperating with the ministries

concerned and bean producers within Myanmar to provide pedigree seeds free of charge annually, said an official of the Ministry of Commerce.

Local farmers and producers tend to follow the traditional methods of

growing beans, rendering the quality and yield of the products low. Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Irrigation are jointly making an arrangement.—*Nay Nay*



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Duterte, 'the punisher', sworn in as Philippines' president

MANILA — Rodrigo Duterte was sworn in as the Philippines' 16th president on Thursday, capping an unlikely journey for a provincial city mayor whose brash man-of-the-people style and pledges to crush crime swamped establishment rivals in May's election.

After making his pledge at the presidential palace in Manila, with one hand on the Bible, Duterte delivered a short speech in which he promised a "relentless" and "sustained" fight against corruption, criminality and illegal drugs.

However, he said these ills were only symptoms of a virulent social disease cutting into the moral fibre of society.

"I see the erosion of the people's trust in our country's leaders, the erosion of faith in our judicial system, the erosion of confidence in the capacity of our public servants to make the people's lives better, safer and healthier," he said.

Outgoing President Benigno Aquino brought the country an average annual growth rate of 6.3 per cent in his six-year term, the fastest of Southeast Asia's five main economies.

Duterte said on Thursday that he would give specifics of his economic policies later, but some already fear that his defiance of convention could pose a danger to the country's health.

In the election campaign, Duterte railed against the country's political elite and tapped into voters' disgust with a succession of governments that failed to tackle poverty and inequality even when the economy was bounding ahead.

His campaign focussed almost entirely on the scourges of murder, rape, drug abuse and corruption, and voters were not deterred by his repeated warnings, in profanity-peppered speeches, to have offenders killed.

Duterte conceded in his maiden speech that many critics believe his methods of fighting crime "are unorthodox and verge on the illegal". However, the 71-year-old former prosecutor said that he knew right from wrong and would be uncompromising in adhering to due process and the rule of law.

Duterte was mayor for 22 years of the far-south city of Davao, where, according to human rights groups, death squads have killed at least 1,400 people since 1998, most of them drug-pushers, addicts, petty criminals and street children.

He denies any involvement in the vigilante killings.

In keeping with his unsophisticated manner, the inauguration ceremony was far less elaborate than those of his predecessors.

Aides said there would be no sumptuous banquet and no champagne corks popping, just a meal of homely dishes for the



President Rodrigo Duterte takes his oath before Supreme Court Justice Bienvenido Reyes as his daughter Veronica holds the bible during his inauguration as President of the Philippines at the Malacanang Palace in Manila, Philippines, on 30 June 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

roughly 600 guests showcasing the country's culinary heritage, including coconut pith spring rolls, a white cheese made from unskimmed carabao milk and durian tartlets.

Duterte is not known for his sartorial elegance: he usually sports a short-sleeved casual shirt, never wears socks and told Reuters on the campaign trail that he wouldn't be seen in a tie.

For his inauguration, Duterte wore a formal

'barong' shirt but without the embroidery that would normally be expected for such an occasion. State TV presenters commented that he appeared to be wearing slip-on loafers.

Indeed, there is little about him that is conventionally presidential.

Aides say that instead of being driven around in the president's limousine, a bullet-proof Mercedes, Duterte wants to travel in a pick-up lorry.

It is still not clear if

he will keep a promise to spurn the luxury of the palace and commute daily from his hometown in the south of the country, which is two hours from Manila by air.

A 21-gun salute welcomed in the new president at Malacanang Palace, a graceful white mansion that was originally built by Spanish colonialists in the 18th century and became the official residence of the president after World War II.—Reuters

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Mongolia's opposition MPP sweeps back to power on country's economic woes



A television journalist reports the results of parliamentary elections at the headquarters of the General Election Commission of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 29 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

ULAANBAATAR — The main opposition Mongolian People's Party (MPP) swept back to power in landslide parliamentary elections, results from Mongolia's election committee showed on Thursday, after campaigning dominated by concern over slowing economic growth.

The transformation of the former Soviet bloc state since a peaceful revolution in 1990 has been a big draw for foreign investors eyeing its rich mineral resources, unleashing a boom from 2010 to 2012.

But an abrupt economic slowdown since 2012 has stirred controversy over the role of global mining firms such as Rio Tinto, which last month finally approved a \$5.3-billion extension plan for the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine.

The MPP's victory will likely be greeted as a tailwind for the economy and international miners, as the party's success in attracting investors when it last held power, from 2008-2012, led to the country being nicknamed "Mine-golia".

The MPP, which has governed for most years since the revolution, won an 85 per cent majority with 65 seats in the 76-member parliament, taking back power from the Democratic Party, an unnamed official from Mongolia's general election committee told a press briefing.

The ruling Democratic Party won nine seats in Wednesday's vote, down from 37. Prime Minister Chimed Saikhanbileg, and the parliament's chairman, Zandaakhuu Enkhbold, were among those kicked out of their seats.

"The Mongolian People's Party's landslide win shows the public assigning clear blame for the country's economic woes to the outgoing Democratic Party government," John Marrett, an analyst at The Economist Intelligence Unit, said in an emailed statement.

A late change of election rules hindered independents and small parties during the short 18-day campaign period.

One seat went to the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), and one to an independent, popular folk singer Samand Javkhan, who has taken up environmental causes.

A vast country with just three million people, best known as the birthplace of Mongol emperor Genghis Khan, Mongolia had struggled in recent years to adapt to a downturn in fortunes.

Demand for coal and copper from giant neighbour China, and weak commodities prices have hit Mongolia hard.

The IMF forecasts economic growth of 0.4 per cent this year, compared with 17.5 per cent in 2011, the year before the Democratic Party took power.

Since 2012, Mongolia has borrowed billions of dollars in sovereign debt. In March, rating agency Moody's gave it a negative outlook, citing the rising debt burden, a projected widening of budgetary imbalances and mining revenue shortfalls.—Reuters

Western Sydney takes centre stage in close-run Australian election

SYDNEY — Twenty-two-year-old forklift driver Mitchell Beckwith is living the dream. Or he's living Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's dream anyway.

Beckwith, who quit his job in inner Sydney for work closer to his home in the west, is an exemplar of Turnbull's ambitious plan to create 30-minute cities around the country where people can both work and live with a commute in that timeframe.

The project is part of Turnbull's focus on jobs and wealth creation as he seeks another term in Saturday's general election, aiming to reassure Australians that the good times aren't over despite the end of mining boom that drove economic growth through the global financial crisis.

Beckwith lives in Parramatta, a key electorate to the west of Sydney that is the focus of a A\$32 billion (£17.7 billion) infrastructure and urban renewal programme.

"Commuting to the city by train was stressful, expensive and I had to stand for



Pedestrians walk in a park next to a fence displaying slogans near a construction site in the western Sydney suburb of Parramatta, Australia, on 15 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

40 minutes," Beckwith told Reuters outside an early polling station this week. "Now I drive to work instead. I can wake up later, have more energy, don't have to stress about how to get home after work and have more spare

time." Western Sydney could be a major determinant of the 2 July vote and has attracted intense lobbying over the eight-week election campaign. As many as six marginal seats at play between Turnbull's conserv-

ative Liberal-National coalition government and the centre-left Labour Party led by Bill Shorten.

Concerned about polls showing a potentially close result, Turnbull has used "Brexit" shockwaves to urge

voters to return his government.

While far right groups have returned to the fray on anti-Islam platforms, domestic economic issues such as jobs, tax and the funding of education and healthcare

have dominated the campaign.

Long derided as "westies" and until recently neglected in public spending plans, residents of Western Sydney experience higher crime and lower employment, health and education outcomes than their wealthier harbourside neighbours.

Having soaked up the majority of the region's migrants, Western Sydney now boasts one of Australia's most multicultural populations: nearly 39 per cent of homes use a language other than English, compared with the national average of 18 per cent.

For now, culinary delicacies like Vietnamese Pho soup or momo dumplings from Nepal are easier to come by than high-paying jobs, or the infrastructure for quick routes into central Sydney.

Turnbull plans to fix that with A\$30 billion in projects including the country's largest public transport and urban road developments and the new international airport at Badger's Creek, to bring thousands of jobs and attract new businesses.—Reuters

Nine killed in pharmacy fire in Mumbai

NEW DELHI — At least nine people, including five children, were killed in a fire at a pharmacy in Mumbai Thursday, a senior police official said.

