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Dawei SEZ project back on track

THE once-suspended Dawei SEZ project that could result in thousands of jobs along the Myanmar-Thailand border is back on track after years of fits and starts.

A high-level committee and a task force have been formed in order to re-start and speed up the Dawei Special Economic Zone, it was learnt yesterday.

In the last few months, the SEZ committee has had more interaction with Italian-Thai Development (ITD) Plc, one of the firms forming a consortium of private developers that signed a concession agreement with the government in 2015.

The consortium includes ITD, a Japanese-Thai joint venture Rojana Industrial Park Plc and LNG Plus International Co., Ltd. also from Thailand.

The Dawei SEZ that includes a highway and a deep-sea port has been in the works for years. Myanmar and Thailand first signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the area in 2008, and two years later Myanmar granted a 60-year concession to ITD to develop a deep-sea port, industrial estate, and road and rail links to Thailand's Kanchanaburi.



The site of the Dawei Special Economic Zone project on the Andaman Sea in Taninthayi Region. PHOTO:MNA

ITD then withdrew from the agreement in 2013 citing financial difficulties, before resigning the concession agreement in 2015.

Formed on 28 February, the new committee and task force will re-start the joint project between Thailand and Myanmar that aims to link the Andaman

Sea to Bangkok and the Gulf of Thailand, the President's office said.

The Myanmar High Level Committee on Implementation of Dawei SEZ and its related projects is chaired by Vice-President U Henry Van Thio, with Union Ministers from the Ministry of

Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of Electric Power and Energy, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Planning and Finance, the Ministry of Construction, Chief Minister

of Taninthayi Region, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Union Attorney-General as members, with Union Minister for Commerce as Secretary, and chairman of management committee of Dawei SEZ as Joint-Secretary.

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Mandalay real estate to improve with lower stamp, sales tax

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

REAL estate agents predicted the market for high-end housing could substantially improve after Internal Revenue Department lowered the tax on stamps and sales from 7 per cent to 4 per cent.

Internal Revenue Department stated they lowered the taxes on 6 February in hopes of relieving tax burden of home ownership.

In 2015, sales for high-end housing in Mandalay came to a near-standstill after real estate taxes were increased.

Furthermore, the escalating taxes resulted in some buyers not reporting a change in home ownership to the development committee so as to avoid paying the additional taxes, instead signing a General Power (GP) agreement, real estate agents said.



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Tourist arrivals to MraukU Cultural Zone declined due to conflicts

THE number of tourists visiting the MraukU Cultural Zone has declined due to armed conflicts which have taken place in Rakhine State, according to recently released statistics.

In the months of October, November, December, January and February, overseas tourists amounting to between 1,000 and 4,000 came in the region, depending upon the stability of the area.

"The amount of the overseas guests dropped more than last year. As for our hotel, the drop was estimated at 30 per cent. Local guests are normal. The drop is considered to be attributed to the affairs in Rakhine State. Some booked their trip, but then cancelled their reservations. They decided depending upon the news they heard."

According to the MraukU township office of General Administration Department, arrivals of foreign guests coming into MraukU were 3,478 in 2011, 3,015 in 2012, 1,752 in 2013,

3,573 in 2014, 4,155 in 2015 and 2016 (January to June).

"To recover the dropping situation of tourism to the normalcy, it is necessary to make stability in the area known to foreign travellers. And completion of the MraukU airport is urgently needed for easy access to the area. Eighty per cent of foreign tourists who visited MraukU used to go about the villages near Laymyochaung, enjoying the trips. Making ecotourism developed is urgently needed," said a tourist guide.

MraukU is an old Rakhine city surrounded by forests and mountains. In prosperous times, Rakhine kings built their city fortified with many walls in accord with the status of a city, with the stone-built palace in the center and religious edifices of pagodas and stupas nearby systematically constructed.

"MraukU is an area full of cultural heritage. It abounds with many things that are of value concerning history and re-



MraukU cultural heritage zone, dotted with ancient pagodas, is a popular tourist destination. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

search. We can profit from these. Accordingly, the MraukU airport rebuilding, which had been suspended, needs to be resumed so that socio-economic develop-

ment of the local people will be achieved," said U Tun Tha Sein, State Pyithu Hluttaw representative of MraukU constituency 1.

It is learnt that Europeans

visit MraukU more than those from Asian countries, especially from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, France and the UK. —Pan Hla Aung (Myitmakha)

Japan grants US\$ 638,065 for four projects in Ayeyarwady



Mr. Tateshi Higuchi (L) and an official ink the grant assistance. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

THE Japanese government will provide four projects in Ayeyarwady with grant assistance.

Ambassador of Japan to Myanmar Mr. Tateshi HIGUCHI and Chairpersons of the Construction Committees from Ayeyarwady Region signed the contracts under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme yesterday to provide US\$ 638,065 to the four projects.

The projects include upgrading of road between Yae Nauk Village and Nyaung Waing Village in Yegyi Township, Ayeyarwady Region with USD 189,876, the project for Upgrading of 2 Roads for Ta Ma Lo Village and Tar Pat Village (West) in Maubin Township, Ayeyarwady Region with USD 111,857, the Project for Construction of Kone Pyin Village Bridge in Yegyi Township, Ayeyarwady Region with USD 178,535, and the Project for Upgrading of Road between Myauk San Village and Yae San Village in Yegyi Township, Ayeyarwady Region with USD 157,797.

The Government of Japan will support upgrading of the 4.2-kilometer-long road, one Reinforced Concrete Construction (R.C.C.) bridge and 13 culverts between Yae Nauk Village and Nyaung Waing Village, upgrading of the 585-meter-long R.C.C. road, one R.C.C. bridge and 2 culverts for Tamalo Village and the 827-meter-long R.C.C. road for Tar Pet Village (West), the construction of a 49-meter-long, 5.5-meter-wide R.C.C. bridge with an approach road and upgrading of the 2.5-kilometer-long road, 2 R.C.C. bridges and 8 culverts.

The Government of Japan has assisted 814 various grassroots projects in Myanmar under the GGP scheme since 1993: the number consists of 400 education projects, 198 healthcare projects, 138 public welfare and environment projects, 43 infrastructure projects and 35 other projects. It is anticipated that these assistances will further strengthen the existing friendly relations between Japan and Myanmar. —GNLM

Dawei SEZ project back on track

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The task force on Dawei SEZ construction is chaired by the Union Minister for Commerce, with Deputy Ministers from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Planning and Finance; Union Minister for Planning and Finance of Taninthayi Region Cabinet, permanent secretaries from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of

Electric Power and Energy, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and directors-general from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Union Attorney General as members and chairman of management committee of Dawei SEZ as secretary and director-general of Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization,

the Ministry of Commerce as joint secretary.

