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ASEAN MINISTERS MEET

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Laos for ASEAN conference

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, along with other foreign ministers from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), attended the 49th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), which was opened yesterday in the Laotian capital, Vientiane.

The foreign ministers were welcomed by Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, who called for "frank and constructive discussions" between member states and partners, "contributing to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world."

In his remarks, Mr Thongloun also identified a range of traditional and non-traditional security challenges including extremism and terrorism, natural disasters and climate change, refugee issues and human trafficking as well as economic developments including the recent "Brexit" as requiring close attention of the ministers.

The opening ceremony of the annual meeting of foreign ministers of ASEAN was also attended by the Secretary-General of ASEAN, senior officials and delegates. The foreign ministers of Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and Norway also attended as invited guests of the Lao PDR, Chair of ASEAN 2016.

Chaired by Lao Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith, the AMM comes following talks between the region's senior officials and diplomats in Vientiane since Thursday as representatives seek progress on regional and interna-



Foreign Ministers of ASEAN pose for photo in ASEAN way at a ceremony to open 49th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. PHOTO: MNA

tional issues of common concern and interest.

The meeting discussed progress of implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2015, in particular the implementation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025.

The one-day meeting also

agreed to the requests for the accession by Chile, Egypt, Iran and Morocco to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

The ASEAN foreign ministers also discussed the promotion of ASEAN's external relations and ASEAN's centrality within

ASEAN-led mechanisms. In addition, the ministers had a candid and constructive exchange of views on regional and international issues such as terrorism, human trafficking, illicit drug, natural disasters, irregular migration as well as developments in the Middle East, Korean Peninsula and

the South China Sea.

During the meeting, the foreign ministers also adopted the TAC and released the statement on the Occasion of the Anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) was also released.

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Taninthayi govt takes tough stance on mining groups

THE Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation for Taninthayi Region U Myint Maung said that mining organisations wishing to renew their mining licenses are required to seek approval from regional government.

Despite the Union government having direct control U Myint Maung stated that mining

groups who are polluting have been ordered to seize their operations.

The Union government has control over mining activities. Yet U Myint Maung said that the, "Union government pays attention to agreements of regional government."

"Mining enterprises who are polluting have been or-

dered to halt their activities until they've resolved pollution issues," said U Myint Maung, again stating that the Union controls mining agreements.

The minister added that companies will have difficulty in procuring a required agreement from regional government for the extension of their licenses, should they be found not to

be running their enterprises in compliance with laws and regulations. Mining permits will not be granted to newly founded companies of individuals already involved in the industry if they are believed to be circumventing legal procedures in the workplace.

He went on to say that current operations are being mon-

itored and if a subsidiary of a polluting company request a license or a renewal they will be denied until they correct their practices, and that the Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win has also expressed a strong stance on the matter.

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Efforts made to entitle ownership of Shwebo Paw San Hmway rice grain

EFFORTS will be made to allow for personal ownership over the Shwebo Paw San Hmway grain of rice once it has been included on the Geographical Index (GI), according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

A survey is reportedly in the process of being conducted in order to ascertain the required information for the grain of rice to be entitled to be listed upon the index.

"Documentation, needed to submit [the rice grain] to the GI, is being put together. The first phase is to ensure [the grain] is listed within the GI. Then, efforts will be made to seek personal ownership. It's a step by step process which the Department of Science and Technology is carrying out," said Dr Soe Htun, vice chair of the MRF.

Groups are currently working together in townships within Shwebo district, making a con-

certed effort to ensure a consistency to the quality and DNA of the rice grain which will allow for it to be listed upon the GI of goods produced from regions within Myanmar.

"Farmers will be able to get a better price for their rice if they can claim ownership over it," added Dr Soe Htun. "It will also benefit those exporters and merchants who sell the rice to foreign markets. As a product of trade, it will also allow for more revenue to be collected by the state."

Soil and water from across townships across Shwebo district are reportedly being tested in a laboratory in order to allow for the utilization of a comprehensive pesticide system, together with a stability in DNA and quality of current grains of Shwebo Paw San Hmway rice.

"The prerogative is to first ensure quality of the rice grain and a



Woman transplanters seen working on a paddy field in central Myanmar.
PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

market for it. There's also a need to make sure the rice isn't being bought for low prices as farmers have agricultural debts to repay at the time paddy is ready to be harvested," said Ko Zaw Aung, a

farmer from Wuntho Township, Sagaing Region.

Efforts will be made to allow for ownership entitlement of the Shwebo Paw San Hmway grain of rice, together with such entitle-

ment for products produced from other regions around Myanmar, with reports of agricultural experts cooperating to establish a seed industry within the country. — *Myitmkha News Agency*

Tear gas leaks at US embassy

SEVERAL people inhaled the tear gas that leaked from an explosion a tear gas canister at the US embassy in Yangon yesterday.

The gas leaked out of the training room of the embassy as the canister was tested at the embassy, told Mr Laughn P Rowe, the security officer of the embassy, to the police.

Following the accident hap-

pened around 9 pm, the embassy's security officer clarified the situation, promising that they will give prior notice to the police if they want to test canisters in the future.

The embassy will hold a press conference to clarify the accident today, according to the embassy.

No one was injured in the accident.—*Zaw Gyi*

Bank provides aid and cash to fire victims in Mandalay Region



Personnel from Brighter Future Myanmar foundation presents aid to fire victims at Panya Village. PHOTO: BFM

AID from Kanbawza Bank's Brighter Future Myanmar foundation (BFM) reached more than 100 fire victims in Tada U Township, Mandalay Region yesterday.

The fire, caused by an electric short circuiting at a solar panel installed on the roof of a home in Pa-

nya Village on 22 July, destroyed more than 20 homes, leaving over 100 people homeless.

BFM provided rice, edible oil and K500,000 each to 21 families. Officials of the foundation presented the aid and cash to the victims.— *GNLM*

Philippines extends offer to purchase 100,000 tonnes of Myanmar rice

The Philippines have reportedly extended an offer to purchase 100,000 tonnes of Ayemahta Rice from Myanmar, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The offer marks the very first time such an extension has been made through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), it is reported.

"The Philippines have recently made us an offer. An MoU will be signed by both countries as soon as possible for the purchase of the Myanmar rice. Although, a date hasn't yet been

set, nor has the price for the rice. Talks will be held for the signing of the MoU," said Dr Soe Htun, vice chair of the MRF.

The Philippines reportedly extended their offer to purchase Myanmar rice during the first week of this July, while plans are presently being made for the signing of an official MoU between the two countries.

"I still don't really know [the whole situation]. That said, I'm aware an offer was extended to the Ministry of Commerce. If [Myanmar rice] is to be exported to the Philippines, a tender will

have to be submitted to them," said U Aung Myint, secretary of the Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association. Upon the successful signing of an MoU between Myanmar and the Philippines, a hundred thousand tonnes of rice would reportedly be exported to the ASEAN archipelago nation within 12 months.

A total of 1.8 and 1.3 million tonnes of Myanmar rice was exported to foreign countries during the fiscal years of 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively, according to statistics of the MRF.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Private contractors to build 80% of affordable housing projects

THE Ministry of Construction has announced that private contractors will build up 80 per cent of affordable housing projects and that they will be issued loans by the government to undergo construction.

The director of the Department of Urban Housing Development said that the government will construct 20 per cent, while the rest 80 per cent will be supported by the government.

"They will be given a set of construction guidelines to ensure that credit loans can be issued by the Construction and Housing Development Bank," said Daw Mi Mi Tin, director of the Department Urban Housing Development

(DUHD).

If the CHDB is unable to supply the loan, it is said that foreign banks will be able to assist.

"The policy of affordable housing employed in the past saw the DUHD utilize a system whereby they constructed and sold the housing projects themselves as a department," added the director.

"We're now working towards a situation whereby all affordable housing will be built by private contractors, although the government will be there to step in and finish off any projects, which for whatever reason, can't be completed by the contractors."

The houses will be built at a cost of Ks10m.

"Once the government can bring to life affordable housing, I want the housing units to be sold exclusively to those individuals who can't afford to purchase expensive property. Only in this way will the lives of us lower-working class be better. Rental prices are incredibly expensive at the moment. We don't even dare to contemplate the prospect of actually purchasing an apartment with the kind of salaries that we receive," said Ko Maung Lwin, a property renter from Yangon's Hlaingthaya Township. The MoC has said that affordable housing projects will be set in Yangon's satellite towns and industrial zones.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Illegal wildlife trade to be controlled

SMUGGLING of illegal wildlife to foreign countries will be closely monitored and strictly controlled to prevent wild animals from extinction, said an official from the Ministry of Resource and Environmental Conservation.

The forestry department is gathering data about smuggling of wild animals and their parts in border areas with the assistance of international non-governmental organizations; Wildlife Conservation Society and World

Wide Fund. Check-ups are being conducted in border channels. Ivory, snakes, tortoises and pangolins are among the most common things being smuggled.

Illegal trafficking of wild animals and parts is ranked fourth after the illegal arms trade, the drugs trade and human trafficking. The respective organizations are cooperating with TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring international network to be able to control trafficking of rare species.

Those who are in possession of, trafficking, transporting and exporting the wildlife will be either fined Ks50,000 or given seven-year imprisonment.

There have been 12 cases of illegal wildlife trades in Chin and Rakhine states, nine in Ayeyawady Region, seven in Kachin State, five in Taininthyay, eight in Yangon Region and 14 each in Nay Pyi Taw and Kayin, Mon and Kayah states from 2010 to July, this year.—GNLM

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Laos for ASEAN conference

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The statement recalled the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 24 February 1976 in Bali, Indonesia and the subsequent Protocols amending the TAC.

It recognized the positive contributions of the TAC to promoting peace and stability in the region over the past 40 years, and which continue to be an important foundation for the development of an inclusive, rules-based, people-oriented, ASEAN Community and to the promotion of ASEAN centrality

The statement also recalled the ASEAN Charter, which urges

State Parties to resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with the rule of law.

The foreign ministers recalled the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) which states that the TAC is the key code of conduct governing relations between States and a diplomatic instrument for the promotion of peace and stability in the region, emphasizing that the aspirations of, and commitment to, the TAC serve as a foundation upon which is built an ASEAN vision of an integrated, peaceful and stable community with shared prosperity as envisaged in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025;

They recognized the impor-

tance of maintaining peace and stability in the region by resolving differences and disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the ASEAN Charter and principles of international law.