"The victims, mostly members of the same family, were asleep on the first floor of the building and had been trapped when the fire broke out around 6am (local time) in the medical store on the ground floor and quickly engulfed the building in Andheri," he said on condition of anonymity.

While eight charred bodies, including that of a few months old baby, were recovered by rescuers and firefighters, one injured person sustained to his injuries in the hospital later in the day, the official said.

Local TV channels reported, quoting eye-witnesses and officials, that the blaze started because of a short-circuit or could also be the result of a cooking cylinder blast.

Some reports also said that a fireman sustained injuries while dousing the flames.—Xinhua

DPRK leader elected chairman of new state institution

PYONGYANG — Top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un on Wednesday was elected chairman of a newly-created institution at the 4th session of the 13th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), or the country's parliament, state television reported.

Three members of the standing committee of the political bureau of the central committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea were elected vice-chairmen of the institution, namely Hwang Pyong So, Choe Ryong Hae and Pak Pong Ju.

Eight others were ap-

pointed members of the institution, some of whom are members of the political bureau of the WPK Central Committee.

The session revised the Constitution of the DPRK. The new state institution, called the State Affairs Commission, was set up to replace the National Defence Commission, according to the revised Constitution. Kim has led the National Defense Commission as first chairman since April 2012.

In addition, the Supreme Public Prosecutors Office and the Supreme Court were changed to the Central Public Prosecutors

Office and the Central Court respectively, according to the revision.

A personnel adjustment was also made to the Presidium of the SPA, the cabinet and legal institutions. The Secretariat under the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea will be removed.

Kim was promoted from the first secretary to the chairman of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea at the 7th party congress held in early May.

He is also holding the post of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army.—Xinhua



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un waves as he participates in a photo session with officials who are committed to the success of the test-fire of surface-to-surface medium long-range strategic ballistic missile Hwasong-10, in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 28 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

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Against all odds

Kyaw Thura

IT comes as no surprise that there are some people who cannot help criticising whatever the government does. It is quite possible that when it comes to politics, there is no one-size-fits-all policy to equitable development, no matter whatever political system a government practises.

It is, therefore, necessary for all of us to consider calmly that our country is just undergoing a time of great change with the newly elected civilian democratic government in power. At this crucial juncture, we need to convince ourselves that change is absolutely not an abstract idea. This demonstrates that no process of reform will ever succeed without unclenching our fists and letting our shared hope burn in our hearts.

Since the price of inaction is high, the onus is on all of us to drive the odd people out of the reform process. Frankly speaking, a single odd one out in the political reform is one too many. If the government, the parliament and the people work together in harmony, our country will be back on track.

In the words of Franklin D Roosevelt, there are many ways to go forward while there is only one way to stand still. Clearly, our country has lagged far behind in terms of development as a direct consequence of poor management. Just as gems glitter by friction, people become mature by trial and error. We must make every effort to meet challenges with perseverance, strength and resolve in bringing our country back to its rightful place in the international community. Now is the time for us to shoulder our share of the responsibility for national development with a clear conscience.

Tour guides grow saplings in Mingun

TOUR guides in Mingun, Sagaing Region have planted 200 trees in the area while also raising awareness about sanitation in the town, members of Myanmar Tourist Guide Association (Mandalay) conducted the planting on 25 June.

The aims to improve the aesthetics of Myanmar by planting; Chinese frangipani (*Plumeria acutifolia*), Bawdi tree and gold mohur tree (*Poinciana regia*) within the compound of Mingun Pah-totawgyi (aka the Mantara Gyi Pagoda), Myatheintan Pagoda and

basic education high school No.1

"This is 8th time the association has carried out the tree planting programme and sanitation across Mingun annually," said Ma Yu, a member of the MTGA.

Around 90 members of the MTGA took part in the environmental conservation campaign.

During the campaign, senior tour guides talked about the prominent pagodas in the region and spoke about being old and how they were young once to juniors.—*Aung Ye Thwin*

Brexit Referendum: Its Likely Impact on Regional Organizations

Maung Maung Gyi

WHEN the UK's referendum result was announced on 24 June 2016, the news came out that the people in the UK have decided to leave the EU. The UK Prime Minister David Cameron immediately announced that he would resign from the position of Prime Minister, probably at the Conservative Party Conference to take place in the coming October.

Britain's decision to leave the EU has great repercussions on the UK as well as on the EU. Peoples in some EU member countries, especially in the major EU countries, who have also been calling for their respective countries to leave the EU, may be encouraged to demand similar referendums, on whether their peoples would also like to remain in the EU or not. Some are worried that the referendum and the decision of the British people to leave the EU could have the domino effect.

Whether the EU would gradually become stronger or withered due to the departure of the UK, only the time will tell. The EU is a very strong Institution as it has been built up step by step since 1951 with the first establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with six members: Belgium, West Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy and the Netherlands. The rules governing the EU Institution are also very impressive as they have been nurtured and strengthened during this time of the gradual formation of the Institution, based on experiences and lessons learned from the history of Europe as well as from the process of the Institution-building itself. After all, there is, if any, only a very remote possibility that it would disintegrate or disappear in the foreseeable future, let alone in the near future. In fact, the UK itself would not be very eager to leave the EU very quickly. There may be delays on the part of the UK to trigger the Article 50 by formally notifying its intention to leave the EU. Top Brexit campaigner Boris Johnson stressed on the 27th June in his regular column in the Daily Telegraph newspaper that Britain would not be rushed into activating Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which will set the clock ticking on a two-year period to negotiate its divorce from the EU.

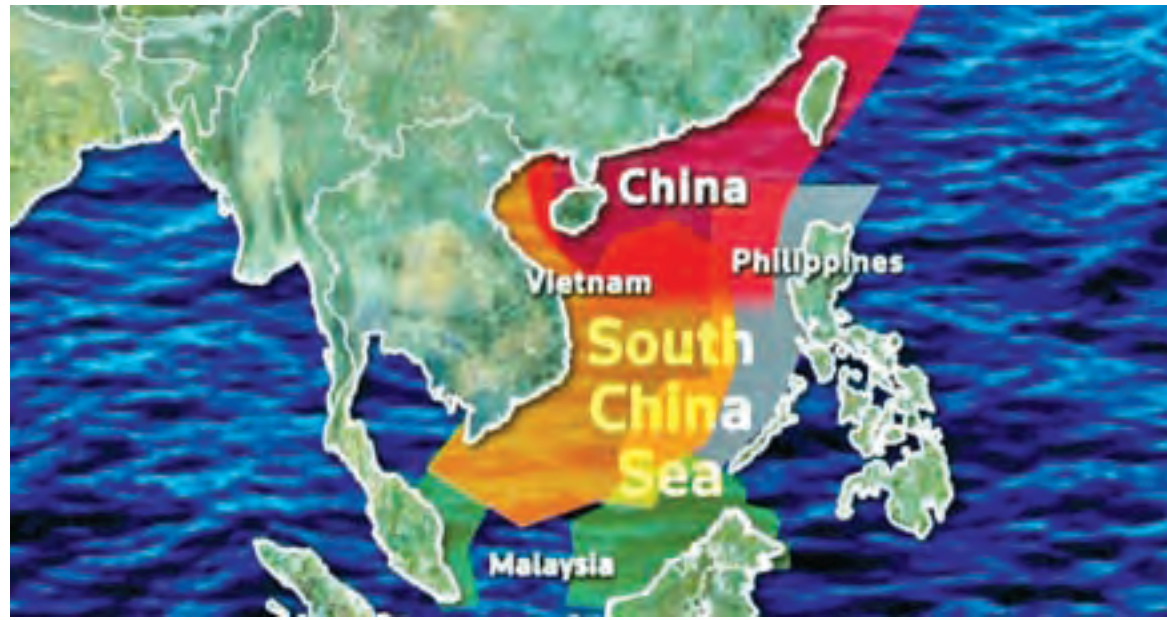
The EU is not only important for Europe and the European citizens for whom it has been established. It is also important for other regional Institutions established in other regions that followed the lead of the EU, like the ASEAN in Southeast Asia. For the ASEAN and other regional organizations that have sprung up in other regions and continents, the EU has been their best model from the very beginning. They have been nourished, nurtured, and educated by its systematic legal framework, disciplined and stringent implementation, and by examples of harmonious and peaceful development of the EU and its member

countries, and its invaluable contribution towards the European continent as well as to the world at large in terms of economic development, prosperity, harmony, and establishing and consolidating peace in the region and at every corner of the world. The other regional organizations have been steadfastly looking upon the EU and eagerly learning from it.