The highway that is part of the project would link Dawei with Bangkok and the Greater Mekong Subregion, while the deep-sea port would link Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam with India, the Middle East, Europe and Africa, significantly shortening the time of transportation and eliminating the need to ship around Singapore through the Malacca Straits. —GNLM

Cambodian Deputy PM visits Mahamuni Buddha Image



Mr. Hor Namhong pays homage to the Mahamuni Buddha Image. PHOTO: TIN MAUNG

Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Hor Namhong and his delegation travelled by air yesterday from Bagan-NyaungU to Mandalay and were greeted by Mandalay Region Minister for Defence and Border Affairs Colonel Myo Min Aung and of-

ficials at Mandalay International Airport. The honorary guests went to visit the Mahamuni Buddha Image and deliver offerings of flowers, oil lamps, glasses of water and golden robes.

The Deputy Prime Minister signed the honorary guest book

and received a small statue of the Buddha as a gift from Mahamuni Buddha Board of Trustees Chairman U Soe Lin.

The honorary guests then departed from Mandalay International Airport in the evening. —Tin Maung (Mann Ko Pwar)

Appeal to be made for Koh Tao death sentences

Mark Angeles

A special investigative team formed by the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand is planning to appeal the recent decision by a Thai court that upheld death sentences for two Myanmar nationals.

"Depending on instructions from authorities in Myanmar, we will make an appeal to the High Court of Thailand," said U Aung Myo Thant, a legal adviser from the Myanmar embassy in Thailand, following the recent announcement from the presiding Thai court.

"Thailand's law allows us to make an appeal within a month. But we can request a one-month extension at least five times if our complaint is reasonable," he said.

A Thai appeals court upheld the death sentences for two Myanmar migrant workers convicted of the murder of two British backpackers on a vacation island in 2014, their lawyer said on Wednesday.

The bodies of backpackers Hannah Witheridge and David Miller were found on a beach on Koh Tao island in September 2014. Police said Witheridge, 23, had been raped and bludgeoned to death and Miller, 24, had suffered blows to his head.

Thailand sentenced Myanmar migrant workers Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun to death after convicting them of the crime on 24 December 2015.

The decision to uphold the death sentence for the two Myanmar men was handed down on 23 February, but the defence lawyer was not informed of the decision until eight days later, prompting questions of legal adherence and calls for an appeal.

"The means in which the verdict was read in this case without informing defence lawyers raises questions regarding adequate adherence to the rule of law. The defence legal team will immediately liaise with Zaw Lin and Wai Phyto to prepare the defendant's appeal to the Supreme Court on this ruling. It is a deeply disappointing ruling for the defence team given our confidence in the strength of our arguments regarding the inadequacy of forensics in this case," Andy Hall said on Wednesday. Hall is a British rights activist and the international affairs adviser to the defence team.

A team of lawyers filed an appeal in May last year against the guilty verdict. The 198-page appeal said that DNA evidence used in the case was inadmissible and had not been collected, tested, analysed or reported in accordance with internationally accepted standards.

"The appeals court upheld the death sentence for the two defendants," Nakhon Chompuchat, the defence team's head lawyer, told Reuters on Wednesday.

The defence has 30 days to make another appeal to the supreme court.

The 2015 verdict followed an investigation and trial that were mired in controversy, including allegations of police incompetence, mishandling of evidence and torture of the suspects.

Thai police drew widespread domestic and international criticism for their handling of the case and the evidence. Protests erupted in Yangon after the verdict, with many people believing the two workers were scapegoats. *Soe Win-MLA contributed to this story*



Zaw Lin (L) and Win Zaw Htun (R).
PHOTO: REUTERS



Photo shows BEHS (6) Botahtaung, formerly known as St. Paul's High School in Botahtaung. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

Commemorative Blue Plaque installed at BEHS (6) Botahtaung

Myat Sandi

The historic and reputable Basic Education High School (6) Botahtaung, formerly known as St. Paul's High School, received Yangon Heritage Trust's 17th commemorative Blue Plaque yesterday.

St. Paul's high school is one of the oldest schools in Yangon and located at the corner of Anawrahta Road and Theinbyu Road.

The prestigious school is a prime example of a substantial 19th Century missionary school and was once part of a large mission compound that encompassed St. Mary's, the biggest Roman Catholic cathedral in Myanmar.

St. Paul's High School was founded by Bishop Paul Bigandet, who served in Yangon from 1856 until 1894 to promote education and Christianity, together with the services of three De La Salle Brothers from Calcutta (now Kolkata). After founding of St. Patrick's school in Mawlamyine in April 1860, the brothers came to Yangon and set up a school in a humble wooden building near the bishop's residence which was on Barr Street (now Maharbandula Park Street).

Within just couple of years, the school had outgrown its small premises and was moved to its



Blue Plaque of BEHS (6) Botahtaung. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

present site in 1886. Between 1900 and 1908, two new wings, which were designed by then famous architect Thomas Swales, were added and later in the 1930s, a study hall and refectory were extended. Lessons were taught in English and St. Paul's has produced many prominent leaders, intellectuals and artists. Deedok U Ba Cho, one of the martyrs assassinated in 1947 along with General Aung San in the Secretariat across the road, was also one of the school's many famous alumni.

The Founder and Chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust Dr Thant Myint-U highlighted the profound history of education in Yangon.

"Yangon has a proud history

of teaching and learning. And the city has produced many not only nationally but internationally renowned statesmen and scholars. St Paul's has since its founding been one of Myanmar preeminent schools and I'm delighted that we are today honouring its illustrious heritage.

He continued, "Too often when people think of the buildings of downtown Yangon they think of these buildings as 'colonial'. But they were also the seedbeds of 'anti-colonial' thinking and action, the places where new generations connected with currents of global knowledge and imagined afresh the future.

We mark St Paul's not because it's a 'colonial' building worth saving but because it is one of the key sites where modern Myanmar was born."

Like all missionary schools, St. Paul's High School was nationalized under the socialist government in 1965.

The commemorative Blue Plaque is a part of Yangon Heritage Trust's efforts to highlight historical buildings and renowned residents who contributed to the narrative of the city. YHT believes that the introduction of commemorative Blue Plaques will make Yangon's history accessible to people of all age and backgrounds.

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Yangon - Tachileik/ Kyauing Tong	74,000	Mandalay - Myitthaingyi	44,000
Yangon - Myitthaingyi	92,000	Mandalay - Tachileik/ Kyauing Tong	53,500
Yangon - Bhamo/ Homalin	87,500	Haha - Tachileik/ Kyauing Tong	48,000

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Asian shares advance, dollar supported by March rate hike bets

TOKYO — Asian shares rose on Thursday as investors were encouraged by President Donald Trump's less combative tone in his first speech to Congress, which sent Wall Street stocks sharply higher, while growing bets on a US rate hike this month buoyed the dollar.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.5 per cent while Japan's Nikkei rose 1.3 per cent to a 14-month high.

European shares could dip after the STOXX Europe 600 benchmark index hit a 15-month high on Wednesday, with spread-betters seeing a fall of 0.1 per cent in Germany's DAX, Britain's FTSE and France's CAC.