Following the annual meeting, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi participated in the 7th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Meeting which focused promoting cooperation in Mekong-Ganga travel sector, education, transport and cultural sectors.

Union Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also attended the 6th Mekong-Korea Foreign Minister's meeting and discussed progress of the cooperation of Mekong-Korea and future programs.—MNA

Yangon sees mass rallies in support of peace conference

Peace activists held mass rallies in support of the upcoming government-led Union Peace Conference 21st Century Panglong in Yangon yesterday, participants said.

U Myat Kyaw, a peace activist who took part in the rallies, said the upcoming conference would pave the way for lasting peace in the country, and that it would result

in a constitution that favours federalism.

The assembly called for support of the peace conference and an end to armed conflict. The activists also held a petition for the peace conference, which would be presented to the Pyithu Hluttaw, the United Nations and international agencies. Rallies in favour of the

21st Century Panglong Peace Conference also took place in the United States, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands and Denmark on Sunday, the Myanmar News Agency reported.

The government has scheduled the peace conference to be held in late August.—Myanmar News Agency



Peace activists seen participating in the mass rallies to support peace conference. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets her counterparts from Norway, South Korea and China



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets South Korean Foreign Minister Mr Yun Byung-se. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who is attending the 49th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and related meetings in Vientiane, Laos, yesterday met Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr Borge

Brende at 5.15pm, South Korean Foreign Minister Mr Yun Byung-se at 6.45pm and Chinese Foreign Minister Mr Wang Yi at 7.30pm at the National Convention Centre in Vientiane.—Myanmar News Agency

UEC extends application deadlines for chairman and other posts

The Union Election Commission has extended its deadline for the acceptance of applications for the posts of chairman and member for its sub-commissions at various levels.

The commission announced yesterday that it was extending the period for applications, which opened 21 June, to 8 August.

The deadline extension was to ensure broader public partic-

ipation in its sub-commissions, and especially to encourage the involvement of more women, the commission said. Application forms are available from township sub-commissions, the announcement said. It added that candidates who meet the eligibility requirements for the posts should send their applications to the sub-commissions in their neighbourhoods.—Myanmar News Agency

Taninthayi govt takes ...

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"Groups are being monitored as to whether they are individuals who comply with mineral mine regulations or not, while no further permits will be granted to those found not to be following legal procedures," said U Myint Maung.

The Dawei district Mining Scrutiny Committee was formed on 3 June to facilitate the monitoring of compliance with mining regulations within the min-

ing industry, with the committee conducting field site inspections since its conception.

The committee closed the Heinda Mine operated by the Myanmar Manpupipet Company, and the Bawapin Mine, run by the Ashaytaing Company on 29 June. 10 large and medium-scale mines operating in the region with six other companies have submitted requests to begin operations.—Myitmakha News Agency

Australian investor to build winery in Chin State

AN Australian leading grapes wine manufacturer plans to establish a winery in Haka, the capital town of Chin State, this year.

A member of Chin State Government said the name of Australian company will be revealed when the project initiates in the region.

In cooperation with the state authorities, the implementation of such production business aims to create more employment opportunities for locals. After the project is completed, quality grapes wine manufactured from local products is planned to be distributed in both local market as well as foreign countries. Native species of grapes will be grown in nine townships in Chin State for the new project. Among townships in Chin State, in Tiddim and Falam are famous as grapes growing areas, planting mostly common. Chin State is located in western part of Myanmar. It is bordered by Rakhine State in the south and Bangladesh in the south-west.—200



Grapes from Chin being seen. PHOTO: ZU ZIN HNIN

500 new apartments to be sold in Mandalay

THE Ministry of Construction will soon sell over 500 apartments from its affordable housing project in Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay, its spokesperson said.

The project, started by the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development and based in Myayenanda Ward, produced a total of 560 flats, its director U Aung Kyaw Oo said.

Each apartment is set to be sold at an "affordable" price through both installment plans and up front settlement plans after the regional government

adopts a new policy on the sale of new apartments.

Priority will be given to low-income families, civil servants, prisoners and staff from private companies.

Staff from both government departments and private companies need to submit recommendations.

Those wishing to buy an apartment through an installment plan have to pay 30 per cent as the down payment, the rest will be paid within eight years in connection with the Construction and Housing Development Bank.—Zar Zar

Crime NEWS

Fugitives arrested at police station



Police officers examining fugitives at the police station.

PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Out of ten fugitives, four submitted themselves at the, got arrested at police station in Sagaing Region on Saturday as they have come to know that they should serve their prison terms, police reported yesterday.

A group of men in connection with a robbery case happened in Noutkyi Island beside the Ayeyawady River in Sagaing Region on 17 April this year have been declared wanted by local police.

According to investigators, the four men—Kwel Gyi (aka Zaw Min Oo), Maung Oo, Chit Chaw and Soe Soe — were involved in robbing a coal cargo ship named Loihsamsit near Lethsaungyu Village in Sagaing Township.

After the case, police arrested five suspects but ten others escaped from the scene. During the cases, the group of offenders attacked police members with long knives, daggers and fuel bottles.

According to their first plan, all people involved in the case to surrender to the police station but only four people arrived the police station, two of them need to receive medical care, said Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Khin Maung Thein.

A local said that about five robbery cases occurred in TadaU Township during April.—Aung Thant Khaing

Pick-pockets arrested in Yangon

Five men accused of pickpocketing mobile devices and cash from passengers on buses on Thursday were arrested in North-Okkapa Township in east Yangon.

A Latt Kaung (aka Myat Min Tun), 41, Hsin Pouk (aka Thein Win), 62, Nga Chun (aka Tun Tun Soe), 45, Taw Pauk (aka Pyae Son), 23, and Shan ma (aka Thein Tun Naing), 35, were seized after they were unable to procure documents proving their ownership of the property, police said.

Police collected two handsets and nearly K60,000 from the suspects, who will face charges under the Criminal Law.—Myanma Alinn



Five pickets being seen. PHOTO: MYANMA ALINN

ICE, yaba pills seized in Kengtung

POLICE confiscated K1.3 billion worth ICE from drug smugglers in Kengtung of Shan State on Friday.

Acting on a tip-off, an anti-drug squad searched a car with two people on board heading from Mongkhat to Kengtung near the Naungpha police outpost. Police discovered ICE weighting 55 kilograms in the car.

Two similar cases occurred on that day in Mandalay Region and Tangyang of Shan State.

Police say they found four kilograms of heroin from Ma San Lwin, a passenger from an express bus en route from Loikaw to Mandalay and arrested her.

Sai Hsan Hlut, who resides in Tangyang Township, was arrested by local police after he was allegedly found in possession of a cache of nearly 1,000 yaba pills.

All drug dealers have been charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Kyemon



Two suspected drug dealers being seen. PHOTO: KYEMON

Hundreds of trapped Myanmar migrants to return home from Malaysia

THE government says it will bring back about 700 Myanmar migrants trapped in Malaysian detention camps within the next month, the Myanmar Embassy in Malaysia has said.

With the assistance of relevant ministries and others, five aircraft owned by Myanmar Airways International will fly them to Myanmar on August 3.

Under an arrangement by the Myanmar Embassy, over 10,000

Myanmar migrants left Malaysia and returned home between 1 January and 22 July this year.

Social organizations and individual well-wishers have made contributions for migrants who cannot afford to buy air tickets.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says it is continuing to scrutinize cases and make necessary arrangements to send migrants back to their motherland.—

LOCAL Business



A farmer harvests rice in central Myanmar. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Myanmar set to become major rice exporter

MYANMAR promises to become a major rice exporting country, an industry expert said on Sunday.

Myanmar is gearing up to reach the top place in exporting the rice to the world market to be able to beat top exporters Vietnam and Thailand.

But the country needs to make a sustained effort to manufacture rice of a high quality to be able to penetrate the international markets, especially the EU market, said Professor Vo Tong Xuan.

Myanmar is targeting Kuwait as its rice buyer and is also making

attempts to be able to export rice to the Middle East and Africa, he added.

Myanmar is now expanding its market to penetrate the markets of Australia, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and India.—200

Fees for tourism industry licenses to be cut by half

Fees for all licenses granted by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT) will be reduced by 50 per cent starting from 1st October, said U Tint Thwin, the director-general of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

“The licenses granted by the ministry are: hotel licenses, tourism licenses, tour guide licenses and tourist transport business licenses. License fees are different from one another. We will scale

down fees for all license to 50 per cent and also relax the rules requiring submission of recommendations,” he added.

The new rule will come into effect starting from 1st October. Those seeking licenses before then will have to pay the original prescribed fees.

The ministry warned that people who run hotels and tourism businesses without a license will be fined Ks50,000 and/or jailed for

up to three years under section 23 of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Law.

It added that action will be taken against those engaged in travel agencies without licenses upon the lapse of the awareness campaign period.

“We will encourage the hoteliers, motel proprietors and travel agents to hold licence during the awareness promotion period,” U Tint Thwin said.—200

Fishing block tenders to be bidden in Mon state

TENDERS for fishing blocks in Thanlwin, Attayan and Gyaing rivers are going to be bidden today, an official from the Fisheries Department of Mon State said.

There are a total of 102 fishing blocks in Mon State including: 50 in Mawlamyine, 20 Kyaukmayaw, 3 blocks in Mudon, 24 in Chaungson and 5 in Paung Township.

According to the tender rules, these fishing blocks can be put out for tender five times. This is the first time the fishing blocks have been put out to tender in these areas.

A total of 98 fishing blocks from Mawlamyine, Kyaukmayaw, Mudon and Chaungson have earned about Ks600million in last fiscal year.—200

Myanmar agarwood set for export in 2017

MYANMAR is planning to export agarwood and its oil as it has a high supply and the value of the particular wood has increased, according to the Myanmar Agarwood Producers and Exports Association (MAPEA).

The interest has come from the Middle East and from the Americas, its main purpose is for oils and perfumes. The main difficulty the organisation has currently is with providing required

documents requested from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

“The market price for a kilogram of agarwood or oil fetches between K20-30m,” said U Kyaw Htun Win. U Kyaw Htun Win also added that the countries interested want more than the country can currently offer, and that the tree is mainly used domestically for sculptures that have an alluring scent.—Myitmakha News Agency

Kyat depreciates in June

INFLATION has risen by 0.19 per cent compared to that of May, with an annual inflation rate of 12.14 per cent as of June, according to an announcement released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

The inflation rate per annum based on the consumer price index was 12.14 per cent as of June this year, and was 11.95 per cent in May. The rate compared to June 2015 and 2016 is 11.19 per cent.

