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HAILING THE UNION PEACE CONFERENCE

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

State Counsellor describes Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong as magnificent opportunity for harmony

Delegates to the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong pose for documentary photo at the Myanmar International Convention Centre—2 in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE Union Peace Confernce—21st Century Panglong kicked off with an opening ceremony at the Myanmar International Convention Centre—2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The opening ceremony was attended by President U Htin Kyaw, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win, Deputy Speakers of Hluttaw, Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, the Chairman of Union Civil Service Board, Region/State Chief Ministers, senior military officers, commanders, chairs of Hluttaw committees, ministers for ethnic affairs, representatives from a stakeholder group representing the government, Hluttaw and Tatmadaw, representatives from ethnic armed organisations, representatives from political parties, representatives from ethnic minorities, Chairman of KNU Saw Mutu Sae Po and Vice Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein, KKO Chairman Saw Mu Shae, Vice Chairman of KNU/KNLA-PC Saw Htot Lay, General Secretary Naw Kapaw Htoo, Sai Baung Khe of RCSS/SSA, PNLO Patron Khun Okkar and Chairman Khun Myint Tun, ALP central committee member Daw Saw Mya Raza Lin, ABSDF Chairman Yebaw Than Ge, Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong of CNF, Sam Lot of UWSA, Chairman U Sai Lin of Mongla Special Region-4, KIO Vice Chairman U N' Ban La, Vice Chairman 1 Maj-Gen Guan Maw, KNPP Vice-Chairman Khu Oo Reh and Phone Naing at the rank of Adjutant-General, SSPP/SSA central committee member Sai Du, NMSP Vice Chairman Naing Hong Sar, diplomats from foreign embassies, officials from UN agencies, local and international NGOs and guests.

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21st Century Panglong commences in Nay Pyi Taw

Ethnic representatives and diplomats attend the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong commenced yesterday at the Myanmar International Convention Centre—2 in Nay Pyi Taw, with an opening address by Preparatory Committee Chairman Dr Tin Myo Win, who chaired the event.

Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong read out the implementation report of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), a body assigned to facilitate the political dialogue as agreed in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

The committee has 49 members— 16 each from a grouping of the government, the military and the parliament, a grouping of the ethnic armed organisations and a grouping of political parties. According to the UPDJC report, an agreement has been reached to start a national-level political dialogue right after the 21st Panglong, an action which won approval at the recent Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting this month (JICM).

Lt-Gen Yar Pyae clarified the undertakings of the Joint Monitoring Committee at union, state/region and local levels, focusing on the committee's achievements in the lessening of tension among NCA signatories.

He stressed the need for continuous measures to enhance stability to reduce aggression and build trust among armed groups, adding that these endeavours would facilitate the political dialogue which would pave the way for federalism.

Sai Kyaw Nyunt, Joint Secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), urged all groups to exert more concerted efforts for the inclusion of the armed groups missing in the peace conference and display a strong sense of magnanimity in the establishment of a framework for political dialogue after the 21st Century Panglong, he added.

"Lt-Gen Yar Pyae stressed the need for continuous measures to enhance stability to reduce aggression and build trust among armed groups"

Pado Saw Kwal Htoo Win said a review of the political dialogue framework would follow the 21st Panglong under the guidance of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee.

The national-level political dialogue will be conducted as agreed in the framework of political dialogue with participation of representatives from the government, the parliament, the military, ethnic armed organisations, political parties and civil society organisations.

An official read out the specific rules and regulations to be followed by the participants at the conference.

The conference was followed by a press conference with retired Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo, U Hla Maung Shwe, Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, U Zaw Htay and U Sai Kyaw Nyunt responded to queries raised by correspondents. —*Myanmar News Agency*

UNSG holds talks with prominent figures of all faiths

A MEETING between UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon arriving in Myanmar and prominent figures of all faiths was held at Kempinski Hotel at 08:30 hrs on 31 August 2016.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko and UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon delivered the opening speeches at the meeting.

During the discussion, the prominent figures of all faiths in Myanmar mentioned that Myanmar people need to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with forgiveness and patience for the peace and stability of the country; to promote peace and unity for future generations; to encourage younger generation to observe faithfully their respective religion.

The meeting was concluded by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin by expressing that the meeting would contribute in some way to our on-going efforts to build a more harmonious, peaceful and prosperous society.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor describes Union ....

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The ceremony was opened with a song entitled 'Unity-based Panglong Conference' performed by artists from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation, Myanmar Music Organisation and the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs.

Next, Chairperson of the Central Leading Committee for Organising the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi extended greetings. (The speech delivered by the State Counsellor is separately reported)

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, KNU Chairman Saw Mutu Sae Po, KIO Vice-Chairman U N' Ban La, Patron of National League for Democracy U Tin Oo and United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon also extended greetings.

After the opening ceremony, the President, the State Counsellor, the Vice Presidents, the UNSG, Hluttaw Speakers, the Commander-in-Chief, representatives from ethnic armed organisation, political parties, the government and Hluttaw, diplomats and UN officials posed for documentary photos. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong to be broadcast live

MEETINGS of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong at the Myanmar Convention Centre-2 on 1st, 2nd and 3rd September will be broadcast live.

The broadcasts will be available at the News Channel and Digital Channel of Myanma Radio and Television from 8.50 am onward. — *MNA*

Only if our country is at peace will we be able to stand on an equal footing with other countries in our region and across the world

(The following is the full text of the speech delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Chairperson of the Central Leading Committee for Organizing the Union Peace Conference— 21st Century Panglong at the opening ceremony of the conference.)

May I begin by wishing the honoured guests and delegates present here today at this opening ceremony of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong, and all those who are with us in spirit, peace of mind and the realisation of all aspirations that will bear wholesome fruit.

This hall is not only filled with guests and delegates who value and cherish peace, it is overflowing with the hopes of friends and well-wishers from across the globe, and the longings and dreams of our people. To fulfill these hopes and to turn these dreams into reality is a huge responsibility. But huge is not to say heavy.

A responsibility that is borne to keep faith with those who loved our country and have departed this world without having known the incomparable joys of peace throughout the land; to affirm our compassion for our people who are today suffering from lack of peace; as evidence of our love for the generations to come who will have to bear the burden of our legacies, both good and bad — such a responsibility can never be too heavy. This is a unique opportunity for us to accomplish a great task that will stand as a landmark throughout our history.

Let us grasp this magnificent opportunity with wisdom, courage, and perseverance, and create a future infused with light. If all those who play a part, however, big or small, in the peace process, cultivate the wisdom to reconcile differing views for the good of the people, the courage to accept ideas and practices that deserve to be accepted, and the perseverance to continue until difficulties are overcome, we will surely be able to build the democratic federal Union of our dreams.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addresses the opening ceremony of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong. PHOTO: MNA

Since its inception it has been the aim of the National League for Democracy to hold political negotiations based on the Panglong spirit and the principle of finding solutions through the guarantee of equal rights, mutual respect and mutual confidence between all ethnic nationalities. The government that emerged after the 2015 elections is determined to uphold these same principles.

The Panglong spirit that enabled us to implement, through unity and cooperation, the hopes of all our people for freedom is equally essential now in the 21st century.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is the first step not only towards peace, but towards the establishment of the long-held hope for a democratic federal Union. Some organisations have already signed the NCA, but there are also those that, for various reasons, have not yet signed. As future political dialogue needs to be based on the NCA, our new government has been making every effort to bring about the participation of the non-signatories. National reconciliation is the concern of all the peoples of our Union.

National reconciliation must include reconciliation among the ethnic armed organisations in our country. Ideological differences between NCA signatories and non-signatories could delay our path to peace. We will strive to bring all under the umbrella of the NCA, which constitutes a common agreement, in order to avert misunderstandings and diversions.

As the government that emerged following the 2015 general elections, we decided, in accordance with the authority given to us by the electorate, to work towards lasting peace, for which our people have longed throughout the years.

We are embarking on this journey towards peace with full confidence in the people of our Union. So long as we are unable to achieve national reconciliation and national unity, we will never be able to establish a sustainable and durable peaceful Union. Only if we are all united will our country be at peace. Only if our country is at peace will we be able to stand on an equal footing with the other countries in our region and across the world. To achieve our long-overdue peace we must engage in dialogue. We must negotiate. If we are to find solutions at the political negotiating table, we will need a framework that is accepted by all.

When the political dialogue framework was being drafted in accordance with the NCA, we consistently urged for flexibility, keeping in mind the possible changes that might emerge in the political landscape following the elections. From the moment that we as a government began working on the peace process, we negotiated with the NCA signatories over the review of the political dialogue framework. At the same time, we also strived to bring the non-signatories into the framework review process.

We have always believed that to be able to resolve the political problems that lie at the root of our armed conflicts, the most crucial requirement is to work together, with mutual understanding and trust, to seek solutions. The Panglong spirit that enabled us to implement, through unity and cooperation, the hopes of all our people for freedom is equally essential now in the 21st century.

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Dinner hosted for attendees to Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong

A DINNER was hosted in honour of attendees and participants to the opening of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong and its session at Myanmar International Convention Centre—2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Before the dinner, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cordially greeted attendees.