MSCI's broadest gauge of the world's stocks covering 46 countries scaled a record high, a day after it rose nearly 1 per cent for its biggest daily gain in almost three months.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average blasted through the 21,000-point mark for the first time. Both the Dow and the S&P 500 rallied around 1.4 per cent.

Trump pledged to deliver "massive" tax relief to the middle class and corporate tax cuts, to spend heavily on infrastructure and to ease regulations — steps that have helped to push US stocks



People are seen behind an electronic board showing stock prices after the New Year opening ceremony at the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE), held to wish for the success of Japan's stock market, in Tokyo, Japan, on 4 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

higher since his election victory in November.

While Trump gave few new details on his tax or spending plans, investors were encouraged by what they saw as a less confrontational tone as he tries to push his growth agenda through a Congress reluctant to widen the government's budget deficit.

More to the point, his stimulus

plan comes as the global economy is picking up momentum.

The J.P. Morgan Global manufacturing PMI hit its highest levels in nearly six years in February.

"Trumpflation may be a misnomer. The uptick in manufacturing predates the election. It continued in February," ING said in a note, pointing to generally strong factory activity readings around

the world last month.

"It's better to be lucky than good. We think President Trump may be lucky in holding office when the overhang of debt and fear from the Global Financial Crisis lifts."

A rate hike by the Federal Reserve later this month also would signal policymakers' growing confidence in US and global economic

expansion.

"The US economy is strong enough to allow the Fed to raise rates. And then we are going to have one trillion dollars in public spending," said a trader at a European bank.

"Under such conditions, we are likely to see a gradual rise in US stocks, with volatility remaining low, until the Fed overkills the economy," he said.

The S&P financial index soared 2.84 per cent after a few key Federal Reserve officials including New York Fed President William Dudley and San Francisco Fed President John Williams, hinted at an interest rate hike this month.

Usually-dovish Fed Governor Lael Brainard also joined the chorus, saying an improving global economy and a solid US recovery mean it will be "appropriate soon" for the Fed to raise rates.

"Even Brainard is talking about the need to raise rates, so a hike in March looks highly likely. Her tone has changed considerably from last year," said Hiroko Iwaki, senior strategist at Mizuho Securities. Government data indeed showed on Wednesday the largest monthly increase in inflation in four years eroded households' purchasing power, supporting the case for a rate hike.—Reuters

Facebook's Oculus cuts price of virtual reality set by \$200

SAN FRANCISCO — Facebook Inc's virtual reality unit Oculus has cut \$200 from the total price of its flagship hardware set, in a bid to expand the system's base of video game players, the company said on Wednesday.

The virtual reality headset Rift and the motion controllers Touch will together retail for \$598, Jason Rubin, Oculus' vice president of content, said in a statement.

Facebook paid \$2 billion for Oculus in 2014, believing it to be the next major computing platform. Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has said that Oculus would spend \$500 million to fund virtual reality content development.

Oculus and other virtual reality makers are struggling to make their products competitive with other gaming systems that sell for much less.

Oculus believes the lower entry price will attract consumers to virtual reality for personal computers at a faster pace, Rubin said. "This price drop was as inevitable as it is beneficial. This is how the technology business works," he said. A larger user base would lead to easier player matching, better communities and the ability to invest more in gaming titles, he said, calling those results "a virtuous cycle."

Rift used to retail for \$599



An attendee tries the Oculus VR Inc. Rift Development Kit 2 (DK2) headset at the 2014 Electronic Entertainment Expo, known as E3, in Los Angeles, California, US, in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

on its own, while Touch sold for \$199. Rival virtual reality company Vive, a unit of HTC Corp, said it would not match Oculus on price and would not change its "strategy of delivering the best and most comprehensive VR product." Its system is listed at \$799 on its website.

"We don't feel the need to cut the price of Vive, as we've had incredible success, and continue to see great momentum in market," Vive spokesman Patrick Seybold said in a statement.

Sony Corp joined the race for virtual reality dominance in October with a \$399 headset, the PlayStation VR, which was the company's first major product launch since it emerged from years of restructuring.—Reuters

Yahoo says about 32 million accounts accessed using 'forged cookies'

NEW YORK — Yahoo Inc (YHOO.O), which disclosed two massive data breaches last year, said on Wednesday that about 32 million user accounts were accessed by intruders in the last two years using forged cookies.

The company said some of the latest intrusions can be connected to the "same state-sponsored actor believed to be responsible for the 2014 breach", in which at least 500 million accounts were affected.

"Based on the investigation, we believe an unauthorized third

party accessed the company's proprietary code to learn how to forge certain cookies," Yahoo said in its latest annual filing.

These cookies have been invalidated so they cannot be used to access user accounts, the company said.

Forged cookies allow an intruder to access a user's account without a password.

Yahoo also said in December that data from more than 1 billion user accounts was compromised in August 2013, making it the largest breach in history.

The company said on Wednesday that it would not award Chief Executive Marissa Mayer a cash bonus for 2016, following the independent committee's findings related to the 2014 security incident. Mayer has also offered to forgo any 2017 annual equity award as the breaches occurred during her tenure, Yahoo said. Last month, Verizon Communications Inc (VZ.N), which is in the process of buying Yahoo's core assets, lowered its original offer by \$350 million to \$4.48 billion.—Reuters

Musk says Tesla to run contest for homemade commercials

NEW YORK — Elon Musk, an active Twitter user, has been Tesla's mouthpiece to the public, informing them about the electric car maker's upcoming products and plans.

On Wednesday, in response to a letter by a fifth grade student, the founder and chief executive of Tesla made another announcement on the social media platform - the company will hold a contest for homemade advertisements.

Bria, daughter of Twitter user Steven, suggested that Musk should run a competition to find the best homemade commercial for Tesla, which has been averse to commercials. "Thank you for

the lovely letter. That sounds like a great idea. We'll do it!" Musk responded to the letter in a tweet.

Bria, who aspires to be a politician, wrote in the letter that Tesla cars were the "best thing" she had ever seen and that she hoped to drive a Tesla car in the future.

"You could give the winners a year of free Supercharging or a Model 3 Easter Egg or something," Bria suggested in the letter, which was written for a school project. "The cool part is that you still won't be taking the time and money to advertise for yourself," she wrote, adding "it would be so cool if you could hook me up with a Tesla t-shirt."



Founder and CEO of Tesla Motors Elon Musk speaks during a media tour of the Tesla Gigafactory, which will produce batteries for the electric carmaker, in Sparks, Nevada, US, on 26 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

She also expressed her disappointment over Tesla cars not being sold in Michigan. Steven, who shared the letter, is a journalist and a professor at Art Institute of Michigan, his Twitter account showed.—Reuters

LOCAL Business

Slaughterhouses, cold storage to be built as part of livestock farming

SLAUGHTERHOUSES and cold storage units will be built in livestock farming so as to process the raw meat to export to the foreign countries, it is learnt from a breeders' association of buffalo, ox, sheep and goat.