According to the CSO's monthly consumer price index and inflation rate, the consumer price index this year also in-

creased when compared to the previous year: 201.14 per cent in June, 2015 and 223.65 per cent in June, 2016.

This fiscal year, the inflation rate was about 11.68 per cent. The inflation rate was the highest in Haka, Chin State in June, 2016, with an average inflation rate of 30.45 per cent. Loikaw, Kaya State and Sittwe, Rakhine State followed Haka with an inflation rate of 21.81 per cent and 20.97 per cent respectively in June this year. Myitkyina, Hpa-An and Dawei are the towns to have the lowest rates of inflation per annum as of June, 2016.—200



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Eight dead, more than 20 missing after boat capsizes off Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian authorities have recovered the bodies of eight Indonesians and are searching for more than 20 who are still missing after their boat capsized off the southern state of Johor on Saturday night.

Search and rescue teams recovered the bodies of two men and two women as of Sunday afternoon, adding to the four that were found after the incident on Saturday night, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) said in a statement.

The dead and missing were among more than 60 people on the boat that capsized at around 9.45pm Saturday night while on its way to nearby Batam in Indonesia the statement added.

“A total of 34 victims were rescued... the survivors are now with Johor Immigration while the dead bodies were handed over to the police for further action.”

The authorities are currently continuing the search within a five nautical mile radius of the location where the boat capsized.—Reuters

Nepal's PM quits just before no confidence vote after allies depart

KATHMANDU — Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Oli resigned on Sunday, nine months after coming to power, minutes before parliament was to vote on a no confidence motion he was likely to lose. Oli, 64, was forced to quit after allies of his multi-party coalition deserted the government

accusing him of not honouring power sharing deals that helped install him as prime minister in October. “I have already submitted my resignation to the President when I met her before coming to the house,” said Oli in a speech in parliament just ahead of the scheduled no confidence vote.—Reuters



Tens of thousands of people attend a funeral procession to carry the body of Kem Ley, an anti-government figure and the head of a grassroots advocacy group, 'Khmer for Khmer' who was shot dead on 10 July to his hometown, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 24 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thousands join funeral procession for Cambodian government critic

PHNOM PENH — Thousands of people attended a funeral procession in Cambodia's capital on Sunday for a prominent government critic, Kem Ley, whose killing has raised fears about political violence in the run-up to elections.

Kem Ley was shot dead in a shop in Phnom Penh on 10 July. Police have arrested a suspect and say they believe the motive for the murder was a debt. Government critics in a country with a long record of violent politics believe Kem Ley was killed because of his work as an activist and his political analysis though they say there is no evidence for that.

“I am here to accompany him for the last time,” said Chhouk Da, 28, a volunteer helping to direct traffic as the procession made its way with Kem Ley's body in a refrigerated glass casket on a truck, flanked by Buddhist monks.

“He was just helping the nation,” said Chhouk Da who was wearing a T-shirt with the words “Wipe your tears, continue your journey”. The killing comes at a time of rising political tension between Prime Minister Hun Sen and an opposition hoping to challenge his 30-year grip on power in local elections in 2017 and a general election in 2018.

Members of the op-

position and activists have been jailed on charges they say were trumped up by the government as part of a crackdown to mute critics. Mourners wearing white shirts held small flags, lotus flowers and pictures of Kem Ley, 46, as the procession including motorbikes and cars moved out of the capital to Kem Ley's home province of Takeo, about 70 km (40 miles) to the south.

Anti-riot police were on guard outside government buildings along the route.

Human rights group Licadho said the procession was at least 8 km (5 miles) long with thousands of people also lining the route.

A police video posted

online showed the arrested suspect, Chuop Somlap, 38, whose name means “meet to kill”, saying he killed the political commentator over a \$3,000 debt.

The United States has called for a credible investigation. The European Union and United Nations have expressed concern about political tension. Human Rights workers say the killing is bound to have a chilling effect on political activism. “The assassination of Kem Ley — a calamity in itself — sadly reaffirms the primacy of violence in the politics of Cambodia,” John Coughlan, a researcher at Amnesty International, said in a statement.—Reuters

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Chief Executive Officer - Nakagawa Kiyoshi

ceo@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye

ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe

dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Chief Proof Reader & Translator - Ye Myint

Expatriate Consultant Editors

Alec Wilmot

cconsultanteditor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Jaidan Coonan

Chief Translator & Editor

Kyaw Thura,

editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Editor

Ye Htut Tin (Local News)

editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

International Editors

Tun Tun Naing (Editor)

intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor)

Translators

Khaing Thanda Lwin,

reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Hay Mar Tin Win,

translator@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Ei Myat Mon, Tin Nwe Lynn

Chief Reporter

Tun Aung Kyaw, reporter2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Reporters

Soe Soe Yu, Thein Ko Lwin (Nay Pyi Taw Bureau),

Khin Mg Win (Mandalay Bureau)

Computer Team

Tun Zaw (Chief of Computer Team), Thein Ngwe,

Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe, Nyei Zaw Moe,

Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win, Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Thai police charge two eight-year-old girls who tore down pink lists

BANGKOK — Two 8-year-old girls in Thailand have been charged for violating campaigning rules ahead of a contentious referendum next month after tearing voter lists off a wall because they liked the pink paper they were printed on, police said on Sunday.

The military government has clamped down on dissent ahead of the 7 August vote on a military-backed constitution that it says will ensure stability in a country rocked by political turmoil for more than a decade.

The girls were charged with obstructing the referendum process and destroying public property after tearing down the lists posted out-

side a school, said Damrong Phetpong, police commander in the northern province of Kamphaeng Phet.

“They confessed to tearing down the voter lists because they liked the color pink,” Damrong told Reuters.

He said they would not face punishment because they were so young.

The referendum will be the first big test of the public's opinion of the military government since it came to power after a May 2014 coup. Critics, including major political parties, say the draft charter would give the military too much power over elected governments, and would not resolve differences between populist political forces and



An activist of the Resistant Citizen, against the junta-backed constitution seals her mouth with duct tape and holds a placard reading “7 Reasons To Not Accept Constitution” during gathered to hold activities against the draft constitution, ahead of the August 7 referendum in front of the Election Commission Office in Bangkok, Thailand, on 15 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

the military-dominated establishment. The government, which appears increasingly jittery ahead of the vote, has brought in a law banning

discussion of the constitution and lobbying, both for and against, with a 10-year prison sentence for anyone who breaks it.—Reuters

Hunt for missing Indian Air Force plane goes into third day

MUMBAI — The massive hunt for an Indian Air Force plane that went missing in stormy monsoon weather over the Bay of Bengal on Friday with 29 people on board dragged into a third day on Sunday.

Air Force and Navy officials said the search was continuing but no signs of any wreckage had so far been found.

Local media channels reported that clear skies and improved weather on Sunday could aid on-going search efforts, which India's Defence Ministry said on Saturday were hampered by choppy seas and thick monsoon clouds in the

search area.

Sixteen ships, a submarine and six aircraft are searching for the plane that disappeared on a routine re-supply flight to remote islands in the Bay of Bengal on Friday.

The Russian-made AN-32 was on its way to Port Blair, the capital of India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, when it vanished from radar.

There were 21 military personnel on board the missing plane including six crew. The remainder were civilians and some family members of soldiers deployed on the islands.—Reuters



Indian Air Force's transport aircrafts Antonov An-32 (foreground) and Dornier Do 228 are seen from the air traffic control at the Yelahanka Air Force Station ahead of Air Force Day on the outskirts of Bengaluru, India, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ramos accepts Duterte's offer to be special envoy to China

MANILA — Former Philippine President Fidel Ramos told reporters on Saturday that he had accepted the offer of President Rodrigo Duterte to be special envoy to China, media reports said.

"I have been cleared by my doctors at the Makati Medical Centre," the Inquirer website quoted Ramos as saying in Davao City after a two-hour meeting with Duterte at the Marco Polo Hotel in southern Phil-

ippines. Ramos, who has been the president of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998, said he met Duterte to clarify what his specific role would be, the Inquirer report said.

Ramos has earlier admitted that he wears a pacemaker but insisted that he is up and about and ready to perform the job.

The ABS-CBN reported that Ramos will attend the National Security Council meet-

ing on Monday after Duterte's State of the Nation address at the House of Representatives. The Malacanang presidential palace has yet to officially announce details of the Ramos-Duterte meeting.

On 14 July, Duterte bared his plan to send Ramos to Beijing to help kickstart bilateral talks over strained relations between the two countries. Tensions between China and the Philippines

heightened in recent years over territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

In 2013, the Philippine government under former President Benigno Aquino unilaterally initiated an arbitration case against China over the dispute to a court of arbitration in The Hague.

The court issued its ruling on the dispute on 12 July, which China has rejected as illegal.—Xinhua

Japan urges nations to deny North Koreans work to cut nuke-linked cash

TOKYO — The Japanese government has been stepping up efforts with the United States and South Korea to urge countries that have been accepting workers from North Korea to no longer do so in a bid to cut off financing for Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development plans, sources close to the matter said on Saturday.

Defying UN Security Council resolutions and warnings from the international community, North Korea has conducted four nuclear tests, most recently in January, as well as rocket launches using ballistic missile technology.

At a time when Japan along with the United States and South Korea remain on alert for a possible fifth nuclear test by the North, the three countries have been trying since spring to root out one of the sources of North Korea's finances — foreign currency earned by North Korean workers abroad, the sources said. The estimated number of North Koreans working abroad is now between 50,000 to 60,000 and the annual amount of remittance is \$500 million. Pyongyang systematically sends people abroad to work as an important source of foreign exchange.

For North Koreans, their major destinations for work are Russia and China, part of the council's five veto-wielding permanent members along with Britain, France and the United States. Including Russia and China, around 20 countries from Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa also accept North Koreans, the sources said, adding the number has been expanding since North Korean leader Kim Jong Un came to power after the death of his father and longtime ruler Kim Jong Il in December 2011.—Kyodo News

World's largest amphibious aircraft made in China

GUANGZHOU — China has completed production of a massive amphibious aircraft that it plans to use to fight forest fires and perform marine rescue missions.

The AG600 rolled off a production line in the southern city of Zhuhai on Saturday, in what aviation observers see as a milestone for the country.

The aircraft has a maximum take-off weight of 53.5 tonnes, a maximum cruising speed of 500 km per hour, a maximum flight

range of 4,500 km, and a maximum endurance of 12 hours, according to state aircraft maker the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC).

