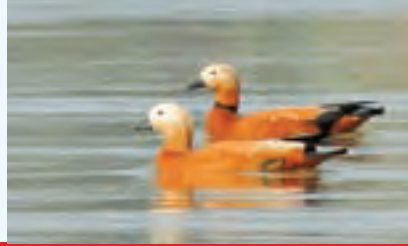


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Sunday, 26 February 2017

Antagonism, extreme nationalism behind assassination of U Ko Ni: Police Chief



Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe (Left) and Myanmar's Police Chief Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win (Right) speak to the media during a news conference regarding the killing of U Ko Ni, in Yangon, Myanmar, on 25 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS/SOE ZEYA TUN

PERSONAL antagonism and extreme nationalism was behind the assassination of legal adviser to the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) U Ko Ni, said Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe yesterday.

At the press conference in Yangon yesterday, authorities

disclosed that three suspects namely Kyi Lin (a) Pho Htoo, Aung Win Zaw and Zeya Phyo who involved in conspiring the January 29 assassination of U Ko Ni.

Meanwhile, the Myanmar Police Force is also cooperating with the international criminal

police organization INTERPO and ASEAN Police to arrest escaping suspect – Aung Win Khaing, aged 45, who served at Lt-Col in the military till 2014, said Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win, Chief of Myanmar Police Force, at the press conference.

Kyi Lin, who shot dead the

legal adviser of the NLD in a close range, got the seven-year sentence in 1985 for stealing Buddha statue and 27-year sentence in 2003 in theft of antiques and Buddha statue, and released from the prison in 2014 after receiving the presidential pardon.

Zeyar Phyo and Aung Win Khaing, who is still at large, established a company in early 2016 and Aung Win Khaing worked as the Managing Director while wife and younger brother of Zeyar Phyo worked as directors of the company.

SEE PAGE 3 >>

Aid from Malaysia delivered to people in Maungtau

AID including food, water and commodities donated from Malaysia were distributed yesterday morning throughout Kyeekanpyin, Wabeik, Maungtau, Sanpyapharwutchaung, Nganchaung and Laungdone villages by Rakhine State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Htein Linn, officials from Regional,

District and Township Administrative Committees, and officials from UN and UNHCR Departments.

Rakhine State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Htein Linn went on to explain, "The aid we received today was received by the nation and handed over to the Rakhine Region

Government. This systematic distribution of the aid is of immense help to the region's stability. This stability cannot be achieved without participation from local residents, it also requires dutifully following guidelines set by responsible officials in charge." Officials from UN and UNHCR then clarified on the

aid received, records of items received, and the continuing distribution process.

Of the aid donated from Malaysia 6,000 bags of rice, 1,846 cartons of instant noodles, 975 cartons of drinking water, 100 cartons of toothpaste, 36 cartons of toothbrushes, 94 cartons of towels, 35 cartons of balm, 562

cartons of soap detergent, 22 cartons of soap bars, 8 cartons of combs, 139 cartons of women's essentials, 50 cartons of razors, 9 cartons of nail clippers, and 50 assortment of footwear were distributed throughout Maungtau District, Sittway, Pauktaw and Myebon townships.—Aye Mya (Mandalay), Aye Min Thu



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Pe Nyunt Way brings “The Heart of the 19th Century Rubbing” on canvas to Lokanat Galleries



Pe Nyunt Way exhibits 15 art works at “The Heart of the 19th Century Rubbing”. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

RENOWNED artist Pe Nyunt Way captured Myanmar’s 19th century parabaik (folded paper) paintings on canvas, showcasing 15 contemporary works of art at the Lokanat Galleries in

Yangon from 26th February to 3rd March.

“The Heart of the 19th Century Rubbing” becomes Pe Nyunt Way’s 10th solo exhibition, demonstrating the 65-year



old artist’s creations which turn the country’s rare parabaik paintings, wall paintings and wood engravings into contemporary arts on canvas.

“The show before you is re-

viving and recording the artistic forms of 19th century paintings by subtle changes, appropriate adaptation and using techniques of rubbing on canvas,” said Pe Nyunt Way.—GNLM

Four new FDA branch offices to be opened in March

FOUR new Food and Drug Administration (FDA) branch offices will be opened in March, according to FDA under the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Four FDA branch offices will be opened with an aim to promote the awareness of the danger of unsafe food and drugs as well as to implement the projects concerning the safety of food, drugs and goods.

The FDA will open two branch offices in Yangon Region and the rest in other regions,” said Dr. Than Htut, Director-General of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the Ministry of Health and Sports.

“We will open four new branch offices in March. We will now have four branches in Yangon including the new ones. Our FDA offices will mainly focus on the safety of personal goods and food before and after entering the market,” he added.

“Currently, the FDA has 27 branch offices across the country. I don’t want businessmen to be profit-oriented only. Moreover, I also want people to cooperate with us for the safety of the foods and goods in the market,” said Dr. Than Htut, Director-General of the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA plans to conduct awareness training courses concerning the food and goods safety at 180 villages in March to keep consumers healthy and develop the quality of healthcare. — Ko Moe

Kayin women most representative in nationwide CSO forum

KAYIN women will be most representative in the nationwide civil society organization (CSO) forum which will be held in Nay Pyi Taw, according to local civil society organizations.

According to current statistics, six women out of 33 representatives from Taninthayi Region, nine women out of 36 representatives from Mon state and 12 women out of 34 representatives from Kayin State will

attend the forum. CSO forum organizing committee demanded at least 30 per cent participation of women representatives in the forum in Nay Pyi Taw. The percentage rule will be effective at Taunggyi forum on 21 and 22 February.

“We can more discuss the women rights if more women representatives attend the forum. The racial conflicts mostly occur in ethnic regions. So, most of

the ethnic women and children are helpless. The population of the women is increasing across the country. In Kayin State, the women population is greater than men because men die in the battles,” said Nant Tin Tin Hlaing, a member of Women Initiatives Network.

The township leaders from Hpa-an, Kawkaik, Kya-in-Seikkyi, Thantaunggyi, Papun and Hlaingbwe are women.

“Our CSOs are always careful of the gender equality. We never discriminate against the women. Most of the women from Kayin State are highly capable, said U Kyaw Swar from Women Initiatives Network.

CSOs will not only discuss the topics which are imposed by the Union peace committee but also the future landscape and policy, according to the CSOs.— Myitmakha News Agency

Mawlamyine Public Health Department staff quarters to be built in 2018-2019

THE Ministry of Health and Sports vowed to give priority to building staff quarters for the Mawlamyine public health department in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

“Although the budget for building the Mawlamyine public health department staff quarters is not included in 2017-2018 fis-

cal year, the Ministry of Health and Sports will submit a proposal to Amyotha Hluttaw to get the budget in the 2018-2019 fiscal year to build the staff quarters, said Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe.

The Union Minister’s comments came in reply to a question raised by U Aye Min Han, the

MP from Amyotha Hluttaw Constituency 1 in Mon state at 2nd Amyotha Hluttaw’s fourth regular meeting held on 23 February.

The Ministry of Health and Sports will request 2 or 3 times the current budget to build the staff quarters in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.— Myitmakha News Agency

Action to be taken against businessmen bribing officials for FDA certificate

THE Ministry of Health and Sports will take deterrent action against those businessmen who give bribes to get Food and Drug Administration (FDA) certification, it is learnt.

“If the businessmen have to pay money to the employees of the FDA to get the FDA certificate, let us know. We will take deterrent action. We cannot accept these kinds of actions. Anyone can inform our department

either by email or phone. We will investigate whether the complaint is true or not. Now, I’m hearing that the businessmen are bribing FDA staff to get the certificate,” said Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe.

We will try to check the samples of goods without delay. Also, the FDA will take deterrent action against illegal food and drug producers in cooperation with the departments concerned.

“We are making food safe. So, the businessmen need to change their wrong habits. We need more and more small and medium entrepreneurs who are conscious of food safety.

Businessmen who produce food and drugs need to provide details on labeling such as the company address, phone numbers, manufacturing date and expiration date. — Myitmakha News Agency

Crime NEWS

Raw opium, amphetamine pills seized in Lashio

A local anti-drug squad seized 8.5 kilo of raw opium in a surprise check in Lashio on Thursday.

The police discovered the drugs from a motorbike driven by Arthur on the Lashio-Tangyan highway road Karshi village.

The anti-drug squad also

searched an express bus en-route from Kutkai to Mandalay on the Lashio-Muse highway road near Hopeik Oriental tollgate and found 2,940 amphetamine pills from Ma Khin Lay Swe, a passenger on the bus. These two suspects are being charged under the anti narcotic law.—Myanmar News Agency



Arthur is seen together with raw opium seized from him. PHOTO: MNA

Maungtaw Region Investigation Commission

Press Release
(24th February 2017)

THE Maungtaw Region Investigation Commission was established on 1 December 2016. The Commission has held 9 meetings and conducted 3 investigative visits, from 11 to 13 December 2016, from 6 to 8 January 2017

and 10 to 17 February 2017.

On its initial trip, the Commission visited 14 villages and camps, including those where the incidents were reported to have taken place. The Commission visited 5 vil-

lages on the second trip. In order to investigate further the contentions contained in the OHCHR report, the Commission revisited 20 villages where human rights abuses were alleged to have occurred.

The Commission issued a press release regarding these visits on 20 February 2017.

The Commission is in the process of preparing an independent, factual and non-discriminatory report, reflecting the situation

obtaining on the ground in the Muslim villages of Maungtaw Region, Northern Rakhine.

To ensure that Muslim refugees in Bangladesh are not deprived of their legal rights and for the Commission to ascer-

tain the details regarding reports of human rights violations, Myanmar and Bangladesh authorities are coordinating to expedite the visit of the Commission to the refugee camps on the Bangladesh side.

Antagonism, extreme nationalism behind death of NLD's legal ...

>> FROM PAGE 1

Zeyar Phyo and Aung Win Khaing were plotting to kill U Ko Ni, and Aung Win Khaing gave K40 million to Aung Win Zaw, brother of the escaping suspect, in April last year as a deposit, and Zeyar Phyo gave K100 million to Aung Win Khaing in August 2016.

Zeyar Phyo was a cadet of the 38th Intake of the Defence Services Academy. While serving for the Tatmadaw at the rank of Captain, he was forced to retire in 2004.

Aung Win Zaw attended 34th Intake of the Defence Service Academy from 1989 to 1993. He got a two-year jail sentence while serving for the Tatmadaw in 1996 and a 27-year jail sentence in 2002 for stealing Buddha statues. He was released from the prison in 2014 after receiving the presidential pardon.

Aung Win Zaw also tried to hire Nagar Lay,

also known as Aung Kyi Lin or Aung Kyi Soe or Aung Naing Myint, in May 2016 to kill U Ko Ni for K20 million and a car without licence. Later, Nagar Lay managed to flee.

In July 2016, Aung Win Zaw offered Aung Soe, living in Insein to kill a diplomat. But, Aung Soe denied his offer.

In August 2016, Aung Win Zaw offered Kyi Lin from K80 million to K100 million to kill U Ko Ni and Kyi Lin replied that just a car was enough to kill U Ko Ni. Aung Win Zaw bought one 9mm pistol and 11 bullets for Ks2.5 million and one five-chambered gun and four bullets for Ks2.5 million.

Myanmar Police Force interrogated 71 men and two women as part of probing into the killing.