Yes, the world at the present moment may be portrayed as the one in disorder and confusion in some respects. Most of the countries have been experiencing difficulties to some extent, in one form or another, even if some might not have reached to the point of a crisis. The difficulties are in various forms, some economic, some political, some social, and some environmental. They may be in the form of war, terror, economic migrants or asylum seekers or political refugees, or due to some kinds of abuses of rights in the human societies of individual countries. Douglas Hurd, former Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, has also succinctly observed the state of the world in his book 'Choose Your Weapons' published in 2011 that, "... we see a world apparently adrift among many simultaneous threats. Climate change, shortage of food, water and energy, pressures of populations, financial collapse, in many places political chaos, bitterness and war all crowd the agenda."

Indeed, there are inequalities within the countries as well as between the countries in the globe. Peoples are able to witness those divisions and inequalities, and prosperity and development gaps, happening within and outside their own countries from their own drawing rooms via television, internet access or face book and twitter, thanks to the globalized technological and communication revolution taking place on this earth. There is no way to hide any happening or development, whether good or bad, taking place in any corner of the world. This can be said good and bad. People who are poor would like to move to places where life would be better. Many are unable to assist the motivating forces for migration. It may simply be economic migration, or may be an attempt to escape from political persecution. For migrant laborers, they want to work where wages are higher. For economic migrants, they want to live where they could easily secure their social needs and to realize their dreams for better lives. Some are unhappy with the way things are going in their own countries. Their poverty, helplessness and feeling of unfairness and frustration, and also their dreams, have many a time been exploited and these people become preys of traffickers, terrorists, extremist ideologies, and religious fanatics.

Against this backdrop, the regional organizations were established with the aim of improving the



lives and lots of the peoples in the region where individual countries, particularly smaller ones, would not be able to work out by themselves to achieve their noble and humanitarian objectives. Primarily, this is due to the change of the international political and economic landscape. The world has become a globalized world and, in a globalized world, everything is interconnected and interrelated, whether they are political, or economic, or trade, or finance, or social or environmental, or religious matters. The world has become borderless in many ways. In a borderless world, whatever happens in one place of the earth, like economic or financial crisis, or infectious diseases, or natural disasters, will have impact on other countries and areas both near and afar. Many a time, individual countries, even larger countries, let alone the small ones, would not be in a position to avoid or deter themselves from these catastrophes by themselves singlehandedly. There are other factors such as lack of necessities and essentials in one's own country, such as capital, skills, investment, or advanced technology, etc. In other words, individual countries that are unable to achieve development and fulfill the needs of its own people or lift their living standard are in fact in need of capacity and resources in organizing economic forces.

At this juncture, the regional organizations have come into play partly with the objective of organizing assistance to each other to enable to successfully carrying out their functions for the uplift of their peoples. Originally, the fundamental objectives of the regional organizations, such as the EU and ASEAN, are to establish security, peace and harmony in the region and to help in assisting each other in their efforts to improve trade and economic relations with the outside world.

In our region, ASEAN has become a success story in enabling the member countries to become developed, rich and prosper. In addition to that, the Association has been able to make peace among its member countries and there had been obvious lack of conflicts among the countries in the Association for a

long period of time. In the later stages, after peace and harmony had been established to some extent among the countries in the region, trade and economic areas have been given priority in their cooperation endeavours. Slowly, they also ventured into other fields such as cooperation in the social and environmental matters. That was when they have become more confident to try to integrate their peoples into a Community.

On the other hand, it should be noted that regional organizations are in fact a combination of individual countries. Individual countries are sovereign countries. So there are national interests of the individual countries in the Organizations. The Organizations have tried to compromise and harmonize these interests. So long as they are successful, the organizations will continue to exist and prosper, and may move on to the next stages of integration. For individual countries also, they are also made up of individual peoples and/or races. So, there is an entity called nationalistic sentiments.

Individual countries and the regional organization that is composed of the individual countries should not forget this factor. If the people in individual countries feel that something has gone wrong in their regional organization, they would go back to cling this nationalistic factor. The thing that could go wrong could be border issues between the two member countries, or economic development gap or income or prosperity gap that the people in one country feel they were left behind or not been treated fairly, or anything like that. But in the case of the United Kingdom, it could be the sovereignty issue. So, the regional organizations tried to take measures to integrate all the peoples of the individual countries by trying to take up social programmes. The main objective of the social programme is to achieve awareness of their identity of being peoples belonging to the same Community.

But, again, politics and economics matter. If the people in one country feel they were not gaining or receiving what they are entitled to or what they had hoped for, or they

feel they are losing unnecessarily, or they have been robbed of their sovereign rights, they would voice their concern, and if that could not be resolved in a reasonable time, the consequences could be disastrous. That could be what might have caused the people of the United Kingdom to decide to leave the EU. There are problems abound like immigration, terrorism, job security and unemployment that are sensational and could quickly stoke up the emotions of the people, let alone matters concerning sovereignty, economic disparity and trade imbalances.

There is indeed a paradox in the development of societies and countries. The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Super Power rivalry had brought fundamental changes to the international and regional environment as the world has undergone basic transformations. The underlying concept of international relations which had existed since the end of the Second World War also began to change dramatically, bringing with it new challenges and new prospects. The new trends in the international environment pointed an era of globalization characterized by growing interdependence among countries on the globe. It means that every nation is affected by events beyond its borders.

In today's globalized world, it was viewed that regional cooperation and regional integration has become the way forward as no small country can prosper outside the framework of regional cooperation and integration. Small countries also cannot make their voices heard unless they band together. In addition to that, the response of small and medium-sized countries to the global challenges should also be to seek greater cooperation and solidarity with neighbours. When States act in concert, they can make a difference in international relations. It means that multilateralism is not only a positive factor but also a must for small and medium-sized states. The best hope for small and medium-sized countries to survive and prosper should be to focus on regional integration, strong ties with neighbours and multilateralism.

In Europe, the EU had been in place and firmly entrenched, and gradually small countries in Europe, particularly those countries in the Eastern Europe which had become liberated from the Communist yoke when the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1989 have joined the EU in earnest and the number of members in the EU has increased and at the present moment it has 28 members.

In Southeast Asia, it was ASEAN that has been fostering regional stability and it was through ASEAN that countries in the region could deal with other countries and regions from a position of strength. ASEAN has neither been a Military Alliance nor a Supra-National Government that had the authority over its individual members. It is noteworthy that full sovereign authority remained vested in each Member-State.

These developments in Europe and Southeast Asia are positive and should be welcome by the international community because they have not only led to peace and prosperity in the respective regions but they would also be leading to the establishment of unity and harmony and resolution of conflicts which would pave the way for establishing Communities where there would be no more conflict of interests among the States, and the world would become a place composed of peaceful communities happily living together of humankind on the entire globe.

However, there have been other trends developing in Europe as well as in other regions after the Cold War. Although the world has become globalized and the world is said to become a global village, and the world is said to be no longer divided on the basis of ideologies, some individual countries, especially in Eastern Europe, particularly composed of various ethnic groups had entangled in secessionist movements, some leading to war among brethren ethnic groups and genocide had even been committed in some cases. This happened in former Yugoslavia. Later, States such as Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro came out of Yugoslavia. Some departed one another peacefully, like Czech and Slovakia, coming out two States out of the one. In addition to these secessions, the nationalistic sentiments could be witnessed growing in those countries as well as in other separated countries from the former Soviet Union. Regrettably, they have led to clashes inside the country as well as between neighbouring countries. The case in point is what has been happening in Ukraine and also in some other small countries that became independent when the Soviet Union disintegrated. These kinds of developments have led and could also be leading to more wars between the States or inside a State. These trends could also be witnessed in other parts of the world, like in Africa.

This is a dilemma in the development of the world. Although the world has become smaller on the one hand, on the other hand many smaller countries came out from the larger ones and leading to conflicts and war and again disintegration. The problem is with the growth of the nationalistic sentiments in some peoples of the world, whether they be big or small. In the United Kingdom, the Scottish people in 2014 held a referendum to decide on the question of the establishment of an independent State or to continue to stay together with Britain in the UK. At that referendum, the Scottish people voted to stay together with Britain in the United Kingdom. But now, in the wake of Brexit referendum result, there are voices again heard in Scotland that they should hold another referendum, may be within two years, to decide whether they want independence or not as the Scottish had voted in this Brexit referendum in favour of staying in the EU. The Northern Ireland had also voted to stay in the EU and now they are musing on what they should do in the light of the Brexit referendum result.

