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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi inspects damaged parts at Setanagyi Pagoda in the Bagan Archaeological Zone. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor calls for ensuring transparency in cultural heritage conservation attempts in Bagan

HISTORIC areas being restored in Bagan need to ensure a cent-per-cent accounting transparency to achieve success, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told local authorities in her tour of Bagan yesterday.

The State Counsellor inspected damaged pagodas in the Bagan Archaeological Zone,

which was hit by a 6.8 magnitude earthquake on 24 August, damaging 258 vaulted temples, 104 pagodas and 13 brick monasteries. The State Counsellor called for ensuring that each edifice not lose ancient artistic value when the damaged pagodas are restored.

Conservation work on the damaged pagodas should take the opinions of the people and effec-

tiveness of the work into consideration, she added.

“Conservation of cultural heritage does not mean conserving lifeless edifices and items and but it means conservation of things which are connected with the history and culture of our country,” she said. “In our history, there are things we can take pride in and there are things

which are not worth taking pride and from which we should take lessons.”

Concerning the conservation of the country’s cultural heritage, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also gave her strongly-held opinion over whether visitors should be allowed to climb the temples to view sunrises and sunsets.

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“Sunset and sun rise viewing on the temples can cause damage to the cultural heritage, and that is not suitable in the long-run and should be banned in the future.



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Investigation Commission on Maungtaw meets in Nay Pyi Taw

U Myint Swe, Vice-President and Chairman of the Investigation Commission on Maungtaw, met with commission members yesterday morning at the Office of the President in Nay Pyi Taw and said a final report was forthcoming.

The Chairman said the commission's report was already compiled, with some facts still to be discussed again among commission members.

"Due to the efforts of the investigation commission, a detailed report (draft) has been already compiled. In the draft report, eight major tasks to be investigated by the committee were written. At today's meeting, detailed facts to be included in the report are to be discussed



Vice President U Myint Swe discusses with members of Investigation Commission on Maungtaw. PHOTO: MNA

again. The commission is required to freely assess and suggest without having any bias, with a view to gaining stability,

rule of law, development and security in Maungtaw State and to the survival of sovereignty of the State. The commission will pre-

pare its report to the best of its ability, to make sure it turns out to be the best. And the commission will advise to emphatically

implement matters needed to be urgently carried out, as regards the suggestions included in the report, so that similar cases will never happen again."

Following the approval of the minutes of the meeting, U Zaw Myint Pe, Secretary of the commission, clarified the status of preparation of the draft report according to the various headings.

Then, commission members U Aung Kyi, U Tun Myat, Dr Hla Maung, Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin, Dr Aung Tun Thet, U Nyunt Swe, U Saw Thalay Saw, Daw Kyein Ngai Man, Police Major-General Zaw Win, U Aung Naing and U Tha Nyan discussed the draft report. — Myanmar News Agency



Rar Khet (a) Sharkay Mumammud, 26, from Ngakhuya Ale Village. PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Suspect arrested in attack on Ngakhuya Border Outpost

POLICE and townselders, acting on a tip-off, arrested a man yesterday on suspicion of involvement in the attack on the Ngakhuya Border Outpost on 9th October last year, according to the State Counsellor's Office Information Committee.

The police arrested Rar Khet, 26, also known as Sharkay Mum-

ammud, from Ngakhuya Ale Village, who fled after the 9 October attack to the border outpost. He returned after receiving information that several other suspects arrived back in the village, authorities said. A file has been opened against the suspect at the Ngakhuya Police Station.—Myanmar News Agency

Aid from Indonesia to be delivered to communities in Maungtaw Township



Volunteers carry aids from the ships to deliver to village in conflict areas in Maungtaw Township. PHOTO: MNA

HUMANITARIAN aids from Indonesia reached Maungtaw yesterday and the food and clothing would be delivered to the peoples who are expected to face shortage of food in conflict areas.

The two ships carrying the aids including 2,146 bags of rice, 5,400 bags of dried noodles and 1,050 bags of nutrition powder and clothing in 35 bags arrived Maungtaw after crossing the sea.

The aids are unloading from the two ships yesterday and will

be delivered to two communities in the township in the presence of the local authorities, MPs, members of the religious organizations, international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations and townselders.

The deliverance of the aids would be given priority to the people who are expected to face the food shortage, said U Ye Htut, Chairman of the Maungtaw District Management Committee.— Maung Zaw Nay/Myanmar News Agency

Warpeik to be upgraded into a model village



Authorities and locals check sites of homes which were burnt down during recent violent attacks by armed attackers. PHOTO: MUANG PO ZAW

PLANS are underway to make Warpeik, which was burnt down during recent violent attacks, into a model village.

"We are going to make Warpeik Village a model village properly and we are choosing the site for the village by inviting the cooperation of the residents," said Chairman U Myint Khaing of the Maungtaw Township Management Committee at the meet-

ing of the committee and residents of Kyikanpyin and Warpeik at the high school in Kyikanpyin Village.

After the meeting, members of the committee and residents visited the chosen site on both sides of on Kyikanpyin-Zinbin-yar road and Kyikanpyin-Nway-ontaung Road.

"We are glad that our village will be rebuilt as a model village

and we are determined to cooperate with authorities. I have always wanted to live in my own house," said Warpeik resident Mammud Armain.

"We have no objection for building the model village, but we would like to request purified drinking water for our village," said Mammaud Narse of the Kyikanpyin (Middle) Village.— Maung Zaw Nay



Post-Primary School, at Shwezar Village, in Maungtaw District, is conducting sports activities for the school children, with 100 and 200 metre hurdles and other outdoor activities. PHOTO: PHO ZAW

State Counsellor calls for ensuring transparency . . .

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“Sunset and sun rise viewing on the temples can cause damage to the cultural heritage, and that is not suitable in the long-run and should be banned in the future,” she said.

She has suggested to build an infrastructure in another suitable place for sunset and sunrise viewing.

The Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, where about 3,000 ancient pagodas and religious edifices can be seen in one place, has been in existence for more than 1,000 years and is not only the pride of all Myanmar nationals but also a major attraction for foreigners across the world. In a manner of speaking, the major earthquake that hit the region on 24 August was felt worldwide.

During her tour, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi discussed several issues related to conservation of cultural heritage in Bagan, including current efforts for the conservation and designation of zones in Bagan and preparation for becoming a part of UNESCO’s World Heritage list.

Previous administrations have constructed numerous new temples and pagodas, in some cases building on top of old structures, or reconstructing them completely, which has had an adverse effect on Bagan becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site, according to archaeological officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Htin Kyaw and first lady attend prize presentation ceremony for English Language Proficiency

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw and first lady Daw Su Su Lwin attended a prize presentation ceremony for winners in the English language proficiency competition for university, degree college and college level students at Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

Also present were Vice President U Henry Van Thio, union ministers, the chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, deputy ministers, officials, rectors, pro-rectors, faculty members and students of universities and colleges.

Prize-winning students read out their essays, conducted impromptu talks and roundtable discussions in English.

Afterwards, Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi in a speech said that teaching students just to pass their examinations is not sufficient, as high-quality education and related capabilities are essential for solving global issues. Technology has allowed for significant and high potential outcomes, and the public has a high expectation for higher education standards, he said.

In addition, the union minister pointed out that it is impossible for anyone to be competent in all disciplines, as the speed of the progress of knowledge is very fast, but some people expect that graduate people are knowledgeable in their chosen area of



President U Htin Kyaw and first lady Daw Su Su Lwin attend prize presentation ceremony for English Language Proficiency at MICC-II in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

specialisation. In conclusion, the union minister urged faculty members to train their students for the future needs of themselves and their country.

During the ceremony, the first lady presented prizes for winners of all three competitions at the post-graduate level.

The vice president presented prizes to the winners of all three competitions at the undergraduate level.

Union Minister Lt-Gen Ye Aung presented prizes to win-

ners of the essay competition at the post-graduate level, while Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presented prizes to the essay competitions at the undergraduate level. Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung presented prizes to winners of the impromptu talk at the post-graduate level. Dr Myo Aung, chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, presented prizes to winners of the impromptu talk at the undergraduate level and Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe presented prizes

es to winners of the roundtable talk at the post graduate level. Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi presented prizes to winners of roundtable talk at the under-graduate level. Chairman of the National Education Policy Commission Dr Myo Myint presented gifts to judges at the competitions.

After the ceremony, the president and the first lady posed for documentary photographs with the winners.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Central Executive Committee of UNFC holds emergency meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Ye Khaung Nyunt

AN emergency meeting of the central executive committee of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand on Monday and Tuesday.

Present at the meeting were more than 30 representatives including leaders from seven armed groups which did not sign yet in Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), New Mon State Party and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP). A few days prior to the emergency meeting, H.E. Mr Sun Guoxiang, special representative on Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, met with four groups from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta’an National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), in the northern part in Kunming, China, on January 19.

The purpose of the emergency meeting was to submit the report of the meeting in Kunming to the vice-chairman of the UNFC and representatives, it is learnt.

At the emergency meeting, discussions on attendance at the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong 2nd Meeting and plans to lay down attitudes were made.

Also among the matters discussed in the meeting were discussions on the peace process led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor, coordination body on fund, working process of Joint Coordinating Body (JCB), submission and approval of the working instructions of Joint Monitoring Committee’s revised ceasefire plan, following the informal talk in Chiang Mai between the peace advisory commission led by U Aung Kyi and the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN), representative of UNFC and matters of reappointment of the special representative of the UN Secretary General to Myanmar. Northern Aligned Groups KIA, TNLA, AA and MNDAA, who are eager to meet with the Union Government for the implementation of peace, issued a statement on Monday that they are ready to meet with the government. It is learnt that KIA, TNLA, AA and MNDAA urged United Wa Solidarity Party (UWSP) to attend the meeting with the government.

State Counsellor and Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo of Bhutan pay homage to ancient pagodas in Bagan



STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo of Bhutan study the sand art at the Gupyauggyi (Myingaba) Pagoda in Bagan. PHOTO: MNA

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, together with Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo of Bhutan, visited the famous ancient pagodas in Bagan yesterday afternoon.

The State Counsellor and the Queen Mother paid homage to the Ananda Pagoda and offered flowers, water and lights.

They then paid homage to the Gupyauggyi (Myingaba)

Pagoda before studying the sand art and lacquerware and sculpture workshops.