"We have done investigation into this crime. And, we will continue our investigation," said Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Stocks cool, bonds heat up as Trump optimism pauses

NEW YORK — Major global stock markets lost ground on Friday as investors scaled back bets US President Donald Trump's policies would promote faster economic growth and instead favoured perceived safer assets such as bonds and gold.

Oil futures fell, pressuring energy stocks after data showed US crude inventories rose for a seventh week, signaling oversupply despite OPEC's efforts to rein in output.

The dollar reversed earlier losses, eking out gains for a third straight week even as the Trump administration's lack of details on fiscal reforms raised doubts about the chances for improved domestic growth in 2017.

"The market will come to realize that a lot of these pro-growth policies might get pushed to the end of this year or next year and you might have this buyer's remorse for the mar-

ket," said Aaron Clark, portfolio manager at GW&K Investment Management.

The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 46 nations, fell 0.3 per cent, to 445.32. It reached an all-time peak at 447.67 on Thursday.

On Wall Street, however, the Dow Jones Industrial Average extended its winning streak to 11 sessions, the longest since 1987, and the S&P 500 rebounded from earlier losses. The Nasdaq Composite erased an earlier drop, paring its weekly loss.

The Dow ended up 11.44 points, or 0.05 per cent, at 20,821.76; the S&P 500 closed 3.53 points, or 0.15 per cent, higher at 2,367.34 and the Nasdaq finished up 9.80 points, or 0.17 per cent, to 5,845.31.

The three indexes posted record highs this week, buoyed by confidence about company results in the coming quarters

even without fiscal stimulus.

"This has started even before the new administration," said Scott Clemons, chief investment strategist at Brown Brothers Harriman in New York.

He cautioned investor optimism will diminish if the lack of progress on tax cuts, looser regulation and infrastructure spending persist.

Europe's broad FTSEurofirst 300 index ended 0.8 per cent lower at 1,458.64 for a weekly loss of 0.1 per cent.

The greenback also clawed into positive territory after being on its back foot most of the day. The dollar index was flat at 101.09, on track for a slim 0.1 per cent weekly gain.

As equities and the dollar lost some of their appeal, bond yields fell, with the German two-year Schatz yield touching minus 0.953 per cent. The benchmark US 10-year Treasury

note yield hit 2.310 per cent, its lowest in over five weeks, Reuters data showed.

Nervousness about the first round of the French presidential election, with anti-European Union candidate Marine Le Pen in the lead, has stoked safe-haven demand for German and US government debt.

Bids for less risky assets, together with traders seeing the likelihood of the Federal Reserve raising benchmark US interest rates in March as being remote, bolstered gold prices to their highest in over three months.

Spot gold rose \$7.72 or 0.62 per cent, to \$1,257.06 an ounce after touching a 3-1/2-month high at \$1,260.10.

In the oil market, Brent crude settled down 1.04 per cent at \$55.99 a barrel while US crude settled down 0.84 per cent at \$53.99.—Reuters

Dollar falls vs yen on US policy doubts

NEW YORK — The US dollar fell to a more than two-week low against the Japanese yen on Friday as investors doubted the likelihood of swift tax reform and a quick spending boost from US President Donald Trump's administration.

On Thursday, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin suggested that much work was still needed on key elements of a tax reform plan, one of the policies investors had anticipated would spur inflation and drive up US interest rates.

Analysts noted that Federal Reserve meeting minutes released on Wednesday reinforced doubts about a rate hike next month since voting members showed much less urgency to tighten credit.

The dollar fell as much as 0.6 per cent against the safe-haven yen to 111.95 yen. Its first dip below 112 yen since 9 February put the greenback on track for its second straight weekly loss against the Japanese currency, of about 0.8 per cent.

"Markets are sort of growing a lot more cautious on prospects for US fiscal stimulus, and consequently I think they are now skeptical of the Fed hiking substantially over the next two years," Vassili Serebriakov, FX strategist at Credit Agricole in New York said.

The euro slipped 0.2 per cent against the dollar in afternoon trading to a session low of \$1.0558. That put it on course for a 0.5 per cent decline since Friday, for the third straight weekly slide.

The euro's modest drop helped put the dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of six major currencies, on course for its third straight weekly gain. The gain was small at just 0.2 per cent, with the index last up only slightly at 101.110 after recovering from a one-week low of 100.660 earlier.

The index hit a 14-year high of 103.820 at the start of the year, largely on the hopes surrounding Trump's avowed pro-growth policies.

"Ultimately, outside of the US there is deflation happening and data is looking strong, so perhaps it's time to just take some dollar longs off the table," said UBS Wealth Management currency strategist Geoffrey Yu in London.

The dollar was up 0.1 per cent against the Swiss franc at 1.0073 francs, near a session high of 1.0079 francs.—Reuters

Alphabet's self-driving car unit sues Uber with trade theft charge

SAN FRANCISCO — Alphabet Inc's (GOOGL.O) Waymo self-driving car unit sued Uber Technologies (UBER.UL) and its autonomous trucking subsidiary Otto on Thursday over allegations of theft of its confidential and proprietary sensor technology.

Waymo accused Uber and Otto, acquired by the ride services company in August, with stealing confidential information on Waymo's Lidar sensor technology to help speed its own efforts in autonomous technology.

"Uber's LiDAR technology is actually Waymo's LiDAR technology," said Waymo's complaint in the Northern District of California.

Uber said it took "the allegations made against Otto and Uber employees seriously and we will review this matter carefully."

Lidar, which uses light pulses reflected off objects to gauge their position on or near the road, is a crucial component of autonomous driving systems. Previous systems have been prohibitively expensive and Waymo sought to design one over 90 per cent cheaper, making its Lidar technology among the company's "most valuable assets," Waymo said.

Waymo unveils a self-driving Chrysler Pacifica minivan during the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan, US, 8 January, 2017. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

Waymo is seeking an unspecified amount of damages and a court order preventing Uber from using its proprietary information.

Otto launched with much fanfare in May, due in part to the high profile of one of its co-founders,



An Autonomous trucking start-up Otto vehicle is shown during an announcing event in Concord, California, US on 4 August, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Anthony Levandowski, who had been an executive on Google's self-driving project. Uber acquired the company in August for what Waymo said in the lawsuit was \$680 million.

Waymo said that before Levandowski's resignation in January 2016 from Google, whose self-driving unit was renamed Waymo in December, he downloaded over 14,000 confidential files, including Lidar circuit board designs, thereby allowing Uber and Otto to fast-track its self-driving technology.

Waymo accused Levandowski of attempting to "erase

any forensic fingerprints" via a reformat of his laptop.

"While Waymo developed its custom LiDAR systems with sustained effort over many years, defendants leveraged stolen information to shortcut the process and purportedly build a comparable LiDAR system in only nine months," the complaint said.

Last month, Tesla Inc (TSLA.O) electric car company sued the former head of its Autopilot system. It said he tried to recruit Tesla engineers for his new venture with the former head of Google's self-driving programme while still working

there, and said he stole proprietary data belonging to Tesla.

Waymo's lawsuit said it learned of this use of trade secrets and patent infringement after it was inadvertently copied on an email from a component vendor that included a design of Uber's Lidar circuit board, which bore a "striking resemblance" to Waymo's design.

Waymo noted that Google devoted over seven years to self-driving cars and said Uber's forays into the technology through a partnership with Carnegie Mellon University had stalled by early 2016.—Reuters

Trump asks NASA to explore putting crew on rocket's debut flight

CAPE CANAVERAL (Fla.) — The Trump administration has directed NASA to study whether it is feasible to fly astronauts on the debut flight of the agency's heavy-lift rocket, a mission currently planned to be unmanned and targeted to launch in late 2018, officials said on Friday.

The study marks President Donald Trump's first step in shaping a vision for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Under former President Barack Obama, the US space agency was working on the heavy-lift Space Launch System rocket and Orion deep-space capsule with the aim of sending astronauts to rendezvous with an asteroid in the mid-2020s, followed by a human expedition to Mars in the 2030s.

The request for the study from the new Republican president's administration tweaks that plan by exploring whether to add a crew to an earlier test flight and perhaps setting the stage for a human return to the moon.

NASA officials said they do not feel compelled to fly the test mission with crew aboard, Bill



Tourists take pictures of a NASA sign at the Kennedy Space Center visitors complex in Cape Canaveral, Florida on 14 April, 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

Gerstenmaier, NASA's head of human space flight, told reporters on a conference call.

"There's not pressure to go do this," Gerstenmaier said. "I find it encouraging that we were

asked to go do this feasibility study."

The study is expected to take about a month. Engineers are assessing hardware changes, schedule delays, additional costs

and increased risks of flying a two-member crew on the first flight of the Space Launch System rocket, which is about four times bigger and more powerful than any current US booster.

A NASA safety oversight panel on Thursday cautioned that the agency should have compelling reasons for adding crew to justify the extra cost, risk to human life and schedule delays.

"If the benefits warrant assumption of additional risk, we expect NASA to clearly and openly articulate their decision-processing rationale," Patricia Sanders, head of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, said at a meeting at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

If approved, the astronauts would fly aboard an Orion capsule, under development by Lockheed Martin Corp, and swing around the moon during an eight-to nine-day mission, similar to what the Apollo 8 crew accomplished in 1968.

Gerstenmaier said adding crew to the mission would not be worthwhile if it forced the flight to be delayed more than about a year. The rocket's second flight, which is to include crew, is targeted for August 2021. The study will explore what would be gained technically by having a crew aboard sooner.—Reuters

What belongs in medical kits for climbers and hikers?

AUSTIN — For mountain climbers and hikers, injuries often include broken bones, sprains and skin wounds, but many don't carry the right supplies for the injuries and illnesses they are most likely to face, a recent study found.

Researchers analyzed data from 11 previous studies of injuries and illness among climbers, and came up with the list of medical supplies that should be in every mountaineer's backpack.

Then they surveyed climbers on 11 mountains in Colorado higher than 14,000 feet to see what medical supplies they carried. More than a third of the climbers weren't carrying a medical kit at all.

"It is hard to come up with a 'one size fits all' approach," said Dr Robert Quinn, a professor of orthopedics at the University of Texas Health Science Centre, San Antonio, who studies mountain injuries and preparedness.

"Experienced climbers will learn over time what is essential

and what just takes up space and weight," Quinn, who was not involved in the study, told Reuters Health.

Dr William Brandenburg of the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver and a colleague write in the Journal of Travel Medicine that people hiking, climbing, backpacking and doing other sporting activities in mountain areas run the risk of injury or illness with little medical care available nearby.

To identify the most common difficulties experienced while mountaineering, the study team searched a medical database for studies of injuries and illnesses among climbers and hikers.

Based on those studies, the most common problems needing medical care resulted from falls or other accidents, which made up 58 per cent to 76 per cent of all injuries.

Strains and sprains, which made up 25 per cent to 29 per cent of injuries, were more common

among people involved in events or trips.

Stomach upset and flu-like sickness were the most commonly reported illnesses, but were less likely to need formal care than dizziness or light-headedness.

Of the 355 individuals surveyed on the mountains, only 212 carried a medical kit.

Among the 158 people who provided descriptions of their medical kits, the most commonly carried medical supply was Band-Aids or other types of bandages. The most common medications carried were non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) drugs like ibuprofen.

Some mountaineers also carried ointments, including Vaseline and antibiotic creams.

The research team offered new recommendations for hikers' and climbers' medical kits, including wound care supplies such as medical gloves and medical tape, bandages and splinting materials.—Reuters

Scientists buzzing with goal-scoring exploits of soccer bees

LONDON — Using sweet treats and months of patient coaching, scientists in England have taught a group of bumblebees how to play soccer.