The 37-metre-long AG600 with a wingspan of 38.8 metres is by far the world's largest amphibian aircraft, about the size of a Boeing 737, according to AVIC deputy general manager Geng Ru-guang. In addition to taking off and landing like an ordinary plane, the AG600 can also take off and land from stretches of water that

are at least 1,500 metres long, 200 metres wide and 2.5 metres deep.

It is destined to become an important part of China's resources for dealing with emergencies. According to the original design, it can collect 12 tonnes of water in 20 seconds, and transport up to 370 tonnes of water on a single tank of fuel.

With excellent maneuverability and a relatively wide range of search scope, the AG600 is capable of rescuing up to 50 people far offshore. Besides, it is very useful

in developing and exploiting marine resources, being adaptable to conduct marine environmental monitoring, resource detection and transportation.

It is the result of nearly seven years of work by a group of 70 aircraft component manufacturers and research teams with over 150 institutes from 20 provinces and municipalities in China. The development and production of the plane received government approval in 2009.

"The AG600 is like a ship that can fly, with advanced gas-water dynamic engineering and underwater corrosion resistance technology," said Huang Lingcai, chief designer of the plane.

According to the AVIC, the AG600 will mainly target the domestic market. Seventeen intent orders have been placed so far.

The unveiling of the AG600 came shortly after Chinese heavy transport aircraft the Y-20 officially entered military service on 7 July and China's first large passenger aircraft, the C919, rolled off the final assembly line in November 2015. Geng described the AG600 as "the latest breakthrough in China's aviation industry, which demonstrates an overall improvement of China's national strength and research capacity."—Xinhua



Amphibious aircraft AG600 rolls off a production line in Zhuhai, south China's Guangdong Province, on 23 July 2016. The aircraft, which has a maximum take-off weight of 53.5 tonnes and a maximum flight range of 4,500 km, will be used to fight forest fires and perform marine rescue missions. The AG600 is by far the world's largest amphibian aircraft, about the size of a Boeing 737. PHOTO: XINHUA

Opinion

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

Insecurity undermines development

Kyaw Thura

There is an inextricable connection between peace and sustainable development. At a time when development is a significant issue on the agenda of every government, the political situation in the country calls for immediate action to make political and social institutions at all levels more inclusive, effective and accountable. However, one thing to bear in mind is that a lack of trust results from a lack

of transparency. In this respect, any failure to guarantee access to justice for all individuals will give rise to instability which can turn to violence and armed conflicts. Any form of conflict is regarded as a major hindrance to political stability and will impede economic and social development. It is, therefore, absolutely vital for government to take the lead in the establishment of open and accountable institutions to promote peace-

ful and inclusive societies.

In fact, peace and good governance are the core elements of the wellbeing of all citizens. The onus is, therefore, on all the decision makers to secure peaceful societies and effective institutions by removing every obstacle to the full realisation of their peace initiative. In addition, researchers have long recognised inclusion, capacity and accountability as the three dimensions of good gov-

ernance. They have also stated that dynamic leaders are able to view limited development as a contributor to a vicious cycle of violence and conflict.

On the whole, it is widely recognised that sustainable development remains a remote dream in the absence of peace and security. History has revealed that armed conflict and civil insecurity undermine our country's development potential.

Civic Duty is Key to the Nation Building Process

Khin Maung Myint

There is no denying that all aspects of development: ranging from peace, unity, mindset, health, higher education, vocational trainings, skilled personnels, industries, transportation, communication, information technologies, E-government, E-commerce, E-banking, E-education, sports, to anything you can think of, would contribute towards the nation building process. However, I'm of the opinion that civic duty plays a key role in the nation building.

Many a writer had contributed articles touching on the subject of the nation building. Their approaches varied and covered a wide range of very useful and tangible ideas and suggestions and examples learned from the experiences of other countries. I'm grateful to them for their endeavours to enlighten us and introduce us to the very valuable informations they provided. However, I haven't come across many articles that emphasize the role of civic duty in the nation building process. There had been some casual mentions of civic duties in very few articles, including some of mine, in the past. Thus in this article I intend to highlight the key role that the civic duty plays

in the nation building process.

All citizens have to fulfil their civic duties to be worthy citizens of the country they live in or call it their home. Here, I would like to clarify the word citizen. For the purpose of this article it represents everyone who lives in a particular country, irrespective of their nationalities or citizenship. In other words they may be expatriates or natives. As everyone dwelling in any country, whether one be a native or an expat, has the duty to observe the laws and orders of that country, thus I assume that they also have obligations to observe the civic duties of that country.

Before proceeding any further, I think I should mention the generally accepted definition of the civic duty. It is defined as an unwritten rule that says citizens of a country owe some kind of loyalty and allegiance to their government. In return they receive protection and civil rights from the government. Citizens should be mindful that with the rights come the responsibilities. Thus, it is also defined as an action or responsibility expected of every member of a society. Generally accepted examples of responsibilities include obeying the laws, paying taxes to the government, voting in elections and doing volunteer works. The volunteerism

could take many forms, such as serving in a shelter, raising money for charity, working as a volunteer fire fighter, advocating for political and social issues or doing communal works -- to mention a few examples.

Though civic duties are not mandated by law in most countries, it is the responsibility of those living in any country, to observe their civic duties in return for the protections and rights they are receiving from that country. In the beginning of this article, one may recall that I had included expatriates as citizens, though they may not have a citizenship status of the country they are living in or working, they too have the obligations to abide by the laws and orders of that country, which is analogous to observing the civic duty.

People often take civic duty or responsibility to a higher level: above and beyond what is expected of them. Many people help out in the community or advocate for groups who are lacking a voice. They provide an excellent example for the rest of their community by always following the laws and rules and helping out when possible. They encourage people to stand up for what they believe in and do everything they can to promote goodwill within their neighbourhoods, cities and coun-

try. They would not hesitate to sacrifice to help others, especially in times of emergencies. People who set out to be leaders must have a strong sense of civic responsibility. They must be willing to show they are honest, ethical and care about others.

Besides the above mentioned general definitions and concepts of civic duty, I would like to take it a step further and state my ideas in connection with the civic duty. I strongly believe that if everyone of us are dutiful in observing the civic duty in every aspect of our daily lives, we would be able to create a disciplined and developed country in no time. By that, I meant to say that if everyone observes the basic civic duties by obeying the rules, laws, community and social values and customs, the undesirable and despicable problems, such as: reckless littering, stray dog problems, flooding in the city due to blocked drains, traffic jams, encroachments of sidewalks by indiscriminate businesses and vendors, noise pollutions due to inconsiderate use of loudspeakers, jumping of queues in public places, accidents due to reckless drivings and endless list of such problems would disappear for sure.

Furthermore, the civic duty is, in my opinion, somehow connected to the mindsets, morals

and manners of the people. A person who has a positive mindset, good morals and manners is a person who also observes the civic duty diligently, while a persons who do not observe the civic duties are those who possess negative mindsets and lacks proper morals and manners. In other words, the observance of the civic duty and the mindsets, morals and manners of the people are interrelated. As the people are the main players in the building of a nation, my conclusion is that the civic duty is the key to the nation building process. This is my personal opinion and may not agree with the generally accepted definitions or concepts of the civic duty. However, I sincerely believe that my perception would be acceptable to most of the readers.

During my schooling days, the State-run schools taught Civics, which dealt with the civic duty and the Christian Missionary schools taught Morals and Manners as extra-curriculum subjects. Both the subjects trained the students to become responsible, law abiding and well-behaved persons later in life. One or both of those subjects should be reintroduced in our schools today to breed responsible and civic duty-conscious citizens who would contribute greatly towards the nation building process.

Czech maize thrives in Myanmar soil

FURTHER attempts to grow grains of maize from the Czech Republic within the river basins of the Maykha, Malikha and Ayeyarwady Delta will be made during the coming months of September and October, according to the Myanmar Maize Producers Association (MMPA).

Plans to continue to plant the

maize grain samples come after the success of initial tests, to four acres of farmland in each Kayah, Kayin and Shan States on 20 May earlier this year, have reportedly yielded good prospects that export of the maize could break into the European market.

As maize seeds from Myanmar cannot be manufactured in

the country, maize grains of the Thai CP company have to be planted instead, but as this grain of maize is absent from the 70 internationally recognized types, it is reportedly cultivated solely for consumption by animals.

"We made an initial test planting of the maize seed samples. Come September 20 acres

of land within the Ayeyarwady Region will be used for further growing of the maize seeds," said U Min Khine, chair of the MMPA.

If maize growers within Myanmar were to change to planting a grain of maize on par with international standards, it would undoubtedly open up trade from international markets, while expansion of the domestic market would see an appreciation from

the current declining value of maize.

Previously, it would take 45 days from the beginning of planting for maize plants to start to sprout corn, whereas the recently test planted Czech Republic maize grain samples have reportedly flourished within just 30 days, half the time of grain currently employed by the majority of maize farmers in Myanmar.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Better Transport Policies, Investments to Boost Myanmar's Growth

STRATEGIC investments and new initiatives in the transport sector can propel Myanmar to reach its high growth potential and reduce poverty and inequality, says a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) policy note.

The Myanmar: Transport Sector Policy Note presents a comprehensive review of the country's transport landscape and identifies interventions that can be implemented in the short, medium and long term. High impact infrastructure investments will enable the Government of Myanmar and other key stakeholders to put the transport sector on a self-sustaining development path, according to Asian Development Bank.

"Myanmar's future is full of great potential," said Bambang Susantono, ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development. "The new government is ready to make use of its abundant and innate resources to eradicate poverty and ensure growth for everyone. This includes providing access to a modern and safe transport system for all."

Twenty million people, or about half the rural population, live in villages without access to

an all-season road in Myanmar, which trails its Southeast Asian neighbors in transport infrastructure. The report notes that \$45 to \$60 billion is required in transport investments by 2030, and these should be coupled with streamlining institutions and strengthening cross-ministerial collaboration.

The in-depth study provides policy frameworks and subsector reviews that will provide policymakers, donors, and private investors the opportunity to help prioritize transport investments for railways, river transport, rural roads and access, trunk roads, and urban transport. Thematic reports on road safety and road user charges are also part of the study.

The study was released at a policy discussion attended by U Thant Sin Maung, Minister of Transport and Communication; U Win Khaing, Minister of Construction; Winfried Wicklein, ADB Country Director in Myanmar; Hideaki Iwasaki, ADB Director for Southeast Asia Transport and Communications Division; Tyrrell Duncan, ADB Technical Advisor for Transport; and Mr. Susantono.—GNLM



Tatmadaw members of Thanlyin Station and Yangon Station of Yangon Command clearing bushes.