Present at the dinner were President U Htin Kyaw, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win, deputy Hluttaw speakers, the Union ministers, chief ministers, senior military officers, the commanders, chairs of the Hluttaw committees, ministers for ethnic affairs, representatives from ethnic armed organisations, representatives from stakeholder groups, foreign diplomats, UN officials and guests.

During the dinner, a cultural troupe from Mongla Region in Shan State and artistes from the Fine Art Department performed songs and dances.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Attendees to Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong enjoy performace of artistes at the dinner. PHOTO: MNA

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes ethnic delegates. PHOTO: MNA

Artistes entertain the attendees to Union Peace Conference. PHOTO:MNA

Only if our country is at peace will we be able to stand on an equal footing with other countries in our region and across the world

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If we are to achieve our shared objective of establishing a democratic federal Union, it is vital that we hold a 21st Century Panglong Conference that will enable all our ethnic peoples to negotiate frankly, openly and on equal terms, as they did at the 20th Century Panglong Conference. This is the vision that has led to our Union Peace Conference. As one of the first priorities of our government, we began preparations for today's conference on 9th May 2016. We formed a preparatory committee and we established the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in place of the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC). I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the previous government led by former President U Thein Sein, which established the MPC and worked for ceasefire. We will continue to build on the previous government's work towards peace.

We have re-formed the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) that was established in accordance with the NCA, and I have taken on the role of Chairperson. The UPDJC has since met twice. We have also convened one meeting of the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting. We have met twice with the leaders of the NCA signatories' peace process steering team. With regard to the non-signatories, we met the leaders of the UNFC in Yangon, and we met the leaders of the Wa Special Region-2 and Mongla Special Region-4 in Nay Pyi Taw.

Today's conference was not organised by the government alone. We established a joint committee to enable this conference to be convened in a tripartite format, comprising government, Hluttaw and Tatmadaw as one group; ethnic armed organisations as one group; and political parties as one group. We all negotiated to enable the participation of both NCA signatories and non-signatories. Because we had a great deal of work to do, some suggested that the conference date be delayed. But through everyone working together in a united effort, we have succeeded in holding this conference, which should have been held many, many years ago, here today.

This experience has further strengthened the trust between all involved. Although there have been differences of view, it is because we have all strived to achieve our common goal—a successful 21st Century Panglong Conference—that we are gathered here today. As you all know, our country has suffered from internal armed conflicts for more than half a century-almost 70 years now. Over successive eras there have been attempts, through a variety of means, to end these conflicts. But for many reasons, peace has long remained a distant goal. We must draw lessons from the setbacks of the past, and join together at this time to write a new page in our history.

At this moment, all the people across our country are watching with great trepidation. Ethnic peoples in the areas of our country where there is not yet peace are waiting expectantly for the outcome of this conference. Many of all ages have had to flee their homes to avoid conflict, and it is long since their hopes to one day return have dimmed. They hardly dare to hope any longer. We must not forget their plight.

Today, as a way of resolving political problems through political means, we have started along the path to lasting peace through the 21st Century Panglong Conference. Not only Myanmar, but the whole world, is watching to see how far we can go, and whether we can succeed in achieving lasting peace. Whether we shall be able to fulfill the hopes and dreams of our people depends on all the leaders who are present here today.

Yet peace cannot be achieved without the involvement of all groups in society. Civil society organisations have long played an important and active role in this country, including in our ethnic states. We pay tribute to all those who have strived so hard already to bring about peace and prosperity for all our people across the country. In particular, I am always impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of our young people, many of whom have been showing their support for this Panglong conference in events around the country in recent days.

No peace process can succeed without the support of the people. Peace is not something that leaders impose. It is not something that can be achieved only in a conference room. It requires the active involvement and support of all peoples. The people of this country have demonstrated time and again their unshakeable courage and determination to bring about a better future. I know that they will wish to see their political leaders pursue these difficult peace negotiations ahead with intelligence, courage and empathy. Our efforts are not primarily for the benefit of those in this room today. They are for the benefit of further generations that may live out their lives in peace and security, of body and of mind.

Our future generations must no longer be scarred- physically and mentally-by conflict and by loss. With a durable peace, our country will flourish, our diversity will be cause for celebration, and our people can finally realize their true potential as the children of this Union.

I would like to conclude by expressing my heartfelt thanks to all our people and our friends who have inspired us to pursue the path of peace, however hard. I am convinced that together we will be able to find the right answers that will enable us to make our dreams come true. It has been said that "the dreamer who makes his dream come true is the lord of us all". To be able to make the dreams of a whole country come true is to become truly the lords of ourselves.

It was the aspiration of the founding fathers of our independent nation to win the right to shape the destiny of our country. Let us proudly exercise this right with a clear vision and strength of purpose, bound in unity and confidence.

Thank you.

LOCAL Business

Jade industry faced with low demand from China

Aung Thant Khine

LOWER demand from china is causing jade companies difficulties in the market as sales are dipping and stock is piling up, according to U Soe Naing, a member of the Myanmar Gems Club.

The Chinese government recently banned the giving of jade as gifts as part of their anti-graft measures, affecting sales of the gem. Moreover, Chinese buyers have previously and still often elect to import the jade raw and directly over the border rather than ordering any finished jade products, further narrowing profits for jade product businesses.

The jade market remains cool despite the fact that the government suspended jade mining operations for the rainy season.

Over the 2015-2016 fiscal year, raw jade worth US$305.779 million was exported to China via the Muse border 115 mile camp. The export of raw jade from April to July in the 2016-2017 fiscal year amounted to US$ 53.016 million with an export volume of 475.096 tonnes.

Merchants appraise a jade stone at the 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Volume of Imports through border trade camps rising

THE volume of imports through border trade camps is rising, even as the ministries concerned are making an effort to scale up the export volume to bridge the gap between exports and imports.

The value of imports through border trade camps as of 19th August in this fiscal year 2016-2017 was US$999.948 million. This figure is over US$87 million higher than the import value in the similar period of the previous year. Capital goods and personal goods are highly imported, it is learnt from the statistics of the Trade Department.

The import of capital goods fetched US$590.835 million, whereas the import value of industrial raw materials was US$198.912million in this period. The personal goods import has attained US$210.201 million, it is learnt. Myanmar mainly exports agricultural products, livestock, mineral goods, forestry products and finished industrial goods while personal goods, industrial raw materials and capital goods are imported into Myanmar. Export value is far outdone by import value, resulting in the big trade deficit.—*Mon Mon*

Sixty tonnes of Ozi Choice milk powder to enter local market

ABOUT 60 tonnes of Australian made Ozi Choice milk powder will be imported into Myanmar this fiscal year, it is learnt from Ruby (MM) Co., Ltd., which is the exclusive distributor of Ozi Choice in Myanmar.

Ozi Choice milk powder, made in Australia from Australian ingredients, is Halal certified. It complies with the Australia-New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSANZ) and adheres to the regulations set by the Australian government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Export Control (milk and milk products). Ozi Choice milk powder has already been certified by Australian FDA and Myanmar FDA (IR-F/2016-B1/2209 10-06-2016). Ozi Choice milk powder is free from melamine and artificial preservatives. The milk powder is full of calcium, protein, vitamins, minerals, nutrients and essential amino acids. Pregnant women and people over three years of age can enjoy this milk powder without concern. Ozi Choice milk powder is the main brand used in hospitals and clinics in Australia. Ruby (MM) Co., Ltd has already entered into agreements with 95 shops in MYanmar to sell the milk powder, ensuring that there is no fraudulent trade mark. They will make efforts to distribute this product across the nation. Currently, they are gearing up to distribute the milk powder in Yangon, Bago and Mandalay regions and Dawei Township.—*200*

Vietnamese companies could make more investments

VIETNAMESE companies could possibly make more investments in Myanmar according to the Nikkei news agency.

Currently, the investments of Viet Nam in Myanmar amount to only US$1.1 billion. But Vietnamese companies are reportedly gearing up to make more investments in Myanmar. Therefore, Vietnamese investments are expected to rise. Following the opening of the Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam (BIDV) in Myanmar, it has become easier to promote the Vietnamese investments.

State-owned Viettel, Vietnam's largest mobile network operator, has been planning to provide telecommunication services in cooperation with Myanmar's company. This would significantly boost the value of investments from Viet Nam.

Viettel will invest US$1.5 billion in the telecommunication project. They will have to keep up with other three other telecoms already operating in Myanmar. Viet Nam is ranked in 10th place on the list of the countries which have invested the most money in Myanmar.—*Mon Mon*

Myanmar negotiated with China to boost export quota of rice, maize

MYANMAR negotiated with China to boost the export quota of rice and maize at a meeting held on 24th August when Dr. Than Myint, the Union Minister for Commerce, received a delegation led by H.E Madam Gao Yan, the vice minister for Commerce in the People's Republic of China.

In this meeting, Myanmar and China discussed promoting of bilateral trade. They will jointly combat illegal trade in the border areas and make efforts to develop legitimate trade in the border areas. Myanmar has plans to open more border checkpoints. Myanmar called on China to fix the export quota of rice and maize so that the export volume will rise.

The export of rice through the border areas to China constitutes over 80 per cent of the rice exported to foreign countries. Although the rice is legally exported from Myanmar, China does not permit the rice export. Therefore, Chinese authorities often enforce the confiscation of rice. Regarding this problem, the authorities from China and Myanmar are still under discussion, it is learnt from the Ministry of Commerce.