The 18 month study at Queen Mary University of London saw scientists train 50 bees to move a small yellow ball to a circled location in order to score a goal and receive a sugary food reward. The first group of bees then showed others in the colony how to play, with the second group impressing scientists by expanding the game.

"The bees solved the task in a different way than what was demonstrated, suggesting that observer bees did not simply copy what they saw, but improved on it," said Olli J Loukola, who co-led the study.

"This shows an impressive amount of cognitive flexibility, especially for an insect."

Their sporting prowess follows a study last year where the scientists taught bees to pull strings to get food and then relay what they learned to others.

Co-author Professor Lars Chittka said it had taken months to teach the first bees how to play football but that the second group picked up the game from their colony peers within 30 minutes.

Chittka said further studies would follow to better understand how an insect with a brain the size of a pin head could learn so much. "Our study puts the final nail in the coffin of the idea that small brains constrain insects to have limited behavioural flexibility," he said.—Reuters

Pfizer subpoenaed in US over patient assistance plans

MASSACHUSETTS — Pfizer Inc said it received subpoenas from the US Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts related to its support for organizations that provide financial help to Medicare patients.

"Pfizer is among a number of companies that have received subpoenas regarding this matter," the New York-based company said in an emailed statement on Friday.

Drugmakers including Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc and Regeneron Phar-

maceuticals Inc have disclosed involvement in similar government investigations.

In a regulatory filing on Thursday, Pfizer said the December 2015 and July 2016 subpoenas were related to groups that help cover patient co-payments for prescription drugs. Medicare is the US government healthcare plan for seniors. As aggressive price increases for certain prescription medications have drawn the ire of politicians and the healthcare industry, concern has grown that

donations made by pharmaceutical companies to patient assistance groups may be contributing to the price inflation.

"We support initiatives, including co-pay foundations, to help patients most in need gain access to medicines," Pfizer said. "We strive to follow government guidelines associated with any contributions we make."

Pfizer said it has been providing information to the government in response to the subpoenas.—Reuters



A man walks past Pfizer's world headquarters in New York on 28 April 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Philippine leader's opponents turn historic event into protest march

MANILA — Political opponents of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday turned a traditional celebration of a "People Power" uprising against dictatorship three decades ago into a protest march condemning his war on drugs.

The small political opposition and left-wing activists held separate commemorative events at the historic highway where more than a million Filipinos gathered in 1986, forcing Ferdinand Marcos and his family to flee to Hawaii after a 20-year rule.

Supporters of Duterte were due to hold a counter rally later on Saturday at a big Manila park, including a vigil backing the anti-drugs crackdown. Similar actions were planned in key cities across the country and in some capitals abroad.

The opposition

warned of a possible return to authoritarian rule under Duterte, calling on Filipinos to stand up for truth and justice and demand a stop to the extrajudicial killings, which have claimed more than 7,700 lives in seven months.

"There is a president who is threatening to re-impose martial law and openly support the killings of thousand of people," staunch Duterte critic Senator Leila de Lima said in a message from her detention cell, a day after she was arrested for drug offences that she described as a vendetta.

"The grim truth: in the last seven months under Duterte, there were more deaths compared to the 14 years of martial law under the Marcos regime."

Rights groups and a US senator criticised Duterte for the arrest of



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. PHOTO: REUTERS

de Lima, describing it as "politically motivated" to silence his critic.

"President Duterte is effectively expanding his drug war from the urban poor to the legislative branch of government," Phelim Kine, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

Thousands of left-wing activists marched

on the main highway in Manila to demand "genuine change" promised by Duterte, calling for the resumption of peace talks with Maoist-led rebels and release of more than 400 political prisoners.

"This is particularly dangerous today when there are real efforts to rehabilitate the Marcoses and pave the way for their eventual return to

Malacanang," Renato Reyes, Bayan secretary-general, said in a statement, referring to the presidential palace.

Former President Fidel Ramos and former senator Juan Ponce Enrile, hailed as the heroes of the 1986 revolt against Marcos, attended a mass at the main army base in Manila to mark the anniversary, which Duterte skipped.

Interior Minister Ismael Sueno had asked local officials to encourage supporters to join candlelight events organised by a pro-administration political movement.

Some cabinet members feared anti-Duterte protests might be used as a staging point to call for the president's ouster, although top security officials have made firm assurance about the loyalty of the army and police. —Reuters

Vietnam's HCM City eyes smart city cooperation with Britain

HO CHI MINH CITY — Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City expects to carry out more cooperation and receive more support from Britain in building a smart city and managing public-private partnership (PPP), a municipal official said on Friday.

Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee Nguyen Thanh Phong made the remarks when meeting with visiting British Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox, Vietnam News Agency reported. Phong said Ho Chi Minh City is willing to create the most optimal conditions for British firms to invest in the city, particularly in the fields of transport infrastructure, health care, education and e-government development. —Xinhua

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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

Expatriate Consultant Editor

Mark Angeles
markrangeles@gmail.com

Senior Translators

Khin Maung Oo
editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Copy Writer Min Zaw

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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Malaysia says will issue arrest warrant for North Korean diplomat in Kim Jong Nam murder

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia said on Saturday it would issue an arrest warrant for a North Korean diplomat wanted for questioning over the murder of Kim Jong Nam if he doesn't voluntarily cooperate with the police.

Earlier this week, Malaysia said 44-year-old Hyon Kwang Song, a second secretary at the North Korean embassy in Kuala Lumpur, was wanted for questioning over the death of the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

"Reasonable" time will be given for the diplomat to

come forward before police take further action, said Abdul Samah Mat, the police chief for Selangor state.

Samah said if the person concerned did not cooperate the police would issue a notice under Malaysian law, "compelling" them to appear before the investigation team.

"And if he failed to turn up upon given this notice, then we will go to the next step by getting a warrant of arrest from the court," he told reporters.

It was unclear if the embassy official can be detained since police have said he has diplomatic immunity.

Eight North Koreans are wanted in connection with the case, including the diplomat. One has been detained by the Malaysian police, four are believed to have fled to North Korea, while two are still in Malaysia.

Police are trying to locate the eight suspect, another North Korean, Ri Ji U, whose whereabouts are unknown, Samah said on Saturday.

Kim Jong Nam was murdered on 13 February at the Kuala Lumpur international airport with VX nerve agent, a chemical classified by the United Nations as a weapon of mass destruction,

Malaysian police said on Friday.

Two women — one Indonesian and one Vietnamese — have also been detained. Police had said on Friday that one of them had suffered from the effects of VX and had been vomiting.

Indonesian embassy officials met with their national Siti Aishah on Saturday and said she had been paid 400 Malaysian ringgit (\$90.15) to participate in what she believed was a prank.

"She only said in general that somebody asked her to do this activity... She said she was given a kind of oil, like baby oil," Indonesian deputy ambassador Andreano Erwin told reporters after meeting Aishah, adding that no charges have been brought against her yet.

Vietnamese officials also met with their national but declined to comment.

Footage released earlier this week by Japanese broadcaster Fuji TV appears to show two women lunge at the victim as he prepared to board a flight to the Chinese territory of Macau.

They are seen grabbing at his face and then quickly walking away in different directions. Later clips show the victim asking airport officials for medical help. —Reuters



Malaysian Police officers gather before a protest organized by Members of the youth wing of the National Front, Malaysia's ruling coalition, in front of the North Korea embassy, following the murder of Kim Jong Nam, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 23 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS



Firefighters are seen at the site after a fire broke out at HNA Hotel in Nanchang, Jiangxi province on 25 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ten killed in hotel blaze in southeastern China

SHANGHAI — A fierce blaze at a hotel in southeastern China killed 10 people, the official Xinhua news agency said in a post on its official microblog on Saturday.

The fire broke out on Saturday morning at the hotel in the inland city of Nanchang, the capital of China's Jiangxi province, trapping people inside, including workers who were carrying out renovations on the building.

Videos and photos on Chinese social media showed thick plumes of smoke coming from the hotel building and dozens of fire trucks and rescue workers on the scene.

Xinhua said one person had been injured jumping from a second floor window to escape and had been taken to hospital.

Rescue work in the building was basic-

ly completed, said Xinhua, adding that initial probes suggested the cause of the fire was tools used to cut construction materials.

The news agency added seven people had been detained by police while investigations continued.

Deadly fires are not uncommon in China, where safety regulations are lax and fire exits often blocked.—Reuters

Experts stress enhanced connectivity between China, Nepal under Belt and Road initiative

KATHMANDU — Nepalese politicians and diplomats on Friday stressed the enhanced connectivity between China and Nepal under the Belt and Road initiative.

Various speakers addressed the interaction on "Trans-Himalayan Cooperation in the context of Nepal-China Friendship"

organized by Nepal China Himalayan Friendship Society here in Nepal's capital.

"Nepal and China have a long history of trading relationship and it needs to be further strengthened to a new height," said Ramsharan Mahat, a leader from the Nepali Congress Party.

"China is currently the second largest economy of the world. As a neighbor Nepal should learn from China on how to achieve economic growth," he said.

Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, a leader from Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) stressed on enhancing the connec-

tivity between Nepal and China.

"The two countries should open more transit routes to strengthen our cross-border transport connectivity and economic cooperation in the days to come," he said.

Nepalese diplomat Hiranyalal Shrestha said that

Nepal can serve as a bridge between China and South Asia.

Cooperation between China, Nepal and India under the Belt and Road initiative will serve the interests in the socio-economic development of the entire South Asian region, he said.

Addressing the pro-

gram, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Yu Hong said the two countries are working to enhance bilateral economic, social, political relationship under the Belt and Road initiative.

She said that Nepal and China are friendly neighbors surrounded by rivers and mountains.—Xinhua

Tokyo assembly heavyweight Shigeru Uchida not to seek re-election

TOKYO — Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly heavyweight member Shigeru Uchida, a former secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Tokyo

chapter, said on Saturday he will not seek re-election when his current term ends in summer, citing his age and health concerns.

The 77-year-old Uchi-

da, who is said to also have had clout in national politics and has often been in confrontation with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, told reporters he will not run in the next assembly election in July.

"I was worried whether I would be able to serve as an assembly member for the next four years," he said, adding he made the decision around the end of 2015.

Uchida has expressed his intention to quit as head of the LDP Chiyoda Ward branch after a newcomer candidate with the party's backing was defeated in the Chiyoda mayoral election earlier this month by the incumbent supported by Koike.

He suggested he will not entirely retire from politics, saying, "I've been nurtured by the LDP. I want to contribute to the party as long as my physical condition allows."

Uchida, who once served as the Tokyo assembly chair, was first elected as an assembly member in 1989. He is currently serving his seventh term.—Kyodo News



Shigeru Uchida, a Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly heavyweight, speaks with reporters in Tokyo on 25 February, 2017. The 77-year-old Uchida, who has often been in conflict with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, said he will not seek re-election when his current term ends in summer, citing his age and health concerns.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

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

Examinations the Necessary Evil?

Dr. Nu Nu Win

IN the field of Education, we call the "Examinations", the "Necessary Evil".

As everyone knows, necessary or unnecessary, an Evil is not something good. It can harm anybody, anytime. However, this Evil is necessary in certain circumstances.

After teaching or learning something, both teachers and pupils want to know and need to know how much the students have achieved from that teaching.

Teachers need to know the effectiveness of their teaching materials and teaching methods. The teacher also needs to know the weaknesses and strengths of his students. Thus having a clear understanding of the needs of the class and the needs of each individual student, the teacher will be in a better position to modify his teaching style and teaching materials and even repeat certain portions of his lessons to get the best

results.