Currently, the animals alive are shipped to abroad, causing the exporters to face with difficulties. The plan of the construction of slaughterhouses and cold storages aims to cover the high cost and solve the problem.

"The transport of live animals is difficult due to the policies of the region and state government, despite the fact that the Union government has already given a green light for land crossings. After the cold storages and slaughterhouses are built, finished products can be exported to the international market," said U Ko Ko Aung from the breeder's association.

"In order to meet the international criteria for the construction of slaughterhouses and cold storage units, joint ventures will be established with foreign experts. We will join hands with them," he continued.

The locations of the slaughterhouses and cold storages will be at least two miles away from houses or religious buildings.



Workers process fish at a seafood factory in Hlaingthaya Industrial Zone, outside Yangon. PHOTO: REUTERS

The breeder's association will make sure not to harm domestic distributors working under a licence (C) granted by the City Development Committee, stating that the processed meat from their cold storages will be mainly exported to foreign markets, it is learnt.

The infrastructure will be

self-conducted and they will explore the virgin and vacant land for construction.

This plan will be implemented simultaneously in Yangon, Magway, Sagaing and Mandalay Regions this year. A canning factory will also be built for the export market, it is learnt.

There are 16.772 million

oxen, 3.695 million buffaloes, 19.06 million sheep and goats, 17.015 million pigs, 306.531 million chickens, 24.503 million ducks and turkeys and 2.106 million quails in Myanmar, according to 2016 statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Local tilapia production can't meet US demand

THERE is still not enough tilapia in Myanmar to meet US demand. Although America demanded over 400 tilapia containers per year, local production cannot produce such amounts, according to Myanmar Fishery Federation.

"The US demanded over 400 tilapia containers at the Boston Seafood exhibition. But we cannot supply that amount of tilapia," said Dr. Myint Sein, Deputy Chairman from Myanmar Fishery Federation. "We don't have enough quality small tilapia to export to the US, he added. "To develop the water sectors, we need to promote the breeding sector rather than the natural catching sector. We also need to assistance from the government to export the fish produce abroad, according to the fishery enterprise.

Although our fishery products have an international market to export abroad, we have some difficulties in the breeding sector," said Dr. Kyaw Tun Myint, Chairman of the Myanmar shrimps Association.

Myanmar exports the fishery products as fish, shrimps, fish paste, dry fish to the abroad amounting to only US\$ 500 million per year.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Location of zones with three to seven-year tax break released

THE locations of the zones with a three-to-seven-year exemption of income tax on the basis of the region and state's development were released by Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

In a bid to attract more investors to Myanmar, MIC set up three different zones in which the entrepreneurs will enjoy the benefits of tax exemption for a period of three to seven years. The zones are located in: the places which are still

weak in development, as zone 1; places which are fairly well developed, as zone 2; and places which are well developed, as zone 3, according to an announcement of MIC with the approval of the Union Government.

Zone 1, the areas that are least developed, include 14 townships from Kachin State, seven townships in Kayah State, seven townships in Kayin State, nine townships in Chin State, 34 townships in

Sagaing Region, four townships in Taninthayi Region, five townships in Bago Region, 13 townships in Magway Region, 10 townships in Ayeyawady region, two townships in Mandalay Region, two townships in Mon State, 17 townships in Rakhine State and 42 townships in Shan State.

The areas that are fairly well developed, designated as zone 2 areas, are four townships in Kachin State, three townships in Sagaing

Region, seven townships in Taninthayi Region, 23 townships in Bago Region, 12 townships in Magway Region, 13 townships in Mandalay Region, eight townships in Mon State, 13 townships in Yangon Region, 14 townships in Shan State, 17 townships in Ayeyawady Region and eight townships in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

The developed areas designated as zone 3 are 14 townships in Mandalay Region and 32 town-

ships in Yangon Region.

The zone 1 is granted tax holidays of seven consecutive years whereas the investors in zone 2 can enjoy tax exemption in the five straight years and zone 3 will have three consecutive year tax break, it is learnt.

The zones areas can be fixed by MIC depending on the region and state development and needs under the approval of the Union Government.—*Ko Khant*

Global gold price affects domestic price

WITH the steep decline in the global gold price of over US\$10 per ounce on 1st March, the domestic gold price slumped by Ks897,000 per tical, according to the local gold market.

The gold price fell to US\$1,251 on 28th Feb per ounce from US\$1,257.40 on 27th Feb and then remained on the decline with about US\$1,242 per ounce on 1st March, which affected the domestic gold market.

When the global gold price jumped on 24th Feb, the domestic gold price soared to a record high of Ks903,500 per tical on 27th Feb.

In early March, the exchange rate of the greenback dropped to Ks1,360 a dollar in the domestic currency exchange market.

The exchange rates for a US dollar declined from Ks1,368 to Ks1,360 from 20th Feb to

1st March. The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) set the exchange rate at Ks1,357 per dollar in keeping with the drop in external exchange market. The CBM set the exchange rate at Ks1,360 a dollar from 21st to 28th Feb.

The US dollar exchange rate hit its highest rate of Ks1,438 on 16th Dec and the lowest rate of 1,348 on 16th Jan, it is learnt.—*Ko Htet*



A staff shows gold bracelets to customers in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Abe welcomes Trump's plan to increase US defence spending



At the House of Councillors Budget Committee in Tokyo on 2 March 2017, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe responds to questions over a controversial cut-price sale of state-owned land to a nationalistic school operator.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe welcomed Thursday US President Donald Trump's plan to call for an "unprecedented" increase in defence spending.

"Strengthening the Japan-US alliance through the increase (in defence spending) will be positive for the peace and prosperity of not only Japan and the United States but also the Asia-Pacific region," Abe said.

"Mr. Trump has an-

nounced that the United States will have enough military power to firmly ensure its presence in the Asia-Pacific region," Abe said in a House of Representatives Budget Committee session.

In his first address to Congress since taking office on 20 January on Tuesday, Trump vowed to rebuild the US armed forces, saying his budget blueprint for the next budget year starting in October will call for an unprecedented level of increase in defence spending.

The president made the pledge a day after the White House unveiled the first details of Trump's budget plan featuring a \$54 billion, or 10 per cent, expansion in defense spending from the level in the current budget year.—Kyodo News

Cambodia's main opposition party gets new chief after Rainsy leaves

PHNOM PENH — Kem Sokha, vice president of the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), was elected as the party's president on Thursday after the self-exiled incumbent, Sam Rainsy stepped down last month.

"The CNRP's extraordinary congress had unanimously elected Kem Sokha as the party's president by raising hands," CNRP's spokesman Yim Sovann said after the votes.