The rice and broken rice export as of 19th August during this fiscal year is over 420,000 tonnes, earning over US$145 million. However, the export value of rice and broken rice has decreased by US$89 million when compared to that of the similar period the previous year, it is learnt from the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar can produce from 3 to 4 lakhs tonnes of corn annually. Myanmar's corn was mainly exported to China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, India, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Bulgaria and Spain. —*Mon Mon*

United Nations Secretary-General concludes his working visit to Myanmar

Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Ban Ki-moon and his wife left Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

They were seen off at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye and his wife Dr Daw Mya Thida, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and his wife, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General for Myanmar Mr. Vijay Nambiar and UN officials.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Minister Dr Win Myat Aye bids farewell to UNSG. PHOTO: MNA

Mrs. Ban Soon-taek visits Hluttaw library, learning centre

Mrs. Ban Soon-taek observing library, learning centre. PHOTO: MNA

MRS. Ban Soon-taek, wife of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited the Hluttaw Library and learning centre at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Officials of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office conducted her around the library and learning centre and elaborated on the opening of training courses.— *Myanmar News Agency*

E-visa available to tourists, business visitors at three border crossings from today

ELECTRONIC visas for tourists and business visitors will be allowed at the Myanmar-Thailand border crossings in Tachilek, Myawady and Kawthaung as of today according to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population on Tuesday.

Further information is available on the website http://www.evisa.moip.gov.mm

The Ministry began e-visa services for tourists entering the country via Yangon International Airport on 1 September, 2014 from a total of 100 countries and the service was extended to Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw airports on 9 November, 2014.

Moreover, the ministry also offered e-visa registration for business visa applicants from 51 countries at Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw airports on 1 July, 2015.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Mon State primed for Panglong

Eleven potential frameworks for the building of a federal state which emerged from a Mon National Conference, held in Kayin State's Kyain Seikgyi Township, will be presented at the 21st Century Panglong Conference, Myitmkha News Agency has been informed.

The Mon National Conference took place between August 22-24, and was attended by over three hundred stakeholders from Mon political parties and civil society organizations.

"I believe the eleven points which have emerged from this conference represent the collective voice of Mon people as the conference was attended by all layers and groups of Mon society and political parties," said Dr Aung Naing Oo, deputy speaker of Mon State Hluttaw.

As well as fourteen representatives from the New Mon State Party permitted to attend the Panglong Conference, members of other Mon State political parties will also reportedly be present at the landmark peace talks.

The main frameworks to come out of the conference included legislation for a federal union; the division of power between states and the federal union; equality in the fundamental human right of democracy; the employment of a democratic multi-party system; and the establishment of a federal tribunal court.

"We'll lay down our arms if our desires are met. Please give us a replete set of rights. We'll discuss our desires [at the Panglong Conference]. We're prepared to be part of a unified Tatmawdaw (Armed Forces), a [Mon] state guard force under the national army — we don't want to live in the jungle [anymore]. That's why we fully support the Panglong Conference. We have high expectations," said U Naing Win Hla, member of the New Mon State Party's central executive committee.

The New Mon State Party informed Myitmakha News Agency that after waiting for 60 years they are extremely glad the National League for Democracy-led government has finally implemented a second Panglong Conference and that they fully support the conference in bringing about peace within Myanmar.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Philippines' Duterte to workers returning from Saudi: Don't do drugs

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, heavily criticised for a brutal anti-narcotics drive in which hundreds have been killed, on Wednesday welcomed home more than 100 Filipinos abandoned in desert camps in Saudi Arabia with a warning — don't do drugs.

The Southeast Asian nation's war on drugs has gained some popular support but the wave of killings has shocked rights groups and brought expressions of concern from the United States, a close ally of Manila.

Duterte railed against the United Nations this month after it called for an end to the killings.

"Avoid drugs at all cost because it could cost your life too," Duterte told the workers after an almost 10-hour flight from Dammam.

Overseas Filipino workers who were repatriated by the Philippine government from Saudi Arabia, pose with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte after arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila, Philippines, on 31 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

The number of drug-related killings in the Philip-pines has reached 2,000 since Duterte became president two months ago on a pledge to wipe out the drug trade.

Migrant oil and construction workers, abandoned in their thousands by Saudi employers during the kingdom's economic slump, are fighting to claim back wages and benefits.

"I lost my job so my children were forced to drop out of college and they were mad at me but what can I do?" Ronie Surilla, 47, a construction worker living for almost a decade in Saudi Arabia, told Reuters, adding that he had not been paid for eight months.

Filipinos living and working outside the country sent home a record $13.2 billion in remittances, a major driver of the Southeast Asian nation's household consumption, in the first half of 2016.

For the returning overseas workforce, the president committed to boost the economy and provide jobs.

The Philippines' economy grew at 7 per cent in the second quarter from a year earlier, its highest level in three years. It made the Philippines the fastest growing among all countries that have reported so far for the second quarter.—*Reuters*

11 died, three missing in northern Japan after typhoon

IWATE (Japan)— Eleven people were confirmed dead and another three remained missing on Wednesday after a powerful typhoon battered northern and northeastern Japan the previous day.

Police said nine bodies were found near a nursing home and a man's body near a river in the town of Iwaizumi in Iwate Prefecture, northeastern Japan. They also found the body of a woman among rubble in the city of Kuji, also in Iwate, they said. The nine bodies found close to the nursing home are believed to be elderly people who lived in the home.

The first typhoon to make landfall from the Pacific in the Tohoku region, the hardest-hit areas in the devastating March 2011 tsunami, caused the collapse of riverbanks and floods in multiple locations. In the northernmost island prefecture of Hokkaido, three people were missing after falling into rivers in the towns of Taiki, Shimizu and Shintoku.

Among them, Yohei Suzuki, a 28-year-old office worker, went missing in Taiki after the car he was driving fell into a river, while two passengers managed to escape the vehicle and reach safety, according to local police. At another care facility for the elderly in Iwate, adjacent to the building where the dead bodies were found nearby, some 70 to 80 people are being airlifted by helicopter to safety, a local social welfare council said, adding nobody is in a serious condition. In Iwaizumi, three residents were rescued by the country's Self Defence Forces after being stranded by flooding in the central part of the town that severed road access.—*Kyodo News*

Photo taken from a Kyodo News airplane on 31 August, 2016, shows a destroyed bridge in Iwaizumi, Iwate Prefecture in northeastern Japan, following heavy rains brought by typhoon Lionrock. Iwate was one of the hardest-hit areas in the devastating March 2011 tsunami. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

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Indonesia's Widodo masters the politics, but reform agenda fades

JAKARTA — As he heads toward the end of his second year as Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo has never looked stronger: a crowd of political parties backs him, he is riding high in opinion polls and the economy is beginning to bounce off the bottom.

After a terrible first year when the rupiah currency plummeted and critics questioned his ability to govern, aides and politicians close to Widodo told Reuters he now feels firmly in control and is already considering re-election in 2019.

But Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, appears to have managed his recovery by soft-pedalling on the political and economic reforms that he had promised in the world's fourth-most populous nation when he stood for election in 2014.

Instead, he has concentrated on building alliances to bolster his authority, an echo of former strongman Suharto, whose mastery of political dealmaking kept him in power for more than three decades.

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (C) walks between parliament members as he arrives at the House of Representatives building in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 16 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"He's turning into a new Suharto," said one senior official, pointing to the "disciplined, cool-headed calculation" of a cabinet reshuffle in July in which Widodo handed positions to parties across the political spectrum.

Presidential spokesman Johan Budi said Widodo was "not yet thinking" about the 2019 election. "He is focused on this period and on working for the prosperity of the people," Budi said.

Analysts say Widodo's political maneuvering probably means he will be less inclined to pursue radical change in Southeast Asia's largest economy, whose over-dependence on resource exports has been painfully exposed by the recent slump in commodity prices.

That was not in the script when the former furniture salesman, who grew up in a riverside slum of central Java, won the presi-dency.

The first leader of modern Indonesia not to come from the military or political elite, Widodo was widely expected to shake up the establishment. Supporters said he would root out corruption, promote people based on merit rather than connections and create an environment for investment to flow into the stalling economy.

"Instead of changing the game, as he promised voters, Jokowi has begun to master it," said Aaron Connelly, a research fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Affairs in Sydney.

Marcus Mietzner, an associate professor at the Australian National University's College of Asia and the Pacific, added:

"He has — sadly but correctly — established for himself that these issues will not win or lose elections, so he ignores them."—*Reuters*

Opinion

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An echo in the hearts of the people

Kyaw Thura

THE 31st August of 2016 deserves to be trumpeted as a historic day because the country has commenced its Union Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw, also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference, in the fashion of the Panglong Agreement brokered by our independence architect and national leader General Aung San in a small town called Panglong of Shan State in 1947.

In addition, the four-day peace conference can be seen as a product of the government's commitment to national reconciliation and hailed as the first step toward to the recreation of a new, diverse, harmonious and vibrant Myanmar.

Home to more than a hundred ethnic groups with their distinctive traditions and cultures, our country has been plagued by more than half a century of internal armed conflict, which has thwarted the successive governments in the restoration of enduring peace.

It is undeniable that restoring peace and stability across the country is secondary to none simply because the continuation of fighting will pose a threat to our nascent democratic reform, thereby undermining the political and economic development.