From the side of the students, they also need to know which part of the lesson has been understood well, what difficulties they have encountered during the learning process, which portion of the lesson they want to know more, and finally what kind of help they want from their teachers.

For these purposes we use "Tests" or "Examinations" to assess the achievement of students and also to assess the teaching of teachers.

So, let's ponder a while and think to what extent we can assess the achievements of students and the teaching of teachers.

According to the experts of Educational Test and Measurement or Educational Assessment, the results or the marks we get from an Examination comes out as follows: ..

Marks from an Examination

= Actual Achievement of a student + or - Error.

That means we can rarely get the actual achievement of a student by merely looking at the marks he gets from an Exam. There can always be an "error" which is a plus or a minus to the actual assessment of a student.

For example: -

Let's say a student had prepared well and knows all the lessons he had to study for his examination very well. If he fell ill the night before the examination or if he had an accident on the morning of the examination, he would not be able to do well in his examination. Because of the physical pain he had to suffer during the examination hour or because of the shock he had experienced that morning, he could have a minus error to his actual achievement which will surely come out in his examination results.

On the other hand let us take

a look at the reverse scenario. In this case the student might not have studied well but if he were able to answer all the questions because the questions asked happened to be just the ones that he had prepared thoroughly, then the result would be that he would get high marks. Then, this would be a plus error to his actual achievement.

So, although we cannot get the actual achievement of a student as the result of an examination, we need to use the examinations and tests up to the time we can substitute them with a better instrument that can assess the actual achievement well.

That is why we call the "Examinations" the "Necessary Evil".

So we need to find precautions and ways and means to get the results nearest to the actual achievement of a student.

Solar energy powers sustainable solutions

Entrepreneurs bringing solar energy systems to farms in developing countries challenge for sustainability charity's prestigious awards.

Alex Kirby

EVERY mouthful of food eaten by virtually every creature on Earth depends ultimately on the sun. But it can do much more than nurture the crops that feed us – and humans are starting to exploit this potential in striking new ways.

Farmers are now using solar energy to do far more than simply enable their crops to grow. Already it's helping them to irrigate their fields and to clean their dairy equipment.

Only about 5% of Africa's cultivated land is irrigated, compared with Asia's 41%. Until recently, the other available methods have been manual irrigation, which is time-consuming and laborious, or petrol or diesel pumps, which are too expensive for many farmers and also add to greenhouse gas emissions.

But now there's another way – solar-powered irrigation pumps. One pioneer of this technology is Futurepump, based in Kenya but importing the pumps from India. Its top-of-the-range SF1 pump costs about US\$650, but the company says it pays for itself in one to two years and will enable farmers to save \$100-200 a year.

Solar energy converted

The pump's solar panel directly converts solar energy into electrical power, which is transferred to a simple motor that rotates a fly-wheel, whose turning moves a pis-



A farmer in Myanmar waters his crop with the help of a solar-powered irrigation pump. Image: Ashden

ton up and down to draw water through the pump cylinder.

The pump, which can produce enough water to irrigate about half an acre of land per hour, works on sunny and cloudy days, in the early morning and late into the evening – and is easily transportable.

Another Kenyan solar energy entrepreneur is SunCulture, which has developed what it calls its AgroSolar Irrigation System. This draws water from any source – for example, a lake, river, stream, well or borehole – using solar power.

The solar panels provide the pump's power directly without the need for batteries or inverters. Water is pumped into a raised storage tank by day, and all the farmer needs to do in the evening is to open a valve on the tank so that the water flows down through a filtration system and onto crop root zones via drip irrigation tape.

In the Mandalay region, water

levels are low and falling, making an alternative to increasingly expensive diesel pumps really important

SunCulture's system costs US\$890, and farmers using it have reported yield increases of 300% or more. Trained technicians and agronomists provide buyers with on-farm training, soil analysis and agronomy support by mobile phone and via a call centre.

Both SunCulture and Futurepump have been longlisted in the 2017 Ashden Awards, an annual international competition to encourage sustainable energy.

Proximity Designs, the winner of one of Ashden's 2014 awards, is based in Myanmar, and introduced treadle pumps and other sustainable agriculture technologies to the country a few years ago.

It has now launched a solar irrigation pump, the Lotus, described as "radically affordable": It costs

US\$345, a price that provides buyers with the pump itself, 260W of solar panels and a stand.

The Lotus can pump more than 15,000 litres of water a day, and the company estimates it will take farmers about 11 months to pay back their costs when they convert from a diesel pump. Farmers in dry parts of Myanmar can expect this return to be even quicker.

Accessible to farmers

Designers had difficulty in creating a pump to fit neatly into the 2-inch tube wells that are found throughout Myanmar. But the product had to be easily accessible for rural farmers. In the Mandalay region, for example, water levels are low and falling, making an alternative to increasingly expensive diesel pumps really important. In Central America, Costa Rican dairy farmers

have found another use for solar energy, and one which again means higher incomes for those who adopt it. A solar company, Enertiva, has designed solar water heaters that supply hot water for washing farmers' milking equipment and tanks.

The country's buoyant dairy industry has high standards, inevitably meaning high costs as well – including for electricity or gas to provide the hot water essential for keeping milking equipment clean. Farmers who used the fossil fuels can save around US\$1,400 per year with the solar heaters, so can pay back their loan within one year. Enertiva's technology, which will work throughout the tropics and is now also being used in Guatemala and Panama, won an Ashden Award in 2015.—*Climate News Network*

“In the Mandalay Region, water levels are low and falling, making an alternative to increasingly expensive diesel pumps really important”.

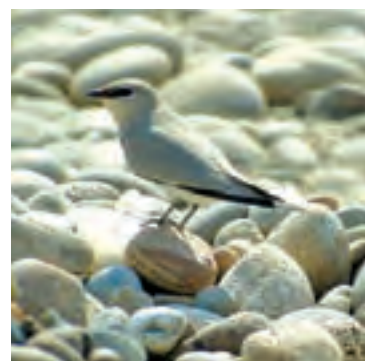
OVER the last 14 years, waterbirds in Myanmar's Ayeyawady River declined by 60% to 90% depending on the species.

Scientists working for Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and Manfred Hermsen Foundation have repeated an ornithology survey of the Myitkyina to Mandalay stretch of the Ayeyawady River last carried out in 2003. They found that many waterbirds have declined sharply due to habitat loss, gold panning and poaching. FFI is calling for immediate action to protect at least the most important river section between Myitkyina and Mandalay.

More than 20,000 waterbirds (61 species) were recorded along the river, with small pratincole and ruddy shelduck the most numerous recorded. But despite their relative abundance compared with other waterbirds (see Table), both of these charismatic species have also experienced a very drastic population decline since the last survey. Species' population declines range from 59 to 98%, compared with survey data from 2003 for the river section between Myitkyina and Sinbo alone.

Lead scientist Christoph Zockler said, "The Ayeyawady River is one of the last remaining wild, un-dammed rivers in Asia, with the section between Myitkyina and Sinbo considered to be of particular importance for conservation."

"Despite the decline, this is still a globally-important site for waterbirds. Therefore we believe it is now critical to secure the designation of this river section as a globally important wetland under the international protection of the



Small pratincole, a characteristic bird of from the the Ayeyawady River.

Survey reveals drastic decline of waterbirds in Ayeyawady River



Ruddy Shelduck (male and female).



The dynamic river creates wild places and habitat for wildlife.

Ramsar convention."

Immediate actions that are required include phasing out small-scale illegal gold mining in the river sections that provide key habitats for birds, fish and other aquatic wildlife; introducing community-based or communal waste management systems in the villages along the river; and preventing further agricultural encroachment onto river banks.

"At the moment, the riverbanks are covered in household waste while sandbanks are being dug up for gold-mining. Unless immediate drastic measures are undertaken to reduce the threats in the most important river sections, habitats for waterbirds will disappear and the river will turn into wasteland," said FFI's Myanmar Country Director Frank Momberg.

SPECIES	2003	2017	CHANGE (%)
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	974	316	67.6% DECREASE
Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	65	18	72.3% DECREASE
Bar-headed Goose <i>Anser indicus</i>	3220	106	96.7% DECREASE
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	5423	1285	76.3% DECREASE
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	2367	325	86.3% DECREASE
Small Pratincole <i>Gallinula lactea</i>	7785	3160	59.4% DECREASE
Eurasian Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	1385	28	98% DECREASE

Waterbird decline from 2003 – 2017 (Myitkyina to Sinbo Ayeyawady River Section).

The Ayeyawady River

The Ayeyawady River is one of the last major remaining rivers in Asia not affected by dams or any other impediments in the water course, and as a result it is able to transport water, sediment and nutrients unobstructed downstream, and provide critical habitat for biodiversity.

Sadly, the human impact on the river is visible and increasing. The serious decline of waterbirds and other birds is associated with the loss of habitats, mostly due to expansion of agricultural land onto sandbanks, riverine swamps and other wetlands, but it is also due to widespread gold panning. Bird trapping and bait poisoning has also been observed throughout the river and seems to be systemic and wide-spread.

Despite the worrying declines, the area is still home to good numbers of waterbirds and a rich biodiversity, and conservationists believe that this critical area is able to recover from previous losses if conservation actions are taken. Some sections still qualify as Ramsar sites, but a Man & Biosphere Reserve seems to be the most appropriate way to conserve the key biodiversity areas while also securing the livelihoods of communities along the river.

Frank Momberg

GAP crops support food safety and income generation

A negotiating meeting to discuss consumer safety and have access to the Hoteliers market in Nay Pyi Taw hotel zone was held on February 21 in the field of Good Agricultural Practice in Agricultural University at the corner of Khayay street and Tatpoe street in Pyinmana township.

The Director of the Agricultural Research said Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) is the standard procedure to be followed in the production process from seedling to end users.

The aim of GAP is to be able to focus on social development, the health of farmers, and a sustainable agricultural system to control the quality of crops and food safety.

The GAP technology has been initiated in Myanmar since 2004 when the representatives from ASEAN member countries and an Australia Project Team held a workshop on ASEAN-GAP which Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Health (former), Ministry of Science and Technology and City De-

velopment Councils participated in and have been preparing for GAP since then.

The director said that if the growers follow the GAP, their crops will have nutritional value and can be of the export quality and be consumed safely. As it is a sustainable cultivation system, it can preserve environment. If the quality corps can seek the international market shares, the growers will prosper.

He added that among the policies set by the Ministry,

the policy of food safety is to establish a sustainable agricultural system and the agricultural development research tasks were are implemented for that system. In this regard, awareness programs are being conducted for farmers and capacity building are being conducted for the government staff. Currently, GAP certificates were being delivered for Mango fruit and GAP protocol is being developed for 14 fruits.

The director of the Department of Agricultural Research

said people and stakeholders would participate in GAP system as a movement.

The meeting was attended by the agricultural experts, hotelier and farmers. The hoteliers discussed the current market demand for sugar beet, sweet chili, asparagus, lettuce, French bean, long bean, Japan cucumber, papaya. The participants observed the crops cultivated in the 6.64 acre field in which 30 crops and 50 species of crops are cultivated under GAP system.—Ko Pauk (Okkanmyay)

Russian prime minister declares 3rd Winter World Military Games open

SOCHI — Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev declared the 3rd Winter World Military Games in the Russian Black Sea resort open at a gala ceremony at Sochi's Ice Cube stadium.