The congress was held at the party's headquarters on the southern outskirts of Phnom Penh with the participation of some 1,100 members. Kem Sokha, 63, had been the CNRP's sole vice president since his Human Rights Party merged with Sam Rainsy's eponymous party in 2012 to form the CNRP.

According to Yim Sovann, the congress also

elected three party senior members — steering committee chief Pol Ham, executive committee deputy chief Eng Chhay Eang and public affairs director Mu Sochua — as the party vice-presidents. The term for the party's president and vice presidents is five years.

The leadership reshuffle was prompted by the resignation of CNRP's long-serving president Sam Rainsy on 11 February.

Rainsy, 68, who has lived in self-exile in France since November 2015 to avoid a seven-year imprisonment for defamation and incitement cases, stepped down as the party's president just days after Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen proposed the National Assembly to amend the Law on Political Parties to ban convicts from serving as president of a party.

On 20 February, the

prime minister's ruling party-controlled National Assembly amended the legislation which bars convicted politicians from leading a political party and empowers the Supreme Court to dissolve any political party over the conviction of a party top official. A prominent political analyst said that the CNRP's leadership reshuffle has little influence on the decision of the voters in the upcoming commune election in June 2017 and the general election in July 2018. "The support base of CNRP depends on the people's assessment of the reforms being carried out by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Therefore, the CNRP's leadership has minimal impact on the decision of the voters," Chheang Vannarith, chairman of the Cambodian Institute for Strategic Studies, told Xinhua.—Xinhua

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Nepal banishes old vehicles from Kathmandu's streets to fight smog

KATHMANDU — Nepal has forced 2,500 old vehicles off roads in its capital city of Kathmandu, part of a fight against alarming air pollution levels that have hit nine times World Health Organisation (WHO) limits. Air pollution has been a chronic problem in rapidly growing Kathmandu, which sits in a Himalayan valley and is home to more than three million people. Rising public anger with the smog is turning into a headache for a beleaguered government headed by former Maoist rebels.

Dust from road works, exhaust from old, poorly maintained vehicles and smoke from coal-burning brick kilns blend in a murky haze that hangs over the ancient city, raising the risk of cancer, stroke, asthma and high blood pressure, experts say.

Officials hope the ban on vehicles more than 20 years old will be a step towards a cleaner future.

"The old vehicle ban will help improve air quality and ease traffic congestion," Transport Department official Tok Raj Pandey said on Wednesday.



A woman covers herself as she walks along a dusty road in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 27 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

State-run monopoly Nepal Oil Corporation has said it will distribute more environment-friendly fuel, which meets Euro 4 emissions standards from next month.

But activists say the government must do more, including enforcing stricter emission standards for new vehicles, as well as switching to cleaner transport.

Levels of PM2.5, fine particulate matter that can reach deep into the lungs, rose to 89.7 micrograms per cubic metre at noon on

Wednesday in the tourist district of Patan, the Department of Environment said.

That compares with a WHO guideline of an annual average of 10 micrograms per cubic metre.

"It is a very serious problem, which poses a threat to people's health," said Khem Bahadur Karki, head of state-run Nepal Health Research Council.

"Around 30 per cent of respiratory illnesses are contributed by outdoor air pollution," Karki said, re-

ferring to a recent council study.

Activists cite a WHO estimate that outdoor air pollution causes nearly 10,000 deaths in Nepal every year, a bigger toll than a devastating 2015 earthquake.

"The pollution is disgusting and shameful," said Ananda Prasad Bhattarai, a 35-year-old teacher, wearing a face mask as he walked through clouds of traffic fumes.

"I don't think the government cares."—Reuters

Emperor meets Vietnamese families of WWII Japanese soldiers

HANOI — Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko met Thursday in Hanoi with Vietnamese women who married Japanese soldiers deployed in Southeast Asia during World War II.

The meeting with surviving wives and children of Japanese war veterans was part of the imperial couple's efforts to soothe some of the wounds from the war. The Vietnamese family members faced discrimination and other hardships after the soldiers returned home.

The emperor, 83, and empress, 82, began their first visit to Vietnam on Tuesday to promote goodwill. They are scheduled to stay until Sunday, when they will travel from the ancient city of Hue to Thailand.

Prior to the meeting with Vietnamese families of former Japanese soldiers, the couple visited Van Mieu, Hanoi's ancient temple of literature, and met with Vietnamese who have studied in Japan or plan on becoming nursing care workers in the country under a bilateral economic partnership agreement.

"What made you take an interest in Japan?" the emperor asked one Vietnamese who has studied in Japan. He also expressed gratitude to those seeking to become nursing care givers in Japan, citing the country's shortage of care workers.

On Thursday night, the em-



Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko meet with family members of Japanese veterans living in Vietnam, at a hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 2 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

peror and empress are scheduled to meet Nguyen Duc, a Vietnamese man who was born conjoined with a twin, apparently due to the aftereffects of the defoliant Agent Orange used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

Japan invaded French Indochina, part of which is now Vietnam, in 1940 during World War II.

Of the Japanese troops deployed there, an estimated 600 remained after Japan's surrender in August 1945 and joined the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, a key figure in the foundation of the country. They fought against France's attempt at recolonization in the First Indochina War between 1946 and 1954.

About half of these soldiers

are believed to have died due to disease or combat.

Many of the Japanese soldiers married local women and had children but the men were not allowed to bring their families to Japan when many of them returned home after the end of the First Indochina War.

The number of their children

is estimated at several hundred and many of them faced discrimination because of their ethnic background.

One such surviving Vietnamese wife is Nguyen Thi Xuan, 93, who now lives in the outskirts of Hanoi.

She met her Japanese husband during World War II. She recalled him asking her if she had a boyfriend. "He was very gentlemanly," she said in a recent interview with Kyodo News.

The two got married in 1945 and the Japanese husband joined the war against France, prompting the family to move around northern Vietnam. One of their four children died at the age of 7 months.

The husband left Vietnam in 1954 due to Vietnamese "government policy," saying that if he was not back within a year he might not be able to return, Xuan said. She was not able to ascertain his whereabouts. "I believed he would return. I was so young," she said.

Xuan said she did everything to raise her three children, including working in a market and farming. In 2005, she suddenly received a letter from her husband apologizing for his failure to return to Vietnam and expressing gratitude to her for raising their children. He visited Xuan the following year with a Japanese woman he had married, their first reunion in half a century.—Reuters

Scores of detained asylum seekers take Australian cash and return home

SYDNEY — Dozens of asylum seekers held in a detention centre in Papua New Guinea have elected to accept cash from Australia to return to their home countries, officials and refugees said, the largest exodus from the South Pacific camp in four years.

Australia has ratcheted up efforts to clear the Manus Island detention centre of people who have twice had their refugee claims rejected, amid fears a deal for the United States to take refugees has fallen through. Reuters reported late last month that asylum seekers were being repeatedly called to meet with Australian officials and pressured to take amounts of up to \$25,000 to return to their home countries or face deportation.