In addition to these issues, there are others like terrorism and fanaticism which are still a problem hard to handle by the international community. They are partly born out of extreme nationalistic sentiments and partly due to religious intolerance and blind faith in their narrow religious sects. They had done a lot of casualties and damages both to peoples and property. These dastardly acts were against the noblest values and concepts born out of the civilization of mankind and had brought disastrous and untold misery to human kind and the world at large.

The world should consider what would be the best course for peoples on the entire planet to enable to live in peace and harmony with unfettered progress and prosperity – whether States should be formed in regional organizations and live in Communities, or live in separate small independent entities composed of its own ethnic groups. And it should also be considered whether a Community composed of many small States would be able to effectively function to realize the aims and objectives of a Community which basically is to promote the welfare of the peoples and States in the Community in a harmonious way and to the best of satisfaction of all its members. The United Kingdom may perhaps demonstrate whether a State quite large enough like it would be able to continue to prosper for its own nationals in a way satisfactory to its citizens and at the same time continue to grow influence and play an important role by wielding power in the international arena like in the past.

Let us make the world a place where people can enjoy life in the best way it could afford us from living in unity in one's own country on the basis of fair share and fair deal

ings to joining regional organizations to promote our welfare by fighting all kinds of injustices with concerted cooperation in all fields, such as economic, financial, and social, as well as preventing occurrence of natural disasters and spread of infectious diseases by tackling issues like environmental degradation and control of diseases which have the capacity to travel beyond boundaries of States and Regions.

There are some concerns that some countries in the EU would follow the British steps of holding referendum to leave the EU and thus weakening the Union and wondered whether this could have great impact and serious implications on some regional organizations and weaken them in the long run. All depend on how the UK would be manoeuvring outside the EU in the long run. For ASEAN, there is no reason yet to be discouraged by what is happening in the EU. ASEAN is still a dynamic Organization and there is no indication as yet that any member of it would have any reason or intention to depart the Association in the foreseeable future. ASEAN is still a Unity in Diversity.

However the Association should be vigilant of the changing international and regional political and strategic environment to stay united. For ASEAN unity is important. There are two reasons to strengthen the ASEAN unity. The first one is that ASEAN has many Dialogue Partners from all over the world and if ASEAN would like to continue to gain respect and control the Driver's Seat, it must be a united Association. Secondly, Southeast Asia stands in a geostrategic position between the East and the West and between two Powers – one existing and established Power and the other emerging Power.

In the changing international politico-strategic environment, the two Powers seemed to be in fierce competition in the Asia-Pacific arena. A case in point is the South China Sea issue. China and some ASEAN Member States, particularly the Philippines and Vietnam are in bitter dispute over the ownership of some of the territories in the South China Sea. On this issue, the Asia Pacific Pivot Policy of the US seems to be playing a role. It called for the freedom of navigation on the Seas in the Indo-Pacific region which includes the South China Sea and the East China Sea. On this case, ASEAN needs to be cautious in her moves as there are some countries in the Association that have common interests with the US and some with China.

Only when ASEAN is united and could tread carefully between the two Powers, it would be able to manoeuvre successfully to serve the interests of the region and the member states and play a regional role necessary and essential for the survival, development and prosperity of the Association and its Member States.

EU tells UK single market access requires full free movement

LONDON/BRUSSELS — European Union leaders met for the first time without Britain on Wednesday less than a week after it voted to leave, delivering a tough message that London can access the bloc's lucrative single market only if it agrees to allow free movement for EU workers.

Last week's shock referendum vote to leave the EU has caused global financial market turmoil, sent the pound sterling tumbling and wiped billions off the value of British shares. Britain's giant financial services sector, roughly 8 per cent of economy, relies crucially on access to the EU market.

Prime Minister David Cameron, who campaigned to stay in the EU and lost, has announced his resignation and left it up to his successor to negotiate the terms of Britain's exit.

But leaders of the victorious Leave campaign have not spelled out in detail what sort of relationship they hope to build with Brussels, creating uncertainty about the future for both Britain and the rest of the bloc.

Cameron, staying on as caretaker until a successor is found, told EU leaders at his final sum-



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron leaves Number 10 Downing Street to attend Prime Minister's Questions at parliament in London, Britain, on 29 June PHOTO: REUTERS

mit with them on Tuesday that he believed the referendum was lost over the principle of unrestricted travel among EU citizens.

But free movement of workers is one of "four freedoms" — along with movement of capital, goods and services — that the EU says must be maintained by any country that wants access to its common market. The 27 leaders added a line to their summit statement at the last minute emphasising that principle.

They also called on Britain to trigger the EU's exit clause by notifying them of its intention to withdraw, which would start a two year clock to negotiate its exit.

"There can be no negotiations of any kind before this notification has taken place," the statement said. Cameron wants time for his successor to formulate a strategy and sound out European colleagues before beginning the countdown. —Reuters

US says Russian ship raised false signal in incident



The Russian destroyer Neustrashimy enroute to Somalia crosses the Suez Canal waterway at the south gate, about 100 km southeast of Cairo, in 2008. PHOTO: REUTERS

BERLIN — The United States on Wednesday accused Russia of deliberately displaying the wrong naval signals and interfering with a US aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean Sea, in the latest salvo about a June incident that both countries blame on each other.

Captain Danny Hernandez, spokesman for US European Command, said the Russian warship Neustrashimy (FF 777) conducted unsafe and unprofessional maritime manoeuvres, which could have led to miscalculation, injury or even death.

A number of Cold War-style incidents have occurred at sea and in the air in recent months, with the militaries of Russia and the United States accusing each

other of dangerous actions in international waters and airspace.

"This most recent incident comes on the heels of other unsafe air and naval incidents on the part of the Russian military," Hernandez said in a statement to Reuters.

He said such action had the potential to unnecessarily escalate tensions between the countries.

In April, the US military said Russian SU-24 bombers simulated attack passes near the USS Donald Cook in the Baltic Sea.

Russia and the United States blame each other for unsafe manoeuvres in the 17 June incident which occurred less than two weeks after officials from the

two countries met in Moscow to discuss ways to avoid incidents at sea.

The Russian Defence Ministry said a US destroyer approached dangerously close to a Russian ship, in what it said was a flagrant US violation of rules to avoid at-sea collisions.

A US official countered that the Russian ship carried out "unsafe and unprofessional" operations near two US ships.

On Wednesday, Hernandez said the Russian ship raised the "ball-diamond-ball" signal on its mast when it was two nautical miles away from the USS Gravelly, a US destroyer operating in the Mediterranean with the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier.

That combination of simple geometric shapes is used to indicate that a ship's ability to manoeuvre is restricted.

Russia identified its ship as the Russian Navy frigate Yaroslav Mudry.

Hernandez said the Russian ship manoeuvred to get closer to the Gravelly, changing course and speed as the US ship did, which he said showed it was not in fact restricted in its ability to manoeuvre, and was thus intentionally displaying a false international signal.

As a result, he said, the US destroyer believed the Russian ship was intentionally trying to interfere with Harry S. Truman operations. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia agrees to talks with NATO after Warsaw summit — France

PARIS — Moscow has agreed to a Russia-NATO council after the alliance's summit in Warsaw next month, French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said on Wednesday, as both sides seek to defuse military tensions exacerbated by the Ukraine crisis.

NATO held its first formal meeting with Russia's envoy to the alliance in almost two years in April, but the talks did little to ease tensions triggered by the Ukraine crisis.

France and others have called for another meeting to try to help rebuild trust between the two sides as NATO prepares for a summit next month.

"Russia gave its approval but would like the meeting to take place after the Warsaw summit to be able to examine the decisions that are taken there," Ayrault told journalists after meeting with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in Paris. —Reuters

Palestinian kills teen in Israeli settlement, then shot dead — army

JERUSALEM — A Palestinian fatally stabbed a 13-year-old girl inside her home in a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, before guards shot him dead, the military and hospital officials said. A member of the response team that killed the assailant was also wounded in the incident, said an official from the KiryatArba settlement, near the city of Hebron.

Over the past eight months, Palestinians have killed 33 Israelis and two visiting US citizens in a wave of street attacks, mostly stabbings.

Israeli forces have shot dead at least 198 Palestinians, 134 of whom Israel has said were assailants. Others were killed in clashes and protests. An Israeli military spokesman said the girl was attacked in her bedroom. Hospital officials in Jerusalem said she died of her wounds, giving her age as 13. —Reuters

India testfires new medium-range, surface-to-air missile

NEW DELHI — India successfully testfired a new medium-range, surface-to-air missile on Thursday from a military base off the coast of the eastern state of Odisha, sources said.