"Dear participants and guests! I declare the 3rd 2017 Winter World Military Games open!" Medvedev said, wishing the athletes to "have excellent results and show restraint and respect for opponents."

"I congratulate participants and visitors, fans of winter sports, on this international festivity of sport," the prime minister said.

The 3rd Winter World Military Games will be held in Sochi on February 24-28. Their programme includes seven competitions in biathlon, cross country skiing, alpine

skiing, ski orienteering, ski-mountaineering, sport climbing, and short track speed skating.

At least 26 countries have put forward over 400 athletes to represent them in personal and team competitions of the 2017 Winter World Military Games with 44 sets of medals (gold, silver and bronze) up for grabs.

The games are organized by the International Military Sports Council (CISM), a major sports organization ranked third after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International University Sports Federation. Russia won the bid to host the games at the 70th CISM General Assembly in Kuwait in May 2015.

Established in 1948 CISM organized first-ever Military World

Games in 1995 and they involved summer competitions. The Winter Military World Games were first held in Italy's Aosta Valley in 2010 and then in French Annecy in 2013. Russia's southern city of Sochi boasts a number of up-to-date sports facilities, both in the coastal and the mountainous areas, ready to host winter sports competitions at a global level.

In February and March of 2014 the Black Sea resort city of Sochi hosted Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, which, according to international sports officials, athletes and visitors, were organized at the highest level possible and provided up-to-date infrastructure at all levels as well as security for all participants in the event.—TASS



Dmitry Medvedev. PHOTO: TASS

French judge takes over probe into Fillon "fake jobs" scandal

PARIS — French presidential challenger Francois Fillon will face a full judicial inquiry into allegations he paid family members for fake parliamentary jobs after the country's financial prosecutor said he was appointing a magistrate to lead a deeper probe.

The escalation is another blow to the conservative candidate whose status as favourite to win the presidency has faded since the "Penelopegate" affair — named after Fillon's wife — first surfaced a month ago. But it may not stop him from standing in April-May vote.

By involving a magistrate in what had so far been a preliminary probe led by police, the prosecutor is putting more resources into the investigation.

The inquiry will examine possible misuse of public funds and a lack of full and proper disclosure, according to the prosecutor's statement that was issued as Fillon took to the stage at a campaign rally near Paris.

The judge can decide to drop

the case, place the 62-year-old former prime minister under formal investigation, or send the case to trial. It was not clear, however, if the inquiry could be concluded before the two-round election, scheduled for 23 April and 7 May, but the French judicial process would not typically wrap up such a case in the nine weeks between now and the poll.

Under French law, if Fillon were to win the presidential race the investigation would be suspended during his time in office.

Fillon has denied any wrongdoing and says his wife was paid hundreds of thousands of euros for genuine work as his parliamentary assistant, though he has acknowledged giving her the work was an error of judgement.

Fillon made no reference to the prosecutor's decision at his rally, at which his supporters cried out "Fillon, President!"

Fillon has pledged to stay in the race come what may, after saying for weeks that he would step down if he were put under formal

investigation. "You are my companions, and with you at my side I can feel your energy that will give me the strength to win," Fillon told the rally.

Nevertheless, the issue has unnerved investors who fear Fillon's campaign woes have handed the anti-euro, anti-immigration Marine Le Pen of the National Front a higher chance of winning the presidency.

Opinion polls show Le Pen leading a fragmented field in the first round but then losing to independent centrist Emmanuel Macron in a second round run-off. Macron has been favourite to win the presidency since the Fillon scandal broke on 25 January.

Fillon — who has long cultivated an image of probity and criticised people for taking government handouts — has been heckled for weeks by protesters at campaign outings. Macron got a boost on Friday when German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she was ready to meet him.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Reconstruction of military aerodromes to continue — commander

MOSCOW — Military aerodromes and runways in the Amur region, Voronezh, North Ossetia and Saratov region will be reconstructed within next two years, Commander-in-Chief of the Aerospace Forces Colonel-General Viktor Bondarev told reporters on Saturday.

"This year, we are doing design and development works at the Ukrainka aerodrome (the Amur region), and next year repairing of the runway will begin there," he said. "We continue repairing of the aerodromes Step (Transbaikalia), Mozdok (North Ossetia), Baltimor (Voronezh), and the second stage of reconstruction continues in Engels (airbase near Saratov)," he said. Reconstruction of all those airports should be completed within 2018-2019, he added.—TASS

Merkel says, on NATO spending target, commitments have to be met

STRALSUND (Germany) — German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday that Germany needed to fulfill its commitment to boost defence spending to meet NATO's target of 2 per cent of gross domestic product.

"Obligations have to be fulfilled and others in the world will demand that of us, and I think they're right that Germany must fulfill its obligations too," she said at an election campaign event in her constituency of Stralsund in northeastern Germany. Germany has come under increased pressure since the election of US President Donald Trump to meet NATO's defence spending target, which was agreed by all members of the 28-nation alliance in 2014.—Reuters

Iran's enriched uranium stock roughly half amount allowed — IAEA

VIENNA — Iran has roughly half the enriched uranium it is allowed under a deal with major powers, the UN nuclear watchdog said on Friday after a process agreed with those powers made large amounts officially unrecoverable, excluding them from the total.

"As of 18 February 2017, the quantity of Iran's uranium enriched up to 3.67 per cent U-235 was 101.7 kg," the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a quarterly report on Iran's nuclear activities. That is well below a limit of 300 kg of uranium hexafluoride gas, the equivalent of 202.8 kg of uranium.

Diplomats had said Iran had recently come close to the limit. The confidential report to IAEA member states is the agency's first since the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, a vocal critic of the agreement.—Reuters

Malaysia to sweep airport for chemicals after Kim Jong Nam murder

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia plans to sweep one of the terminals at Kuala Lumpur international airport for toxic chemicals after Kim Jong Nam was murdered there with a nerve agent last week.

The teams involved include the police forensic team, the fire department and the Atomic Energy Licensing Board, the Malaysian police said in a statement on Saturday.

The sweep will be conducted from 1 am (1700 GMT) on 26 February, the police said. Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was killed on 13 February at the airport by VX nerve agent, classified by the United Nations as a weapon of mass destruction, Malaysian police said on Friday.—Reuters

Bombs target oil pipeline in Iraq's Kirkuk, one killed

KIRKUK — Four bombs went off on Saturday near a minor pipeline from an oilfield close to the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, security and oil industry sources said.

The pipeline delivers crude from the Bai Hassan oilfield to a degassing station in Kirkuk, though pumping had been halted for maintenance at the time of the blasts, security sources and officials at the state-run North Oil Company said.

"Four bombs blew up near a pipeline in Bai Hassan oilfield this morning, causing a fire. Firefighters are trying to put out the blaze," said an oil engineer. One member of the Kurdish security forces was killed and two were wounded when three more bombs exploded as they approached the location of the first blast, a Kurdish security member said.—Reuters

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE															
YANGON TO BANGKOK				BANGKOK TO YANGON				YGN TO ICN				ICN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-304	09:50	11:45	Daily	TG-303	8:00	8:45	Daily	KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily	KE-471	18:30	22:30	Daily
TG-302	15:00	16:55	Daily	TG-301	13:15	14:00	Daily	YGN TO KUL				KUL TO YGN			
TG-306	19:50	21:45	Daily	TG-305	18:05	18:50	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-706	6:00	8:15	Daily	PG-701	8:45	9:40	Daily	AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily	AK-504	6:55	8:00	Daily
PG-702	10:30	12:25	Daily	PG-707	13:45	14:40	Daily	AK-503	19:10	23:30	Daily	AK-502	17:20	18:30	Daily
PG-708	15:30	17:25	Daily	PG-703	16:45	17:35	Daily	8M-501	16:10	20:10	2	8M-502	16:45	17:45	1
PG-704	18:20	20:15	Daily	PG-705	20:30	21:45	Daily	8M-501	11:45	15:45	1	8M-502	21:10	22:10	2
8M-335	7:30	9:15	Daily	8M-336	10:15	11:00	Daily	MH-741	11:15	15:40	Daily	MH-742	13:55	15:05	1,4,6,7
8M-331	16:30	18:15	Daily	8M-332	19:20	20:05	Daily	MH-743	16:00	20:15	1,4,6,7	MH-740	09:10	10:15	Daily
UB-017	17:45	19:15	Daily	UB-020	10:35	11:10	3,5	YGN TO KMG				KMG TO YGN			
UB-019	8:00	9:30	3,5,7	UB-018	21:05	21:35	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
UB-019	8:55	10:25	1,6	UB-020	11:30	12:05	1,6	CA-416	12:30	16:00	Daily	CA-415	10:50	11:30	Daily
YGN TO DMK				DMK TO YGN				MU-2032	15:30	18:50	Daily	MU-2031	13:50	14:30	Daily
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	MU-2012	12:55	19:55	3	MU-2011	08:20	11:55	3
FD-252	8:30	10:20	Daily	FD-251	7:15	8:00	Daily	YGN TO TPE				TPE TO YGN			
FD-256	12:55	14:40	Daily	FD-255	11:35	12:25	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-254	17:35	19:25	Daily	FD-253	16:20	17:05	Daily	CI-7916	10:50	16:10	Daily	CI-7915	7:00	9:50	Daily
FD-258	21:40	23:30	Daily	FD-257	20:15	21:10	Daily	YGN TO PEK				PEK TO YGN			
DD-4231	08:00	9:45	Daily	DD-4234	10:30	11:15	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
DD-4235	12:00	13:45	Daily	DD-4230	6:30	7:15	Daily	CA-906	23:50	0550+1	1,3,5,7	CA-905	19:30	22:50	1,3,5,7
DD-4239	21:00	22:55	Daily	DD-4238	19:25	20:15	Daily	YGN TO HAN				HAN TO YGN			
SL-201	11:00	13:35	Daily	SL-200	08:45	10:00	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
SL-207	19:45	21:45	Daily	SL-206	17:10	18:35	Daily	VN-956	19:10	21:30	Daily	VN-957	16:40	18:10	Daily
YGN TO CAN				CAN TO YGN				YGN TO SGN				SGN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-713	20:25	01:00+1	1	8M-714	2:05	3:40	2	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-711	8:40	13:15	2,4,5,7	8M-712	14:15	15:50	2,4,5,7	VN-942	12:10	14:55	2,3,4,5,7	VN-943	9:25	11:10	2,3,4,5,7
CZ-3056	11:35	15:50	3,6	CZ-3055	8:40	10:35	3,6	YGN TO HKG				HKG TO YGN			
CZ-3056	17:40	22:20	1,5	CZ-3055	14:40	16:40	1,5	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
YGN TO SIN				SIN TO YGN				KA-251	1:05	5:25	Daily	KA-250	21:50	23:45	1,3,5,7
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	UB-8027	09:00	13:30	1,3,5,7	KA-252	22:20	00:10	2,4,6
8M-231	8:20	12:40	Daily	8M-232	13:45	15:15	Daily	YGN TO DOH				UB-8028	14:50	16:20	1,3,5,7
SQ-997	10:25	15:10	Daily	SQ-998	07:55	09:20	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DOH TO YGN			
MI-515	14:20	18:50	1,3,5	MI-522	11:30	15:30	4,6	QR-919	8:05	11:30	1,3,4,6,7	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-519	17:35	22:10	Daily	MI-518	15:15	16:40	Daily	YGN TO CNX				QR-918	20:10	5:20	1,3,4,6,7
MI-522	16:20	20:50	4,6	MI-516	12:00	13:25	1,3,5	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	CNX TO YGN			
MI-533	13:35	20:50	2	MI-533	11:30	12:45	2	PG-724	13:40	15:35	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
3k-584	19:40	00:10	Daily	3K-583	17:30	19:00	Daily	YGN TO DAC				PG-723	12:00	12:55	Daily
3K-582	11:35	16:05	Daily	3K-581	09:10	10:40	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DAC TO YGN			
TR-2823	9:25	13:55	1,2,4,5,7	TR-2822	7:20	8:45	1,2,4,5,7	BG-061	16:45	18:30	1,3,6	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
UB-001	7:15	11:45	Daily	UB-002	13:00	14:30	Daily	MDL TO DMK				BG-060	13:30	16:00	1,3,6
YGN TO NRT				NRT TO YGN				Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DMK TO MDL			
NH-814	22:10	06:45	Daily	NH-813	11:00	16:30	Daily	FD-245	12:55	15:15	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
												FD-244	11:10	12:25	Daily