In the evening, the State Counsellor hosted a dinner in honour of the Queen Mother.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Illegally-cut timber and trucks seized



Photo shows confiscated illegally-cut timbers and truck. PHOTO: MNA

UPON learning that illegally-cut timbers were being smuggled out along the "Shweli" riverine route, Tatmadaw troops and Myanmar Police made an area clearance operation, seizing 359 tonnes of various timber and 70 trucks, according to a news release from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Service.

After receiving information about the illegal timber being

smuggled out of nearby Manton in Moemeik township, the Tatmadaw made aerial reconnaissance, taking aerial photos starting on January 17 that showed smugglers transporting logs with the use of trucks. Tatmadaw troops tried to stop smuggling by threatening to open fire.

The 359 tonnes of various timber and 70 trucks seized were discovered during several area clearance operations conducted

between 19 and 22 January near Monewee village in Namkham township and Monekhet village in Manton township.

To stop the smuggling of illegally-cut wood in northeastern Shan State, aerial reconnaissance and area clearance operation are continually being conducted. The seized timber and trucks will be handed over to the respective departments, it is learnt.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Ammunition seized in Shan state



Ammunition seized in Shan state. PHOTO: C-IN-C's OFFICE

TATMADAW columns seized ammunition on Sunday morning near Kyugok (Panghsai) town, east northern Shan State.

Members of Tatmadaw found 30 60mm bombs, 70 bomb heads, 29 hand grenades, 23 magazines, two bulletproof jackets and two bulletproof helmet while conducting area clearance operations in the surrounding areas of Kyugok town in Shan State.

Government troops are still conducting area clearance operations near the areas.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Dy Attorney-General meets law officers in Sagaing

DEPUTY Attorney-General U Win Myint met with law officers in Sagaing Region in his recent visit to Sagaing, calling on carrying out their duties without corruption.

At the meeting held at the Sagaing Region Law Office, the Deputy Attorney-General also urged the law officers to make efforts for reforming the sector they are playing aiming at improving it while attaching importance to their duties for the rule of law.

Besides, he also urged the officers to carry out the tasks dutifully in the upcoming by-election.—*GNLM*



Deputy Attorney-General meets law officers in Sagaing. PHOTO: MNA

Crime NEWS

Raw opium, stimulants seized in Mogaung and Ywangan

POLICE from Mogaung Myoma Station searched two motorcycles driven by Thein Zaw and Khin Maung Win at the 8-mile intersection, 8-Mile Village in Mogaung on Monday and seized 3,800 stimulant tablets.

Similarly, an anti-narcotics squad from Taunggyi searched three motorcycles driven by Thant Zaw Min, Tun Tun Naing (alias Lwan Wai) and San Win together with Ma Khin Sanda Kyaw and Ma May Win Hlaing

on board on the Ywangan-Han Myint Mo-Mandalay Road near Kyaukgupyin Village in Ywangan Township on Monday and seized 13 kilos of raw opium and three phone handsets which are commonly used to contact drug dealers and their associates.

Police have taken action against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Light truck hits bridge's signboard on Yangon-Mandalay Highway

A LIGHT truck hit Phayataung bridge's signboard when the driver lost control after the left front tire of the vehicle burst at 11:30 pm yesterday near milepost 229/6 in Tatkon Township on Yangon-Mandalay Highway.

The light truck driven by Soe Min Thant with three others on board was en route from

Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw. Two males including the driver were slightly injured. They were taken in a Phayataung Police Station vehicle to the 1,000-bed Nay Pyi Taw Hospital.

Police have taken action against the driver under section 337/338 of the Penal Code.—*Than Oo (Lemyethna)*



Highway police inspect the light truck on Ygn-Mdy Highway. PHOTO: MPF

Unregistered cars seized in Paung Township

FOUR unregistered cars were seized by local police in Paung Township in Mon State in one day after the drivers could not provide documents proving their ownership of the cars, according to Thaton District Police.

Acting on a tip-off, police were waiting for the unregistered cars at different target points in Paung Township on Sunday, confiscating four cars without

licenses including three Toyota Wish cars and one Honda Fit.

According to the investigators, the cars entered the township while heading from Mawlamyint to Thaton.

Four suspects—Aung Thu, 48, Kyaw Myint Soe, 29, Aung Thu Oo, 36, and Myo Win, 44, have been charged under Section 8 of the Export and Import Law.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Photo shows confiscated cars. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

LOCAL Business

CB Bank to install additional 500 ATMs

COOPERATIVE Bank (CB) will install an additional 500 ATMs in cooperation with Diebold Nixdorf, based in United States, it is learnt.

Diebold Nixdorf will provide technical assistance for installation of the machines.

"This action aims to make it easier for CB bank users to withdraw money. The bank will install quality ATMs with

the help of advanced technology and service," said an official from the CB bank.

Those 500 ATMs will be installed in big cities across the nation. The installation will commence in the middle of this year.

Additionally, CB bank is making efforts with this company to offer the withdrawal of cash with the use of mobile phone instead of cards.—200

RTAD issued licenses for over 100 cars with SKD system

THE Road Transportation Administration Department (RTAD) has issued licenses for over 100 cars imported under the Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) system, especially for the cars produced by Suzuki and Nissan, according to an announcement by the department. The RTAD initially issued licenses for a fleet of 100 Suzukis out of 700 while over 30 Nissan cars were granted licenses, it is learnt.

Currently, there are no plans to differentiate the licenses for those cars imported with the SKD system by colour or number from cars licensed through the traditional system, said an official from the above said department.

Other brand new showrooms are also seeking licenses for cars imported under SKD system. The number of cars imported under the SKD system is expected to rise.—Ko Khant

Myanmar's bananas in demand in Thailand

MYANMAR's banana market looks very promising with demand from Thailand, in addition to China, according to the Commerce Ministry. The banana variety produced in Kachin State is being cultivated as a substitute for poppy. Previously, this type of banana was exported only to China, making the Myanmar heavily dependent on the China market. The bananas fetch a good price

because of its colour, fragrance and quality, with the prevailing price of US\$4,000 per tonne.

Thailand recently proposed to purchase this variety of bananas from Kachin State. The bananas were first exported to Thailand in early January with positive results. The banana is expected to get a good price due to its quality in the highly competitive market of Thailand. —Ko Htet

MAEX shares can be purchased through four securities companies

SHARES of Myanmar Agro Exchange Public Limited (MAEX) can be purchased through securities companies including KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Company, CB Securities Company, AYA Trust Securities Company and KTZ Ruby Hill Securities Company, said U Thurein Aung, the director of MAEX.

"We will sell our shares through the links with securities companies. Currently, we're receiving applications only. We will update on whether we will sell volumes of shares as they asked for only a small volume, he added.

Stock trading was approved for MAEX by the Securities

and Exchange Commission of Myanmar under the Ministry of Planning and Finance on 11th January. Over 500,000 shares are being sold at Ks10,500 per share.

Those interested can observe the company's prospectus and take out applications to buy shares via the aforementioned securities companies.

Formed in 2015 with 21 original shareholders, MAEX has a capitalisation of Ks15.72billion. The company, which is engaged mainly in construction, is developing the fruits, vegetables and flowers wholesale market and also preparing for opening of cold storage warehouses. —Myitmakha News Agency



A file photo shows workers seen on a production line at a garment factory in Hlinethaya. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Seven foreign and local enterprises permitted to invest US\$1,435.808 million

SEVEN foreign and local enterprises have received permission to invest US\$1,435.808million, creating 5,533 job opportunities, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission meeting held on 21st January.

There were foreign investments of US\$1,416.080million and Myanmar Citizen investments of US\$19.728million. The foreign investments were from China, Singapore, South Korea, Viet Nam and Samoa, it is learnt.

The seven enterprises are: G

& U (Myanmar) Fashion Company Limited for manufacturing of garments using the Cutting-Making and Processing (CMP) process; Jia Long Plastic Products (Myanmar) Company Limited for the manufacturing and marketing of polybags and related products such as elastic bands; Shyang Peng Cheng Company Limited for the manufacturing of a variety of shoes using the CMP process; Dongwon M House Company Limited, for the CMP manufacturing of the upper parts

of shoes; CMI Engineering Company Limited for the manufacturing and sale of switchboards, electrical control boxes, sheet metal parts and steel receivers; Myanmar National Tele & Communications Ltd for nationwide telecommunications networks and services and Ga Mone Pwint Co., Ltd for leasing of shopping mall office towers and hotels on the BOP system, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.—Mon Mon

Woodside to re-start drilling offshore Myanmar

PERTH, (Australia) — Woodside Energy expects to spud exploration wells by mid-year offshore Myanmar and Western Australia.

The campaign off Myanmar is due to start next month. The first two wells will appraise the Thalin discovery, and will incorporate coring and drillstem testing programs.

Woodside adds that the joint venture partners for blocks A-6 and AD-7 have approved two exploration wells, one on each block, with work in progress to identify two additional drilling prospects.

In Australia's Exmouth sub-basin, the company expects to drill the Swell gas prospect in the WA-483-P permit during 2Q.

As for Woodside's ongoing development projects, at Wheatstone off Western Australia construction of LNG Train 1 is nearing completion, with all modules on-site and final hook-up and commissioning under way. The LNG stor-

age tanks and export loading jetty are complete, while the storage and loading system are ready for commissioning.

First LNG production now looks likely in mid-year with Train 2 due to start up six to eight months later. Once both trains are fully operational, the project should lift Woodside's annual production by more than 13 MMboe.

At the Greater Western Flank 1 development on the North West Shelf, the final GWF-1 wells on the Tidepole structure delivered first gas late last year.

The Persephone project remains on budget and on schedule for start-up in 3Q, with subsea installation under way.

For Greater Western Flank 2, the offshore campaign has started with the installation of mooring piles at two drill center locations, and reservoir drilling in progress.

Subsea equipment manufacturing has started for the Greater

Enfield tieback, due to deliver first oil in mid-2019.

Elsewhere off Western Australia, the company and its partners in the Browse project are evaluating alternative development options and are looking to select a concept later this year.

Work has also started on commercializing the Scarborough area gas resources, with a projected start for front-end engineering and design next year.

Offshore Gabon, processing of the first azimuth of multi-client 3D seismic data for the DoukouDak block has been completed, Woodside adds, as has processing of MC 3D data for the Luna Muetse block.

The joint venture is drawing up plans for a well to be drilled in 2017/2018.