As legal attempts to halt the threat of deportation stall, as many 29 men, all of whom have spent four years in detention, have elected to leave in the last few weeks, sources familiar with the situation told Reuters.

A group of nine Nepalese men will depart PNG on Friday, one source said. One source told Reuters approximately 14 detainees have asked the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate their transfer home. Refugees on Manus Island said a further 15 have not used the IOM to return home.

"There is a growing thought

that it is better to move on and get on with our lives rather than hang onto some false hope," an official Australian source told Reuters, who declined to be named.

"We haven't seen as many people leave since the first year of the camp being reopened in late 2012."

Offering money to failed asylum seekers to return home is not illegal, however, the sums being offered have more than doubled since a year ago and are far above the funds being offered elsewhere. Germany has announced plans to offer up to 1,200 euros (1,028 pounds) to asylum seekers to return home. After four years in detention in conditions widely criticised by organisations such as the United Nations many of the detainees are

suffering mental health issues.

The Papua New Guinea Supreme Court last year ruled the Manus Island centre breached human rights, was illegal and must close.

Voluntary returns of failed refugees will ease criticism of Australia and its policy of indefinite detention for anyone who attempts to make it to Australia by boat. But finding a solution for the refugees on Manus Island, the bulk of the more than 800 men held in PNG, will prove more difficult.

The United States has agreed to resettle up 1,250 men, woman and children on Manus Island and Nauru, though security interviews have stalled, hinting Washington may lean towards revoking on the deal.—Reuters



Detainees walk around the compound near a stack of water bottles inside the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea, on 11 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Viet Nam suspends imports of five agricultural items from India

HANOI — Viet Nam will suspend import of five agricultural commodities from India due to high risk of *Caryedon serratus* (Olivier) infection, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

The decision was made after the MARD found that the products are likely to be contaminated with the insect which is subject to Viet Nam's plant quarantine, reported *Tien Phong (Pioneer)* newspaper on Thursday. The suspension will take effect in 60 days since Wednesday. The five items included peanuts, cassia seeds,

cocoa seeds, French bean seeds and tamarind. The MARD's Plant Protection Department is urged to closely supervise the import of the above-mentioned products during the time as well as notify Indian relevant agencies of the issue for thorough remedies.

In 2016, Viet Nam detected over 3,000 tons of peanuts and 24 tons of tamarind of Indian origin infected with living Oliver insect. Since the beginning of 2017, Viet Nam has found other 380 tons of contaminated peanuts imported from the South Asian country, said the ministry.—Xinhua

Malaysia to release DPRK suspect in airport killing

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's attorney general said on Thursday that a Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) man, who was arrested as a suspect following the airport killing, will be released and deported.

Ri Jong Chol, the 47-year-old DPRK man who worked at a local anti-cancer drug company in Malaysia, was arrested by the police on 17 February for suspected involvement in the airport case, in which a DPRK man with the passport name of "Kim Chol" was poisoned with lethal VX nerve agent. Ri was remanded for

two weeks in police custody. The remand will expire on Friday.

Malaysia's Attorney-General Mohamed Apandi Ali did not elaborate on the reasons of the release, but local media said it was due to a lack of evidence. During the investigation, the police did not reveal the connections between him and four other suspects believed to have fled the country. On Wednesday, the two female suspects who carried out the attack, one from Indonesia and one Vietnamese, were charged with murder. If convicted, the two will face death sentence.—Xinhua

Opinion

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

School-age children on streets and child-laborers paid for a song!

Khin Maung Oo

THE old academic year is coming to an end, and nearly all examinations except BEHS exams have finished. Breathing a huge sigh of relief, parents can now let their children relax a bit and allow them to be free from the great burden of academic learning and all-year exhaustion with school lessons. Some parents have arranged to send their children to monastic summer youth centers popularly known as "Dhamma schools" for learning Buddhist scriptures and character development training. Some children go to summer resort camps or overseas summer trips. These days, most children are going about the town in twos or threes, especially teens may be seen to gather at game-shops or simply wander about. Whatever it is, they seem to lack worries and woes, shown by their smiling faces and loud voices. Meanwhile, ambitious parents, whose aims

are for their children to have brighter careers, have arranged for their children to prepare for the new academic year, after taking an adequate amount of leisure time. Generally speaking, their futures appear to be smooth and pleasant. For parents and children, recreation, relaxation and happiness will always follow hard work and all kinds of stress encountered during the examination season. These children may one day become doctors, engineers, professors, captains, majors, colonels and department heads. Oh, what a colorful edifice of hope!

On the other side of the above scenario however, there are many school-age children and underage laborers going about the town and working at various places. They are also teens, but they cannot go to school for a variety of reasons. Though being immature, they have to support their parents with the meager

amount of income that they earn by working at road-side stalls, in cafes and at market-places. Their hearts are tender, but their lives are difficult and rough. Just like the children from upper society, they too want peace, happiness and hopes. They surely would like to learn at schools. Yet, the idea of becoming a doctor or an engineer may never appear in their minds, not even in their dreams. Who dare say they will never ever get to higher posts, even if they get the opportunity to learn. Provided that they can be well trained and their abilities be raised, they can become precious jewels for future Myanmar. It is learnt that some children have gone astray while searching for a way to get out of their hard lives. Some wealthy children became drug-addicts whereas some poor children because of peer-group pressure became glue sniffers. Some of these

tender minds became merciless and cruel ones. In fact, such situations are very sorrowful and regrettable for us.

What is worse than that, many of our national ethnic children are being displaced by armed conflicts, not to mention the matter of getting the opportunity to study at schools. As long as these armed conflicts exist in their regions, they cannot enjoy the fruits of the National Education Strategic Plan. If these children get the opportunity to learn at schools in their peaceful regions, they can become leaders who can lead the country to peace and stability. To sum up, let us take part in the campaign, "National Education Strategic Plan," launched by the Union government so that our school-age children and child-laborers working for cheap wages can get opportunities for attending school.

Is Hsa Lein, “ဆလိန်” going to disappear from our youths’ lips?

Khin Maung Oo

Continue from 2-3-2017

You will come to notice that “aspirate—h” is added to the above-said Myanmar aspirated consonants, they will change into un-aspirated ones. What is more interesting is that aspirated verbs are found to be active and un-aspirated ones are passive. To make it clear, let me point out a few verbs. Such verbs as “ချိုး/break” “နွဲ့/break” “ချက်/cook” “ချုပ်/sew or stitch” “ခေါက်/fold” “ချောက်/frighten” beginning with aspirated consonant “ခ/kha; “ဆုတ်/tear” “ချော့/grasp” “ဆွဲ/pull” “ဆန့်/stretch” beginning with aspirated consonant “ဆ/hsa”; “ဖျက်-ဖြို/destroy” “ဖွင့်/open” “ဖြန့်/spread/deliver” “ဖြဲ/tear” “ဖျော့/lose/kill” beginning with aspirated consonant “ဖ/pha” are active. Contrariwise, such verbs as ကွက်-ကြောက်-ခုတ်-စန့်-ပျက်-ဖြို-ပွင့်-ဖြန့်-ဖြဲ-ပျောက် beginning with un-aspirated consonants “ka/sa/pa are passive ones, meaning “Is broken/ cooked/ torn/

spread/ destroyed/ opened/ spread/ torn/ lost respectively.