AIRLINE CODES

8M = Myanmar Airways International

BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines

MH = Malaysia Airlines

MU = China Eastern Airlines

NH = All Nippon Airways

SQ = Singapore Airways

PG = Bangkok Airways

UB = Myanmar National Airlines

VN = Vietnam Airline

3K = Jet Star

AI = Air India

CI = China Airlines

DD = Nok Airline

KA = Dragonair

MI = Silk Air

TG = Thai Airways

AK = Air Asia

CA = Air China

CZ = China Southern

FD = Air Asia

KE = Korea Airlines

QR = Qatar Airways

TR = Tiger Airline

DAY

1 = Monday

2 = Tuesday

3 = Wednesday

4 = Thursday

5 = Friday

6 = Saturday

7 = Sunday

Iraqi forces push deeper into western Mosul as civilians flee

MOSUL, Iraq — US-backed Iraqi forces pushed deeper into western Mosul on Saturday after retaking the city’s airport from Islamic State and punching into built-up areas of the jihadists’ last major stronghold in the country.

Troops advanced in several more populated, built-up southern districts and about 1,000 civilians walked across the frontlines, the largest displacement since fighting began a week ago in a bid to deal Islamic State a decisive blow.

The new offensive comes after government forces and their allies finished clearing Islamic State from eastern Mosul last month, confining the insurgents to the western sector of the city bisected by the Tigris river.

Commanders expect the battle in western Mosul to be more difficult, in part because tanks and armoured vehicles cannot pass through the narrow alleyways that crisscross ancient districts of the city.

But Iraqi forces have so far made quick advances on multiple fronts, capturing the northern city’s airport on Thursday, which they plan to use as a support zone, and breaching a three-metre high berm and trench set up by Islamic State.

The advancing forces are



Rapid Response forces members cross farm land during a battle with Islamic State’s militants south west Mosul, Iraq on 24 February, 2017.
PHOTO: REUTERS

now less than three kilometres (two miles) from the mosque in Mosul’s old city where Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate in 2014 spanning Iraq and Syria, sparking an international military campaign to defeat the group.

Losing Mosul would likely deal a hammer blow to the militants’ dream of statehood, but they still control swathes of territory in Syria and patches of northern and western Iraq from where they could fight a guerril-

la-style insurgency in Iraq, and plot attacks on the West.

Federal police and an elite Interior Ministry unit known as Rapid Response have completely recaptured Hawi al-Josaq just north of the airport and begun clearing houses in the Tayyaran district, said Brigadier General Hisham Abdul Kadhim.

Islamic State was resisting with snipers and roadside bombs, he said.

Separately, counter-terrorism forces were advancing on

two directions towards Wadi Hajr and Mamoun districts, said Lieutenant General Abdelwahab al-Saadi, a senior commander.

“Clearing operations are ongoing and our forces have entered those areas,” he told Reuters on a hill overlooking the battle.

Saadi said an Islamic State suicide car bomb had been destroyed on Saturday morning before reaching its target.

The campaign involves a 100,000-strong force of Iraqi troops, Shi’ite militias and Sunni tribal fighters. It is backed by a US-led coalition that provides vital air support as well as on-the-ground guidance and training.

Western advisors are increasingly present close to the frontline, helping coordinate air strikes and advising Iraqi forces as the battle unfolds.

About a thousand civilians, mostly women and children, walked out of southwestern parts of Mosul on Saturday and climbed into military trucks taking them to camps further south.

The United Nations says up to 400,000 people may have to leave their homes during the new offensive as food and fuel runs out in western Mosul. Aid groups warned on Friday that the most dangerous phase of the offensive was about to begin.

Some of the people fleeing the Mamoun area said they were originally from Hammam al-Alil, south of Mosul, but were forced to move four months ago as Islamic State retreated north into the city.

“They began shelling us arbitrarily, so we hid in the bathrooms. When the security forces came, they yelled to us so we fled to them,” said civilian Mahmoud Nawwaf.

The government is encouraging residents to stay in their homes whenever possible, as they did in eastern Mosul where fewer people fled than expected.

A Reuters correspondent near the airport saw nine families living in a house where residents with full beards served trays of tea to security forces. Some said Islamic State had forced them to move from Samarra, 250 km (160 miles) south of Mosul.

Abu Naba, 37, said he was surprised at how quickly the militants had been driven out.

“We could hear their voices outside and 15 minutes later they were gone,” he said.

A woman with a baby wrapped in a blanket on her lap said she had given birth in the house 22 days ago because it was too dangerous to reach a hospital.—Reuters



US President Donald Trump takes the stage to address the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Oxon Hill, Maryland, US on 24 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump vows military build-up, hammers nationalist themes

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md./WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump said he would make a massive budget request for one of the “greatest military buildups in American history” on Friday in a feisty, campaign-style speech extolling robust nationalism to eager conservative activists.

Trump used remarks to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), an organization that gave him one of his first platforms in his improbable journey to the US presidency, to defend his unabashed “America first” policies.

Ahead of a nationally televised speech to Congress on Tuesday, Trump outlined plans for strengthening the US military, already the world’s most powerful fight-

ing force, and other initiatives such as tax reform and regulatory rollback.

He offered few specifics on any initiatives, including the budget request that is likely to face a harsh reality on Capitol Hill: At a time when he wants to slash taxes for Americans, funding a major military buildup without spending cuts elsewhere would add substantially to the US budget deficit.

Trump said he would aim to upgrade the military in both offensive and defensive capabilities, with a massive spending request to Congress that would make the country’s defence “bigger and better and stronger than ever before.”

“And, hopefully, we’ll never have to use it, but nobody is going to mess with

us. Nobody. It will be one of the greatest military build-ups in American history,” Trump said.

Appealing to people on welfare to go to work and pledging to follow through on his vow to build a wall on the US-Mexican border, Trump drew rounds of applause from the large gathering of conservatives, many of them wearing hats emblazoned with the president’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again.”

His speech was heavy on the nationalist overtones from his campaign last year, focusing on promises to boost US economic growth by retooling international trade deals, cracking down on immigration and boosting energy production.—*Reuters*

Britain flags concern about confidence in Hong Kong’s system

HONG KONG — Developments in Hong Kong have affected confidence in a system of government intended to ensure the Chinese-ruled city’s autonomy, though its rule of law remained robust “despite challenges”, former colonial power Britain said on Friday.

Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997 with guarantees it would retain extensive autonomy, an independent legal system and broad personal and commercial freedoms under a deal known as “one country, two systems”.

The international financial hub has seen tumultuous times over the past couple of years, with pro-democracy protests quelled in what many residents see as creeping interference by Beijing and the rise of a small but vocal movement pushing for independence.

Britain monitors developments in Hong Kong, as the agreement it struck with China for the territory’s return stipulated the continuation of its capitalist way of life for 50 years. In its latest report to its parliament, covering the six months to the end of last year, the British government said the formula setting out how the city is ruled “continued to function well in the vast majority of

areas”. “Nevertheless, during the reporting period a number of developments caused concern in Hong Kong and internationally, affecting confidence in ‘one country, two systems,’” it said.

“We believe that, despite challenges, Hong Kong’s rule of law remains robust overall, thanks in large part to a world-class, independent judiciary,” it added. Late last year thousands of lawyers marched through the heart of Hong Kong to condemn legal intervention by Beijing that effectively barred two elected pro-independence lawmakers from taking their seats in the city’s legislature. The intervention fuelled concern about the independence of the city’s judiciary.

China rejects outright any talk of independence and Britain reaffirmed in its report that it did not see independence as an option for the city. Britain urged both the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, as well as elected Hong Kong politicians, to take steps to maintain confidence in “one country, two systems”, which Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson called “the best system for Hong Kong’s long-term future”.

While the city’s capitalist ways are guaranteed for 50 years, no specific time frame has been agreed for the “one country, two systems” formula.

But Johnson said he was “encouraged” by indications from Hong Kong authorities that the arrangement would not cease in 2047. Hong Kong’s government, which is close to Beijing, said the formula was implemented fully and successfully, and outsiders should stay out of Hong Kong’s affairs.

“Foreign governments should not interfere in any form,” it said.

China’s Foreign Ministry said Hong Kong was an internal matter that no country had a right to interfere in, and that it opposed these regular reports from Britain.

“We demand the British side stop issuing these reports, and stop interfering in Hong Kong’s affairs,” it said in a statement late on Friday. Britain also reiterated concern over the case of five Hong Kong booksellers who published material critical of Beijing and disappeared in late 2015 to re-emerge in Chinese custody months later. Four have been released but one remains in detention.—*Reuters*

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Taipei holds 1st Japanese ramen festival

TAIPEI — A 10-day bazaar featuring some of Japan’s most famous ramen noodle dishes kicked off on Friday in Taipei as organizers hoped to attract local aficionados to taste the genuine Japanese delicacy.

The first Nippon Ramen Festival, featuring 10 of Japan’s well-known ramen restaurant chains, such as Fukuoka’s Ippudo and Hokkaido’s Ajisai, opened to the public in the run-up to a four-day national holiday. It will run through 5 March.

“Japanese ramen noodle dishes have won the hearts of so many people in the world that we want our friends in Taiwan to taste the real Japanese ramen,” said Kenji Chiba, the event ambassador and head of the Chibaki Ya ramen restaurant. The Japanese way to eat ramen is to slurp the noodles, said Takeshi Ogawa, chairman of Ippudo’s operator Chikara no Moto Partners. “Some Taiwanese may think it’s rude, but in Japan, we slurp the noodles, savoring them with our

mouth and nose,” Ogawa said.

The history of Japanese ramen can be traced back to 1665 when Zhu Zhiyu, a Ming Dynasty scholar who lived in self-imposed exile in Japan, served noodles in soup to Tokugawa Mitsukuni, a powerful feudal lord of the Edo Period (1603-1868), according to Ogawa.

Back then the noodle dishes were extremely simple, Ogawa said. The noodles were made of lotus root flour and the ham broth soup was rich and strong.

Since the Meiji Period (1868-1912), as the Japanese began to eat more meat, sliced meat and other ingredients were added to the ramen.

Over the years, ramen dishes have become more versatile. Other kinds of soup stock have been developed in addition to the salty broth, which is considered the oldest. They include miso, soy sauce, pork bone and other meat-based soups.

Different regions, from the colder Hokkaido to the



Representatives of 10 of Japan’s well-know ramen noodle restaurants pose for the media at the first Nippon Ramen Festival in Taipei on 14 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

warmer Kyushu, have also developed ramen featuring different flavors and tastes, Ogawa said.