Cleaning up surroundings of historical ancient Sandawshin Kyaikkhauk Pagoda

TATMADAW members of Thanlyin Station and Yangon Station of Yangon Command carried out the collaborative sanitation work in the surroundings of the Ancient Historical Sandawshin Kyaikkhauk Pagoda in Thanlyin town, Yangon on Saturday

23 July.

The Tatmadaw men cleared up bush and weeds around the pagoda and cleaned the precinct of the pagoda in Thanlyin town.

Moreover, the soldiers cleaned the inside and outside of the students' hostel in SouthOak-

kalapa Township.

Similarly, soldiers of Taninthayi station and their families cleaned up grass, rubbish in the Yazamingalar Reserve Lake of Chaungngai Monastery in Taninthayi town on Saturday 23 July. —C-in-C's Office

To take retributive action against those who make hate speech

Tommy Pauk

The entire people of Myanmar are ardently working together with the democratically elected government to upgrade our country to be able to firmly stand stall among the nations with the same standard in economy, education, living standard etc. As we have already known that our country lagged behind the other neighboring countries for several years due to internal conflicts or civil war and mismanagement of the successive regimes. We have human resources, natural resources, water resources and abundant arable lands. Being patriotic, we do not want our country's position to be lower than any other countries in every aspect of development. The country Myanmar represents all diverse national races in Myanmar and whose GDP must be as equal as other people in the South East Asia. We are striving hard for our people to prosper and for our country's economy to grow with concerted efforts in cooperation with the incumbent government in unison. Amid doing hard work for rehabilitating the nation by the people, some unscrupu-

lous persons intend to destroy the stability and unity.

Besides, they create conflict among the national races and people professing different religious faith. Public should be aware of their conspiracy and find out the mastermind behind the curtain. All the peace loving citizens dislike and denounce the malicious intention of the marplots by meddlesome persons. In fact these persons are the destructive elements for our country which is already on the road to democratization process. The persons who make hate speech are the trouble makers as well as destructive elements for peace and tranquility in the country. Hate speech is defined in the Wikipedia as follows;

Hate speech, outside the law, is speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, or sexual orientation. In the law of some countries, hate speech is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it incites violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group. The law may identify a

protected group by certain characteristics.

We all must avoid hate speech in order to maintain peace and unity in our society though we have diverse culture, diverse religion and diverse ethnicity. Even then, we ought not to despise or insult others those who are of different religion, race and culture in our country. In other words, those who belong to different religion, race and culture are obliged to respect and understand our faith, tradition and race. Hate speech is a kind of misleading technique to attack or fuel a certain community. The communal violence is created by the hate speech indeed. In some countries, due to the hate speech, the communities were plunged into chaos and mayhem. We should be mindful to avoid hate speech and be aware of the impact of hate speech on every society across the world.

The governments concerned tackled difficulties to restore the security and order in these countries. The thoughtful and sensible persons in any society do not support or create hate speech. They utterly avoid hate speech and bring the marplots to justice. This shows that all good and thought-

ful citizens wish their country to be peaceful, safe and secure at all time. The good and thoughtful citizens always cooperate with law enforcement authorities in investigating who the destructive elements are.

In Myanmar, the incumbent government is going to promulgate a law which would forbid the hate speech and prescribe the penalties for those commit or break the law. This is an encouraging news or plan because the hate speech is the threat to any community and society. We the peace-loving citizens heartily welcome the law which obstructs hate speech in Myanmar. Anyone who commits hate speech must pay for his sin because that act impairs the peace and tranquility of a certain society or community severely. Normally, all the religious teachings, spiritual enlightenment and practices are based on compassion, loving kindness and humanity. Despite having goodness in any religion, a very handful of unscrupulous persons insult people who believe in different religious faiths by using hate speech as an attacking tool. Unfortunately, sometimes, the simple and naïve persons fall into the trap of hate speech and they

become the accomplices of the makers of hate speech. Thus the group which creates hate speech gets a certain number of members by using the tactic of religious indoctrination. These members are being indoctrinated by the mastermind to launch hate speech as possible as they can. These persons behave as if they protect and propagate the certain religious faith. Actually, hate speech makers are merely the destructive elements in the society. They are neither patriots nor the pious persons of a certain faith. They do not do pious acts but they do only hostile acts to different races and people who believe in different religions indeed.

The communal violence and religious conflicts are caused by hate speech. Their acts do not contribute to the country's socio-economic development. We sensibly denounce the act of hate speech and persons who create hate speech in our society. It is our bounden duty to bring the destructive elements and hate speech makers to justice so that the enduring peace and unity will ever prevail in our society. Hatred leads to chaos and compassion brings happiness in any human society indeed!



A Syria Democratic Forces (SDF) fighter walks in the silos and mills of Manbij after the SDF took control of it, in Aleppo Governorate, Syria, on 1 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Islamic State shuns withdrawal offer in surrounded Syrian city

BEIRUT — Islamic State shunned an offer for its fighters to withdraw safely from the Syrian city of Manbij and clashes with US-backed forces still raged after its expiry, a spokesman for Washington-backed forces said on Saturday.

The jihadist group did, however, propose a deal to allow the safe passage of critically ill civilians to areas controlled by the US-backed forces in exchange for allowing wounded IS fighters to leave the city, the

spokesman said.

The Syria Democratic Forces alliance, made up of Arab and Kurdish fighters and backed by the United States, made rapid advances against the jihadists last month after launching a campaign to flush them out of territory along the Turkish border, through which they had for years moved weapons and fighters.

The SDF quickly surrounded Manbij, but the fight to take the city has been tougher, with

slow advances inside it in recent weeks.

On Thursday the SDF-allied Manbij Military Council said Islamic State militants would be allowed to leave the city with light weapons, without a fight, if they left within 48 hours.

The offer was the idea of local actors, the Council's spokesman Sharfan Darwish said, without elaborating.

"The deadline is approaching, time is almost up ... and the battles are continuing. As far as

we're concerned, the situation has not changed," he said early on Saturday, adding that there had been no apparent response from IS to the initiative.

"Our steps towards liberating Manbij are going ahead."

Darwish said later clashes were still going on after the expiry of the offer.

Darwish did not say whether the SDF would accept the IS proposal on wounded fighters and sick civilians. He said IS had been using civilians as "human

shields".

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said clashes continued inside Manbij, and that the US-led coalition fighting IS was bombing parts of the city and nearby areas. Activists say dozens of civilians have been killed this week in air strikes in the city and to the north, and the opposition Syrian National Coalition called for a suspension of the air strikes while the incidents are investigated.—Reuters

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Women in male-dominated career fields watch a unique US presidential campaign

LOS ANGELES — Dr. Linda Liau works with the precision of a master, peering into a patient's head with magnifying loupes as she removes a brain tumour.

When Liau was called into an emergency room as a surgeon more than 20 years ago to help treat a car crash victim, another member of the medical team assumed she was a nurse.

Even today, the 49-year-old neurosurgeon sometimes gets a surprised reaction from new patients who were expecting a man.

Such an assumption is common in career fields dominated by men.

Neurosurgery, welding, venture capitalism, construction, film directing and the electrical trade — these are six jobs where US women have made inroads but are still vastly outnumbered.

And one position, US president, has never been filled by a woman. With presumptive Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton seeking to become the first to break that barrier, several women in career fields made up mostly of men told Reuters that they saw her candidacy as significant.

"I think ultimately the goal would be to be gender-blind completely, so the fact that we're even talking about having a female president as a novelty is, in a way, sad," Liau said.



Welding instructor Darlene Thompson, 45, poses for a portrait at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College in Los Angeles, California, United States, on 27 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

On a construction site, Joundi White, 31, has often been reminded of her gender. Early in her career, the reminders were pet names such as "sweetheart" and "honey." Now, she can rarely shake the sense that she is outnumbered.

"I eat lunch alone," White said. "I don't have people to relate to at work."

"Don't get me wrong, I identify more with the guys, but to them, ultimately, I'm just a girl."

Wearing a hard hat, White passes under heavy steel beams, walking along the commuter train tracks she is helping build in her working-class neighbourhood in

southern Los Angeles.

Welder Darlene Thompson, 45, is also no stranger to the construction site, or to the hostility that she says women often encounter in the field. These days, she teaches others as an instructor at Los Angeles Trade Technical College.

In a heavy coat and blue gloves, she looks from under her helmet at the white-hot flame of a welding torch.

It was a fight to learn these skills. More than a decade ago, when she began receiving job training as a welfare recipient, Thompson had to argue for the chance to study welding. Public assistance

administrators wanted to push her toward cosmetology or culinary arts, she said.

Thompson did not say how she would cast her ballot in November but said she would not vote for Clinton just because the candidate is a woman.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's slogan has resonated with her.

"When they talk about 'Let's make America great again,'" Thompson said, "what I think of is the companies in Detroit, the automotive industry going back to Detroit and giving back jobs."

A well-paid job as an electrician has opened up opportunities for Hannah Cooper, 28. For one thing, she was able to buy a house in the expensive Los Angeles real estate market.

Sometimes, she will encounter someone on a construction site who knows her mother, Kelly Cooper, who also was an electrician.

"Everyone remembers her because there's only a few women," Cooper said.

Kelly Cooper began as an apprentice in 1975.

"You have to have thick skin to be anyone in the trade," she said. "To be a woman in the trade, you have to have a particularly thick skin."

She is now director of con-

struction for the Los Angeles Department of General Services.

Eva Ho, 44, is a woman working in the technology field, which is unusual enough. But she is also a venture capitalist, which is rarer still.

"In some ways the V.C. career has really been an old boys club, and it's been dominated by white men for the last three or four decades," Ho said.

A graduate of Harvard and Cornell, Ho said she was drawn to work in technology because of its ability to drive social change. But she came late to it, never having used a computer until college.

For the Burtons, who work together as filmmakers through their company Five Sisters Productions, their career had its seeds in their childhood as the daughters of a writer and a former professional musician.

Both parents were feminists who thought their five daughters could do anything, said Ursula Burton, a director, producer and actor.

Now the possibility of a female president could help create more opportunities for women, she said.

"Having a woman president opens up the presidency for girls," Burton said, "and it will shift the perception for boys of what girls can do." —Reuters

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Spy agencies struggle to spot threats from lone, mentally ill attackers

WASHINGTON — Recent attacks on civilians in the US and Europe have exposed a gap in the intelligence community's efforts to track suspected extremists and prevent mass killings, a half dozen American, British and French counterterrorism officials told Reuters.