Offshore eastern Canada, the company has elected to withdraw from the Nova Scotia Joint Venture.—Offshore Magazine

China says will protect South China Sea sovereignty

BEIJING/ WASHINGTON— China said on Tuesday it had “irrefutable” sovereignty over disputed islands in the South China Sea after the White House vowed to defend “international territories” in the strategic waterway.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer in his comments on Monday signaled a sharp departure from years of cautious US handling of China’s assertive pursuit of territorial claims in Asia.

“The US is going to make sure that we protect our interests there,” Spicer said when asked if Trump agreed with comments by his secretary of state nominee, Rex Tillerson. On 11 January, Tillerson said China should not be allowed access to islands it has built in the contested South China Sea.

“It’s a question of if those islands are in fact in international waters and not part of China proper, then yeah, we’re going to make sure that we defend international territories from being taken over by one country,” he said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing on Tuesday “the United States is not a party to the South China Sea dispute”.

China claims most of the South China Sea, while Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei claims parts of the sea that commands strategic sealanes and has rich fishing grounds along with oil and gas deposits.

China’s sovereignty over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea was “irrefutable” Hua said. But China was also dedicated to protecting freedom of navigation and wants talks with nations directly involved to find a peaceful solution.

“We urge the United States to respect the facts, speak and act cautiously to avoid harming the peace and stability of the South China Sea,” Hua said.

“Our actions in the South China Sea are reasonable and fair. No matter what changes happen in other countries, what they say or what they want to do, China’s resolve to protect its sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea will not change,” she added.

Tillerson’s remarks at his Senate confirmation hearing prompted Chinese state media to say at the time that the United States would need to “wage war” to bar China’s access to the islands, where it has built military-length air strips and installed weapons sys-



Hua Chunying, spokeswoman of China’s Foreign Ministry, speaks at a regular news conference in Beijing, China, on 6 January, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

tems. Tillerson was asked at the hearing whether he supported a more aggressive posture toward China and said: “We’re going to have to send China a clear signal that, first, the island-building stops and, second, your access to those islands also is not going to be allowed.”

The former Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM.N) chairman and chief executive did not elaborate on what might be done to deny China access to the islands.

But analysts said his comments, like those of Spicer, suggested the possibility of US military action,

or even a naval blockade. Such action would risk an armed confrontation with China, an increasingly formidable nuclear-armed military power. It is also the world’s second-largest economy and the target of Trump accusations it is stealing American jobs.

Spicer declined to elaborate when asked how the United States could enforce such a move against China, except to say: “I think, as we develop further, we’ll have more information on it.”

Tillerson narrowly won approval from a Senate

committee on Monday and is expected to win confirmation from the full Senate. Military experts said that while the US Navy has extensive capabilities in Asia to stage blockading operations with ships, submarines and planes, any such move against China’s growing naval fleets would risk a dangerous escalation.

Aides have said that Trump plans a major naval build-up in East Asia to counter China’s rise.

China’s foreign ministry said earlier this month it could not guess what Tillerson meant by his remarks,

which came after Trump questioned Washington’s longstanding and highly sensitive “one-China” policy over Taiwan.

Washington-based South China Sea expert Mira Rapp-Hooper at the Center for a New American Security called the threats to bar China’s access in the South China Sea “incredible” and said it had no basis in international law.

“A blockade — which is what would be required to actually bar access — is an act of war,” she added.

“The Trump administration has begun to draw red lines in Asia that they will almost certainly not be able to uphold, but they may nonetheless be very destabilizing to the relationship with China, invite crises, and convince the rest of the world that the United States is an unreliable partner.”

Bonnie Glaser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank called Spicer’s remarks “worrisome” and said the new administration was “sending confusing and conflicting messages.”

Dean Cheng, a China expert at the conservative Heritage Foundation, said Spicer’s remarks showed the South China Sea was an important issue for the Trump administration.—Reuters

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Acting Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Expatriate Consultant Editor

Mark Angeles
markangeles@gmail.com

Senior Translators

Khin Maung Oo, Myint Win Thein

editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

International News Editor

Ye Htut Tin

editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Local News Editors

Tun Tun Naing (Editor)

intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor)

Translators

Khaing Thanda Lwin,

reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Hay Mar Tin Win,

translator@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Ei Myat Mon

Chief Reporter

Tun Aung Kyaw,

reporter2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Computer Team

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

Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,

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

Circulation

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532, Hotline - 09 974424114

Advertising inquiry

01 8604530, Hotline - 09 974424848

marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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Cambodia, Laos vow to boost anti-drug cooperation

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia and Laos on Tuesday vowed to further enhance their bilateral cooperation in combating drugs along the border, Cambodian Foreign Ministry spokesman Chum Sounry said.

The commitment was made between Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn and his Lao counterpart Saleumxay Kommasith during a meeting here.

According to the spokesman, Sokhonn informed Kommasith about the six-month anti-drug campaign that Cambodia launched at the beginning of this month and proposed the Lao side to further boost cooperation between the two countries to combat drug trafficking along the border.

“In response, the Lao foreign minister expressed his agreement with the

proposal and promised to talk with the ministries concerned to further enhance the anti-drug cooperation with Cambodia,” he said.

Cambodia shares about 533 kilometres of border with Laos to the north and northeast. According to the spokesman, to date, the two countries had demarcated around 465 kilometres of the borderline. Kommasith ar-

rived here on Monday for a three-day visit. Earlier in the day, he paid separate courtesy calls on Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen and King Norodom Sihamoni.

He will also attend the meeting of the Cambodian-Lao Joint Boundary Commission with Var Kimhong, Cambodian senior minister in charge of border affairs, on Wednesday.—Reuters

Japan Defence Ministry’s 1st satellite successfully placed in orbit

TANEGASHIMA — The Japanese Defence Ministry’s first communications satellite was successfully placed in orbit late Tuesday afternoon, part of the country’s efforts to upgrade the Self-Defence Forces’ communications network to better deal with security challenges.

An H-2A rocket carrying the Kirameki-2 defence communications satellite was launched at 4:44 pm from the Japan

Aerospace Exploration Agency’s Tanegashima Space Centre in Kagoshima Prefecture, southwestern Japan.

The Kirameki-2 satellite is one of three defence communications satellites that will replace three civilian satellites currently used by the SDF.

According to Defence Ministry officials, the new satellites will facilitate direct communications among units of the Ground,

Maritime and Air Self-Defence Forces through a high-speed, high-capacity network, serving as a communications infrastructure to counter the North Korean missile threat and defend remote islands.

The ministry plans to operate the Kirameki-2 over the Indian Ocean and expects it to be also used by SDF personnel taking part in UN peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and an antipiracy mission

off Somalia, they said.

The importance of the SDF’s communications infrastructure has also increased following the enactment of security legislation expanding the SDF’s activities overseas to contribute more to regional and global peace. The legislation, which loosens constraints imposed by the war-renouncing Constitution, came into force last March.—Reuters

Fire-prone Indonesian province declares early emergency to combat “haze”

JAKATAR — Indonesia’s fire-prone Riau province declared a state of emergency on Tuesday, the disaster mitigation agency said, after President Joko Widodo urged regional authorities to avoid a repeat of fires that smothered Southeast Asia in smog in 2015.

Indonesia faces global pressure to put an end to slash-and-burn land clearances for palm and pulp plantations which send clouds of toxic smoke over the region each year.

Tuesday’s move is intended to help Riau, which sits a stone’s throw across the Malacca Strait from wealthy city-state Singapore, to begin taking preventive steps as dryer weather is expected in 2017 than in 2016.

“The province of Riau today declared emergency status for forest and land fires for 96 days,” National Disaster Mitiga-

tion Agency spokesman Sutopo Nugroho told Reuters.

The 2015 fires were among the worst on record, straining ties with neighbours, and costing Indonesia an estimated 220 trillion rupiah (\$16.5 billion) in economic losses, or about 1.9 per cent of gross domestic product, Widodo’s office has said.

Every year, Indonesia faces criticism from its neighbours Singapore and Malaysia over the smog, euphemistically known as “haze”, and its failure to stop the fires from being lit.

Data from the state weather agency shows dryer weather in store for Indonesia this year, which authorities fear could spark more fires.

“We hope that at the beginning of this year there is planning and quick action (so) we can prevent forest and land fires in 2017,” Widodo said.



Trees burn during a fire in Pekanbaru, Indonesia Riau province, Indonesia, on 18 January, 2017 .

PHOTO: REUTERS

He called for preventive measures, tougher law enforcement, more community involvement and better governance of private land and concessions.

“Check preparations for

aerial operations, air patrols, rain making and water bombing. These have to move quickly from the start,” the president said.

Widodo thanked communi-

ty stakeholders and authorities for efforts to prevent and douse fires in 2016, when hotspots were reduced by 83 per cent.

“The reduction was drastic,” he added.—Reuters

Pakistan tests long-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile: army

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has conducted its first successful flight test of surface-to-surface ballistic missile, which has a maximum range of 2200 kilometers, the military said on Tuesday.

The “Ababeel” missile is capable of delivering multiple warheads, using Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology, an army statement said.

“The test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system,” the statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations said.

“Ababeel” is capable of carrying nuclear warheads and has

the capability to engage multiple targets with high precision, defeating the enemy’s hostile radars, the military said.

“Development of Ababeel’ Weapon System is aimed at ensuring survivability of Pakistan’s ballistic missiles in the growing regional Ballistic Missile Defense environment. This will further reinforce deterrence.”

President and prime minister of Pakistan conveyed their appreciation to the team involved and armed forces of Pakistan on this landmark achievement. The top military leaders have also congratulated the scientists and engineers on successful conduct of missile test, the statement said.—Xinhua

A-bomb museum discovers new photos of mushroom cloud, A-bomb dome

HIROSHIMA — The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum showed to the press on Tuesday a total of 10 newly discovered photos, including one taken by the crew of the Enola Gay that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima showing the mushroom cloud rising skyward on 6 August, 1945.

The photographs collected from the Library of Congress and the National Museum of the US Air Force in the United States also include a picture of US Navy sailors observing the so-called Atomic Bomb Dome 10 years after the bombing.

With the new findings, the mu-

seum now holds two photographs of the mushroom cloud taken from the Enola Gay. Late last year the museum gathered around 2,100 photographs related to the atomic bomb and found that at least 10 of them had been uncollected.

The photograph of the mushroom cloud is believed to have been taken by the Enola Gay crew when the plane approached Hiroshima again in order to confirm the damage caused by the bomb.