It is, therefore, incumbent on the stakeholders engaged in the discussions and negotiations in the 21st Century Panglong Conference to demonstrate a clear determination to overcome their differences to achieve peace, for a cry for peace and solidarity has long been an echo in the hearts of the entire population.

Universal Periodic Review or United Nations Human Rights Reporting Process

Dr. Khine Khine Win

BASED on my working experiences regarding human rights awareness raising activities in many places, what I found out is that most of our people including government officials have limited knowledge on Universal Periodic Review, UPR. As Myanmar is one of the member States of United Nations, we should have knowledge about UPR. Indeed if you are interested in human rights, you should study UPR.

What is UPR? UPR is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council or what we can say is that this is a UN examination of the human rights situation in each country. If you look back, the existence of the UPR is too young, just 10 years old in age. It was established by UN General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006. This is the first international human rights mechanism to address all countries and all human rights.

UPR is a State-driven process under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights obligations. The objectives of the UPR are: improvement of the human rights situation on the ground, fulfillment of the State's human rights obligations and commitments and assessment of positive developments and challenges faced by the State, enhancement of the State's capacity and of technical assistance, in consultation with, and with the consent of, the State concerned, sharing of best practice among States and other stakeholders, support for cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights and to encouragement of full cooperation and engagement with the HRC, other human rights bodies and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Under this mechanism, the human rights situation of all UN member States is reviewed every 4.5 years. 42 States are reviewed each year during three Working Group Sessions dedicated to 14 States. These three sessions are usually held in January/February, May/June and October/November. The Working Group on the UPR, which is composed of the Human Rights Council's 47 Member States and chaired by the Human Rights Council President, conducts country reviews. Every UN member States have to perform their human rights situation by submitting a report to the Human Rights Council, which is of utmost importance to the promotion and protection of human rights of all groups of their people. A review of a State is based on: (a) a national report prepared by the State under review; (b) a compilation of United Nations information on the State under review prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); and (c) a summary of information submitted by other stakeholders (including civil society actors, national human rights institutions and regional organizations), also prepared by OHCHR.

The basis of country reviews is: (a) the Charter of the UN (b) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (c) Human Rights instruments to which a State is Party and (d) voluntary pledges and commitments made by the State, including those undertaken when presenting their candidature for election to the HRC. Country reviews also take into account applicable international humanitarian law.

Myanmar's first UPR report has submitted in January 2011 and second in November 2015. For the first cycle, Myanmar government received 190 recommendations from 57 countries. Among them Myanmar government accepted 74 recommendations. For the second cycle, Myanmar received 281 recommendations from 93 countries. Among them Myanmar accepted 166 recommendations.

Recommendations are suggestions made to the State under Review to improve the human rights situation in the country or you can say that they are the homework for next cycle review. It is for sure that the State has the prime responsibility to implement the UPR recommendations. During the next cycle UPR, the State under review is expected to provide information on their progress or failure to implement the recommendations.

"What is UPR? UPR is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council or what we can say is that this is a UN examination of the human rights situation in each country. If you look back, the existence of the UPR is too young, just 10 years old in age. It was established by UN General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006. This is the first international human rights mechanism to address all countries and all human rights".

The Key to UPR is for the recommendations to be implemented. In this regard, with aim to give an overview of the UPR process, to present report of the UPR Working Group on Myanmar, to explore roles and responsibilities in implementing the accepted recommendations and to discuss next step, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and Lutheran World Federation Myanmar will jointly organize a two day workshop on 9 and 10 August in Nay Pyi Taw. Parliamentarians from Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, government officials from ministries concerned and member and staff of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission will join the workshop. I hope that this workshop will bear a fruitful outcome for the implementation of the UPR recommendations.

In recognition of the need for us to continually strive for better protection and for greater promotion of human rights, I do hope accepted recommendations implementation will succeed by working together with many stakeholders. This article is just an introduction about UPR and I urge you all to study more on UPR if you are really interested in human rights situation of your country.

References: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx

President meets UN Secretary-General in Nay Pyi Taw

President U Htin Kyaw, United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon, diplomats and Ministers pose for a group photo at president's residence in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw met United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon at his residence in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, Mr Ban Ki-moon expressed his belief that the country's ongoing 21st Panglong Conference would meet with success, calling for continued cooperation with the United Nations in the human rights issue in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the persistent efforts for the COP21 agreement on climate change, to which the country is a signatory.

President U Htin Kyaw was accompanied by Union Ministers Thura U Aung Ko, U Thein Swe, U Kyaw Win and Dr Win Myat Aye. UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon was accompanied by his Special Advisor on Myanmar Mr Vijay Nambiar and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Hluttaw Speakers meet with UN Secretary-General

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than receive Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Ban Ki-moon. PHOTO: MNA

PYITHU HLUTTAW Speaker U Win Myint and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Ban Ki-moon and party at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, Deputy Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and Chairmen of Hluttaw Committee U Thein Swe and U Min Oo and members and officials of the Hluttaw Office. —*Myanmar News Agency*

President's wife meets with wife of UN Secretary-General

President's wife discusses with wife of UN Secretary-General. PHOTO: MNA

DAW SU SU LWIN, wife of President U Htin Kyaw, met Mrs Ban Soon-taek, wife of United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

After an exchange of cordial greetings, Daw Su Su Lwin hosted a pleasant tea party in honour of Mrs Ban Soon-taek.—*Myanmar News Agency*

C-in-C Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with UN Chief, diplomats

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing held talks separately with Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and diplomats who were attending the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong yesterday.

During the meeting with Mr Ban Ki-moon, they discussed Myanmar's efforts for achieving peace, UN's humanitarian assistance, clearing landmines and the further role of Myanmar's armed forces in UN's peacekeeping mission. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also received EU Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Roland Kobia and discussed issues over peace making in the country and promotion of military relations.

The Commander-in-Chief also held talks in the afternoon with Mr Sun Guoxiang, China's special representative for Asia affairs, exchanging views on the stance of the Tatmadaw in the peace process and ongoing peace process negotiations in line with the law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets Mr Ban Ki-moon. PHOTO: MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Mr Sun Guoxiang. PHOTO: MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing discuses with EU Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Roland Kobia. PHOTO: MNA

UEC's tribunal nullifies Kanpetlet's MP

THE Union Election Commission's tribunal has nullified the election of the representative of the Kanpetlet constituency-2 in Chin State, declaring U Phwe Arr as the official representative of the constituency.

The UEC's tribunal returned the verdict yesterday, hinging on a complaint that was lodged with the UEC against Dr Ba Maung by his contender U Phwe Arr. After the hearings, the commission legally annulled the election of Dr Ba Maung on 16 August.

The removed representative failed to file an appeal to the election commission during the set period, the commission said, adding that the election of Dr Ba Maung was terminated as of the date of its announcement. – *Myanmar News Agency*

Three arrested in Malaysia over planned attacks on eve of independence day

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police said on Wednesday they had arrested three local supporters of the Islamic State militant group who had allegedly been planning several attacks in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, ahead of independence day celebrations.

The three men, detained in a three-day police operation on 27-29 August, had allegedly received instructions from Malaysian Islamic State fighter Muhammad Wanndy Muhammad Jedi to attack an entertainment centre, a Hindu temple and a police station on Tuesday on the eve of independence day celebrations.

"All three suspects were planning to leave for Syria to join the Islamic State terrorist group ... after successfully carrying out the attacks," Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar said in a statement.

Police said they had seized a grenade and a handgun with 24 bullets from one of the suspects, who works as a lorry driver. The two others worked as a butcher and a drinks seller.

Wanndy is a Malaysian known to be fighting with Islamic State in Syria and is seen as the man responsible for ordering a grenade attack in June on a bar on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, the Islamist group's first successful assault in Malaysia.

Police arrested nine people believed to have Islamic State links in the aftermath of the grenade attack.

Earlier this month, Malaysia revoked the passports of 68 Malaysians who have been identified as leaving the country to join Islamic State. Police intelligence reportedly said in March that 18 Malaysians had been killed while fighting with the group in Syria, and that seven others were killed carrying out suicide attacks for the group.

There have not been any reports of Malaysian Islamic State fighters returning home.

Authorities in Muslim-majority Malaysia have been on high alert since Islamic State-linked militants carried out an armed attack in the capital of neighbouring Indonesia in January.

Commuters walk through the hallway of KL Sentral train station in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 27 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

In June, Islamic State released a video of its fighters from Southeast Asia calling on its supporters to unify under one umbrella group and launch attacks in the region.

A total of 230 people, including 200 Malaysians, were arrested between 2013 and early August this year for involvement in militant activities linked to Islamic State.—*Reuters*

Japan's military seeks record spending to counter North Korea, China moves

TOKYO — Japan's defence ministry on Wednesday asked for a hike in spending to record levels, as it juggles its responses to a growing ballistic missile threat from North Korea and China's assertive moves in the East China Sea.

If approved, the hike of 2.3 per cent will take the defense budget to 5.17 trillion yen ($51.47 billion) in the year starting 1 April, for a fifth consecutive increase as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe bolsters Japan's military.

The nation's Self Defence Forces are pivoting away from guarding the north against a diminished Russian threat to reinforce an island chain stretching 1,400 km (870 miles) along the southern edge of the East China Sea.