The missile MR-SAM, developed jointly with Israel, was test-fired from a mobile launcher in the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur this morning and it met all the targets, the sources said.

The missile was tested over the Bay of Bengal and fishermen in the area were asked not to venture into the sea to avoid any kind of untoward incident, they said.

The missile has been developed by state-owned Defence Research Development Laboratory and Israel Aerospace Industries. Some 100 missiles will be produced in India every year, the sources said. —Xinhua

Taiwan, Japan to discuss fishing near Okinotori next month

TAIPEI — Representatives from Taiwan and Japan will meet in Taipei next month to discuss fishing near Okinotori, the southernmost point of Japanese territory, the island's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

Tsai Ming-yao, secretary general of the Association of East Asian Relations, the Taiwanese body in charge of ties with Japan in the absence of formal diplomatic relations, told a press conference that the two sides will hold the first round of official talks to discuss the establishment of a dialogue mechanism for cooperation on maritime affairs. —Kyodo News

Australian teenager pleads guilty to planning ANZAC Day terror offence

SYDNEY — An Australian teenager on Thursday pleaded guilty to planning a terror attack which involved beheading a police officer and attaching explosives to a kangaroo at commemorations of the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli during World War I.

Sevdet Ramadan Besim, 19, had planned to attack police at the Melbourne ANZAC day parade on 25 April, 2015 but his scheme was uncovered by police in Britain who found messages on the phone of a 15-year-old British boy to a man in Australia.

The British boy last year pleaded guilty to inciting an attack on an ANZAC day parade in Melbourne, prosecutors said. —Reuters

US-led strikes pound Islamic State in Iraq, kill 250 fighters

WASHINGTON — US-led coalition aircraft waged a series of deadly strikes against Islamic State around the city of Falluja on Wednesday, US officials told Reuters, with one citing a preliminary estimate of at least 250 suspected fighters killed and at least 40 vehicles destroyed.

If the figures are confirmed, the strikes would be among the most deadly ever against the jihadist group. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the operation and noted preliminary estimates can change.

The strikes, which the officials said took place south of the city, where civilians have also been displaced, are just the latest battlefield setback suffered by Islamic State in its self-proclaimed "caliphate" of Iraq and Syria.

The group's territorial losses are not diminishing concerns about its intent and ability to strike abroad though. Turkey pointed the finger at Islamic State on Wednesday for a triple suicide bombing and gun attack that killed 41 people at Istanbul's main airport.

CIA chief John Brennan told a forum in Washington the



A US Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet fighter jet launches from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Mediterranean Sea in a photo released by the US Navy, on 3 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

attack bore the hallmarks of Islamic State "depravity" and acknowledged there was a long road ahead battling the group, particularly its ability to incite attacks.

"We've made, I think, some significant progress, along with our coalition partners, in Syria and Iraq, where most of the ISIS members are resident right now," Brennan said. "But ISIS' ability to continue to propagate its narrative, as well as to incite and carry out these attacks — I

think we still have a ways to go before we're able to say that we have made some significant progress against them."

On the battlefield, the US-led campaign against Islamic State has moved up a gear in recent weeks, with the government declaring victory over Islamic State in Falluja.

An alliance of militias have also launched a major offensive against the militant group in the city of Manbij in northern Syria.—Reuters

Russia will countenance an Assad exit in Syria, but not yet

MOSCOW — Russia will countenance Syrian President Bashar al-Assad leaving office, but only when it is confident a change of leader will not trigger a collapse of the Syrian government, sources familiar with the Kremlin's thinking say.

Getting to that point could take years, and in the meantime Russia is prepared to keep backing Assad, regardless of international pressure to jettison him, those sources said. Such steadfast support is likely to further complicate already stalled peace talks with Assad's opponents and sour relations with Washington which wants the Syrian leader gone. "Russia is not going to part company with Assad until two things happen," Sir Tony Brenton, Britain's former ambassador to Russia, told Reuters.

"Firstly, until they are confident he won't be replaced with some sort of Islamist takeover, and secondly until it can be guaranteed that their own position in Syria, their alliance and their military base, are sustainable going forward."

The Kremlin, which intervened last year to prop up Assad, fears turmoil in his absence, thinks his regime too fragile for major change, and believes there's much fighting to do before a transition,

say multiple Russian foreign policy sources.

Russia and the United States are co-sponsors of peace talks between the warring sides in the Syria conflict. Those talks, currently on hold, have so far carefully skirted the question of whether a peace deal would require Assad's departure, so negotiations could theoretically limp along despite the contradictions between the positions of Moscow and Washington.

Moscow has signaled its support for Assad has limits. Russian diplomats have said the Kremlin is backing the Syrian state, not him personally. President Vladimir Putin has said it would be worth considering how members of the opposition could be incorporated into Syrian government structures.

Such talk has fueled Western hopes that Russia might help broker Assad's exit sooner rather than later. But sources close to the Kremlin say there are no meaningful signs Russia is ready to cut him loose anytime soon.

"I don't see any changes now (in Russia's position on Assad)," said Elena Suponina, a senior Middle East analyst at the Moscow-based Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, which advises the Kremlin. "It's the same and why change it?"—Reuters



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Urging tougher stance, UN adds 2,500 peacekeepers to Mali

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations Security Council agreed on Wednesday to add just over 2,500 peacekeepers to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali, which has been hit by a series of deadly attacks and has become the deadliest place to serve for U.N. peacekeepers.

The French-drafted resolution, which was approved unanimously by the 15-nation council, said the Mali peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) should “take all necessary means to carry out its mandate ... (and) to move to a more proactive and robust posture.”

The increase will bring the force’s maximum size to 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 police.

A peace deal signed last year by Mali’s government and various separatist groups has failed to



UN peacekeepers patrol in Kidal, Mali, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

prevent periodic violence in northern Mali by Islamist militants, who have also staged assaults on high profile targets in the capital Bamako, Burkina Faso and

Ivory Coast. French U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre, council president this month, said implementation of that peace agreement was now one of MINUSMA’s

strategic priorities, along with taking a tougher stance to protect civilians in the face of a “resilient terrorist threat.”

Al Qaeda in the Islam-

ic Maghreb (AQIM) has claimed an attack on two U.N. sites in northern Mali at the end of last month, in which a peacekeeper from China and three civilians

were killed and over a dozen others wounded.

Delattre said that “highly specialised European contingents” — including special forces and intelligence experts — would be among the additional forces sent to Mali.

French forces intervened in 2013 to drive back Islamist fighters who had hijacked the Tuareg uprising to seize Mali’s desert north in 2012. But it has since proved difficult to prevent Islamists staging deadly attacks. A UN peacekeeping mission was then deployed. But the militants have since reorganised and launched a wave of attacks against security forces, peacekeepers and civilian targets and have threatened neighbouring countries. According to the UN, 101 peacekeepers have been killed since MINUSMA deployed.—Reuters

Italy votes to halt aviation supplies to Egypt over student death

ROME — The Italian Senate voted on Wednesday to halt supplies to Egypt of spare parts for F16 warplanes in protest against the killing of Italian student Giulio Regeni earlier this year.

Italy has repeatedly complained that Egyptian authorities have not cooperated to find those responsible for the 28-year-old student’s death, and in April it withdrew its ambassador to Egypt for consultations.

However Wednesday’s vote in the Italian Senate marked the first commercial steps taken against Cairo. After a heated debate, the upper house of parliament passed the so-called Regeni

amendment by 159 to 55.

Regeni, who was doing postgraduate research into Egyptian trade unions, was last seen by his friends on 25 January. His body, which showed signs of torture, was found in a roadside ditch on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital on 3 February.

Nicola Latorre, a senator from Prime Minister Matteo Renzi’s Democratic Party, said the vote was aimed at putting pressure on Egypt to help “the truth emerge more quickly” over the killing. Centre-right lawmakers warned that it would hurt relations with “an ally in the fight against terrorism.”—Reuters

At Pacific Alliance summit, Chile warns against isolationism

PUERTO VARAS, (Chile) — Member nations of Latin America’s Pacific Alliance trade bloc must strengthen their relationships and keep clear of the isolationist path represented by Britain’s exit from the European Union, Chile’s foreign minister said on Wednesday.