Among these pictures, one was an aerial photo of Hiroshima city in 1946, which appears with signatures of three Enola Gay crew members.—Kyodo News

After US exit, Asian nations try to save TPP trade deal

WELLINGTON/ TOKYO — Australia and New Zealand said on Tuesday they hope to salvage the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) by encouraging China and other Asian nations to join the trade pact after US President Donald Trump kept his promise to pull out of the accord.

The TPP, which the United States had signed but not ratified, was a pillar of former US President Barack Obama’s policy to pivot to Asia.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has touted it as an engine of economic reform, as well as a counter-weight to a rising China, which is not a TPP member.

Fulfilling a campaign pledge, Trump signed an executive order in the Oval Office on Monday pulling the United States out of the 2015 TPP agreement and distancing the United States from its Asian allies.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said he had held discussions with Abe, New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong overnight about the possibility of proceeding with the TPP without the United States.

“Losing the United States from the TPP is a big loss, there is no question about that,” Turnbull told reporters in Canberra on Tuesday. “But we are not about to walk away ... certainly there is potential for China to join the TPP.”

Obama had framed TPP without China in an effort to write Asia’s trade rules before Beijing could, establishing US economic leadership in the region as part of his “pivot to Asia”.

China has proposed a counter pact, the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) and has championed the Southeast Asian-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

New Zealand’s English said the United States was ceding influence to China and the region’s focus could switch to alternative trade deals.

“We’ve got this RCEP agreement with Southeast Asia, which up until now has been on a bit of a slow burn, but we might find the political will for that to pick up if TPP isn’t going to proceed,” English said.

Malaysia’s trade minister said negotiators from the remaining TPP countries would be in “constant communication” to decide the best way forward.

“Notwithstanding the current position of the new US Administration on (TPP), we will continue to engage with our American colleagues to strengthen our bilateral trade and economic relations, given the US’s importance as our third-largest trading partner and a major source of investment,” Mustapa Mohamed said in a statement. The TTP, which has been five years in the making, requires ratification by at least six countries accounting for 85

per cent of the combined GDP of the member nations.

Australia held open the possibility of China, the world’s top exporter, joining a revised deal.

“The original architecture was to enable other countries to join,” Australian Trade Minister Steven Ciobo told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Tuesday.

“Certainly I know that Indonesia has expressed interest and there would be scope for China if we are able to reformulate it.”

Japan has led the push for the partnership, which also includes Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and Vietnam. “There is no change to our view that free trade is the source of economic growth,” Japanese Economy Minister Nobuteru Ishihara told reporters.

When asked whether Japan would be open to negotiating a bilateral trade pact with the United States, Ishihara said it was still uncertain whether US trade officials would start such negotiations. Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Hagiuda said separately that Japan was not considering moves with other TPP members based on a lack of US involvement.

“As Prime Minister Abe has made clear, TPP without the United States is meaningless and the balance of interests would crumble,” he told a news conference, adding Tokyo would keep explaining the benefits of the pact for America.—Reuters

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Good riddance to our old mindsets and dogmatic beliefs!

Khin Maung Oo

UNDENIABLY, our environment partially influences us. Though all were born with nothing in our hands, some of us reached the societies of well-to-do people, some to bourgeois families and some to poor classes. According to the status we found ourselves in, we were given different environments. However, our environment cannot be said to have decided our destiny. Much as we were born poor, our efforts can push us to a higher place in our society. In the world including Myanmar, there are men of exemplary success, who climbed up to the top-level from the bottom, in many fields. Favorable conditions in a rich family's environment may have helped us to a certain extent. However, many became poor when their parents passed away, despite the fact that

they were the best opportunities and the best education. Some descendants of wealthy families became wealthier than their ancestors. Among them, many lead their lives in peaceful and luxurious ways, whereas some would not have hesitated to do anything to get what they want.

Nowadays, we are seeing extraordinary people from the ordinary class. Poor as they are, they are never reluctant to return very valuable things they have found to their owners. Though he belongs to an ordinary class, a young boy built up public libraries on a self-help basis, with a view to helping people around him get a chance to read and enjoy books, knowing very well that reading can develop men's minds and characters. Very recently we read a news report about a brave and conscientious youth who risked his life to help the local police. He was able to assist in the arrest of the culprits and a huge amount of narcotic drugs were seized as a result of his selfless act of bravery. These praiseworthy persons came from ordinary families, but they may have inherited good character and sound judgement from their parents. In addition their character may have been influenced by their environments they were brought up in or knowledge and good judgment received from books they have read.

In our communities, some are rich and very rich. Some are educated and regarded to be sophisticated. Some of the former kind tends to despise the latter kind, or vice versa. To put it simply we, parents, usually used to tell our offspring to try hard in

getting education so that they can get to the top of the totem pole of society. We should be well convinced that we cannot live in peace, happiness and security with the poor and the least educated in our immediate vicinity. By nature, men long for happiness. Yet, selfishness cannot bring us to a better world. To be able to live in happiness, we need to take part in mass movements under the leadership of the current government, by contributing our individual mental and manual labor as much as we can. We firmly believe that consideration for the sufferings of others and willingness to share our happiness with others will help us in our march towards a peaceful nation. So, now is the time to say "Good bye and good riddance to our old mindsets and dogmatic beliefs."

Pyatho: the month of Equestrian Tourney Festival

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sithu
Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

(Continued from 24-1-2017)

The American Heritage Dictionary gives the following origin and history of Polo [Gu-Lee]. "Polo is a game played by two teams of 3 to 4 players on horseback equipped with long handled mallets from driving a small wooden ball through the opponent's goal. There are two types of pologround polo and water polo. Polo game is Tibeto-Burman origin".

Gu-lee was very popular in Taungoo Period. Tabin Shwe Hti, Bayint Naung, Prince Min Yey Kyaw Swa and Nat Shin Naung the Lord of Taungoo were noted for gu-lee sports. Nat Shin Naung composed many ratu verses on gu lee games.

Court bards composed different forms of verse describing this game in association with Equestrian Tourney festival.

In Myanmar traditional performing arts gu lee game was, composed, sung, and mimed in dance horse riding, galloping and playing gu lee.

In view of these evidences we may say that Myanmar already had gu lee game long before the British introduced it as Polo game.

Before this article is concluded, the writer wishes to clear up one confusion of polo game and polo game branded ciga-

rettes of British Colonial days. Polo game branded cigarettes were very popular in those days. It was very stylish and easily addict able to smoke such cigarette. The then upper class people and college students smoked such cigarettes for show. They did not call them cigarettes. They simply called them polo. So Polo ceased to mean game and acquired the name of stylish cigarette.

In concluding this Article, the writer wishes to give credit to a song composer and musician of national fame Myoma Nyein who lived in our neighbourhood in Mandalay. As a young boy the writer used to stop in front of his house to listen and enjoy the rehearsing of his songs. Among many of his hits jrif;cif;awmf [Myin Khin Taw]. Royal Equestrian Tourney is one of those that the writer can still sing. The following are the original wordings and a loose English translation.

၁။ ငွေနှင့်ပွဲရို၊ ဝေဝေစီ၊ မြောက်လေ ဆော်သွေး၊ အေးတုလရာသီ၊ သမယအခါဆို၊ ပြာသို၊ ခွာသို၊ ညာစိုစမ်းလုံလမ်း၊ ရွှေနန်းတော်တွင်း၊ လုံဝင်းမူယာပလီ၊ သူဇာဒေဝီတော်ဝင် ပန်းကိုလှမ်းမလို့ပြင်ရှာပြီ၊ ဗျာဘာဆကလေးချ အရွယ်ညို၊ ရွှေကြင်နန်း၊ ဘွေနှန်းအဆောင် ဆောင်တွေဆို။

၂။ (သံမြိုင်) လာချေပြီ၊ ဖျိုတို့ မောင်လ၊ သူလဲပါဝင်သည်၊ လာချေပြီ၊ မှန်မှန်မည်းမည်း၊ လူသူမသဲတကွ၊ နှင်းခဲပြာဝေရီ၊ မင်းညို

သိကြားတန်ဆောင်ကိုင်ဟန်နှင့်၊
စန္ဒရရှက် မြင်းစီးပုံ



မင်းသား၊ မှူးမတ်သားများ၊ ယောက်ျားအာဇာနီ၊ နှလုံးရည်၊ လက်ရုံးရည်၊ မြင်းကလဲ မြင်းချော၊ မာန်မီ၊ ခါးပတ်တော် ရွှေချည်ငွေချည်၊ မောက်တို၊ မောက်ရှည်၊ ဘာလီ ကွေးနဲ့၊ အဲမောင်း လုံရေးပြိုင်ကြပြီ၊ မြန်မာ့တံခွန် ထူချေပြီ၊ ခွာ သံချင်းယှက်၊ ဂေါက်ဂက်၊ ဂေါက်ဂက်၊ ဘယ်ညာ၊ မြိုင်မြိုင်ချို။

၃။ မန်းခွာညို၊ ညာစမ်းလဲလန်း၊ နွဲ့မူယာပလီ၊ နန်းတွင်းသူဇာ ဒေဝီ၊ မခိုတယို နဲ့ ကဘို့ကရိုမူဟန်ချို၊ လူဘဲလား၊ နတ်တမျှအညို၊ ထင်ယောင်မြင်ယောင်သည်။

၄။ မရိုးစည်းမောင်း၊ ချိန်ချိန်သောင်း၊ ကောင်းကင်တိုင်မဟီ၊ တံပသံ၊ ခရာသံ ညံစီ၊ ဝဲလက်ယာ မင်းခန်းတော်စုံပြီ၊ တော်ကြီးဘုရား၊ နှစ်ပါးထွက်ခါ၊ စံပွယ်တော်မူလေပြီ၊ မြင်းခင်းသဘင်ဆင်ယင်တော် မူလေပြီ၊ စန္ဒယားစက်၊ ဝဲလက်လှပုံချို၊ သိကြားတန်ဆောင်တိုင်၊ အဲမောင်းတံခွန် မြိုင်မြိုင်ဝေဝေစီ။ (Cho သံမြိုင်) လာချေပြီ

.ဂေါက်ဂက် ဂေါက်ဂက် ဘယ်ညာမြိုင်မြိုင်ချို။

Loose English translation

1. Silvery snow makes it gloomy. As the northerly breeze comes in the entire month turns chilly. In the month of Pyatho, Kwa Nyo blooms are fresh. At the Palace, young court ladies so pretty like angel Thuza, with byabasan hair choif-eur of an early teenager are trying to get hold of royal flower Thazin. They are seen in all royal apartments.
2. **Chorus:** "Hark! They are coming including my Lover.