It is fair to say that ramen is one of the most popular dishes in Japan. The number of registered ramen noodle stores in Japan has exceeded 35,000, according to Akira Ito, head of project development at Nishinippon Newspaper Co, one of the event’s co-organizers.

Owen Lee, chief executive officer of co-organizer United Daily News Group, said his firm has been hold-

ing so many events that it established a new company last year to be responsible for promoting the group’s philosophy of bringing the world to Taiwan.

An event the new company organized last year was an exhibition of Studio Ghibli’s animated films in Taipei. Following the event’s success, Lee said they wanted to organize something that is completely different and in which attendants can participate so they can better understand the culture of that country.—*Kyodo News*

White House bars some news organizations from briefing

WASHINGTON — The White House excluded several major US news organizations, including some it has openly criticized, from an off-camera briefing held by the White House press secretary on Friday, representatives of the organizations said.

Reporters for CNN, The New York Times, Politico, The Los Angeles Times and BuzzFeed were not allowed into the session in the office of press secretary Sean Spicer.

Spicer's off-camera briefing, or "gaggle," replaced the usual televised daily news briefing on Friday in the White House briefing room. He did not say why those particular news organizations were excluded, a decision which drew strong protests.

Reuters was included in the session, along with about 10 other news organizations, including Bloomberg and CBS.

Spicer said his team decided to have a gaggle in his office instead of a full briefing in the larger White

House briefing room.

"Our job is to make sure that we're responsive to folks in media. We want to make sure we answer your questions, but we don't need to do everything on camera every day," he said.

Off-camera gaggles are not unusual. The White House often invites hand-picked outlets in for briefings, typically for specific topics. But briefings and gaggles in the White House are usually open to all outlets and they are free to ask anything.

A pool reporter from Hearst Newspapers was included in the gaggle on Friday and was preparing a pool report for distribution to the entire press corps. Media outlets allowed into the gaggle also shared their audio with others.

Spicer's decision drew a sharp response from some of the media outlets that were excluded.

"Nothing like this has ever happened at the White House in our long history of covering multiple ad-



Journalists work in the briefing room at the White House in Washington, US on 24 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

ministrations of different parties," Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, said in a statement.

"We strongly protest the exclusion of The New York Times and the other news organizations. Free media access to a transparent government is obviously

of crucial national interest."

The White House Correspondents Association, or WHCA, also protested.

"The WHCA board is protesting strongly against how today's gaggle is being handled by the White House," said Jeff Mason, president of the association and a Reuters reporter.

President Donald Trump has regularly attacked the media, sometimes singling out organizations and reporters for criticism.

"The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of

the American people!" Trump tweeted last week.

Some critics have said his attacks on news media endanger press freedoms.

During the election campaign last year, Trump's team banned a few news organizations, including The Washington Post and BuzzFeed, from covering his campaign rallies for a period of time to protest their coverage.

CNN posted a Twitter message on Friday afternoon saying: "This is an unacceptable development by the Trump White House. Apparently this is how they retaliate when you report facts they don't like. We'll keep reporting regardless."

Ben Smith, editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed News, said in a statement: "While we strongly object to the White House's apparent attempt to punish news outlets whose coverage it does not like, we won't let these latest antics distract us from continuing to cover this administration fairly and aggressively." — Reuters

Malaysia mulls reviewing diplomatic ties with N Korea

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia is considering reviewing its diplomatic ties with North Korea amid an acrimonious stand-off between the countries over the handling of the apparent assassination of the estranged half-brother of the reclusive country's leader, local media reported on Saturday.

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi is quoted as saying that he ordered the Foreign Ministry to present an evaluation of its relations with North Korea to the Cabinet.

He has said the government would decide on what to do with North Korea following the assessment, according to The Star and other Malaysian newspapers.

Malaysia, which established diplomatic ties with North Korea in 1973, is only one of a handful of countries in the world that has a diplomatic mission in Pyongyang.

Malaysia and North Korea opened embassies in each other's capital cities in 2004 and 2003, respectively, and they later reached an agreement on reciprocal visa-free visits.

In 2009, Malaysia became the first country granted visa-free travel rights by North Korea for its citizens.

However, bilateral ties have severely soured in the wake of the 13 February killing of Kim Jong Nam with a highly toxic nerve agent at a Kuala Lumpur airport.

Malaysia has already recalled its ambassador to Pyongyang.

Malaysian police suspect that a number of North Koreans were behind the murder of the exiled half-brother of Kim Jong Un, the country's current leader.

A North Korean man, a Vietnamese woman and an Indonesian woman are already in custody in connection with the death that the police said Friday involved the lethal internationally banned VX nerve agent, developed in the 1950s by Britain as a chemical weapon.

Police are trying to hold seven other North Koreans, which include a diplomat at the country's embassy in Kuala Lumpur and an employee of its national carrier, Air Koryo. —Kyodo News

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1032)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1032) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S MOL (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SHIPPAN ISLAND VOY. NO (011)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SHIPPAN ISLAND VOY. NO (011) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BATAM VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BATAM VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.2.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

I learnt to smile in mid-thirties: Helen Mirren

LONDON — Veteran actress Helen Mirren says she struggled to have a proper smile till her mid-thirties.

The 71-year-old actress said she thought she looked “stupid” when the corners of her mouth turned upwards, but after she urged herself to grin more she noticed it instantly made her feel “a little bit better,” reported Female First.

“It was only actually in my mid-thirties that I learnt to smile. I couldn't smile before that, I thought I looked stupid when I smiled. And then I learnt the power of a smile and funnily enough when you smile, even if you don't feel like smiling, you immediately feel a bit better. Life feels a little bit better when you're smiling,” Mirren said.

The actress also said she had a tough time battling with her lack of self-esteem and still struggles to feel positive everyday.

“I don't know if anyone else is different than me but it's something I have to handle on almost a daily basis. But certainly it's something I am aware of on a daily basis, you know, self-questioning...,” she said. Mirren, however, feels her lack of confidence led her to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. “It may be one of the reasons I became an actress.” — PTI

Foreign Oscar contenders denounce ‘fanaticism’ in US

BEVERLY HILLS (Calif.)

— The directors of all five Oscar-nominated foreign language films on Friday denounced what they called a “climate of fanaticism and nationalism” in the United States and elsewhere, and dedicated their Academy Award to the cause of unity and free expression.

The directors from Iran, Sweden, Germany, Denmark and Australia spoke out in a statement as hundreds of people attended a rally on the eve of Oscar weekend. The rally was organized by one of Hollywood's biggest talent agencies in support of freedom of expression and unity. The statement and show-business rally in Beverly Hills followed a crackdown by US President Donald Trump on travel to the United States, and months of fiery speeches by celebrities at awards shows and marches.

Iranian film director Asghar Farhadi, is boycotting Sunday's Oscar ceremony in protest at Trump's bid to ban travel from seven majority Muslim nations.

Speaking to the rally in a video from Tehran, Farhadi denounced politicians whom he



Director Asghar Farhadi, Best screenplay award winner for the film ‘Forushande’ (The Salesman), poses during a photocall after the closing ceremony of the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, on 22 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

said are “trying to promote hate but creating divisions between cultures, traditions and nationalities.”

Farhadi was also part of the group that attacked “divisive walls,” and the divisions of “genders, colors, religions and sexualities” in current politics.

“We would like to express our unanimous and emphatic

disapproval of the climate of fanaticism and nationalism we see today in the US and in so many other countries, in parts of the population and, most unfortunately of all, among leading politicians,” said the statement, issued to trade publications Variety and the Hollywood Reporter.

It was signed by Farhadi director of “The Salesman”, Martin

Zandvliet (Denmark's “Land of Mine”), Hannes Holm (Sweden's “A Man Called Ove”), Maren Ade (Germany's “Toni Erdmann”), and Martin Butler and Bentley Dean (Australia's “Tanna”).

The directors said that “regardless of who wins the Academy Award for best foreign language film on Sunday, we refuse to think in terms of borders.”

“We dedicate this award to all the people, artists, journalists and activists who are working to foster unity and understanding, and who uphold freedom of expression and human dignity.”

Their statement echoed speeches at the Beverly Hills rally, organized by the United Talent Agency in place of its annual Oscar party.

Actress Jodie Foster urged the crowd of about 500 people to take action to defend civil liberties and democracy.

“It's our time to show up and demand answers. It's our time to tell our elected officials to do their job (and) that we will not tolerate chaos, ineptitude and war mongering,” she said. —Reuters

Emma Thompson won't take part in short “Love Actually” sequel

LONDON — Actress Emma Thompson has said she is not taking part in a short “Love Actually” sequel for Britain's Comic Relief charity appeal because it is “too soon” to reprise her role in the romantic comedy after the death last year of co-star Alan Rickman.

Thompson and Rickman played wife and husband Karen and Harry in the hit 2003 movie, which also starred Hugh Grant as the British prime minister and Bill Nighy as an ageing rock star, as well as Keira Knightley, Liam Neeson and Colin Firth.

A short film revisiting the characters is in the works for the annual charity appeal, which holds its fundraising Red Nose Day and televised evening of celebrity comedy sketches on 24 March.

Speaking to the BBC last week, director Richard Curtis confirmed some of the big names would take part but added there was a question mark over Thompson's return. Rickman, also known for the “Harry Potter” films, died of cancer in January 2016, aged 69.

“Richard (Curtis) wrote to me and said ‘Darling I can't write anything for you because of Alan’ and I said ‘No, of course



Actor Emma Thompson. PHOTO: REUTERS

you can't, it would be sad, too sad, it's too soon,” Thompson told Reuters at the UK launch of Disney's new “Beauty and the Beast” film on Thursday night.

“It's absolutely right, it's supposed to be for Comic Relief and there isn't much comic relief in the loss of our dear friend really only just over a year ago... We thought and thought but it just seemed wrong.”

The 2003 movie is set in the run-up to Christmas, with different stories of romance and

love woes, like Rickman's character getting close to a female colleague. In one scene, Thompson's character tears up alone in the bedroom when she discovers a necklace he bought is not for her.

While saying it was “absolutely the right decision” to leave her out, Thompson said the idea of the sequel was appealing. “To revisit the wonderful fun characters of Bill Nighy and Hugh Grant and all of that, that's fantastic.” —Reuters

East-West collaborations excite me, says Indian pop star Chauhan

LONDON — Sunidhi Chauhan, one of India's biggest pop stars, wants to collaborate with megastars like Justin Timberlake and Usher as she looks to push her career beyond Bollywood.

“Collaborations excite me. The whole blend of two cultures coming together is a beautiful thing,” Chauhan told Reuters in London ahead of her 2017 UK tour with Rock On Music.

Hailed across the Indian film industry for her versatile voice, Chauhan has already produced a song with singer-songwriter Enrique Iglesias.

“It turned out to be good. People liked it and I'm so happy about that,” said the singer who started her career as a teenager and has delivered hit after hit in the last two decades.

At home, she's widely regarded as the ‘Queen of item numbers’ — Bollywood movie dance tracks that are then lip-synched by leading actresses in films.

But in 2017 she wants to branch out further.

“This year I'm definitely going to pay attention to singles

that I want to do. You know, some independent music, not just stick to films but also show a different side of my personality through my music,” the softly spoken singer said.

Chauhan also wants to advance her acting career after making her debut in the short film ‘Playing Priya’ late last year. She's eyeing bigger roles and says she would love to do a biopic on the late actress Madhubala, who viewed by many as India's Marilyn Monroe.