The attacks have a common theme of being carried out by actors with an apparent history of mental illness — but few if any direct links to extremist groups, the officials told Reuters.

From both a legal and a strategic perspective, counterterrorism investigators globally are focused on plots by established violent groups with known ideologies, such as Islamic State. In the US, laws designed to protect citizens from intrusive government spying can limit investigations of individuals unless they have provable ties to foreign terror groups.

Counterterrorism officials told Reuters that the assailants in a recent spate of mass killings all had histories of apparent mental illness. They included the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida; the murder of a British parliamentarian in Northern England; the killings of police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Dallas, Texas; the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice, France; and Friday's mass

shooting at a German shopping mall. The counterterrorism officials in the US and Europe spoke on condition they and their organisations remained anonymous.

On Saturday, Munich police chief Hubertus Andrae said the Munich mall gunman, identified in news reports as Ali David Sonboly, had undergone psychiatric treatment before the attack and was obsessed with mass killings. He had no criminal record, and had no known connections to extremist groups. The German-Iranian 18-year-old, a local resident, shot and killed nine people after opening fire near Olympia shopping mall. The tactics in such attacks contrast sharply with the attacks in Paris last November and Brussels in March, which were carried out by groups of militants with direct links to Islamic State.

Existing systems for collecting intelligence on extremists are not set up to identify individuals with a history of mental illness who come into contact with people or propaganda that could incite them to engage in violence, the intelligence officials told Reuters.

In the attack in Orlando, the perpetrator had viewed online jihadist propaganda, possibly produced by the Islamic State, the investigators said. But subsequent probes turned up no evidence the



People lay flowers in front of the Olympia shopping mall, where yesterday's shooting rampage started, in Munich, Germany, on 23 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Orlando shooter, Omar Mateen, had any significant connections with Islamic State or any other militant organisations.

French investigators have arrested five alleged accomplices in the Nice attacks, but they have so far found no evidence that the attack was directed by foreign militants, according to a US counterterrorism official and a French official. The case of Mateen perhaps best exemplifies the difficulty in detecting and preventing attacks by single perpetrators with a history of mental illness. Federal officials have acknowledged that, for about 10 months in 2013 and 2014, the FBI investigated Mateen after he allegedly boasted to co-workers about supposed connections to Al

Qaeda and other militant groups. While he was under investigation, the FBI placed Mateen's name in three government databases, one of which is intended to trigger additional scrutiny if an individual passes through airport or border checkpoints. But having found no evidence that Mateen had any real connections to militants, the FBI closed its investigation and his name was removed from the databases, two US intelligence officials told Reuters. The US officials said those decisions were made to comply with laws designed to limit invasive government surveillance on all Americans. Neither the CIA nor National Counterterrorism Center are allowed to collect and retain information on American suspects

who have no provable links to international terrorist groups, the two US officials said.

About three weeks before he carried out the massacre in Orlando, Mateen told an acquaintance that he was worn out from staying up all night to research psychiatric medication, the acquaintance, who asked not to be named, told Reuters. Mateen also told this person that he was worried that he had slipped into psychosis. US officials also said they are investigating the role mental health issues may have played in the shooting of police in Baton Rouge and Dallas. In both attacks, the shooters had displayed signs of apparent mental illness and extreme views before their rampages.—Reuters

Turkish president gains upper hand in power struggle

ISTANBUL — At the crossroads between a divided Europe and a convulsed Middle East, Turkey is caught in a power struggle between former Islamist allies which is shaking democratic institutions and raises questions about its future path.

Since a failed coup on 15 July, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) founded by President Tayyip Erdogan has gained the upper hand in its battle with clandestine networks in the military, judiciary and bureaucracy loyal to US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen.

This fight to the bitter end has alarmed the West and unsettled the country of 80 million, which borders the chaos in Iraq and Syria and is a Western ally against Islamic State.

Erdogan accuses Gulen of masterminding the attempted coup by a faction within the military and has rounded up more than 60,000 people in an operation which he hopes will cleanse Turkey of what he calls the Gulenist "virus".

The purges, carried out as Turkey faces attacks by Islamist State and a revived struggle with Kurdish militants, go beyond the more than 100 generals and 6,000 soldiers held, or the nearly 3,000 judges detained.



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan reviews a guard of honour as he arrives to the Turkish Parliament in Ankara, Turkey, on 22 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

They already encompass 21,000 teachers and much of the academic community, and new targets in a media already hit by years of firings and fines, jailings and closures.

"They are traitors," Erdogan told Reuters in an interview on Thursday. He described Gulen's network as "like a cancer" and said he would treat them like a "separa-

tist terrorist organisation" and root them out, wherever they may be.

Gulen, 75, denies plotting against the state and suggested the day after the abortive coup that it may have been staged to justify a crackdown on his followers.

The millions of members of Gulen's "Hizmet" (Service) movement do not outwardly identify as supporters. Since the failed coup many are going even further underground, refusing to take calls or trying to leave the country.

Some followers are dumping books in the woods and publishers are getting rid of their stocks, said Nedim Sener, an investigative journalist at Posta newspaper who wrote a book on the Gulen movement's efforts to infiltrate the state and was jailed in 2011 for more than a year.

A senior journalist at a Gulen-affiliated newspaper, speaking on condition of anonymity because he feared reprisals, said he and other editors were afraid to go to the paper's office in the days following the failed coup and that their printers refused to continue publishing.

"I advised my colleagues not to go to the office for their own safety," he said. "The newspaper has become a liability, it has just disappeared ... I'm afraid for my

family and for my life. It's dangerous to go outside."

Asked if he was a follower of Gulen's teachings, he said: "Answering this question could now be used as evidence against me. Now I could be prosecuted for a book I keep at home ... Everyone is too afraid to call their friends, worried this will cause their detention. It's a climate of fear everywhere."

Erdogan was prime minister from 2003 until 2014, when he became president. When he first came to power, he led a reinvented Muslim conservative party wary of fiercely secularist generals and judges who had closed a series of Islamist parties.

In the skirmishing that followed, and after the army and the courts tried to push aside the AKP in 2007-08, Erdogan turned for help to Gulen, whose movement had built a loyal following among police, prosecutors and civil servants.

Gulen, a Muslim imam self-exiled in Pennsylvania since 1999, has built a franchise of schools in Turkey and around the world, promoting the importance of education, scientific progress, religious coexistence and fighting poverty.

After their ascent to power,

Erdogan and the AKP became dependent on the Gulenists in their common fight against the army. It was mainly Gulenist prosecutors who, after Erdogan and his party narrowly escaped being banned in 2008, built two big conspiracy trials targeting the upper echelons of the army.

These two cases, known as Ergenekon and Sledgehammer, netted more than 40 generals, but also swept up opponents of both the ruling party and the Gulenists. It later became clear after many charges were dismissed that bogus evidence had been used.

Yet at the time, the Gulenists' apparent success in helping Erdogan break the army's grip on Turkish politics emboldened them to demand more power in the security services and the army.

"It is essentially not a struggle about ideology because their ideology is so similar. Both want to turn Turkey into a more conservative Islamised society," said one Turkey analyst who asked not to be named after the declaration of emergency laws which could hit those critical of the state.

"It is a struggle about power and that alliance broke down because of disagreement over power-sharing."—Reuters



Peru's former President Alberto Fujimori sits in court during the sentencing in his trial on charges of embezzling state funds to manipulate the media during his tenure as president, in Lima on 8 January 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Peru's Fujimori asks for pardon ahead of presidential transition

LIMA — Peru's imprisoned former authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori has filed a new request for a presidential pardon, the prime minister said on Saturday, five days before President-elect Pedro Pablo Kuczynski takes office.

It is unclear if the pardon would be decided by outgoing President Ollanta Humala, who rebuffed Fujimori's first pardon appeal in 2013, or by Kuczynski, who must govern alongside a Congress controlled by the populist party Fujimori

founded. Prime Minister Pedro Cateriano said Fujimori sent the pardon request to the justice ministry. "It will be processed according to the constitution and the law," he said on Twitter.

Fujimori, who suffers from hypertension and turns 78 next week, was jailed in 2007 and is serving a 25-year sentence for corruption and human rights abuses during his 1990-2000 government.

Hundreds of Peruvians who view Fujimori as a misunderstood hero marched in

Lima on Friday to demand he be freed from prison.

Kuczynski, who narrowly defeated Fujimori's daughter, Keiko Fujimori, in a run-off election last month, opposes giving Fujimori a pardon that would clear him of guilt.

However, Kuczynski has said he would back a law that allows ageing prisoners like Fujimori to carry out the remainder of their sentences under house arrest. Fujimori's lawyer did not immediately respond to requests for comment.—Reuters

Attacking Trump, Democrat Kaine makes campaign-trail debut

MIAMI/WASHINGTON — Democrat Tim Kaine made his first appearance on the campaign trail as Hillary Clinton's vice presidential running mate on Saturday, touting an optimistic view of America and leaping to attack Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's record.

Joining Clinton at a rally in the battleground state of Florida, the bilingual Kaine peppered Spanish-language phrases into a speech focused on introducing himself to voters unfamiliar with the low-key U.S. senator from Virginia.

Kaine criticized

Trump's recent suggestion he might not honour US security commitments to NATO in Europe, and the real estate mogul's history of casino bankruptcies and founding the failed Trump University.

"When Donald Trump says he has your back, you better watch out," Kaine said, with Clinton sitting at his side nodding. "He leaves a trail of broken promises and wrecked lives wherever he goes. We can't afford to let him do the same thing to our country."

In contrast, he said, Clinton "doesn't insult people, she listens to them.

What a novel concept." He said they shared a common creed: "Do all the good you can." Clinton unveiled her choice of Kaine late on Friday, grabbing the political spotlight from Trump, who accepted the Republican presidential nomination on Thursday night after a chaotic four-day convention.

The former secretary of state will formally be nominated as her party's presidential candidate in the 8 November election at the Democratic convention in Philadelphia, which opens on Monday. In choosing the soft-spoken Kaine, a former Richmond mayor and Vir-

ginia governor with a long establishment resume, Clinton opted for a steady and experienced hand who she hopes will offer a clear alternative to Trump's volatile campaign and his Republican vice presidential choice Mike Pence.

"Senator Tim Kaine is everything Donald Trump and Mike Pence are not. He is qualified to step into this job and lead on day one," Clinton told the Miami crowd.