According to history of Korean language, we learnt that Sejong the Great (15 May 1397 – 8 April 1450, the fourth king of Joseon dynasty Korea, created the Korean alphabet. Though we cannot say exactly who created Myanmar alphabet, all researchers who have studied the origin and development of the Myanmar script claimed that its source was the Brahmi script which flourished in India from about 500 B. C. to over 300 A. D. The relationship of similarity between characters and letters forms suggests that there is no denying that Myanmar script had its source in Brahmi. The earliest Myanmar writing is from the Bagan period of the 11th and 12th centuries. Now I am highlighting these so as to convince our Myanmar youths that our well-established Myanmar language is a national heritage gained through our fore-fathers’ arduous effort. We all, including authorities,

scholars, writers, mass media and Myanmarsar lovers urgently need to persuade the youths to learn to admire the prestigious language, and not to follow suit wrongly.

I am a Myanmar language lover and I write a considerable amount of writing in English. But, I admit that I am not the master of the languages. Ironically enough, a phonetics illiterate has been urging the young minds to promote our country’s national heritage to the best of their caliber at their turn. As a lay man holding conventional views, I would not like to see our mother tongue deteriorating. Students across the world including our country have been taking exams such as TOEFL, IELTS, SAT and so on, by paying much money every year. It can be said that they are making us follow their rules. Much as we are learning foreign languages, every individual need learn to love our mother tongue. At least, we must be mindful of our respon-

sibilities to keep our language intact. In learning foreign languages, our teachers always tell us to lay emphasis on spelling and pronunciation. Nowadays Myanmar-Myanmar dictionaries are available everywhere. We should have a Myanmar spelling dictionary and a Myanmar-Myanmar dictionary within our reach so that we can consult at any time. As an ordinary being, I feel that we will never find it difficult as much as teaching a flower seller with a thick cockney accent to get the flow of upper-class society, to teach Myanmar students and youths how to properly articulate Myanmar words and Myanmar aspirated sounds. Would that enthusiastic teachers like Professor Henry Higgins in the famous musical film, My Fair Lady, would emerge in our country to launch a campaign for protecting our Myanmar Language from deterioration. Myanmar abounds with many scholars and learned men. I humbly request all my respect-

ed persons to educate the young generation through class-rooms and mass-media to other than take our Myanmarsar for granted.

Then, it is just a matter of time before facebook users cease to write corrupted Myanmar words. I beg your pardon in case there included a mistake in my writing, as I did it out of Cetana and in all simplicity.

Last but not least, I am a dilettante, but not a scholar. As for authorities concerned and Myanmar language professors, they should observe or make a survey as to how many youths are losing the pronunciation “ဆလိန်” from their lips, by asking students and youths in their vicinity.

They will answer ကျောင်းဆရာ for ကျောင်းဆရာ, စုတ်ဖြဲ for ဆုတ်ဖြဲ, စန့်ကျင် for ဆန့်ကျင်, စန့်ရေ for ဆန့်ရေ, စန့်တက် for ဆန့်တက်. If my claim is regarded to be a problem to be urgently cured, let us take part in the campaign for teaching our youths how to articulate “ဆလိန်.”

3MDG Fund plans to hand over 17 new rural health centres to MoHS in May

TO IMPROVE public health services in hard-to-reach parts of the country, 17 more rural health centres being built by the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund will be finalised and handed over in May of this year, according to the 3MDG Fund.

Those 17 health centres have been constructed in the southern, eastern and northern parts of Shan, Kayah and Chin States and Yangon, Sagaing and Mandalay Regions.

This is part of a US\$12 million project to build 82 health facilities with onsite staff accommodations across the country under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Sports. It contributes to the government

drive towards universal health coverage to ensure that everyone can access the healthcare they need without causing financial hardship.

The rural and sub-rural health centres are financed by 3MDG's donors and designed and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

The 3MDG Fund officially handed over 15 new health centres in Ayeyawady Region to the Ministry of Health and Sports on 27 February to increase access to services for some of the hardest-to-reach people in the country.

The centres will serve all community health needs, with a particular focus on maternal,

newborn and child health care. The effort will aid in reducing the dangers of childbirth; the number of deaths among women and babies in delivery is currently higher in rural areas than in urban settings.

The centres include areas for childbirth, emergency and waiting rooms, examination rooms, water tanks, incinerator and placenta pit, onsite accommodation for staff, and drug storage facilities. In addition, many sites have environmentally sustainable solar panels, making sure that power is available in emergency situations.

Depending on their size, the centres can treat up to 50 patients a day.—GNLM

Ancient gold-coloured coins found in Rakhine State



Coins found by a resident in Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State in early February.

PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

OVER 40 gold-coloured coins with different designs have recently been discovered by a local woman in Kyaukpyu Township in Rakhine State, according to residents.

Daw Ma Shwe Kyi found 41 coins buried in the ground while she was digging the soil to collect white yams around Theiktaunggyi Mountain near Kanpyinsu Ward in Sanae Town in February. Her spouse, U Maung Khin Shwe, thinks that the coins were made from the time of the Arakanese Kingdom, as he found words written in the Arakanese language on the surface of the coins. The couple wishes to give the coins to the Department of Archaeology National Museum and Library

in MraukU Township to see if they could receive an appropriate amount of money for them.

U San Tun Shwe, a town elder, shared his knowledge of history and said some Arakanese concealed their valuables such as gold jewelry, coins and Buddha statues in the earth when they abandoned their residences during battles in 1784, when the Arakanese Kingdom was conquered by the Bodaw U Waing, the sixth king of the Konbaung Dynasty of Myanmar, after which Rakhine became part of the Konbaung kingdom of Myanmar.

Arakan has a 5,000-year-old language and a rich culture, the elderly added.—Myitmakha News Agency

SSCFM forum held in Mandalay to become smart city

A FORUM hosted by Smart & Sustainable Cities France-Myanmar (SSCFM) was held on Wednesday to further develop the city of Mandalay. The forum was jointly held by the Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC) and French authorities.

The forum held at Hotel Marvel Mandalay was attended by French officials, businessmen and Yangon City Development Committee Mayor, Deputy Mayor, committeemen and officials.

At the forum, French officials and the MCDC discussed the building of the city.

"This forum is good for Mandalay city. We are sharing opinions and discussing future planning to become a smart city. We have some ideas from the forum to develop Mandalay City. We have planned to implement the project to develop Mandalay with the assistance of France," said U Ye Mon, Vice Mayor.