That means opting for fewer tank divisions as they build a mobile amphibious force from scratch. The costly rejig comes as Japan is also forced to spend more to guard against ballistic missiles being developed by North Korea capable of striking most areas.

The single biggest expenditure is 99 billion yen ($970 million) to upgrade Japan's warhead-killing Patriot batteries, a last line of defence against missile strikes.

The improvements will double their range to around 30 km (19 miles) and sharpen targeting to hit arriving ballistic warheads.

They will take five years to complete, with the first four enhanced Patriots expected to be ready for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

In June, North Korea test-fired what appeared to be two mobile Musudan rockets, one of which climbed to 1,000 km (600 miles), or enough to fly more than 3,000 km (1,800 miles) down range.

On 24 August, Pyongyang also fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) toward Japan that traveled 500 km (311 miles).

Japan's biggest defence contractor, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) (7011.T) will upgrade the PAC-3s under license from Lockheed Martin Corp and Raytheon Co, sources familiar with the plan told Reuters last month.

The budget request also includes funding to improve Aegis destroyers that are Japan's first line of defence against ballistic missiles.

Japan and the United States are developing a new warhead killer, the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3), to destroy targets in space, but no decision on a full rollout has yet been made.

Other proposed defence buys will reinforce the East China Sea, where Japan and China are locked in a territorial dispute over a group of islets 220 km (140 miles) northeast of Taiwan known as the Senkakus in Tokyo and the Diaoyus in Beijing.

Japanese air scrambles against Chinese aircraft are running at a record high, with Beijing's navy probing deeper and more frequently into the Western Pacific beyond Japan's island chain.

Chinese military activity in the region was "escalating," Japan's Self-Defence Forces chief Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano said in June.—*Reuters*

A Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force AH-1S helicopter fires anti-tank missile during an annual training session near Mount Fuji at Higashifuji training field in Gotemba, west of Tokyo, on 25 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

China, Viet Nam should boost military cooperation: defence ministers

BEIJING — Defence ministers of China and Viet Nam held talks on Tuesday in Beijing, saying the two countries should boost military cooperation and make contribution to regional peace.

Defence Minister Chang Wanquan told his Vietnamese counterpart Ngo Xuan Lich that the Chinese military is ready to beef up cooperation with Viet Nam in areas including high-level exchanges, personnel education and training, border defence, mutual visits and multilateral security affairs. Chang expressed the hope that the two sides could properly deal with differences, so as to contribute to regional peace and stability. Ngo Xuan Lich stressed that the two countries should enhance military cooperation and strive to make military ties a key aspect of bilateral relations to benefit the people of the two countries.—*Xinhua*

North Korea makes progress on missiles, but no evidence of nuclear weapons yet

SEOUL — North Korea has made considerable progress this year on weapons technology, including testing a submarine-launched missile for the first time, but it's still not clear if the isolated nation has developed a nuclear warhead.

It also does not yet have a fleet of submarines that can launch the newly developed missile. Nevertheless, concerns about the threat posed by North Korea have spiraled since it conducted its fourth nuclear explosion in January and followed it up with a series of missile tests despite severe United Nations sanctions. Also, three major factories known to produce machine parts for North Korea's sanctioned nuclear and missile programmes have been modernized or expanded, according to analysis of recent satellite imagery seen by Reuters, a further sign of its commitment of scarce resources to weapons.

"North Korea has dramatically increased the pace of missile testing and invested heavily in modernizing its factories that produce them, something we can see in satellite images," said Jeffrey Lewis of the California-based Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

"These investments have paid off with the recent test of a solid-fueled submarine-launched missile, but North Korea has not yet completed development of a submarine to carry that missile." In April, a South Korean official said the North had accomplished miniaturization of a nuclear warhead to mount on a missile, although there was no direct evidence it had done so.

The United States has said the North's claim that it had miniaturized a warhead had to be taken as a credible threat.—*Reuters*

Key Islamic State leader killed in apparent US strike in Syria

BEIRUT/WASHINGTON — Islamic State said on Tuesday one of its most prominent and longest-serving leaders was killed in what appeared to be an American air strike in Syria, depriving the militant group of the man in charge of directing attacks overseas.

A US defence official told Reuters the United States targeted Abu Muhammad al-Adnani in a Tuesday strike on a vehicle traveling in the Syrian town of al-Bab. The official stopped short of confirming Adnani's death, however.

Such US assessments often take days and often lag behind official announcements by militant groups.

Adnani was one of the last living senior members, along with self-appointed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who founded the group and stunned the Middle East by seizing huge tracts of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

As Islamic State's spokesman, Adnani was its most visible member. As head of external operations, he was in charge of attacks overseas, including Europe, that have become an increasingly important tactic for the group as its core Iraqi and Syrian territory has been eroded by military losses. The group reacted by saying his death would not harm it, and his killers would face "torment", a statement in the group's al-Naba newspaper said, according to the Site Intelligence monitoring group.

"Today, they rejoice for the killing ... and then they will cry much when Allah will overpower them, with His permission, with affliction of the worst torment by the soldiers of Abu Muhammad and his brothers," the statement said.

Advances by Iraq's army and allied militia toward Islamic State's most important possession of Mosul have put the group under new pressure at a moment when a US-backed coalition has cut its Syrian holdings off from the Turkish border.

Those military setbacks have been accompanied by air strikes that have killed several of the group's leaders, undermining its organisational ability and dampening its morale.

A US counter-terrorism official who monitors Islamic State said Adnani's death would hurt the militants "in the area that increasingly concerns us as the group loses more and more of its caliphate and its financial base ... and turns to mounting and inspiring more attacks in Europe, Southeast Asia and elsewhere". —*Reuters*

IS spokesman and head of external operations Abu Muhammad al-Adnani is pictured in this undated handout photo, courtesy the US Department of State. PHOTO: REUTERS

Security forces stand at the SYL hotel that was partly destroyed following a car bomb claimed by al Shabaab Islamist militants outside the president's palace in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, on 30 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Death toll from Shabaab attack on Mogadishu hotels rises to 22: police

MOGADISHU — The death toll from Tuesday's car bomb attack targeting two hotels popular with officials near the presidential palace in the Somali capital Mogadishu has risen to 22, police said on Wednesday.

The attack was claimed by the Islamist militant group al Shabaab. The blast partially destroyed two hotels, including one in which a meeting of security officials was underway, the government has said.

"We have confirmed from various hospitals that at least 22 died and 50 others were wounded," police officer Major Mohamed Abdullahi told Reuters.

Information Minister Mohamed Abdi Hayir said on Tuesday a security officials were gathered inside one of the hotels, the SYL, at the time of blast, and that one minister and some state radio journalists were wounded.

The hotel is frequented by government officials and police said it believed the facility was the likely target.

Seeking to impose its own harsh form of Islam, al Shabaab, wants to topple the Western-backed government in Mogadishu and also push out the 22,000-strong African Union mandated AMISOM peace keeping force backing it.

The group was forced out of Mogadishu by AMISOM in 2011 but have remained a serious threat, launching frequent attacks aimed at the government. The militants have claimed responsibility for several explosions in Mogadishu, including a car bomb and gun attack last week at a popular beach restaurant in the capital that killed 10 people.—*Reuters*

Saudi Arabia says Houthis will not be allowed to take over Yemen

BEIJING — Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Wednesday the Iranian-allied Houthi movement would not be allowed to take over Yemen, as he accused Iran of seeking to sow unrest around the region.

The head of a Houthi-backed ruling council pledged readiness on Monday to resume negotiations on ending Yemen's war but reserved the right to resist attacks by a Saudi-backed exiled government seeking to unseat it.

UN-sponsored talks to try to end 18 months of fighting collapsed in failure this month and the Houthi movement and allied forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh resumed shelling into neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

The talks foundered after the Houthis and Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) announced the formation of the 10-member governing council on 6 August, ignoring a warning by UN Yemen envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed that such a move would violate UN Security Council resolutions on how to solve the conflict.

Speaking to Reuters in Beijing, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said the ball was in the Houthis' court as to whether peace talks resumed.

"What is certain, not questionable, certain, they will not be allowed to take over Yemen. Period. So the legitimate government will be defended," al-Jubeir said.

"The chance they have is to enter the political process, reach an agreement ... for the benefit of all Yemenis including the Houthis," he said.

Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies accuse the Houthis of being pawns of Iran and have launched a military intervention to restore Hadi to power.

The Houthis have held on, having made an alliance with Saleh, who enjoys the support of most of the military.

The Houthis and the GPC hold most of Yemen's northern half, while forces working for the exiled government share control of the rest of the country with tribes.

At least 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen's 18-month-old civil war, the United Nations on Tuesday, approaching double the estimates of more than 6,000 cited by officials and aid workers for much of 2016.

Speaking earlier to students at a Beijing university, al-Jubeir lambasted Iran.

"We see Iran supporting Houthis in Yemen and trying to take over the government, supply weapons to the Houthis, smuggle explosives to Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia," he said.

"We wish we could be as good neighbours like before the 1979 revolution," al-Jubeir said.

"It's up to Iran to mend its behaviour."—*Reuters*

UN defends aid work in Syria after accusations of being too close to government

NEW YORK — The United Nations defended its aid funding in Syria on Tuesday after an investigation revealed lucrative contracts were awarded to people close to the nation's President Bashar al-Assad.