“At a time that seems dominated by the discord and disintegration brought by ‘Brexit’ and by the lamentable attack in Turkey, what we are doing is constructing realistic, flexible and pragmatic integration,” Foreign Minister Heraldo Munoz said as the Pacific Alliance kicked off its summit in the scenic town of Puerto Varas.

The Pacific Alliance is one of two large trade blocs in Latin America. Member nations Chile, Colom-



Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Heraldo Munoz speaks during a news conference at The 46th General Assembly of the Organisation of the American States in Santo Domingo, on 15 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

bia, Mexico and Peru have moved to reduce trade tariffs between them since forming the bloc in 2011.

The group represents 38 per cent of Latin America’s gross domestic product, and

starting in May, 90 per cent of commerce between its member states has been free of tariffs. That has piqued the interest of nations far outside the bloc, with 49 different observer states eyeing

possible trade agreements with the group.

The countries seen closest to becoming integrated into the bloc are Costa Rica and Panama.

Argentina, a member of Mercosur, Latin America’s other trade bloc, is looking to bring itself closer to the Pacific Alliance.

But that nation’s finance minister, Alfonso Prat-Gay, said his country’s loyalties remained with Mercosur.

“We have a neighbourhood that we belong to and that we want to keep belonging to, and that’s the Mercosur. Thus, any move is with the Mercosur,” he said.

The Pacific Alliance summit, backed by snow-capped volcanoes and azure waters in Chile’s touristic Lake District, ends on Friday.—Reuters

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EgyptAir black box data downloaded; evidence suggests fire on board

CAIRO — Investigators have downloaded data from one of the black box flight recorders on EgyptAir Flight MS804 and are preparing to analyse it, bringing them closer discovering what caused the jet to crash, Egypt's investigation committee said on Wednesday.

The Airbus A320 plunged into the eastern Mediterranean Sea en route from Paris to Cairo on 19 May, killing all 66 people on board. The cause of the crash remains unknown.

"Preliminary information shows that the entire flight is recorded on the FDR since its takeoff from Charles de Gaulle airport until the recording stopped at an altitude of 37,000 feet where the accident occurred," Egypt's Aircraft Accident Investigation Committee said in a statement. Search teams have salvaged both of the so-called black box flight recorders. Investigators are now preparing to analyse data from the flight data recorder. "Recorded data is showing consistency with ACARS messages of lavatory and avionics smoke," the committee said, refer-

ring to the Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System, which routinely downloads maintenance and fault data to the airline operator.

The plane had sent a series of warnings indicating that smoke had been detected on board through ACARS. Recovered wreckage from the jet's front section showed signs of high temperature damage and soot, the committee said. Those were the first physical signs that fire may have broken out on the A320 airliner, in addition to maintenance messages indicating smoke alarms in the avionics area and lavatory. The committee said these findings would need further analysis to discover the source and reason for the marks, however.

The second black box, the cockpit voice recorder, is still being repaired in laboratories belonging to France's BEA aircraft accident investigation agency, where the data chips from both recorders were sent after the devices were retrieved from the Mediterranean earlier this month.—*Reuters*



A flight recorder retrieved from the crashed EgyptAir flight MS804 is seen in this undated picture issued on 17 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump's opposition to trade deals fuels internal party opposition

WASHINGTON — Presidential candidate Donald Trump on Wednesday lashed out at the US Chamber of Commerce's scathing criticism of his stance on trade, highlighting divisions within the Republican Party that threaten unity ahead of the 8 November election.

At a campaign rally in Maine on Wednesday, Trump called the nation's largest business association "controlled totally by various groups of people who don't care about you whatsoever."

He said new trade deals should be negotiated because foreign countries are taking advantage of America.

"Every country that we do business with us look at us as the stupid people with the penny bank," Trump said Wednesday at the rally in Bangor, Maine.

The Washington-based lobbying group, which represents the United States' largest companies and business interests, is typically a reliable backer of Republican policies.

But on Tuesday it took issue with Trump's vocal opposition to trade deals, calling his proposals "dangerous" ideas that would push the United States into another recession.

Trump said the Chamber's argument that his policies would cause a trade war were incorrect because the United States was already at a deficit.

"We're already losing the trade war, we lost the trade war," Trump said. "Nothing can happen worse than is happening now."

In speeches on Tuesday, Trump called for renegotiating or scrapping the



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures while delivering a speech at the Aluminosource Building in Monessen, Pennsylvania, US, on 28 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, calling it a job killer, and reiterated opposition to the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership among the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim countries. He also lambasted China's trade and currency policies.

The Chamber has consistently backed trade deals.

The public squabbling between the presumptive Republican nominee and the business group was unusual, one of a series of reminders that Trump still struggles to unite his party behind his campaign. The Republicans and many business leaders tend to share policy goals and work in lockstep, and many business leaders have traditionally been big donors to Republican candidates.

So far, the Chamber's political action committee has donated \$134,000 to federal candidates or their committees, with \$127,500 of that total going to Republicans, according to US government campaign finance records. Billionaire Repub-

lican donor Paul Singer, who bankrolled an effort to try to defeat Trump during the campaign's nominating phase, said on Wednesday that a Trump presidency and his trade positions would almost certainly lead to a global depression.

"The most impactful of the economic policies that I recall him coming out for are these anti-trade policies," Singer said during a panel discussion at the Aspen Ideas Festival in Colorado, according to CNBC.

But opposing trade deals has proven a winning strategy for Trump among voters concerned about the loss of manufacturing jobs.

Art Laffer, an economic adviser to President Ronald Reagan who supports Trump, said he did not like the tone of Trump's speech on Tuesday but thought it was an improvement over his past comments on trade.

"It's not terribly alarming to me," Laffer said. "I didn't see any 45 per cent tariffs across the board. ...

"I saw negotiating better trade deals rather than

throwing away all the trade deals we have now. He points out the flaws in these trades, and that's all true," Laffer said. "I don't like the tone of it, but I dislike the tone less today than I did three weeks ago."

Peter Navarro, a Trump trade policy adviser, defended the candidate's position.

"Here's the central point to understand: The White House has been utterly and completely soft on China's illegal trade practices," said Navarro, a professor at the University of California, Irvine. "The status quo is the worst of all possible worlds for the United States."

Trump also took fire from for his positions on trade from Democrats.

In a call organised by rival Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, U.S. Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, a former businessman and tech entrepreneur, said that while the country needed to do a better job protecting workers, more resources should be put into training them for a new economy. He also noted that it was unusual to see a Republican standard-bearer and the Chamber divide.

"You've really got a special circumstance when the US Chamber of Commerce" responded to Trump's economic plan with a "full-fledged onslaught," Warner said. "No one could have predicted this kind of election season."—*Reuters*



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Became an actor by accident: Johnny Depp

LOS ANGELES — “Pirates of the Caribbean” star Johnny Depp said that he became an actor by accident.

The 53-year-old actor appeared on the “Jonesy’s Jukebox” radio talk show alongside his band members from the “Hollywood Vampires” - Matt Sorum, Robert DeLeo and Bruce Witkin.

Depp revealed that he tripped into acting while trying to pursue music as a teenager, reported People magazine.

“I’ve (been a musician) since I

was little. I have played since I was 12. I started playing clubs when I was like 13 in Miami,” Depp said.

“I needed to pay rent. Somebody said, ‘Why don’t you go meet an agent. My agent is with Nick Cage,’ so she sent me on an audition for something and I got it,” he added.

The “Sleepy Hollow” star said it wasn’t until his band broke up that he considered acting full-time.

“It seemed like a good way to pay the rent for a minute,” he said.—PTI



Johnny Depp.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Scarlett Johansson named highest grossing actress ever

LOS ANGELES — “Avengers” star Scarlett Johansson has been named the highest grossing actress of all time.

According to Box Office Mojo, the 31-year-old’s work has garnered an impressive domestic box office revenue of USD 3.3 billion dollars.

Not only is Johansson the only female in the top ten on the prestigious list-and she’s in the tenth spot, it should be noted-but she’s the youngest actor named.

Harrison Ford, Samuel L. Jackson, Morgan Freeman, Tom Hanks, Robert Downey Jr, Eddie Murphy, Tom Cruise, Michael Caine and Johnny Depp all round out the rest of the high-ranking celebs.

The second-highest grossing female on the list is Cameron Diaz, who comes in at 19, Helena Bonham Carter, Cate Blanchett, Julia Roberts, Elizabeth Banks, Emma Watson and Anne Hathaway (who are numbers 26, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 50, respectively).