They are coming through 2 gloomy misty and chilly surrounding.

Princes, Knights, Ministers, and Soldiers all mounted. They are riding their steeds with might and main. They wear gold and silver belts, short and long helmets and balik-wes on their shoulders to contest lance throwing at the Equestrian Tourney. It's Myanmar glory. Hush! Listen the hooves galloping – gauk get, gauk get in perfect symmetrical rythem.

3. Adorned with Kwa Nyo flowers agenlic young court ladies coming out shyly. Are they human or are they angel?
4. Mayoe drums, bronze gongs, are being struck echoing to the sky above. Horns and trumpets are sounding. All courtiers have arrived seated on either side left and right. Their Majestics make public appearance to begin the Royal Equestrian Tourney. With lances the contestants are demonstrating and contesting 37 modes. Flags, crests, all ceremonial paraphernalia are flying in the breeze making a splendid, magnificent scene.

Chorus: Hark! They're comin the hooves galloping gauk get, gauk get, gauk get in perfect symetrcal rhythm.

Press release for advance voting for citizens abroad

24th January, 2017

- With the permission of the Union Government, the Union Election Commission will in a timely manner send advance vote documents and envelopes for Myanmar citizens abroad who are eligible for advance voting, among those who applied for such votes with Form (15), to Myanmar embassies abroad through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, it is necessary for in-charges of township election commissions to sign, seal the stamp of township commission stamps and hand over advance vote documents to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 1st February, 2017.
- Representatives of political parties, Hluttaw candidates, local and foreign election observers and the media are invited to study the process. (Unofficial Translation)

Union Election Commission

Nobel Myanmar Literary Festival 2017, Aesthetic literature concludes successfully

NOBEL Myanmar Literary Festival, 2017's 3rd day of aesthetic literature was held yesterday morning at the National Theatre on Myoma Kyaung Street, Yangon.

At today's paper reading sessions, writers Yarthetpan (Taunggoo hostel), Dr Aung Gyi, Ko Tar and Sayar Nyein Min respectively read the papers—"creation

of characters in Min Lu's short stories," "Rendering of Mao Tse Tung's poem," "translating two poems" and "creation of aesthetic literature."

In the literary dialogue programme, "creation of literary element in translations" was discussed by Maung Thar Ma Nya as a leading person with Maung Ye Khaing, Tint Zaw and D-No-

vo participating in the discussion.

Min Khaik Soe San led in the discussion "creation of a novel" with Mya Hnaung Nyo, Juu, Lingar Yee Kyaw and Dr Soe Lwin participating in the discussion.

And in the literary talk "currents of aesthetic literature" Dr Khin Maung Nyo led the discussion with Kaung Thant, Yarthetpan and Myay Hmon Lwin joining the discussion.

During the Nobel Myanmar Literary Festival, exhibition of the best aesthetic Myanmar novels—100 published during 100 years, exhibition of Nobel Literary Prize winners—100, paper reading sessions, reading clubs of aesthetic literature, recitation of poems, exhibition of cartoons, caricatures and drawings, literary talks are being held and various kinds of books are being put on sale.

The festival came to an end in the evening successfully.—Yee Yee Myint & Ohnmar Thant



Readers observe books at Nobel Myanmar Literary Festival 2017 in Yangon. PHOTO: HLA MOE

Projection of richness of Bangladesh culture continues

BANGLADESH Embassy in Yangon organized a cultural programme titled "Rhythms of Bangladesh" – primarily a presentation of classical, modern and folk dances. A dance troupe, led

by Samina Husain Prema, from Bangladesh performed at the Chancery yesterday as part of the Embassy's effort to highlight the richness of Bangladesh culture.

Samina Husain Prema, one

of the reputed dancers of the younger generation of Bangladesh and artistes from the dance school Bhavna performed before an enlightened audience.

Resident Ambassadors and members of diplomatic community, local political leaders and elites, media persons, and Bangladesh expatriates attended the programme.

Faculty members and students of the Dramatic Arts department of the National University of Culture and Arts. Yangon also attended the programme to get introduced to styles, forms and traditions of our performing arts.

Singers from the Bangladesh community in Yangon sang to add colour and diversity to the event.—Bangladesh Embassy



Samina Husain Prema and dancer troupe perform at Bangladesh Embassy in Yangon. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw visits Lower House of Parliament in UK



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint attends dinner party hosted by Rt Hon Mr John Bercow. PHOTO: MNA

A MYANMAR Friendship Delegation led by U Win Myint, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, are currently in Britain at the invitation of the Right Honorable Mr. John Bercow, Speaker of Britain's Lower House of Parliament.

The delegation arrived at the Lower House at 10:15 am on Monday and were told about the workings and history of the Lower House & the Westminster System by the leader of the Overseas Office, Mr Matthew Hamlyn.

Afterward, U Win Myint and party inspected the Parliament and were accompanied by responsible officials.

The Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and party were then entertained at a luncheon by the

Vice-Speaker of Britain's Lower House and the Chairman of the Ways and Means, Rt Hon Mr Lindsay Hoyle MP.

In the afternoon, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and party were received by the leader of Outreach and Engagement, Britain's Lower House, Mr David Clark, concerning the working process of the committee.

In addition, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw met with H.E Mr Rory Stewart, Minister for International Development and discussed matters on the provision of subsidies in Parliamentary Development.

In the evening, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and party attended a dinner party hosted by Rt Hon Mr John Bercow.—Myanmar News Agency

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives representative of IDEA Myanmar



Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than hold talks with resident representative of International IDEA Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received Mr. Mark McDowell, resident representative of International IDEA Myanmar yesterday morning at the Amyotha

Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw. During the meeting, they discussed providing of assistance for development of Amyotha Hluttaw.—Myanmar News Agency

Preparations for Mandalay Children's Literature Festival underway

PREPARATIONS are being made at the Myanmar Information Institute of Technology (MITT), where the Children's Literature Festival will be held.

"Employees from regional Information and Public Rela-

tions Departments prepared 50 bookshelves to display books on children's literature on the ground floor of MITT.

The main aim of the festival is to exhibit children's literature and sell books. So, they are preparing 50 bookshelves to display

play books written by Sayagyi Min Thu Wun. Other books will also be exhibited," said Daw Wei Wei Phyto, regional head of IPRD.

Basic education schools, monastic education schools and private schools will show books

in five exhibition halls — goods reproduced from recycled items; rare butterfly species; laboratory experiments; Myanmar arts and crafts made by pupils and teachers; and teaching/learning aids of international standards, said Basic Education High School

No (26) Headmaster Dr Than Htaik Soe.

School teams which will participate in entertainment events and competitions are now conducting full dress rehearsals, it is learnt.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub printing press)

Trump's exit from Pacific trade deal opens door for Germany — Gabriel

BERLIN — Germany would take advantage of any trade opportunities in Asia and South America left by a protectionist United States, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel said, after US President Donald Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

"If Trump starts a trade war with Asia and South America, it will open opportunities for us," Gabriel told Handelsblatt newspaper in an interview published on Tuesday. "Trump must simply recognise that the US economy often isn't competitive, while the German (economy) is," he said, criticising Trump's threat to impose a 35 percent tariff on German cars imported from Mexico.

Trump signed an executive order formally withdrawing from the 12-nation TPP on Monday, following through on a promise made during his election campaign. He called the move a "great thing for the American worker".

Gabriel — Economy Minister and leader of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), who is expected to run against Chancellor Angela Merkel in September's election — said German industry should remain confident in the face



Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel . PHOTO: REUTERS

of Trump's moves. Barely 10 percent of German exports go to the United States, Gabriel said, while 60 percent go to other countries in Europe. "You can see the weight of our economic interests," said Gabriel. "Germany should act with self-confidence and not be fearful or servile."

"We are a highly successful, technologically advanced export nation with many hard-working people and smart companies."

Bernd Lange, a Social Democrat and chairman of the trade

committee in the European Parliament, told broadcaster rbb that Germany and the European Union should look into expanding trade with China and other countries.

"We must certainly speak with China because it is trying to jump into the gap left by the United States, even if they have other practices," he said.

Lange said the European Union should also push for closer ties with countries that had similar values, including Canada, Japan and Australia.—Reuters

UK Supreme Court says PM May must get parliament approval to trigger Brexit



Gina Miller (C) arrives at the Supreme Court to hear the decision of a court ruling on whether Theresa May's government requires parliamentary approval to start the process of leaving the European Union, in Parliament Square, central London, Britain, on 24 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — The UK Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that Prime Minister Theresa May must get parliament's approval before she begins Britain's formal exit from the European Union.

The UK's highest judicial body dismissed the government's argument that May could simply use executive powers known as "royal prerogative" to invoke Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty and begin two years of divorce talks.

However, the court rejected arguments that the UK's devolved assemblies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales should give their assent before Article 50 is invoked.

"The referendum is of great political significance, but the Act of Parliament which established it did not say what should happen as a result," said David Neuberger, President of the Supreme Court which ruled by 8-3 against the government.

"So any change in the law

to give effect to the referendum must be made in the only way permitted by the UK constitution, namely by an Act of Parliament."

May has repeatedly said she would trigger Article 50 before the end of March but she will now have to seek the consent of lawmakers first, potentially meaning her plans could be amended or delayed, although the main opposition Labour Party has said it would not slow her timetable.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia, Turkey say direct contact important at Astana talks — ministry

MOSCOW — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu discussed Syria peace talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana by phone on Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Lavrov and Cavusoglu "underlined the importance of establishing direct contact between the Syrian government and representatives of the opposition," the ministry said in a statement.—Reuters

Russia says US withdrawal from Afghanistan would worsen situation — Ifax

Russia's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that any decision by the United States to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan would worsen the situation in the country, Interfax news agency reported.

The ministry said it had not spoken to the new administration of US President Donald Trump about the issue.

"As far as I know, Trump does not currently have any intentions to withdraw, which is logical, because if in the current environment he decides to withdraw the contingent, then everything will collapse," Interfax quoted Zamir Kabulov, special representative to the Russian president on Afghanistan, as saying.—Reuters

Turkey will not hand over al-Bab to Syrian government forces — deputy PM

ISTANBUL — Claims that Turkey will hand over the Syrian town of al-Bab to President Bashar al-Assad's forces after driving out Islamic State are not true, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus told the state-run Anadolu agency on Tuesday.