The UN's Syrian contracts came under fire in British newspaper *The Guardian* which said aid money has gone to a charity set up by Assad's wife and to groups and businesses under US and European Union sanctions.

More than 250,000 people have died and 11 million from a population of 23 million have been forced from their homes in Syria's five-year war which started as an uprising against Assad's rule.

The uprising sparked violence among government forces, pro-government militias, nationalist rebels, Islamic State and Kurdish groups and has created a patchwork of areas controlled by different groups.

A spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Syria was a "difficult and challenging operating environment" with a limited number of vendors of fuel, telecommunication and other goods, especially in hard-to-reach areas.

But he said UN aid had reached more than one million people this year in such areas. "People who accuse us of being 'too close' to one side or another have clearly not been paying attention to what we have been saying on a regular basis," he said in an email to the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

He added that a guiding principle for the United Nations, with 193 member states, was to deliver to all areas of Syria irrespective of the status of control. "This includes regular dialogue with the government of Syria and its relevant entities to operate at scale and assist the most vulnerable people," the spokesman said.—*Reuters*

Nepal bans Indian couple from mountains for faking Mt. Everest climb

KATHMANDU — Nepalese officials on Tuesday prohibited an Indian couple from climbing any mountain in Nepal for the next 10 years, after concluding that they used doctored photos to claim they climbed Mt. Everest in May.

Dinesh Rathod and Tarakeshwari Rathod, both police officers from Maharashtra state in India, received climbing certificates from Nepalese authorities in June after they presented photographs that supposedly showed them atop the 8,848-metre peak on 23 May.

"The photos were doctored. Their climbing certificates have been cancelled, and they will not be allowed to climb any mountain in Nepal for the next 10 years," Gyanendra Shrestha, a tourism ministry official, told Kyodo News.

The Rathods came under investigation after another Indian climber, Satyarup Siddhanta from Bangalore, claimed that the couple had superimposed their faces and logos on photos of his successful climb of a few days earlier.

Nepal saw an encouraging spring season on Mt. Everest this year with 454 successful climbs after two disastrous years that saw cancelation of spring expeditions on the mountain.

In 2015, an avalanche triggered by a massive quake left 18 dead on the mountain, while in 2014 another avalanche on the mountain left 16 Sherpa guides dead.—*Kyodo News*

Brazil Senate expected to dismiss Rousseff in impeachment vote

Brazil's suspended President Dilma Rousseff. PHOTO: REUTERS

SAO PAULO — Brazil's Senate was expected to vote on Wednesday to dismiss President Dilma Rousseff, finalizing a nine-month impeachment process and confirming the country's shift to the right with the end of 13 years of leftist Workers Party rule.

Rousseff's supporters seemed resigned to the likelihood that more than two-thirds of the 81-seat Senate would convict her of breaking budget laws, while opponents hailed the chance to turn the page on a drawn-out economic and political crisis. Brazil's first female president has denied any wrongdoing and said the impeachment process was aimed at protecting the interests of the country's economic elite.

If she is convicted as expected, a tricky transition would fall to her conservative former vice president, Michel Temer, who has served as interim president since the Senate trial began in May and will finish out the term through to 2018.

Temer has vowed to pull the economy out of its worst recession since the 1930s and implement austerity measures to plug a growing budget deficit that cost Brazil its investment-grade credit rating last year. But even an overwhelming vote to remove Rousseff would not mean an easy path ahead for Temer, as there are signs of clear resistance in Congress to his proposals to cap public spending and reform public pensions.

His government also risks entanglement in a sweeping investigation of kickbacks at state oil company Petrobras that already ensnared dozens of politicians in Rousseff's coalition. —*Reuters*

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ရန်ကုန်မြို့ အရှေ့ပိုင်းရေပိုင်း၊ သင်္ဃန်းကွန်းမြို့နယ်၊ ဘီတိုစီ၊ လေးခေါင်ကန်လမ်းမကြီးပေါ်မေတောင်ရိုးနေသောမြေတိုင်းအမှတ် ၂၉/ဃ၊ မြေကွက်အမှတ် ၁၂၊ အလျား ၇၅ပေ × ဝေပေ ၆၆၊ အနံ ၁၃၅ပေ × ၁၄၀ပေခန့် ရှိသော မြေကွက်အား မူလအမည်ပေါက်ပိုင်ရှင် ဒုဗ္ဗဘာသာဝင် ဟိန္နုလူမျိုး Hဘာဂျောက ဦးရဲအောင်အား သူပိုင်မြေကွက်ကြီးထဲမှ မြေကွက်ကလေးကို ဖဲ့ဆောင်းခဲ့ရာ ဦးရဲအောင်ကွယ်လွန်ပြီး ဆက်ဝံသူ ဦးရဲအောင်၏သား ဦးအောင်ရွှိထံမှ စာရွက်စာတမ်းများဆောင်ရွက်ရာတွင် ဝယ်ယူထားခဲ့သူ ဦးမင်းခေါင်ခဲ့မှ ဥပဒေအရ ထောင်ချက်မည်ဖြစ်ကြောင်း အများသိစေရန် ကြေညာအပ်ပါသည်။

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Venezuela arrests opposition activists ahead of anti-government rally

CARACAS — Venezuela has arrested several opposition activists accused of plotting violence during an anti-government rally scheduled for Thursday, President Nicolas Maduro said on Tuesday, and opposition leaders slammed the arrests as intimidation.

The opposition is calling on sympathisers from across the country to march in the capital of Caracas to push for a recall referendum against Maduro, who calls the rally a plot to stir up violence and set the stage for a coup.

The upcoming march follows months of tensions between Maduro and the opposition-controlled legislature, exacerbated by triple-digit inflation, Soviet-style product shortages and a severe economic recession.

"We must win the battle against the coup — before, during, and after the dates announced by these fascists," Maduro said in a televised broadcast. "We've captured a group of people carrying important equipment, C4 explosives. We're trying to capture a number of them in real time."

Maduro called opposition party Popular Will "the party of violence that is mixed up in the coup of 1 September." He accused opposition leaders of seeking to stage a putsch similar to one that briefly toppled late socialist leader Hugo Chavez in 2002.

Intelligence agents on Tuesday raided Popular Will's offices and arrested long-time street activist Carlos Melo, opposition parties said. Popular Will activist Yon Goicoechea was arrested on Monday on charges of carrying explosives.

Another Popular Will leader, jailed former mayor Daniel Ceballos, was transferred to prison from house arrest on Saturday. He was accused of trying to escape his home to plot violence during the march.

Opposition leaders have accused elections authorities of intentionally stalling the recall vote. Maduro's approval rating in July fell to a nine-month low of 21 per cent, according to pollster Datanalisis.

"We denounce the pathetic way in which the government is seeking to demobilize and intimidate the democratic leadership," said Jesus Torrealba, leader of the Democratic Unity coalition.

Opposition sympathizers have been walking from far-flung corners of the country to join the Caracas march.

Popular Will was founded by Leopoldo Lopez, a former mayor jailed for leading the 2014 anti-government protests.

The opposition describes him as a political prisoner, and rights groups across the world have pressured Venezuela to release him.

The issue of jailed opposition leaders helped scuttle a brief 2015 rapprochement between Venezuela and the United States, its main ideological adversary.

Maduro insists his government does not hold political prisoners and described Lopez as a dangerous criminal.—*Reuters*

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (R) attends a pro-government gathering in Caracas, Venezuela, on 30 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sri Lanka to launch macro programme to alleviate poverty

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena is to launch a macro programme in order to prioritise alleviating poverty from the island nation, Cabinet Spokesperson, Rajitha Senaratne told reporters here on Wednesday.

"The government has paid its attention on alleviating poverty according to the pledge given in Presidential Election 2015 and according to the UN sustainable development goals," Senaratne said.

He added that the government had also recognised that economic development should consider social security, minimising income differences, marginalised communities due to various reasons and development diversities in provincial and district levels.—*Xinhua*

Prosecutors to decide in September on Samarco dam spill charges

BELO HORIZONTE, (Brazil) — Federal prosecutors investigating the deadly dam spill in November at the Samarco iron ore mine, owned by Vale SA (VALE5.SA) and BHP Billiton (BHP.AX), will decide in coming weeks whether to charge the company and executives, a prosecutor in the case said on Tuesday.

A police investigation accused Samarco in June of willful misconduct, saying the company ignored clear signs the dam was at risk of collapsing. The investigation is now with prosecutors, who are deciding whether to file charges.

Samarco denies any wrongdoing.

"The task force is at this moment concluding the analysis of the documents from the investigation," prosecutor Eduardo Santos de Oliveira said in an interview, declining to comment further on what charges might be brought or whether the case might be dismissed.

A helicopter flies over the Bento Rodrigues District, covered with mud after a dam owned by Vale SA and BHP Billiton Ltd burst in Mariana, Brazil, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

He said a decision was expected in September.

De Oliveira's comments come the day after Samarco, Vale and BHP published a report into the cause of the dam collapse, which killed 19 people and resulted in Brazil's worst environmental disaster.

The report found the spill was caused by drainage and design flaws but stopped short of assigning blame, saying such a verdict was outside its scope.