Trump was unimpressed, saying on Twitter he had watched the joint appearance and "ISIS and our other enemies are drooling.



US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and Democratic vice presidential candidate Senator Tim Kaine. PHOTO: REUTERS

They don't look presidential to me!" In his speech, Kaine said he was an optimist and described his childhood in Kansas City helping his father in his metal-working

shop and his Catholic mission to Honduras, where he helped teenagers with carpentry and welding and they taught him Spanish.—Reuters

Residents flee as wildfire threatens homes in foothills near Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES — A fast-moving wildfire that has forced hundreds of people to flee from their homes in the drought-parched foothills northwest of Los Angeles had blackened some 20,000 acres by Saturday night and was threatening homes and commercial structures, fire officials said.

The so-called Sand Fire broke out shortly after 2 pm on Friday and spread quickly near Santa Clarita, about 40 miles (65 km) northwest of the city, prompting evacuation orders covering about 1,500 homes.

By late Saturday night the Southern California blaze was 10 per cent contained, and was casting a pall of thick black smoke over much of Los Angeles and threatening about 100 commercial structures.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's homicide detectives were investigating circumstances surrounding

a man found dead in an evacuation area.

Media reported a resident was found dead in a burned car, citing a neighbor who said the man's house has burned down.

Residents earlier posted pictures on social media of the sun blotted out by the towering plumes and the South Coast Air Quality Management District issued a smoke advisory, warning of unhealthy air conditions in the region.

Officials said one firefighter sustained a minor injury, and that structures had been destroyed or damaged in the Bear Divide and Sand Canyon areas.

"Because this is the fifth year of an ongoing drought we have a lot dry vegetation," Los Angeles County Fire Chief Daryl Osby told a news conference.

"Some of these fuels, they haven't burned in decades. This fire has

increased to about 11,000 acres just overnight."

Some 900 firefighters were battling the flames in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit (41 Celsius), with the aid of 28 helicopters and eight fixed-winged aircraft.

But fire managers said crews were struggling in very rugged terrain as they tried to defend homes in the community of Little Tujunga and stop the spreading blaze that is burning through chaparral and brush.

Evacuation shelters have been set up for residents in the area and about 10 roads have been closed due to the fire. A number of roads in and out of foothill communities were shut down.

The fire is one of a series this summer that have hit the drought-stricken state, where dried grass and bush land as well as high temperatures have helped fuel the blazes.—Reuters

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: 09.259.81.46.46

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Magic lights up Warner Bros' Comic-Con panel, superheroes reign

SAN DIEGO, (Calif) — Oscar-winning actor Eddie Redmayne brought the wizarding world of “Harry Potter” to real life briefly on Saturday, as he helped hand out wooden wands to the 6,500-plus audience at a Comic-Con panel and made everyone perform a spell.

Redmayne, the lead actor of “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them,” asked the audience to shout the incantation for the light-up spell “Lumos Maxima” to unveil a new trailer. “Fantastic Beasts,” due out in November, is a spin-off from the magical “Harry Potter” universe created by J.K. Rowling.

The movie’s cast remained tight-lipped about the plot and their characters, but the trailer shows “magizoologist” Newt Scamander (Redmayne) arrive in New York in 1926 with a case of magical creatures that escape, wreak havoc and face threats from the non-magical humans in the city.

Warner Bros showcased its upcoming blockbuster films at

the annual four-day San Diego convention for film and pop culture fans, including “Kong: Skull Island,” “King Arthur: Legend of the Sword,” “Suicide Squad” and the rest of its expanding DC Comics superhero universe, following in the footsteps of Disney’s blockbuster Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise.

Ben Affleck, the latest actor to don Batman’s cape and cowl, said he felt “tremendous amount of pressure” both starring in and directing the next standalone Batman movie.

“It’s terrifying and inspiring and really exciting because it’s one of most iconic, fascinating characters ever created in American drama,” he said.

The cast of 2017’s “Wonder Woman” discussed exploring the origins of the Amazonian warrior heroine played by Israeli actress Gal Gadot, and bringing a strong female lead to the male-dominated superhero movie world. This year marks the 75th anniversary of Wonder Woman’s debut in comic books.



An attendee dressed as the Flash walks the convention floor at the pop culture event Comic-Con International in San Diego, California, United States on 22 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

“Wonder Woman has the heart of a human and the strength of a goddess and combination of the two is very powerful,” Gadot said.

Batman and Wonder Woman will join forces in the “Justice League” film with Flash, Aquaman, Cyborg and Superman,

who, it was revealed Saturday, had survived the events that appeared to kill him in “Batman V Superman” earlier this year.

Rivaling Affleck’s Batman at the panel was Lego Batman, voiced by Will Arnett, the star of next year’s animated “Lego Batman Movie,” a spin-off from

2014’s “The Lego Movie.”

Animators recreated the Comic-Con panel setup in a short sketch that included a Lego version of panel moderator Conan O’Brien asking Lego Batman, Lego Joker and Lego Robin about the new film, in which Batman tackles fatherhood.—Reuters



Amid her ongoing feud with Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, pop star Taylor Swift returned to Instagram to wish her longtime friend Selena Gomez a happy 24th birthday. PHOTO: PTI

Taylor Swift breaks social media silence to wish Selena Gomez on birthday

LOS ANGELES — Amid her ongoing feud with Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, pop star Taylor Swift returned to Instagram to wish her longtime friend Selena Gomez a happy 24th birthday.

She uploaded a throwback picture of her and Selena making a heart shape with their hands. She captioned it, “Going through old pictures today, because @selenagomez just turned 24! I can’t imagine my life without you, Selena. HAPPY BIRTHDAY!” This has marked Taylor’s first Instagram post since she responded to the leak of her phone conversation with Kanye to discuss the lyrics on his Famous.

After Kim posted the record-

ing on her Snapchat last weekend, the 26-year-old diva issued a statement in which she insisted that she never heard the full song. Selena was one of the first people coming to Taylor’s defense at the time, taking to Twitter to express her disappointment over celebrities who used their voice for something unimportant. “There are more important things to talk about... Why can’t people use their voice for something that matters?” she wrote. However, she ended up being criticized by some of her fans who noticed that she herself hadn’t used her voice to speak out about various tragedies that had happened in the past few months.—PTI

Jurassic World 2 to begin production in Hawaii next year

LOS ANGELES — Production on Jurassic World 2 is slated to start early next year in Hawaii.

Juan Antonio Bayona, who replaces Colin Trevorrow as director for the Jurassic World sequel, will begin the production of the film on February 27, 2017, reported Ace Showbiz.

It’s unclear whether the fixed date is for pre-production or principal photography. However, the fixed date seems plausible for the filming as Trevorrow has said that the crew will not spend too much time in Hawaii. The majority of the filming will take place in London’s Pinewood Studios.

Jurassic World 2 would not

focus on “a bunch of dinosaurs chasing people on an island” like the previous Jurassic films.

Trevorrow said that he would focus on the idea of multiple companies cloning dinosaurs in the follow-up to Jurassic World which is scheduled for a June 22, 2018 US release. The 38-year-old filmmaker, whose dinosaur adventure film became the third-highest grossing film of all time, had said that the sequel may include more hybrid dinosaurs, like the current film’s Indominus Rex.

“(It will not be) just a bunch of dinosaurs chasing people on an island. That’ll get old real fast.

“I feel like the idea that this

isn’t always going to be limited to theme parks, and there are applications for this science that reach far beyond entertainment,” Trevorrow said. “Dr. Wu says in the film, when he’s warning Dr. Mesrani, ‘We’re not always going to be the only ones who can make a dinosaur.’ I think that’s an interesting idea that even if we don’t explore fully in this film, there is room for this universe to expand,” he added. Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard are set to reprise their respective roles, with Steven Spielberg returning as executive producer. Bayona will direct the film with the screenplay written by Trevorrow and Derek Connolly.—PTI

‘Audience don’t judge stars with box office numbers’

MUMBAI — Actor John Abraham feels that while the trade is obsessed with box office, after a point the audience do not judge a star’s popularity based on numbers.

The “Rocky Handsome” star says he is aware a film’s success or failure depends on whether viewers are connected with it, but that is not in an actor’s hands.

“I believe if a film doesn’t do well, you have to understand it didn’t connect and if it does well, it connected. But there’s nothing you can do about it. I don’t think after a point people are going to

judge your stardom or popularity based on those numbers,” John told PTI. “Trade will do that, they like doing that. Let them do that. As an audience, and the rest of us, we have to just enjoy the film,” he said. The actor, who made his debut in 2003 with “Jism”, went on to star in films like “Saaya” and “Paap”, before getting a big breakthrough with “Dhoom”.

John has since then appeared in films like “Dostana”, “Garam Masala”, “New York” and “Madrass Cafe”. The actor says he never feels the box office pressure and wants to be moved by the

script when he is signing a film.

“I don’t get affected by numbers. I really don’t get affected by the success or failure of a film. I only get affected when I sign the film, because that’s the time you should really be affected,” he said. The 43-year-old “No Smoking” actor will be next seen in “Dishoom”, which releases on July 29. Directed by Rohit Dhawan, the thriller chronicles the story of two policemen, Kabir (John) and Junaid (Varun Dhawan), who go on a 36-hour manhunt to find India’s top batsman who is missing in the Middle East.—PTI

Russian balloonist sets world record for circumnavigation



Russian adventurer Fedor Konyukhov is seen in front of his balloon as it is inflated before the start of his record attempt for a solo hot-air balloon flight around the globe near Perth, Australia, in this handout image received on 12 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PERTH — Russian adventurer Fedor Konyukhov has landed safely in a field on a private property in West Australia after setting a world record for circumnavigating the world solo in a hot air balloon.

The 64-year-old Konyukhov emerged from the balloon's gondola after more than 11 days aloft expressing his appreciation for the smell of the earth, and "how wonderful it is", according to millionaire businessman and fellow aviator Dick Smith, who was on hand to assist with the landing.

Konyukhov, who embarked on his epic journey from Northam in Western Australia on 12 July, set the record of just over 11 days when he passed above the township 100 km north east of Perth, Australian national broadcaster ABC reported earlier.

The Russian balloonist beat the previous record of 13-1/2

days set in 2002 by the late Steve Fossett.

In completing the epic journey, Konyukhov flew directly over Northam, a feat described as "incredible" by Smith.

"After going 34,000 kilometres around the world he crossed the runway where he took off from," Smith said. "That's never happened before. It was mainly luck and it's just unbelievable."