Syrian rebels, backed by Turkish special forces, tanks and warplanes, have been besieging al-Bab since December. Kurtulmus said the US-led coalition had failed to give sufficient support to Turkey's operation to seize the town.—Reuters

Iraqi forces preparing offensive on western Mosul, commander says

MOSUL — Iraqi forces have started preparing an offensive to capture the western side of Mosul from Islamic State, campaign commander Lieutenant General Abdul Ameer Rasheed Yarallah said.

Popular Mobilisation "is preparing an operation in the next two, three days, to back up the operation to retake the right bank" of the city, on the western side of the Tigris river, Mosuliya TV cited him as saying on Tuesday.

Popular Mobilisation is a coalition of predominantly Iranian-trained Shi'ite groups, formed in 2014 to take part in the war on Islamic State. It became officially part of the Iraqi armed forces last year.

Iraqi officials on Monday announced that the eastern side of the northern Iraqi city has been taken from Islamic State, after nearly 100 days of fighting.—Reuters

Italy avalanche death toll rises to 14

FARINDOLA, Italy — Rescuers working through the night pulled five more bodies from the wreck of a hotel in central Italy that was razed by an avalanche last week, bringing the death toll to 14, the national fire brigade said on Tuesday.

The latest bodies — three men and two women — were recovered hours before families of victims were due to hold the first funerals of those killed in the avalanche.

Eleven people so far have been rescued from in and around the hotel in the Gran Sasso national park, some of them surviving for two days under ice and rubble.

But 15 people are still missing after a wall of snow crashed into the four-storey building last Wednesday, hours after earthquakes shook the region.

Prosecutors in nearby Pescara have opened an investigation into the avalanche.—Reuters

Russia, Turkey, Iran near deal over Syria truce efforts

ASTANA — Russia, Turkey and Iran on Tuesday were working on a statement to reaffirm a fragile ceasefire between Syrian warring parties that could agree to establishing a mechanism to observe its compliance and pave the way for a UN-led peace settlement.

Delegations from the Syrian government and opposition were holding indirect talks for a second day in the Kazakh capital at a time when Turkey, which backs the rebels, and Russia, which supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, each want to disentangle themselves from the fighting.

That has led them into an ad-hoc alliance that some believe represents the best chance for progress towards a peace deal, especially with the United States distracted by domestic issues.

However, after two days of deliberations an initial draft communique suggests the powers have agreed little beyond reaffirming the need for a political resolution and to reaffirm a 30 December ceasefire that each side accuses the other of violating.

Delegates from Russia, Turkey and Iran were wrangling over the terms of the final communique which would need to be approved — though not formally signed — by the government and opposition delegations.

UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, attending the Astana talks, said the three powers were closing in on a final statement that would reaffirm and



Participants of Syria peace talks attend a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

strengthen the current cessation of hostilities between the warring parties.

“We’re not far from a final declaration,” he told reporters.

Diplomats said there was a nuance in the language being used, with the Syrian government opposed to the use of the word ceasefire as opposed to cessation of hostilities, which suggests more short-term arrangements.

“If the guarantors want the success of this meeting they have to do something more on the

ground,” senior opposition negotiator Osama Abu Zaid told reporters. “There are pledges from the Russian side to reinforce the ceasefire in areas where there are continued violations, but we’re waiting for more than just statements.”

A rebel source said they were discussing a draft of the final text with their Turkish backers.

A Syrian government source said consultations were ongoing to break obstacles presented by Turkey, which he said was trying

to introduce elements beyond the Astana framework.

The draft statement from Monday includes a paragraph suggesting the powers would either consider or establish “a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire, prevent any provocation and determine all modalities.”

However, diplomats said there were still differences among the powers especially on the wording, including on how to

resume peace talks under the umbrella of a United Nations resolution which calls for a transition of power.

It was also unclear whether Russia would be able to put pressure on Iran to force its militias on the front lines to abide by the terms of any ceasefire mechanism in areas on the outskirts of Damascus, where heavy fighting is ongoing.

“We’d like to think that the Russians are putting pressure on the Iranians, who are not very warm to the idea of a ceasefire or a political transition,” said a senior Western diplomat.

In a sign of perhaps some pressure on the Syrian government, a senior Russian official was quoted by Ria-Novosti news agency on Monday as saying he was concerned by recent violations of the ceasefire. In a rare reprimand, the source said that some Syrian government commanders had been “strongly reminded” of the necessity to abide by the ceasefire.

Some observers said the meeting, sponsored by Moscow and Ankara with the support of Tehran, could jump-start UN-led negotiations that were suspended in April. De Mistura said on Monday it would be a major achievement if the sides could agree a mechanism to oversee and implement a nationwide ceasefire paving the way for talks that he has proposed for next month in Geneva.—Reuters

Jihadists in Syria launch assault on rebels attending peace talks

BEIRUT — A jihadist group has launched an assault and seized some positions from Free Syrian Army (FSA) groups in northwestern Syria that are attending peace talks in Kazakhstan, rebel officials said on Tuesday.

Officials from the jihadist group, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, could not immediately be reached for comment. Fateh al-Sham was previously known as the Nusra Front. It changed its name after cutting its ties with al Qaeda last year.

An official in one of the rebel groups, Jabha Shamiya, told Reuters the attack in rural areas west of Aleppo began overnight, and it was the first time Fateh al-Sham had attacked the FSA groups in that area.

The commander of a second FSA rebel group, Jaish al-Mujahideen, told Reuters Fateh al-Sham aimed to “eliminate the revolution”, saying the group had seized “some positions”, though these were far from its headquarters. — Reuters

Afghan vice-president’s bodyguards face arrest over abuse case

KABUL — Afghan authorities ordered the arrest of nine bodyguards of Vice President Rashid Dostum on Tuesday, over allegations of sexual violence and torture of a political rival in a case that has caused deep alarm among Western allies of the Kabul government.

Dostum has proved a difficult and unpredictable ally for President Ashraf Ghani, who brought the ethnic Uzbek into the national unity government after the disputed 2014 election, despite longstanding accusations of human rights abuses.

Dostum faces allegations of ordering his men to detain Ahmad Ischi, a former ally, who says he was severely beaten and threatened with sexual violence over several days.

Ghani has promised a thorough investigation of the case, which has caused deep unease among allies of the Western-backed government in Kabul, including the United States, which issued a statement last month expressing its concern.



Abdul Rashid Dostum. PHOTO: REUTERS

Officials from the attorney general’s office confirmed the arrest order had been issued against the men after repeated attempts to question them as part of the investigation.

“We sent several letters telling them to come and answer questions regarding the allegations, but nobody showed up, so the investigating team issued an arrest warrant against nine bodyguards who are directly involved,” said Jamshed Rasooli, the spokesman for the attorney general’s office.

No comment was immediately available from a spokesman for Dostum.

The case has caused severe embarrassment for Ghani, whose relations with Dostum, a veteran of decades of Afghan politics, have long been under strain.

His standing within the ethnic Uzbek community, estimated to make up about 9 per cent of the population, has made it tough for Ghani to replace him, despite the concerns of foreign allies.—Reuters

Roadside bomb kills at least 4 soldiers in Somalia town

MOGADISHU — At least four soldiers were killed and five wounded on Tuesday when a roadside bomb that Islamist insurgents said they planted exploded outside a military camp in a town near Mogadishu, officials said.

The blast in Afgoye, about 30 km (18 miles) southwest of the capital, took place a day after the al Shabaab group carried out a raid in the same town that was repulsed by government troops, Major Osman Abdulle, a police officer, told Reuters.

“Last night, we repulsed the militants who attacked us. They must have planted the bomb,” he said. Al Shabaab, which has been waging an insurgency across Somalia, claimed responsibility for the bombing. The group is fighting to topple the Western-backed government in Mogadishu.

“We planted the bomb last night. At least seven soldiers died,” Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, the group’s military operations spokesman, told Reuters.—Reuters

Vucic: I expect clear messages from EU



Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic. PHOTO: TANJUG

BELGRADE — Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic said Monday he did not have excessive expectations from Tuesday's resumption of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue in Brussels, but that he was hoping for clear messages from the EU regarding bringing weapons and equipment where they did not belong.

"I do not have excessive expectations - it is important

that we ask EU officials not to support bringing weapons and equipment where they do not belong, and all else will be resolved in other ways," Vucic said.

Brussels welcomes resumption of top-level dialogue

A new round of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue — to be attended by Serbia and Kosovo PMs Aleksandar Vucic and Isa Mustafa, as well as Presidents Tomislav Nikolic and Hasim Taci — will be held in Brussels on Tuesday. Brussels welcomes the top level-meetings, EC spokesperson Maja Kocijancic said, noting that recent developments underlined the need for stronger commitment and engagement by both sides.—*Tanjug*

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Kenyan irrigation app aims to cut water waste, crop losses

KUNENE (Kenya) — Dressed in brown overalls, gumboots and a hat, John Njeru kneels and scoops up a handful of soil at his small farm in central Kenya, where he grows tomatoes, spinach and carrots.

"Not only has there not been enough rain in the past few months, it's also been unevenly distributed," he said, picking through the earth in his hand. "This destroys our crops."

Dealing with more unpredictable and irregular rainfall associated with climate change is a challenge for many farmers, and one made worse by water-wasting, inefficient irrigation systems, experts say.

But scientists from Kenya's Meru University of Science and Technology have come up with one way to deal with the problem: a mobile app that monitors the need for water in fields and controls irrigation equipment to deliver just what is needed.

"Farmers in the region traditionally water crops with cans or buckets", an inefficient way of getting water to plants, said Daniel Maitethia, an electronics lecturer at Meru University.

"The lack of measuring also means they water crops unevenly — so some may get too much water, and others not enough," he said.

The "sensor-based automatic irrigation system" app, launched last year, uses sensors placed throughout a field to determine if soil is moist enough.

If it's too dry, a control unit uses solar panels to open the valve of a water tank, then close it again when the soil is damp enough.

Initially tested at the university's own farm, the irrigation system is now being rolled out to the public — including farmers like Njeru.

"We can't yet quantify how many farmers are using the app, but hope to expand it to thousands across Meru

County — and potentially the rest of the country if the system proves successful," Maitethia said.

The combined app and irrigation system cost 50,000 Kenyan shillings (\$480) per quarter of an acre, including solar panels and two drip irrigation lines. The system can be expanded to an additional quarter acre for 5,000 Kenyan shillings (\$48).

While Maitethia acknowledges the upfront cost of the system is high, he believes it will not only curb water waste but save labour costs as it does not require farmers to physically monitor it.