Johansson, who starred in “The Jungle Book”, “Hail”, “Caesar!” and “Captain America: Civil War this year”, had spoken about the gender pay gap in Hollywood.—PTI



Scarlett Johansson. PHOTO: REUTERS



Joanna Lumley (L) and Jennifer Saunders arrive for the world premiere of “Absolutely Fabulous” at Leicester Square in London, Britain, on 29 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sweetie darling! Patsy and Edina return in ‘Absolutely Fabulous’ movie

LONDON — Get the champagne out, Patsy and Edina are back. The champagne-swilling, chain-smoking duo, who love to shop and of course party, return for more antics in “Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie”, a big screen adaptation of the hit 1990s British television comedy show.

Stars Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley reprise their roles as raucous fashion PR agent Edina Monsoon and her best friend, magazine editor Patsy Stone, alongside other original cast members and plenty of famous names in the highly-anticipated film. This time the duo, known for their disastrous shenanigans and calling everyone “sweetie” and “darling” through it all, see their

glamorous London lives turned upside down after accidentally pushing model Kate Moss into the River Thames. Seeking to escape a media frenzy over Moss’s presumed death, they flee to the French Riviera to try to get back into the glitzy high life.

“What don’t we get up to in the film,” Saunders told Reuters at the film’s premiere in London on Wednesday. “They do everything you’d expect them to do and more. They manage to kill a supermodel, I don’t know how much worse it gets than that.”

“Absolutely Fabulous”, which was born from a sketch by Saunders and her comedy partner Dawn French, originally aired for three series starting in 1992 before being revived again in 2001. The movie, has been eagerly awaited by fans, many of whom wore Patsy and Edina face masks at the premiere.

“We thought we’d be lucky if we got a second series,” Lumley said. “The extraordinary thing is knowing that this is going around the world and the fact that the world seems to know about ‘Absolutely Fabulous’ is thrilling.” On top of Moss, the movie features dozens of other famous names — models, designers as well as various celebrities — mostly playing themselves. Among those walking the gold carpet at the premiere were model Jerry Hall and designer Stella McCartney, as well as pop star Kylie Minogue, who sings the series’ theme tune for the film soundtrack. Asked if there could potentially be a sequel to the movie, Saunders said: “Well I said yes just now so we’ll wait and see. I’m never going to say no.”

“Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie” begins its cinema roll-out from Friday.—Reuters

Oscars organisers invite new members in diversity push

LOS ANGELES — Organisers of the Oscars, facing an outcry over the lack of diversity on its voting board for the film awards, said on Wednesday it has invited nearly 700 new members with a focus on female and minority talent.

Actors Idris Elba, America Ferrera, Oscar Isaac, John Boyega, Eva Mendes and this year’s Best Actress Oscar winner Brie Larson were among the 683 potential new members, the academy said in a statement.

Forty-six per cent of those invited are female and 41 per cent are people of colour, aged 24 to 91, said the organisation, whose members also include directors, producers, cinematographers and composers.

“This class continues our



Actor Idris Elba. PHOTO: REUTERS

long-term commitment to welcoming extraordinary talent reflective of those working in film today,” Academy President Cheryl Boone Isaacs said in the statement.

“We encourage the larger creative community to open its doors wider, and create opportunities for

anyone interested in working in this incredible and storied industry.”

All 20 acting Oscar nominees this year were white for a second consecutive year, prompting criticism with the online hashtag #OscarsSoWhite. Oscars host Chris Rock provided biting commentary during the awards show, which was boycotted by director Spike Lee and actress Jada Pinkett Smith.

The largely white, male and older roster of film industry professionals who belong to the academy has long been cited as a barrier to racial and gender equality at the Oscars.

The organisation responded by announcing a sweeping affirmative action programme, pledging to double female and minority membership by 2020.—Reuters

Giant diamond fails to sell at auction, trade interested

LONDON —The biggest uncut diamond to be discovered in over a century failed to sell at a Sotheby's auction on Wednesday, but the chief executive of Lucara Diamond Corp, the company that found the gem, said there was interest from buyers in the diamond trade.

Bids for the 1,109-carat, tennis ball-sized stone topped out at \$61 million — an amount that fell short of the undisclosed minimum reserve price.

Sotheby's had estimated that the diamond, found last November at Lucara's mine in Botswana, would sell for more than \$70 million.

"The fact that the stone didn't sell, yes, it is disappointing but it doesn't change anything for Lucara as a company," Lucara CEO William Lamb said in a telephone interview from London.

"There is definitely demand for the stone. It is just demand from the people who we would normally sell the stone to," he said.

Shares in Vancouver-based Lucara ended down 14.5 per cent at C\$3.35 on the Toronto Stock Exchange after news of the failed sale.

"The result is a disappointing one, and potentially calls into question the sale method chosen," BMO analyst Edward Sterck said in a note to clients.

The public auction route is unusual for large, rare diamonds, which are usually offered for sale to small groups of sophisticated diamond dealers.



A model shows off The 1109-Carat "Lesedi La Rona", rough diamond during a media event at Sotheby's in London Britain on 14 June 2016. The largest gem-quality rough diamond discovered in more than 100 years goes up for auction later this month. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lucara chose the auction route, Lamb said, because it wanted to have "access to as many ultra-high net worth individuals as possible, those people who had bought very expensive items in the past."

Lucara had not yet decided what to do with the stone, he added, but possibilities include loaning it to museums to increase its exposure and to help educate the public about diamonds.

"We don't have to sell it because ... we have an exceptionally strong balance sheet. We have well over \$150 million to \$160 million in cash, we have no debt," Lamb said.

The Lesedi la Rona, which means "our light" in the Tswana language spoken in Botswana, is the world's second-biggest gem quality diamond ever recovered, and the largest in more than a century.

The biggest is the Cullinan diamond, a 3,106-carat stone found in South Africa in 1905.

Lucara last month sold a 812.77 carat uncut diamond named "The Constellation," which it found at the same Botswana mine as the Lesedi la Rona, for \$63.1 million. A Dubai-based firm was the buyer, according to media reports.—Reuters

Japanese teen wins top prize in global pre-college science contest

TOKYO — An 18-year-old self-trained engineer from Chiba near Tokyo has received the highest award in engineering mechanics in the world's largest pre-college scientific research contest.

Takahiro Ichige, a third-year student at Chiba Municipal Chiba High School, won this year's award for a simple power-saving controller for stepper motors used in air conditioners and other devices, at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair held in the United States in May. Approximately 1,700 students took part in the event.

Ichige, the second Japanese to become a category winner, is making preparations to file for patent protection on his work.

When he was a child, Ichige was intrigued by motors used to move plastic models, especially four-wheel-drive cars.

He began to read specialised books on them when he became a junior high-school student.

"Theoretical studies are an extension of engineering work," Ichige said. "I like applying engineering principles to things close to us."

Ichige drew attention when, as

a first-year high school student, he won third prize for his studies on how to stabilise the rotation of motors in a science contest for high school students.

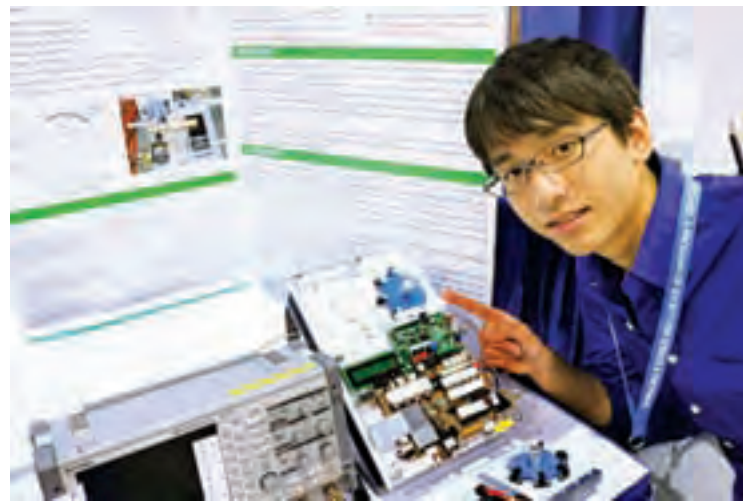
He participated in Intel ISEF for the first time the following year and won fourth prize.

After returning from the event, Ichige began studies in earnest to reduce stepper motors' consumption of electricity, spending 16 hours per day on experiments at his home during the summer vacation. Though a good hurdler, he skipped summer training to concentrate on his studies.

Ichige qualified to participate in Intel ISEF for the second year in a row after winning first prize in a domestic contest.