Smith completed the first solo circumnavigation of the world by helicopter in 1983.

When Konyukhov broke the record he was directly over Northam at an altitude of approximately 6,000 meters and traveling at 60 kilometres per hour, Smith said.

He said the Russian had been advised to fly for another hour in search of safer terrain on which to land.

During the journey Konyukhov flew as high as 10,000 metres and dealt with extreme temperatures — as low as minus 56 degrees Celsius — that caused his oxygen masks and drinking water to freeze, ABC reported.

Konyukhov also had to cope with the failure of his heating system and fierce electrical storms, ABC said.

On the last leg of the journey he was pushed far south toward Antarctica as he crossed the southern ocean between the Africa and Australia.

"It is scary to be so down south and away from civilization," Konyukhov wrote in one entry in a blog he updated at various points during the flight.

"This place feels very lonely and remote ... just a thick layer of cyclonic clouds below me and dark horizon to the east." —Reuters

Funky or classic? Medal ceremony gets musical makeover

RIO DE JANEIRO — Olympic organisers will bring typical Brazilian informality to the medal ceremonies at Rio 2016 with three different kinds of podium music depending on whether the sports are considered classical, pop or cool, officials said.

The 45-second bursts of music will be played as winners mount the podium to receive their medals.

Winners in sports such as fencing and equestrian will hear a more traditional sound, while

funkier tunes will play for those triumphing in newer and younger sports such as BMX biking and beach volleyball, said Christy Nicolay, executive producer of sport presentations.

A more pop sound would be played for sports such as basketball, Nicolay added.

"For the first time ever we have three different styles of victory ceremonies," Nicolay said. "This is my eighth Olympic Games and I've always wanted to do this. And music in Brazil is so

amazing that's it's a great opportunity to show that.

"There are so many sports in the summer Olympics and some of them are so different. For example the music at gymnastics would be very different to BMX, or beach volleyball would be very different to fencing. So we wanted three different styles of ceremonies." Rio de Janeiro will become the first South American nation to host the Olympic Games next month. The Games run from 5 to 21 August.—Reuters



A worker applies a coat of paint to a set of Olympic rings on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 22 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

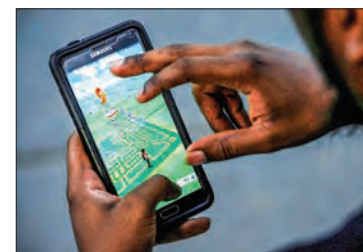
Pokemon GO blamed for illegal border crossing from Canada to US

HELENA (Montana) — Two youths unaware of their surroundings when they were playing Pokemon GO on their cell phones made an illegal border crossing this week from Canada into the United States in a remote part of Montana, US Customs and Border Patrol said.

The two, who were not identified, were found by US Border Patrol agents on Thursday, with their attention affixed to their phones as they were trying to hunt down cartoon characters on a journey that took them over the border.

"Both juveniles were so captivated by their Pokemon GO games that they lost track of where they were," said Michael Rappold, a spokesman for the agency. The two were reunited with their mothers at a nearby border patrol station, the agency said.

The game has been an unexpected success from Spain to Australia, doubling Nintendo's value since the game's launch



A virtual map of Bryant Park is displayed on the screen as a man plays the augmented reality mobile game "Pokemon Go" by Nintendo in New York City, on 11 US July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

in the United States earlier this month. Using mobile devices, players search for virtual Pokemon characters that appear to pop up at office spaces, restaurants, museums and other places. Players score points in various ways, including capturing the Pokemon characters with a flick of a finger on their phone screen.

The game was also to blame for a rash of car accidents and a slew of mishaps stemming from distracted players.—Reuters

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(25-7-2016, Monday)

06 : 00 pm	08 : 30 pm
• Weather Report	• Sayit-Wyne Girls
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	09 : 10 pm
06 : 20 pm	• Travelogue: "Anyar Myay" or Upcountry (Part- I)
• Cartoon Programme "Kung Fu Panda 2" (Part-2)	09 : 30 pm
07 : 00 pm	• Music Programme
• International Drama Series	09 : 50 pm
07 : 40 pm	• Dances
• International Drama Series	10 : 10 pm
08 : 20 pm	• Myanmar Video Music
• MRTV Entertainment Music	

From 25-7-2016 (Monday) 6:00 pm
To 26-7-2016 (Tuesday) 6:00 pm

mitv Myanmar International

(25-7-2016 07:00am ~ 26-7-2016 07:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP-1) The Culture of Pennant Pillar
07:41	Am	Elephant Catching and Scaring Trip Mile
		Stone 26
07:54	Am	Sticky Shan Snack
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Myanmar Traditional Thatched Roofs: Nipa Palm
08:42	Am	Mobile House
08:53	Am	Myanmar Puppet
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar's Traditions and Culture: The Golden Land

09:46	Am	Gold from Garbage
09:56	Am	Goldsmith
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Coconut Shell Artist
10:50	Am	A Precious Gift from Waste

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:27	Pm	Food Trip (EP-2)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste of Myanmar (Fried Flat Noodle)
08:49	Pm	Now in Yangon

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

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

Dominant Farah warms up for Rio in style

LONDON — Mo Farah returned to the scene of his 2012 Olympic glory and completed his preparations for the defence of his distance double in Rio with a crushing sub-13-minute victory in the 5,000 metres at the London Diamond League meeting on Saturday.

The Briton was never threatened in a celebrational procession, running solo for the second half of the race and putting in a late burst to cross the line in 12.59.29 — the fastest time in the world this year.

Fellow Briton Andrew Butchart outkicked veteran American Bernard Lagat for second place but they were effectively in a separate race, coming in 15 seconds behind.

“I just wanted to go for it. It was my last chance to run quick before Rio. This track has so much meaning for me and I got amazing support from the crowd,” said Farah, who grew up in London after leaving Somalia as a boy.

“Rio is right around the

corner and I’m in good shape. I just have to keep my feet on the ground and stay patient but I’m excited.”

Farah will start as favourite in both the 5,000 and 10,000m in Rio next month — only Finn Lasse Viren has retained both titles — while at the other end of the scale Dafne Schippers will seek the 100m/200m sprint double.

The Dutchwoman, now totally converted to the track after giving up the heptathlon, will be the woman to beat over 200 and looked supremely relaxed as she easily triumphed in her preferred distance in 22.13 seconds.

“I’m happy for now, I came here to win the race and I feel like the time will come in Rio,” said Schippers, who last year won the 200m world title and was second in the 100. “I’m comfortable with being tagged as the favourite (in Rio), I’m never nervous, which is good for me.”

In the 100m none of the trio of American big guns was present but Jamaican 2015 world cham-



Great Britain’s Mo Farah poses for a selfie with spectators as he celebrates winning the men’s 5000m during the 2016 London Anniversary Games at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London, on 23 July. PHOTO: REUTERS

pion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce has ground to make up if she is to win a third successive Olympic title as she managed only third in 11.06 on Saturday as she continues her recovery from an injury-hit season.

Marie-Josée Ta Lou of Ivory Coast was the surprise winner,

having run a 10.96 personal best in the heats then matched it in the final to triumph ahead of Michelle-Lee Ahye of Trinidad & Tobago.

After their women’s team set a national record in the 4x100m relay on Friday Britain’s men responded with an impressive 37.78

on Saturday — the world-leading time for the year and 0.05 away from the British record.

The British B team were only three hundredths behind them, raising national hopes of a medal in Rio after years of disqualifications and baton malfunctions.—Reuters

A 555-strong US Olympics team includes record 292 women

NEW YORK — A record contingent of 292 women will be part of a powerful 555-strong United States team at next month’s Rio Olympics.

The team, announced on Saturday by the US Olympic Committee (USOC), will contest 244 of 306 medal events.

The Americans topped the gold medal (46) and overall medal (104) table at London 2012.

The record number of women on the US team tops the previous mark of 289 by China in 2008. It is the second time the American roster has featured more females than males.

“I am especially excited for the historic achievement of our women’s delegation which is a true testament to the strength and growing number of women’s sport opportunities in the United States,” USOC CEO Scott Blackmun said.

The American team includes 191 returning Olympians. Equestrian rider Phillip Dutton and shooters Emil Milleev and Kim Rhode are heading to their sixth Games.

Among those going to their fifth Olympics are swimmer Michael Phelps, middle-distance runner Bernard Lagat,

tennis player Serena Williams and beach volleyballer Kerri Walsh Jennings.

Phelps, who owns an Olympic record 18 golds, will swim in at least three events in Brazil.

Runner Allyson Felix, the most decorated US Olympic woman with four golds and six overall, makes a fourth Games appearance, competing in the 400 meters and probably the 4x400 relay.

Among the strongest medal favourites are the women’s basketball team and gymnast Simone Biles in the women’s all-around.

The women’s rowing eight seek to continue a dynasty on the world stage. They have not lost an Olympic or world championship title since 2006.

Dutton, 52, will be the oldest team member, with 16-year-old table tennis player Kanak Jha the youngest.—Reuters



Allyson Felix reacts after placing fourth in the women’s 200m in 22.54 during the 2016 US Olympic Team Trials at Hayward Field, Eugene, OR, USA, on 10 July. PHOTO: REUTERS



Former Manchester United player Paul Scholes. PHOTO REUTERS

Pogba is not worth world-record fee, says Scholes

LONDON — Former Manchester United player Paul Scholes has questioned whether the club should pay a world-record fee for Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba, saying the 23-year-old is not in the same bracket as the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

United have been negotiating with Juventus over the transfer of Pogba, who is a top target for new manager Jose Mourinho, according to media reports in Britain.

Scholes was Pogba’s team mate when the latter was a teenager at United and feels despite his obvious talent, the France international has a long way to go before he can stake his claim as one of the world’s top players and command a record fee.

“He was a very talented young player, I played with him and I knew how good he was,”

Scholes, who is playing in a futsal tournament in India, told the *Times of India* daily.

“I just don’t think he is worth 86 million pounds (\$112.75 million). For that sort of money, you want someone who is going to score 50 goals a season like Ronaldo or Messi. Pogba is nowhere there yet.”

Scholes also praised Manchester City’s capture of Borussia Dortmund midfielder Ilkay Guendogan for a fee worth around 20 million pounds, according to British media reports. “I think Guendogan is a really impressive player,” Scholes said. “I’ve seen a lot of him at Borussia Dortmund.”

“If he can stay fit, I think he can be a fantastic player. I also think he is great value for the money Manchester City paid for him. I think he is a bargain.”—Reuters