"If there is a glitch in the system, the farmer receives a text message notifying him of the problem," he explained. "A technician employed by the university will then help the farmer remotely with instructions, or physically come to the farm if needed."

Depending on the se-

verity of the problem, a consultation with a technician can cost the farmer up to 500 Kenyan shillings (about \$5).

Njeru, who paid 75,000 Kenyan shillings (\$721) to install the app and irrigation system on his 1.5-acre farm, said that "although the app is expensive, it's a cost worth paying when I compare my current harvest to previous years."

"I used to lose up to 70 per cent of my produce as a result of dry weather and inefficient irrigation, compared to only 10 percent now," he said.

Njeru used to occasionally hire other farmers to help water his farm on a day-to-day basis. Now he no longer needs to do so, he said.

"That saves me 20,000 Kenyan shillings (\$192) per month," he said.

Maitethia thinks that as more people buy the app, its cost could reduce by more than half.—*Reuters*



People stand near their cars stranded due to heavy snow on a road in Chizu, Tottori Prefecture in western Japan in this photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 24 January, 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Over 300 cars stuck in snow in western Japan

TOTTORI (Japan) — More than 300 vehicles were stranded in snow early on Tuesday on highways and a major road on the Sea of Japan coast in western Japan, prompting a request for troops to help in rescue efforts.

Roughly 200 vehicles were held up on National Route 373 in the town of Chizu, Tottori Prefecture, as of 5 am, while some 130 vehicles were caught on the Tottori Expressway connecting Hyogo and Tottori prefectures as of 6:40 am, according to highway and government officials.

As of 6:30 am, 20 vehicles were stuck on the Yonago Expressway that links Tottori and Okayama prefectures, although at one point, about 120 vehicles were stranded between the Kofu and Hiruzen highway

exits.

Two men were taken to hospital after falling ill in the incident, which started around 2 pm on Monday when trucks and other vehicles became stuck in snow, according to officials of the West Nippon Expressway Co.

A 3-year-old boy was also taken to hospital from the Tottori Expressway after developing a fever, local rescue forces said. Those stranded on the national route took refuge at a public hall and other shelters.

Tottori Governor Shinji Hirai requested early Tuesday the dispatch of the Self-Defence Forces for disaster relief. The Japan Meteorological Agency has issued a warning for heavy snowfall in the region through Tuesday evening.—*Kyodo News*

Italian police bust ring planning to smuggle tonnes of cocaine

ROME — Italian anti-mafia police said on Tuesday they had broken up an international drug ring that was conspiring to smuggle about eight tonnes of cocaine to Europe from Colombia.

Fifty-four people with links to the 'Ndrangheta, the organised crime group based in the southern Calabria region, were arrested in various parts of Italy, they said in a statement.

The haul, confiscat-

ed in a plantation near the Caribbean port of Turbo, would have had a total street value of about 1.6 billion euros (\$1.7 billion), officials said.

The drugs were to be smuggled into Europe via

Calabrian ports and airports. What police called a "test run" of 63 kilograms (139 lb) of pure cocaine was found hidden in a load of bananas in the central Italian port city of Livorno.—*Reuters*

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'Last Jedi' title reveal sends 'Star Wars' fans into tizzy

LOS ANGELES — Movie studio Disney on Monday revealed that the next "Star Wars" movie will be called "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," setting off rampant speculation from fans about what the title implied for the plot.

The movie, the second of the sequels set 30 years after the original movie trilogy, will follow the adventures of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher). It had previously been known only as "Episode VIII."

"We have the greatest fans in this or any other galaxy. In appreciation of the fans, we wanted them to be the first to know the title of the next chapter in the Skywalker saga: 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'," movie studio Disney said in a statement.

Rian Johnson is directing the movie, which will be released on 15 December.

Fisher shot all of her scenes for the movie before her sudden death in December of a heart attack, Disney said at the time of her passing.

Disney has not released plot details for "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" but Johnson has said it will immediately follow the events of 2015 release "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," in which Skywalker was revealed to be the last remaining Jedi and had gone into hiding.

"Force Awakens" ended with scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley) discovering her hidden powers, finding Skywalker and ready to start her Jedi training.

Theories about the plot



Actor Mark Hamill. PHOTO: REUTERS

made the #TheLastJedi hashtag the top trending item on Twitter on Monday, with some 152,000 tweets in just one hour. Disney has yet to release any trailers.

Fans noted that Jedi —

those belonging to the force for good — can be singular or plural in the "Star Wars" universe.

"If it's called #TheLastJedi, my honest and bold prediction is that Luke Skywalker has to

die," said Twitter user Nikolas Oliverio.

"hold up if rey is the last jedi... what happens to luke.. OR if luke is the last jedi... what happens to rey..." asked a bewildered fan, Ana with 1 n, on Twitter.

The cast for the movie will also include "Force Awakens" members John Boyega, Adam Driver and Lupita Nyong'o.

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens," became the third-highest grossing movie of all time, taking some \$2 billion at the global box office, after its release in December 2015.

The standalone movie "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," released in December 2016, has made \$1 billion at the worldwide box office.—Reuters

Beyond Pokemon Go: augmented reality catches Jon Hamm at Sundance



Actor Jon Hamm arrives at the 73rd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California January 10, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARK CITY, Utah — Attendees at the Sundance Film Festival can use augmented reality (AR) to hang out with "Mad Men" star Jon Hamm or assemble a human brain, as makers of the new immersive technology seek to engage independent filmmakers.

The Sundance premiere of "Marjorie Prime," a film starring Hamm as a hologram character, gave virtual reality (VR) startup 8i the chance create the 'HoloHamm,' an AR hologram of Hamm to drum up buzz for the movie.

Viewers pan a mobile device across a room and Hamm will appear on their screens as if he is in that location, and interact using pre-recorded phrases.

"This really opens up lots of promotional opportunities in entertainment," said Linc Gasking, 8i co-founder.

Niantic Inc's Pokemon Go mobile game became the first mass market adoption of AR last July. Players used their mobile

phones to capture animated characters that appeared in real locations.

Unlike VR, where headset users can watch a 360-degree story, AR renders virtual images over real life settings and can be viewed on a smartphone or other device.

Tech advisers Digi-Capital issued a forecast this month that the AR market would be \$83 billion by 2021. The Hamm hologram was created in a few hours using cameras to capture the actor in 360 degrees, Gasking said. It is more cost-effective to create than VR because it layers digital images over a real life set, as opposed to creating an entire virtual 3D world. The 10-day annual Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, has featured VR for the past five years at its New Frontier showcase, where independent filmmakers have created 360-degree stories viewed using a headset, like Google Cardboard or Oculus Rift.—Reuters

Boy band New Edition receives star on Walk of Fame

LOS ANGELES — Former R&B boy band New Edition reunited to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Monday, ahead of the premiere of a television series tracing the group's path to stardom.

Band members Michael Bivins, Ricky Bell, Ronnie DeVoe, Bobby Brown, Ralph Tresvant and Johnny Gill were all

on hand at the unveiling in Los Angeles.

During their heyday, the group infused rap and hip-hop into their music and laid the foundations for a new genre known as new jack swing in the 1980s.

Best known for hits "Candy Girl" and "Mr. Telephone Man", New Edition is credited

by some in the music industry with launching the modern boy band movement, setting the stage for acts like The Backstreet Boys, New Kids on the Block, and Boyz II Men.

The three-part TV series will premiere on Black Entertainment Television (BET) on Tuesday.—Reuters

Mazes and fairytales as Chiuri debuts her Dior haute couture line

PARIS — Italian designer Maria Grazia Chiuri unveiled a fairytale-like debut haute couture collection for French fashion house Christian Dior on Monday, presenting flowing flowery dresses, capes and plenty of intricate craftsmanship.

Dior's first woman artistic director, who previously spent some 17 years at Valentino, took inspiration from labyrinths for the line on the second day of fashion shows at Paris' Haute Couture spring/summer 2017 week.

Amid a lush garden setting at the French capital's Rodin museum, models opened the show in Dior's signature Bar jackets in black, re-invented into capes with hoods and worn with lace tops, pleated skirts and wide-leg ankle-length culotte trousers.

The looks were accessorised with black see-through masks, sometimes formed as butterflies, as well as feather headdresses.

Chiuri also presented a selection of white dresses before

moving onto dream-like frocks in pink, mauve, grey and blue for the evening.

Flower embroidery adorned the tulle and organza dresses, some of them strapless, others with spaghetti straps, as did a variety of tarot symbols and stars. The princess-style gowns came in ruffled layered styles or with lace decorations.

Models wore necklaces with butterflies or flowers. Flowers adorned headdresses for the romantic look. There was also a selection of dark velvet and metallic coloured evening gowns.

"I think that we have to maintain this dreaming idea of couture but at the same time I don't want to lose the wearable idea," Chiuri told reporters.

"(A) labyrinth is a place where you go inside and it's also just a little bit dangerous ... but at the same time you believe that it's possible to find a way. I think in some way it represents my new adventure in couture at Dior."

At her debut ready-to-wear line for Dior in September, Chiuri showcased an eclectic collection, mixing "sport couture", street style and fairytales, for the brand looking to appeal to young fashionistas.—Reuters



Italian designer Maria Grazia Chiuri appears at the end of her Haute Couture Spring/Summer 2017 fashion show for Dior in Paris, France, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sprint to buy a third of Jay Z's music streaming service Tidal

SAN MARCOS, CALIFORNIA — US wireless carrier Sprint Corp said on Monday it would buy 33 percent of Tidal, a music streaming service owned by rapper Jay Z, marking a move to more content driven services in a highly competitive wireless market.

Sprint paid \$200 million for the stake, and Jay Z and each of the company's two dozen artist-owners will remain part owners, according to a person familiar with the deal.

Sprint shares rose 3.4 percent to \$9.23 in midday trading on the New York Stock Exchange.

The deal would make exclusive content from Tidal available to Sprint's 45 million retail customers. Sprint Chief Executive Marcelo Claure will join

Tidal's board. The partnership comes as wireless carriers try to capitalize on the popularity of music streaming services. In 2014, rival T-Mobile US said it would allow customers to listen to services like Spotify and Pandora without it counting toward their data use. Last year, it expanded the list, adding Amazon Music and ESPN Radio among others. Tidal calls itself an "artist-owned" service backed by Kanye West, Jay Z's wife Beyoncé and Madonna among others, and is available in more than 52 countries.