Chauhan's confident she can juggle both singing and acting. Her passion knows no boundaries: She's sung in languages she doesn't understand, including French, and has crossed over into the Pakistani music industry.

“I've sung for so many Pakistani jingles and films. It's like performing at home in India. There's no difference,” Chauhan said.

“The politics and everything, I honestly don't get into all those things because it upsets me, and at the end of the day, life is too short.” —Reuters

Hiroshima A-bomb museum draws record visitors in FY 2016

HIROSHIMA — The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum drew a record of nearly 1.6 million visitors in the year ending March, with visitor numbers rising in the wake of former US President Barack Obama's May visit.

As of Friday, the number of visitors eclipsed the previous record of 1,593,280 set in fiscal 1999, and the figure is likely to reach around 1.73 million by the end of March, the museum said.

Following Obama's visit to the city as the first sitting US leader in late

May last year, the number of visitors to the museum rose 40 per cent from a year earlier in June and July.

The museum had planned to stop displaying paper cranes presented by Obama but decided to continue the popular exhibit as it attracted many to the museum.

Yuri Takahashi, a 29-year-old nurse from Tokyo's Nakano Ward, who became the 1,593,281st person to visit the museum said, "I understood the horrors of atomic bombs after seeing the Atomic Bomb Dome. This is a place that

marks Japan's history."

Museum director Kenji Shiga attributed the rise in the number of visitors to the display of the cranes dedicated by Obama and the popularity of "Kono Sekai no Katasumi ni" (In this corner of the world), a Japanese animated film set in Hiroshima before and during World War II.

The United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6 August, 1945, and a second on Nagasaki three days later. Japan surrendered on 15 August, bringing the war to an end.—Kyodo News



Yuri Takahashi (L) receives a commemorative gift as she became the 1,593,281st visitor in fiscal 2016 to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum on 24 February, 2017, surpassing the previous record in fiscal 1991. Visitors have increased considerably since then-US President Barack Obama visited there in May 2016. Photo: Kyodo News

Carnival kicks off in Brazil despite recession, security woes

RIO DE JANEIRO — Carnival festivities kick off in Brazil on Friday, with officials in Rio de Janeiro, site of the country's best-known revelry, preparing to hand the key of the city over to "King Momo," a figurehead who traditionally presides over the partying.

Despite an ongoing recession and police strikes that raised security concerns in recent weeks, thousands of locals and tourists swarmed across Rio for the start of the five-day festival, which the city expects will draw more than 1 million visitors and generate about \$1 billion for the local economy.

The celebration, known for block parties and the big-budget spectacle of parades at Rio's official Carnival venue, this year plays out as Brazil seeks to emerge from a two-year recession, its worst on record, and political volatility that last year led to a presidential impeachment.

A limited police strike in Rio, and a far bigger

stoppage by police in the neighboring state of Espirito Santo, earlier this month prompted fears of a crime surge during Carnival. The strike in Espirito Santo, which lasted a week, led to a spike in murders, thefts and assaults.

But policing in Rio by this week had returned to normal and pre-Carnival street parties have been

celebrated without major disruptions. With beer and cocktails flowing freely, officials have deployed outdoor urinals across the city and some offices and stores, wary of vandals, have boarded up windows and doors.

The festival, whose roots lie in a tradition of carnal indulgence before the austere Catholic sea-

son of Lent, officially ends next Wednesday.

Major carnival parades and other festivities will also take place in other cities, including São Paulo, Brazil's biggest metropolis, and Salvador, a city in the northeast where processions of giant floats serve as stages for pop stars and other performers—Reuters



A reveller parades for the Aguia de Ouro samba school during the carnival in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on 25 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Vionnet's birds of paradise fly in Milan palazzo

MILAN — Fashion house Vionnet unveiled an airy and colourful collection inspired by birds of paradise in the brand's first fashion show in Milan following its decision to switch from the Paris catwalks.

True to its signature draping techniques and fluidity, Vionnet's autumn and winter 2017/18 collection showcased light feminine designs, with long transparent skirts, pleated gowns and silky dresses.

"The fantastic birds of paradise of Papua New Guinea give inspiration, their theatrical feathers and their tropical colours suggest optimism ... they become a muse, for a modern and timeless woman who is always flying," read a style note.

Designer and owner Goga Ashkenazi showcased dresses decorated with white designs of birds, others were made in light fabrics with bird prints.

The lightness of the looks was interrupted at times by heavy coats covering the dresses, capes with fur cuffs as well as denim trousers and tops, used in past collections by the brand.

For the evening, sparkly dresses were alternated with sequined ones or black pants matched with long silky tunics with plunging necklines.

Models walked in a succession of frescoed and wooden beamed rooms of the 15th century Milan palazzo Casa degli Atelliani, as



A model presents a creation from the Vionnet Autumn/Winter 2017 women collection during Milan's Fashion Week, in Milan, Italy, on 24 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

guests sat in upholstered chairs, window seats and loungers.

The colour of the designs ranged from the subtle beige, taupe and orchid white to acid greens and fuschia, and bold red, orange and turquoise.

Models wore gold chain necklaces with lock charms and bright or metallic leather ankle boots or high heeled strapped sandals.—Reuters

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(26-2-2017 07:00am ~ 27-2-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Lacquerware Technology College
07:41	Am	Talking Shwe Thway (Children Journal)
07:52	Am	Coin Collectors
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Stars in The Golden Age
08:53	Am	Welcome School for the Blind
09:03	Am	News
09:27	Am	Travelogue: To my dream city (Part-1)
09:51	Am	A Precious gift from waste
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	The Iron Rider

10:39	Am	Myanmar Traditional Thatched Roofs: Thet Nge
10:52	Am	Myanmar Puppet

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	The Mountain with antique stone sculptures & Mural Painting
07:49	Pm	Today Myanmar: Hand in Hand for Peace
08:03	Pm	News
08:27	Pm	Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part-3)
08:54	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass — Aung Thiha

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



Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri. PHOTO: REUTERS

My dream has died, says sacked Ranieri

LONDON — Claudio Ranieri said his “dream died” when he was sacked by Leicester City nine months after leading them to the Premier League title against all the odds.

The Italian was fired on Thursday with Leicester one place and one point above the relegation zone.

“Yesterday my dream died,” Ranieri said in a statement on Friday. “After the euphoria of last season and being crowned Premier League champions all I dreamt of was staying with Leicester; the club I love for always. Sadly this was not to be.”

Ranieri’s dismissal has been met with widespread shock.

“The adventure was amazing and will live with me for-

ever,” the 65-year-old manager said.

“My heartfelt thanks to everybody at the club, everybody who was part of what we achieved, but mostly to the supporters. You took me into your hearts from day one and loved me. I love you too.”

Leicester started last season as 5,000-1 outsiders to win the English top-flight title for the first time in their history.

“No-one can ever take away what we achieved together and I hope you think about it and smile every day the way I always will,” Ranieri said.

“It was a time of wonderfulness and happiness that I will never forget.

It’s been a pleasure and an honour to be a champion with all of you.”—Reuters

Manchester United handed tough Europa league draw

LONDON — Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said Friday’s draw for the last 16 of the Europa League against Russian side Rostov has been unkind to his team, the favourites.

“It is a bad draw in every aspect. Far and difficult. Comes in a bad period,” Mourinho, whose side are still competing on four fronts, told reporters.

“They had a very good Champions League campaign. They beat Ajax and Anderlecht in qualifiers and managed important results against Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid. “I know the coach well. The team are very defensive and physical. It’s a bad draw.”

Rostov, which is north east of Moscow, beat Bundesliga giants

Bayern Munich in the Champions League group phase and suffered two narrow defeats by Atletico Madrid. United play in the English League Cup final on Sunday, are still in the FA Cup and chasing a top-four finish in the Premier League. They will play the second Champions League leg at home.

Second favourites Roma face a tricky task against French club Lyon while Schalke and Borussia Moenchengladbach clash in an all-Bundesliga derby.

Gent’s reward for knocking out Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley is a tie against fellow Belgians Genk.

Celta Vigo, Spain’s only survivors, face Russian club Krasnodar.

Draw for the last 16 of the Europa League:

Celta Vigo (Spain) v FC Krasnodar (Russia)

Apoel FC (Cyprus) v Anderlecht (Belgium)

Schalke (Germany) v Borussia Moenchengladbach (Germany)

Olympique Lyon (France) v Roma (Italy)

Rostov (Russia) v Manchester United (England)

Olympiacos (Greece) v Besiktas (Turkey)

Gent (Belgium) v Genk (Belgium)

FC Copenhagen (Denmark) v Ajax (Netherlands)

First legs to be played on 9 March, second legs on 16 March.—Reuters

Berahino in frame for first Stoke start

LONDON — Stoke City striker Saido Berahino is in contention to make his first start for the club when they travel to face Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League on Sunday, manager Mark Hughes has said.

The 23-year-old Berahino has made two substitute appearances since his move from West Bromwich Albion in January and has impressed the manager during Stoke’s training camp in Dubai. “Berahino is looking really sharp and we are really pleased with what we are seeing. He is close to being ready to start now,” Hughes told reporters on Friday.

Berahino has not scored a league goal for nearly a year and saw his career stall at his former club due to a series of off-field incidents. “Whether this weekend is

too early for him we will have to wait and see,” Hughes added.

“He is itching to start matches now. We are excited by him. He will play a part on Sun-

day because he is showing the qualities that attracted us to him in the first place.” With third-placed Tottenham yet to lose a league game at White Hart Lane this season, Hughes urged Stoke, who are ninth in the table, not to be rattled by the north London club’s impressive home record. “Hopefully we will be sharp from the off.

They are a strong side, they are very impressive at home and we will be up against it. We are in good shape though,” he added.—Reuters



Stoke City's Saido Berahino. PHOTO: REUTER

Simeone seeks first Liga win over Barca in his 300th game



Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone. PHOTO: REUTERS

MADRID — The toughness and guile that made Diego Simeone a great player has been there for all to see in his time as manager of Atletico Madrid, and the Argentinian marks his 300th game at the club with a major challenge on Sunday against Barcelona.

Simeone’s team has yet to beat Barca in domestic competition, but they broke the 10-year duopoly of Barcelona and Real Madrid in La Liga in the 2013-14 campaign — the club’s first league crown for 18 years.

Atletico had won only two trophies in the 15 years before Simeone’s arrival and since he became manager in 2011 the outfit has won five.

He has also steered the club to titles in the Europa League, UEFA Super Cup, King’s Cup and Spanish Super Cup, and has presided over two home victories over Barcelona in the last three seasons to reach the Champions League semifinals.

But Barca has lost all 16 domestic matches.

The club did however win La Liga with a 1-1 draw against Barca, arguably Simeone’s greatest accomplishment, and they have won 187, drawn 61 and lost 51 of 299 games with him in charge.

Barcelona, yet to get over losing 4-0 at Paris Saint Germain in the Champions League last week, were not convincing in the game

that followed, a 2-1 home victory over Leganes following a 90th minute Lionel Messi penalty.

Atletico have, meanwhile, hit their stride, winning 4-1 at Sporting Gijon and then going on a scoring rampage at Bayer Leverkusen to win 4-2 this week.

Atletico fans — now with 100,000 members for the first time in their 113-year history — will be rooting for Simeone at the Vicente Calderon stadium because this is likely to be his last chance to do so at the venue with the club moving next season. “The family doesn’t stop growing, congratulations,” Simeone said on Twitter, referring to the membership milestone.—Reuters