De Oliveira said the report, which was commissioned by the mining companies and carried out by law firm Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, would be considered in any decision to bring charges but that at first glance the report appeared to have little new information.—*Reuters*

Japanese volunteer group receives Magsaysay Award in Philippines

MANILA — The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and five other organizations and individuals from Asia on Wednesday formally received the Ramon Magsaysay Award, often dubbed Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, for "all daring to create social good" in the region.

The recipients were each conferred with a certificate, a medallion bearing the likeness of the late Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay, who inspired the award, and a cash prize in a ceremony held at the Cultural Centre of the Philippines in Manila.

Philippine Vice President Leni Robredo and Ramon del Rosario, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, led the presentation.

Joining the JOCV was Dompet Dhuafa ("Wallet of the Poor"), a charity organisation in Indonesia, and Vientiane Rescue from Laos.

Three individuals were also recognized: Conchita Carpio-Morales, the Philippine Ombudsman; Bezwada Wilson, an anti-scavenging advocate in India; and Thodur Madabusi Krishna, a musical artist from India who won the Emergent Leadership Award.

"While their respective social causes and leadership solutions are uniquely their own, there is one thing this year's Magsaysay laureates all share in common: a greatness of spirit that infuses their crusade for change. All are unafraid to take on large causes," Carmencita Abella, president of the foundation, said in a statement in late July in announcing the names of the awardees.

"We have much to learn from the 2016 Magsaysay awardees, and much to celebrate about their greatness of spirit," she added.

The Magsaysay Award has been given to more than 300 individuals and groups since its creation in 1957, the year Magsaysay died in a plane crash.

Magsaysay, who was elected president in 1953, is hailed for his leadership and moral courage, his simplicity and humility, and his passion for justice, particularly for the poor.—*Kyodo News*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO (123N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (123N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.9.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAWEI STAR VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.9.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MCC HA LONG VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MCC HA LONG VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.9.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV E.R. TURKU VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV E.R.TURKU VOY NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.9.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S HANJIN SHIPPING LINES
Phone No: 2301185

Brazil's Gisele holds top spot in Forbes model list; Jenner jumps

LOS ANGELES — Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bundchen remained the highest-paid female model in the world with annual income of $30.5 million, while Kardashian clan member Kendall Jenner more than doubled her earnings, according to Forbes' 2016 list on Tuesday.

Jenner, 20-year-old member of reality TV's Kardashian family, tied for third, up from 16th the prior year, and she was the biggest gainer on the 2016 list. Her salary increased from $4 million in 2015 to $10 million in 2016 in part due to partnerships with Estee Lauder and Calvin Klein, Forbes said.

Illinois native Karlie Kloss, 24, was also ranked third and doubled her income to $10 million. The magazine said Kloss had more campaigns than any other model on the list.

Bundchen, 35, has made more money than any other model since 2002 and continues to collect top dollar from endorsement deals with Chanel, Carolina Herrera and Pantene.

Coming in second with $10.5 million was fellow Brazilian Adriana Lima. The longtime Victoria's Secret model works with Maybelline and IWC watches.

The highest-ranked of six newcomers on the list was Gigi Hadid at fifth. Hadid has more than 22 million fans on Instagram, and Forbes said brands like Maybelline and Tommy Hilfiger are eager to reach her audience.—*Reuters*

Brazilian top model Gisele Bundchen. PHOTO: REUTERS

Selena Gomez to take career break after panic attacks

LOS ANGELES — Pop singer Selena Gomez said on Tuesday she was taking time out to deal with panic attacks and depression thought to be a side effect of her lupus disease.

Gomez, 24, issued the statement in the midst of her Revival world tour, and about a year after revealing that she had been diagnosed with lupus.

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body and affects some 1.5 million Americans, according to the Lupus Foundation of America.

It was not immediately clear when she would start her break or what would happen with the rest of her tour, mostly in Europe and South America, through the end of 2016.

"I've discovered that anxiety, panic attacks and depression can be side effects of lupus, which can present their own challenges," she said.

"I want to be proactive and focus on maintaining my health and happiness and have decided that the best way forward is to take some time off . . . I need to face this head on to ensure I am doing everything possible to be my best," the former Disney Channel star said.

Singer Selena Gomez performs during the 2015 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in New York in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Gomez announced her decision about two weeks after getting into a social media feud with her ex-boyfriend, Justin Bieber, after the Canadian pop star posted images to his Instagram page of himself and his latest girlfriend, Sofia Richie.

Fans posted negative comments and Bieber made his account private in response.

"If you can't handle the hate then stop posting pictures of your girlfriend lol -it should be special between you two only," Gomez wrote under an image of the new couple. "Don't be mad at your fans. They love you."

Gomez, who found fame as a teenager through the 2007-12 Disney Channel series "Wizards of Waverly Place," also canceled half of her "Stars Dance" tour in 2014 when she was initially diagnosed with lupus.—*Reuters*

Chris Brown arrested for suspected assault at L.A. home

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Chris Brown was arrested on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon on Tuesday after a daylong standoff at his Los Angeles home that began with a dawn 911 call from a woman, police said.

Brown, 27, denied any wrongdoing in posts on Instagram before he was taken into custody and said he had woken up to find police outside the property in the Tarzana neighbourhood in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley.

"He is being transported to robbery homicide, where he will be arrested for assault with a deadly weapon," Los Angeles Police Department's Lieutenant Chris Ramirez told reporters at a media conference outside Brown's home.

Brown was released on bail of $250,000 bail late on Tuesday night, according to online county records.

Ramirez declined to elaborate on the charges against Brown, saying an investigation was still under way. T*he Los Angeles Times* reported that the singer pointed a gun at a woman it identified as Baylee Curran.

Curren told the newspaper Brown threatened her when she was admiring diamond jewellry and told her and a friend to leave the house.

Police who responded to the 911 emergency call at about 3am (1000 GMT) on Tuesday spent hours surrounding the house before beginning a search of the sprawling premises.

During that search, TMZ posted a photo of Brown standing on the front porch with a police officer and his attorney, Mark Geragos. Geragos could not be reached by Reuters for comment.

"I don't sleep half the damn night I just wake up to all these ... helicopters, choppers is around, police out there at the gate," Brown said in a video he posted on Instagram showing police stationed outside the house. "What I do care about is you are defacing my name and my character and integrity," he said, saying he had done nothing wrong and criticizing police actions.—*Reuters*

Artist Chris Brown. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venice star-studded film fest set to open under heightened security

VENICE — A musical with Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone, Jude Law as a chain smoking pope and Mel Gibson's come back with a war drama are all tipped as must-sees at the Venice film festival which opens its 73rd edition on the Lido under heightened security on Wednesday.

Top Hollywood talent and auteur directors will be vying for the Golden Lion at the world's oldest film festival which, after a period in the doldrums, is again seen as a launch pad for the industry's award season after premiering Academy winners in its last three editions.

Space drama "Gravity", comedy "Birdman" and last year's clergy sex abuse film "Spotlight" secured Oscars after premiering in Venice and those wins have helped attract talent to this year's festival, said artistic director Alberto Barbera.

"The second element is that this year there is a lot of good stuff around," he told Reuters as the red carpet was laid out in preparation for the star-filled line-up. The rich selection of US and international movies include Damien Chazelle's "La La Land", the festival's opener, starring Stone and Gosling in a musical comedy-drama about a jazz pianist who falls in love with an aspiring actress in Los Angeles.

"'La La Land' is something that everyone is talking about," said Variety film critic Jay Weissberg. "As much as maybe people don't even want to admit that they like musicals, everybody kind of likes a musical."—*Reuters*

UN rights office urges French towns to repeal burkini bans

GENEVA — The United Nations human rights office has called on French beach resorts to lift their bans on the burkini, calling them a "stupid reaction" that did not improve security but fueled religious intolerance.

France's highest administrative court last Friday suspended one seaside town's ban on the full-body swimsuit sometimes worn by Muslim women, on the grounds it violated fundamental liberties.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein welcomed the decision by the Conseil d'Etat against the Mediterranean resort of Villeneuve-Loubet, his spokesman Rupert Colville said. A dozen other towns also have such bans.

A woman wearing a burkini walks in the water on 27 August 2016 on a beach in Marseille, France, the day after the country's highest administrative court suspended a ban on full-body burkini swimsuits that has outraged Muslims and opened divisions within the government, pending a definitive ruling. PHOTO: REUTERS

"We call on the authorities in all the other French seaside towns and resorts that have adopted similar bans to take note of the Conseil d'Etat's ruling that the ban constitutes a grave and illegal breach of fundamental freedoms," he told a briefing.

"We urge all remaining local authorities which have adopted similar bans to repeal them immediately."

The "highly discriminatory" bans should be repealed before the summer holiday season ends, Colville said.

Bans have been defended on the grounds that burkinis violate French principles of secularism.

They come after mass killings by Islamist militants in France over the past 20 months. Colville said the UN rights office understood the grief and anger generated by the attacks.

But he said of the burkini ban: "It's frankly a stupid reaction to what we are ... facing, in terms of terrorist attacks. It does nothing to increase security, it does nothing to improve public order."

Such decrees "fuel religious intolerance and the stigmatization of Muslims in France, especially women", he said.

They "may actually undermine the effort to fight and prevent violent extremism, which depends on cooperation and mutual respect between communities".