Jay Z bought Tidal for roughly \$56 million in 2015. Apple Inc was in talks to buy Tidal to boost its Apple Music service, according to a Wall Street Journal report in June.—*Reuters*

Oxford historian Garton Ash to receive Germany's Charlemagne prize

BERLIN — Oxford University historian Timothy Garton Ash, an outspoken opponent of Britain's vote to leave the European Union, is to receive the 2017 Charlemagne Prize conferred annually by the German city of Aachen.

Pope Francis was last year's winner of the prize, awarded annually to those who have contributed most to the ideals of post-war Europe. The prize organizers described Garton Ash as "an extraordinary British academic, who has commented on and accompanied the journey of the European Union with passion and precision, providing the community with thoughtful depth".

It singled the historian out for his engagement and

commitment to a unified Europe, and his call to press forward towards an EU with "practical construction that is strong enough to weather the storm".

Garton Ash published a column on Saturday in Britain's Guardian newspaper criticizing US President Donald Trump for his "irascible, bullying, narcissistic character" and said his arrival in the White House heralded "a new era of nationalism" marked by such personalities as Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Xi Jinping of China.

The prize is named for Charlemagne, the eighth to ninth century Frankish ruler who carved out a European empire.—*Reuters*



European Parliament President Martin Schultz wears the Charlemagne Prize medal during a news conference in Rome, Italy, on 6 May, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thai Chinese face New Year fashion dilemma

BANGKOK — Bright red garments, gold embroidery and colourful accessories would normally have been the mode du jour for Thailand's ethnic Chinese celebrating Lunar New Year on Saturday.

Striking colours, especially red, are believed to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune.

But this year, donning colourful clothes could be seen as disrespectful in a country where many are still wearing black, white or grey as a sign of mourning for King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died on 13 October last year.

The traditional mourning period of 100 days ended last Friday, but the transition back to colour has been slow.

The year-long mourning for government officials is not mandatory for all Thais, but most people shopping for new clothes in Bangkok are still in monochrome.

Bangkok resident Suvannee Suttitertkun said she would be wearing a black traditional dress with gold embroidery for Lunar



A woman sells colorful clothes ahead of Chinese New Year celebration in Bangkok, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

New Year.

"It is because we still have to show respect that we are mourning King Rama IX," she said, referring to King Bhumibol by his formal title.

King Bhumibol was the world's longest-reigning monarch after seven decades on the throne and was revered as semi-divine by many Thais. He was succeeded by his son, King Maha Vajiralongkorn, in December.

Some Thais, like Tanagrit Leartskritanapa, have chosen to stick with bright red for Lunar New Year.

"Most of the people understand this is for Chinese New Year, that we have to wear bright auspicious colours to bring luck into our lives," the 60-year-old said. "At the same time, deep in our hearts, we feel sorrow and we don't forget our king, because he's still living in our hearts."

Many shopkeepers in Chinatown said there had been a drop in sales of red clothes, but they have offered more alternatives in gold, silver and black.

Ethnic Chinese number more than 9.3 million in Thailand, making up about 11 per cent of the population, according to 2012 data quoted by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, an international body based in Berlin.—*Reuters*

Croatian Jews to boycott Holocaust remembrance event over 'relativisation' of crimes

ZAGREB — Croatian Jews said on Monday they would boycott the country's main Holocaust remembrance event this week, accusing the authorities of playing down crimes perpetrated under the Nazi-backed Ustasa regime during World War Two.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is held on 27 January each year, the date in 1945 when

the biggest Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz in occupied Poland, was liberated by Soviet troops.

Three months ago, rightist veterans of Croatia's 1991-95 independence war raised a commemorative plaque in the town of Jasenovac to comrades killed there at the beginning of the conflict Zagreb fought to secede from Serbian-led Yugoslavia.

Included in the veter-

ans' plaque are words from a salute used by the Ustasha regime that killed tens of thousands of prisoners including Jews, Serbs, Roma gypsies and anti-fascist Croats, in the 1941-1945 Jasenovac concentration camp. That prompted the association representing Croatia's remnant population of Jews, numbering somewhat over 1,500, to pull out of its primary Holocaust remembrance

event, which is normally conducted in the Zagreb parliament. "We took the decision on the basis of reactions by the government, parliament and the president. The problem is not (just) a plaque in Jasenovac including the Ustasha salute, but the relativisation of everything (to do with the Holocaust)," community leader Ognjen Kraus told the state news agency Hina.—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(25-1-2017 07:00am ~ 26-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Orchidologist Dr. Saw Lwin
07:49	Am	Farming: Duck Breeder
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	A Visit To Ye
08:47	Am	Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre-Hmawbi
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	We'll Leave After 12 Passengers Are On Board
09:41	Am	Swan Hein Cave
10:03	Am	News

10:25 Am Shwe Bo Township Bearing Five Names mar

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Tuesday 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	New
07:27	Pm	The Man and The Elephant (Part-I)
07:43	Pm	The Man and The Elephant (Part-II)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Sculpture-Work of Art
08:43	Pm	Indian Footsteps
08:51	Pm	Kayin Child Boxer

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

Wawrinka wins testy Tsonga clash to reach semis

MELBOURNE — Former champion Stan Wawrinka engaged in a war of words with Jo-Wilfried Tsonga before winning the only argument that mattered on Tuesday, storming into the Australian Open semi-finals with a 7-6(2), 6-4, 6-3 win over the Frenchman.

Wawrinka bickered heatedly with the 12th seed during a change of ends after the first set before putting his aggression to better use, wrapping up the one-sided match in two hours and 15 minutes on a sun-bathed Rod Laver Arena.

Fourth seed Wawrinka will battle either compatriot Roger Federer or German giant-killer Mischa Zverev, who face off in the late quarter-final, for a place in the final.

Wawrinka, the 2014 champion, put in his most complete performance of the tournament against Tsonga, sending 41 sweetly struck winners whistling past the out-of-sorts Frenchman, a former finalist but a shadow of his usual energetic self.

Tsonga put up some stout resistance early in the match but that crumbled in the first set tie-break when he elected not to play at a blazing backhand pass.

It landed flush in the corner, giving Wawrinka four set points and Tsonga folded on the first of them.

The pair retired to their chairs between sets and suddenly began sniping at each other.

"What did you say? You're the one looking at me and talking to me. What are you looking for?" Wawrinka barked at Tsonga in French. "Come on, let it go. Did I look at you once?"



Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka reacts during his Men's singles quarter-final match against France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia on 24 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Tsonga's best response came in the second set when he broke Wawrinka in the seventh game after the Swiss botched a simple volley and hammered another unforced error.

But after Tsonga handed serve straight back, broken to love, tension threatened to boil over again as Wawrinka came forward to smash a winner directly at the Frenchman.

The Swiss waved an apology but Tsonga walked away.

Wawrinka stormed on relentlessly, breaking Tsonga twice more with a display of pure power hitting to take the second set.

Tsonga went a break down quickly in the third but had one last chance to rally when Waw-

rinka gave up a break point at 4-2.

The Swiss slammed the door shut, however, nervelessly crushing a forehand deep into the corner and then rushing forward to put away the volley.

Within minutes he had three match points, and his third semi-final at Melbourne Park sewn up when Tsonga pushed a defensive lob over the baseline.

While a semi-final against Federer would hold no fear for Wawrinka, he said he was fully aware his compatriot would be the crowd favourite as he bids for an 18th grand slam title.

"It's going to be tough to have some fans, but hopefully a few will cheer for me," he said in a court-side interview.—Reuters

Toure criticises players who swap top leagues for China cash

LONDON — Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure has criticised fellow footballers who have traded Europe for China, saying he would prefer to follow Manchester United forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic's example and stay in a competitive league.

Chinese Super League clubs have made a number of high-profile recent signings recently, with Shanghai SIPG buying Brazil midfielder Oscar from Chelsea for 60 million euros (\$64.46 million).

Their rivals Shanghai Shenhua signed Argentine striker Carlos Tevez for a reported 84 million euros, but Toure said money was not everything to him.

"Do you play football because you love football or do you play because you want to make money? Me, I just want to play football because I enjoy it," he told British media.

"Some people have the mentality that they want to do that (go to China) – to try something different. But for me, my feeling is that I want to play

more football.

"Look at my friend Ibrahimovic. He's 35 and he's going to play for maybe three more years? He's got the same mentality as me. He's a big player, a champion who loves football. It's football first. Anything after that is a bonus."

Toure, who is out of contract in June, was frozen out of City's squad earlier this season following a spat between the manager Pep Guardiola and the player's agent, but returned to the team in November after making a public apology.

He has featured regularly ever since, but there is no official word yet on whether he will be offered a new contract at City. His agent revealed last week that he had turned down a 520,000 pounds a week offer to play in China.

"I want to play in Europe, especially in England. I want to continue doing that for a few years yet. I always say that if I went to China I would end up feeling angry there," the 33-year-old added.—Reuters



Arsenal's Wenger charged with misconduct



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger clashes with fourth official Anthony Taylor before being sent to the stands. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has been charged with misconduct after appearing to push the fourth official during a Premier League match against Burnley, the FA said on Monday.

Wenger was angered by a decision to award Burnley a penalty late in the game on Sunday which Arsenal won 2-1.

"It is alleged that in or around the 92nd minute, he used abusive and/or insulting words towards the fourth official," the FA said in a statement.

"It is further alleged that following his dismissal from the technical area, his behaviour in remaining in the tunnel area and making physical contact with the fourth official amounted to improper conduct."

Wenger has until 1800 GMT on Thursday to respond.—Reuters

Van Dijk doubtful for Southampton's League Cup semi-final

LONDON—Southampton defender Virgil van Dijk could miss Wednesday's League Cup semi-final second leg against Liverpool at Anfield after injuring his ankle in Sunday's 3-0 Premier League win over Leicester City, manager Claude Puel has said.

Southampton hold a one-goal advantage going into the tie, but the loss of former captain Jose Fonte, who has moved to West Ham United, coupled with the injury to Van Dijk, could leave them short of experienced cover in the heart of defence.

"Van Dijk, he is having a

scan and I am waiting for the results at the moment," Puel told the club website (www.southamptonfc.com). "It's not serious, but I don't know if he can participate in this game. We will see in the next days before the game."

Midfielder Steven Davis, who has been injured since Southampton beat Liverpool 1-0 in the semi-final first leg on 11 January, could return in time for Wednesday's match after stepping up his recovery.

"It's better for Davis," Puel added. "We will see in the training session if he can participate in this game or not."—Reuters