Winning the best category award at Intel ISEF, "I felt relieved because I was worried about whether I would be able to get across to the judges in English," he said.

Ichige dreams of becoming an automobile designer. "I want to produce electric vehicles that people will love and that can contribute to the reduction of global warming," he said. — Kyodo News



Takahiro Ichige points to a simple power-saving controller for stepper motors he has developed in May 2016. He received the highest award in the category of engineering at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in the US city. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Ornamental square watermelon shipments begin from western Japan

TAKAMATSU (Japan) —This year's crop of rare cube-shaped watermelons, to be used as ornaments rather than eaten, started shipping Wednesday from western Japan at a wholesale price of around 10,000 yen (\$97) per fruit. The watermelons, produced ex-

clusively in Zentsuji, Kagawa Prefecture, are grown in square plastic containers. They are inedible as they are harvested unripe. Production began about 45 years ago and currently there are six growers, with a total of 330 watermelons expected to be shipped

on the first day.

Department stores and fruit stores in Japan sell the watermelons as popular ornaments, while the distinctive item has also caught on abroad, with orders from countries like Thailand and Russia.—Kyodo News



Entertainment Channel

(1-7-2016, Friday)

06 : 00 pm	Music
• Weather Report	09 : 10 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• The Stories Of The Great Souls (U Pyae Son)
06 : 30 pm	09 : 40 pm
• Cartoon Programme "How to train your Dragon" (Part-1)	• International Movie Songs
07 : 20 pm	09 : 50 pm
• International Drama Series	• Snow Flakes...Scenic Confluence...To Kachin State
07 : 50 pm	10 : 10 pm
• International Drama Series	• Music Programme
08 : 50 pm	10 : 30 pm
• MRTV Entertainment	• Myanmar Video
* 07 : 00 pm	
Live: Myanmar Woman Day Fashion Show and Culture Show 2-7-2016 (Saturday)	
* 01 : 30 Am	
Live: EURO 2016 " Wales Vs Belgium "	
From 1-7-2016 (Friday)	6:00 pm
To 2-7-2016 (Saturday)	6:00 pm



(1-7-2016 07:00am ~ 2-7-2016 07:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes "Lisu: Their Life and Customs" (Part- I)
07:48	Am	Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre-Hmawbi
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Herbal Medicine By Thurein (Aloe Vera)
08:50	Am	TECH School
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	An Ardent Aficionado Of Traditional Design
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Tour of national heritages and archeological sites
10:50	Am	Sagaing: Youth Leader

(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 Journey To Southern Shan State (Ep-3)
07:40	Pm	Culture Shows: Theatrical Art
07:49	Pm	Amazing: Sayargyi Nyein Chan Aung
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Architect: U Thaw
08:51	Pm	Kyaikhteeyoe: Bamboo Guns

(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)



Michael Phelps during the finals for the men's 200 metre butterfly in the US Olympic swimming team trials at CenturyLink Centre, Omaha, NE, USA, on 29 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Phelps doing it his way on Road to Rio

OMAHA, (Nebraska) — Determined to exit swimming on his own terms, Michael Phelps cleared a major hurdle on the road to Rio on Wednesday, qualifying for a fifth Olympics with a victory that has paved the way to more Games glory.

Inspired, motivated and sober, Phelps heads to Rio thanks to his 200 metres butterfly win at the US Olympic trials with the goal of adding to his staggering record total of 22 medals, including 18 gold, and pen a happy ending to a brilliant career that he feels he denied himself at the 2012 London Olympics.

"Coming back and being able to have the opportunity to

finish how I want," said Phelps, of his motivation. "I'm doing this because I wanted to.

"Thinking about the ups and downs we've gone through in and out of the pool to get to this point and not feeling an absolute 100 per cent but still being able to get the job done.

"I think things are probably going to hit me a lot more emotionally now than what they would have in the past, because I'm enjoying the moment and I'm embracing the moment."

For Phelps, this Olympic journey is more important than the destination, a trip into retirement that he is determined to share with his fiancée Nicole

and infant son Boomer, who were among the sellout crowd of 14,000 at the CenturyLink Centre.

At London, which he had declared to be his last Games, Phelps won four gold and overall six medals but walked away with the regret that he simply went through the motions.

He subsequently talked of a golf career but eventually found himself testing the waters of a swimming comeback which was interrupted by a second drunk driving arrest in 2014 and a stint in rehab that laid the foundation for Phelps' transformation from a party boy to a family man.

After accepting his med-

al for his 200 fly win, Phelps searched the darkened arena for his partner and child, joining them poolside where he hugged Nicole and planted a kiss on his son's forehead.

"I wanted to go over, and I've always given my family my flowers and stuffed animal, I guess that's his (Boomer's) first stuffed animal from a race," said Phelps, who will have Nicole and Boomer join him in Rio despite the Zika threat. "I just wanted to share that with them."

"I don't see him every day. I try to, but if I do it's for a very short moment, so any time I have with him is always very special."

While Phelps, who will cel-

ebate his 31st birthday on Thursday, has turned his life around away from the pool, in the water he remains as demanding and critical as ever.

Aside from the result, very little in his 200m swim on Wednesday evening pleased Phelps, the winning time of 1:54.84 well off his world record mark of 1:51.51.

"Awful," declared Phelps when asked to assess the last part of his swim. "The piano felt pretty hard."

"I think with everything that has happened and being able to come back that was probably harder than any swim I have had in my life."—Reuters

Federer plays cameo role to end Willis fairytale

LONDON — Few players have reduced the great Roger Federer to a role as secondary attraction on Wimbledon's Centre Court but for one hour and 25 minutes on Wednesday he had just a walk-on part in the Marcus Willis fairytale.

The seven-times champion enjoys too much deep-rooted affection at the All England Club to be cast as a real pantomime villain, but for once the cheers were all behind the 25-year-old local hero on the other side of the net.

Federer's 81st Wimbledon match, of course, ended in victory.

Even the most over-egged Hollywood script could not have had him losing to world number 772 Willis,



whose transfor- mation from a 30 pounds (\$40.30) an tennis coach Wimbledon sation has tured the tion of the sporting world. But the swagger-

ing Swiss was at least made to break sweat under the closed roof before claiming a 6-0, 6-3, 6-4 victory.

Willis had his photo taken with Federer, 34, before the warm-up and could hardly stop grinning.

He even celebrated a practise serve with a raised fist as his friends went through their song-list at court side.

But when Willis lost the opening set in 25 minutes without managing a game you feared the worst.

So when he did finally trouble the scoreboard, holding serve in the eighth game, the deafening roar rivalled the one heard when fellow Briton Andy Murray ended 77 years of pain by beating Novak Djokovic in the 2013 final.

From then on the quirky left-hander's unorthodox shots kept 17-times major champion Federer guessing at times, especially his grass-hugging backhand slices and cheeky drop volleys.

Federer joined in with some

dazzling party pieces of his own but played largely within himself — smiling occasionally as Willis bathed in an unfamiliar spotlight. Afterwards he paid Willis the ultimate compliment.

"I'll remember most of the Centre Court matches here at Wimbledon, but this one will stand out because it's that special and probably not going to happen again for me to play against a guy 770 in the world," Federer told reporters.

"The support he got, the great points he played. In some ways, I enjoyed it as much as I possibly could, but I also had to put my head down and focus hard to get the lead." Federer broke for a 5-2 lead in the second and closed it out two games later but was pushed harder in the third as Willis, who survived six qualifying rounds before stunning Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis in round one, kept his nose in front. Federer, moving well after missing the French Open with a back injury, looked a touch relieved when he broke at 4-4 in the third set, though, and claimed victory when Willis sliced a backhand long in the next game.—Reuters

Giggs 'set to leave' Manchester United

LONDON — Ryan Giggs has rejected an offer to stay at Manchester United and is ready to end his association with the club after 29 years, a British newspaper reported on Thursday.

Giggs, who played 963 times for United after joining the club as a 14-year-old, worked as a coach under David Moyes and Louis van Gaal.

But the *Daily Mail* said he has decided against taking up an offer of a reduced role from new manager Jose Mourinho.

"Giggs' representatives are now in negotiations with United over a pay-off for the final year of his contract," the *Mail* said.

It was reported that Giggs has not spoken directly to Mourinho, who starts work at United on Monday. Giggs is likely to be questioned about his future on British television on Thursday when he starts work as an ITV pundit ahead of the Euro 2016 quarter-final between Poland and Portugal.—Reuters