The bans were "nothing to do with health or hygiene", as argued by some French officials, Colville said. "And it's a complete contradiction to think we liberate people from clothing impositions by making other clothing impositions. So the idea that by banning this form of clothing you are somehow advancing women's freedom is complete nonsense." —*Reuters*

Taiwan artist draws pleasure from miniature pencil carvings

TAIPEI —Taiwan artist Lee Chien-chu stands in front of Xilou Bridge proudly holding up a miniature carving of the landmark, the latest offering in his pencil sculpture series.

Lee has been peering through a magnifying glass to create miniature sculptures of various landmarks and symbols out of pencil lead for six years at his home in Yunlin County in western Taiwan.

His tiny sculptures can be as little as 0.1 mm long and take hours to finish.

"I have created a series about Buddha hands, a series about architecture, one about traditional (Chinese) weapons and one about the alphabet. Those are all artworks that I like very much," Lee told Reuters.—*Reuters*

STOMP stomps out loud for two months in Beijing

BEIJING — There are only seven dancers on the stage. They beat tin buckets, water sinks and broomsticks so passionately if not frenziedly, while the audiences clap, slap, and stomp — this is indeed stomping out loud together, like the name of the musical.

Debuted on 29 June, the dance troupe STOMP's two-month-long Beijing tour is about to close on 4 September, after winning a daily average attendance rate of 85 per cent in Beijing, according to news portal Sohu.com.

STOMP from Britain gives new life to almost everything that can make a sound, including human body parts and many daily household utensils.

It is eye-opening to see everything being able to sound musical — from trash can, match box to plastic tube to newspaper, and entertainingly experiential to join the rhythmic chorus.

To add to the surprise of the audiences, the dancers even broke a broomstick in their ecstatic swings and secured a new one to continue their performance.

Unlike traditional dance shows, the audiences are invited to contribute to the musical with their rhythm and sounds — granting them new life and new role: they are longer silent distant onlookers, but are dancers themselves — on a much bigger stage.

STOMP puts up impromptu shows, getting their inspirations on the theme and character — unhurriedly on the same day of staging to make the shows more varied and more attractive. An audience surnamed Yu said he has watched the show twice and each filled him with new experience.

Founded in 1991, STOMP stands out with its unique style and skill that combine movement with energizing percussion music. It has put on more than 20,000 performances in 53 countries and regions since birth, including the closing ceremony of the London Olympic Games.

"Stomp out loud" is performed in Beijing, capital of China, on 24 August 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

As its first-time tour to China, STOMP has incorporated elements with Chinese characteristics and objects it found at a Chinese destructor plant, including traffic signs reading "No entrance allowed" or "Construction ahead."

It is possible that these made-in-China "scraps" would join its future global tour, according to a theater employee.—*Xinhua*

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(1-9-2016, Thursday)

06 : 00 pm
- Weather Report
- MRTV Entertainment Music

06 : 20 pm
- Swan Hein Cave

06 : 40 pm
- Daingnak Style

07 : 05 pm
- International Drama Series

08 : 30 pm
- International Movie

10 : 25 pm
- Myanmar Video

(00:00 Am ~ 06:00 Am) Transmission (Repeat - 06:00 Pm ~ 00:00 Am)
(06:00 Pm ~ 12:00 Pm) Transmission (Repeat - 06:00 Pm ~ 00:00 Am)
(12:00 Pm ~ 04:22 Pm) Transmission (Repeat - 06:00 Pm ~ 10:22 Pm)

04 : 22 pm
- Cartoon Movie "101 Dalmatians"

From 1-9-2016 (Thurday) 6:00 pm
To 2-9-2016 (Friday) 6:00 pm

mitv Myanmar International

(1-9-2016 07:00am ~ 2-9-2016 07:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Ep-2) (Jivitadana Hospital)
07:51	Am	Chaung Tha Souvenir Business
08:03	Am	News
08:25	Am	Conflict & Solution Between Man & Elephant
08:42	Am	Manuha Temple Festivities
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanma Pottery
09:50	Am	Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Family"
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	History And Mystery Behind The Caves
10:50	Am	Myanmar's Export: Mango

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-1)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Rising Glory Of Myanmar Arts
08:54	Pm	Trishaw Man

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

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Andy Murray of Great Britain celebrates after recording match point at the 2016 US Open tennis tournament in New York, on 30 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Impressive Murray leads British charge in New York

NEW YORK — Whisper it quietly, the Brits are coming.

Of the eight British players in the main draw at the US Open, the most since 1985, five made it through to round two, with Andy Murray, Dan Evans and Naomi Broady joining Johanna Konta and Kyle Edmund in the last 64 on Tuesday.

The quintet of survivors matches the best performance by British players at Flushing Meadows since 1987, when four women and one man made it through the first round.

Second seed Murray, looking ominous in all black, was the last of the five to progress with a late-night 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Czech Lukas Rosol, effortlessly advancing without facing a single break point.

"I served very well," said Murray, who set up a second round encounter against Marcel Granollers of Spain.

"It was a tough start to the match, he had a few chances early on but once I got the break up, I played well."

Evans was ranked as low as 772 in May 2015 and still outside the top 300 when the US Open began last August.

A string of successes on the Challenger Tour carried him close to the top 100 and his 6-2, 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 over the American Rajeev Ram is set to lift his ranking from 64 to inside the top 60, a new career-high.

"I would have taken your hand off," Evans responded when asked how he would have reacted had someone offered him a chance to be ranked this high at this stage of the year.

"It's been a pretty interesting year and I'm happy with how it's been."

Evans next plays 27th-seeded German Sascha Zverev, who at 19 is tipped as a future star of the men's game.

World number 82 Broady earned only her second ever grand slam win with a gutsy 6-7, 6-3, 6-4 win over fellow Briton Laura Robson.

The 26-year-old Broady recently broke into the world's top 100 and admitted she was a late bloomer.

"I think in British tennis they like to say that you're running out of time and you're playing catch-up and if you're not there by 18 then you're behind everybody else," she said.

"But tennis is becoming more of a longevity sport there and the average age of the top 100 is getting older.

"I think I was 25 when I broke into it this year. I'm still there and I maybe won't be in the top 100 as long as Laura has the potential to be but we've not got the same career, so I'll just do the best with what I've got."

There was disappointment for Heather Watson, however, who suffered from a fever and back pain as she lost 6-2, 7-5 to Dutch qualifier Richel Hogenkamp. The other British player in action, Aljaz Bedene, also suffered a straight sets defeat, with Australian 14th seed Nick Kyrgios proving too strong in a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 victory.—*Reuters*

Williams sister act through to Open second round

NEW YORK — World number one Serena Williams opened her US Open account with a tidy 6-3, 6-3 win over Ekaterina Makarova on Tuesday, to join her sister Venus in the second round of the year's final grand slam.

Williams, whose status as world number one is under attack from several fronts, delivered a message that she will not be surrendering the top spot without a fight, needing just 63 minutes to dispatch the 29th-ranked Russian. Germany's Angelique Kerber and Spain's Garbine Muguruza, who have both beaten Williams in slam finals this season, along with Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska, will all be eyeing the number one ranking should the American's bid for a 23rd grand slam title stall.

Williams has owned the number one spot since 18 February 2013 and will extend her streak to 186 consecutive weeks by the end of the US Open fortnight, tying the WTA record held by Steffi Graf.

Back on Arthur Ashe Stadium court for the first time since a shock loss to Italy's Roberta Vinci in last year's US Open semi-finals, Williams made quick work of Makarova to follow the lead of her sister Venus.

Sixth-seeded Venus had provided the opening act for sister Serena when she outlasted Ukraine's Kateryna Kozlova 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 before turning over the Arthur Ashe Stadium court to her top-seeded sibling.

The Flushing Meadows spotlight is once again firmly fixed on Serena as she chases an Open Era, record smashing 23rd slam title with concerns over her right shoulder, believed to be a factor in her third-round singles loss at the Rio Olympics.

As always at the US Open, what the world number one was wearing attracted as much attention as her performance. Williams sported a black tennis dress with cutouts revealing her muscular shoulders.—*Reuters*

Rooney to quit England after 2018 World Cup

LONDON — Wayne Rooney will end his England career after the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the striker said on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old made his announcement at a news conference ahead of the World Cup qualifier against Slovakia on Sunday when will set a new record for an England outfield player, ahead of David Beckham, by winning his 116th cap.

"Come Russia I feel that will be the time for me to say goodbye to international football, my mind is made up, said Rooney, who was reappointed England captain by new manager Sam Allardyce on Monday.

"Russia will be my last opportunity to do anything with England so I'm going to try to enjoy these two years and hopefully I can end my time with England on a high," he said.

England's record goalscorer with 53 goals, Rooney has been a stalwart for his country since bursting on to the international scene under Sven-Goran Eriksson at Euro 2004.

Four managers and 12 years later, however, Rooney accepts there has been a familiar tale of England under-achievement.

"We have to (move on from previous disappointments). You can't just forget it (Euro 2016) but it's a new era for us. A new manager. I seem to say that after every tournament. We have to work out how we can go one step further in tournament play.

"I'm looking forward to this new regime. I'm excited by the players involved at the moment and, although there have been questions about my future, I said straight after the Euros that I wanted to still be involved," he added.

"When Sam got the job I made that clear to him and here we are. Sam is a relaxed guy. The camp has been good, we have only had one session, but we are all excited about what ideas he can bring to us."—*Reuters*

England's Wayne Rooney. PHOTO: REUTERS

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