France's public transpor-

tation system shows the way to choose a commuting option for the public. Also, France has taken into account the environment, which have perfect harmony with weather conditions. "We held the forum in Mandalay to become a smart city. The forum was mainly held for Mandalay City, Mandalay Technological University, municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce Association and Mandalay Engineer Association," said U Ye Mon.—Myitmakha News Agency

Proposal to FIFA to build futsal football court at Thuwanna

THE Myanmar Football Federation will submit a proposal to Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) to build an international futsal football area in the compound of Thuwanna football stadium in Yangon.

The futsal court is targeted to be completed this year and will have a seating capacity of 5,000.

"FIFA has planned to pro-

vide a FIFA forward program to respective countries' football associations.

The futsal ground project will be submitted to the FIFA forward program. We need to have the futsal ground if we want to develop," said U Phone Naing Zaw, the executive of the Myanmar Football Federation.

The Myanmar Football Federation will also submit the pro-

posal to the Ministry of Health and Sports and they will discuss detailed plans for the futsal ground.

Futsal is a variant of football played on a hard court and mainly indoors. It is played between two teams of five players each, including a goalkeeper. The site could potentially attract international tournaments and players to Myanmar.—Myitmakha News Agency

Crime NEWS

Sittway-bound passenger vehicle catches fire; 1 dead, 4 injured

A COMMERCIAL bus travelling from Yangon to Sittway caught fire 25 miles from Ohntaechaung village in An Township, Rakhine State yesterday morning, leaving one passenger dead and three injured.

At about 6:20 am, as the Aung Pyaesone passenger vehicle reached milepost the 25 in the vicinity of Kazuukine village, an electrical short caused the vehicle to ignite while on the An-Sittway road. An Township's Fire Services Department dispatched one fire engine and local residents of Kazuukine

village helped extinguish the flames. The fire was successfully put out at about 8:15 am.

Three men and one woman suffered minor burns, while Ma Aye Aye Than, 20, from Ponnagyun Township, Dabeit village, died after becoming trapped in the burning vehicle. Of the 18 passengers onboard, 13 were male and 5 were females.

The vehicle's driver, Kaung Sett Naing, fled from the scene. Regional Police Force is opening a case to take action against him.—MPF

Illegal teaks found in the Pajero

ILLEGAL teaks were seized in a vehicle in Kutkai, Southern Shan State.

At about 10:15 am, 28 February, a combined team involving police members from Kutkai police station, Tatmadawmen and staff from the Forestry Department including the witnesses stopped and searched a Pajero vehicle, vehicle no.7C/xxxx enroute from Lashio to Muse near the Oriental toll gate in Kutkai

Township.

The driver, Thein Htike, from Ywarthitkaly village, PyinOoLwin Township was seized with 9 illegal close grained teaks 0.5442 tonnes in that vehicle. The owner of these teaks is U Bo Gyi from Mandalay according to the inspection.

The two suspects were charged with the public property protection law by Kutkai police station.—Myanmar Police Force

Illegal teaks seized in Kani

ILLEGAL timber logs weighing over one tonne was seized in western Muhtaw west village, Kani Township, Sagaing Region on Tuesday.

A combined team involving local police members from Kani police station and staff from the Forest Department including the

witnesses searched the house of U Nyunt Win, 42, in Muhtaw village at 3:15 pm on that day and found 12 blocks of timber logs weighing 1.5812 tonnes.

The suspect has been charged with the public property protection law by Kani police station.—Myanmar Police Force



Officials of Forest Department inspect illegal timber logs. PHOTO: MPF

Former head of ten-household found dead in northern Rakhine

THE body of an ex-head of ten-household from Kyeekanpyin Village (South) in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State was found dead yesterday morning and classified by police as a murder.

Nur Kiryin, 35, son of Zarfok Arlong, was taken away by four masked men at 12 pm on 1 March.

Zarfok Arlong searched for

his son and discovered his body with many injuries at around 6 am.

The case was handed over to Pyinphyu Police Station under Border Guard Police Headquarters No. 2.

The body was sent to People's Hospital in Maungtaw Township by police officials. A murder investigation is ongoing.—Myanmar News Agency

UK PM May clear she wants Brexit bill unchanged by parliament: spokesman

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May has been clear that the legislation needed for her to trigger formal divorce talks with the European Union should be passed by parliament unamended, her spokesman said on Thursday.

Parliament's upper house inflicted a defeat on the government on Wednesday, voting for a change to her Brexit plan that says she can only trigger Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty if she promises to protect the rights of EU citizens living in Britain.

May has said she wants to guarantee EU citizens' rights and hopes this can be resolved as a priority once the negotiations begin, but she does not want to

do so until other member states agreed to a reciprocal deal for Britons abroad.

The government hopes to overturn the changes when the legislation returns to the lower house of parliament, which last month passed the bill with no amendments.

"The prime minister has made clear her intention that the bill should be passed unamended," her spokesman told reporters. "MPs (members of the lower house) have already voted it through unamended at the first stage so we expect that to be the case again."

The upper house, the House of Lords, will debate further possible changes to the legislation

on 7 March. The bill will then return to the lower house, the House of Commons, most likely in the week of 13 March.

The spokesman said the prime minister was committed to her plan to trigger divorce talks by the end of March and said the Lords vote would not have any impact on that.

The opposition Liberal Democrat leader in the Lords agreed. "This bill will go through, there has never been any question about it going through," Dick Newby told Sky News.

"I think the Lords collectively will back off," he said. "The idea that ... this somehow jeopardizes the 31 March deadline is complete baloney." —Reuters

Trump's immigration opening falls flat with key audience — Democrats



US President Donald Trump delivers his first address to a joint session of Congress from the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington, US, on 28 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's signal of a new openness to immigration reform in a speech to the US Congress did little to win over Democrats who would be essential to re-vamping the nation's immigration laws.

Any goodwill Trump may have sparked with his mention of a chance for "real and positive immigration reform" in Tuesday's speech, his first to a joint session of Congress, was soon dashed by rhetoric that Democrats said tarred and misrepresented most immigrants.

"The speech he gave was one of the most anti-immigrant speeches that we heard any president ever give," Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer said on Wednesday.

What offended Democrats,

a minority in both chambers, was Trump's reference to past incidents in which one illegal immigrant "viciously gunned down" two California law enforcement officers and another "viciously murdered" a 17-year-old boy.

Trump built a base of support for his 2016 presidential campaign by vowing to fight illegal immigration, including a pledge to build a wall on the US-Mexico border. On becoming president in January, he immediately issued a temporary visa ban against seven Muslim-majority countries, later blocked by federal courts. He also suspended a refugee programme and initiated tougher deportation procedures.

Major immigration reform efforts failed in Congress under

Trump's predecessors, Democratic President Barack Obama and Republican George W. Bush, because of deep divisions among lawmakers and Americans over the issue.

The challenges include how to protect illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children, and how to deal long-term with the estimated 11 million people living in the country without proper documentation.

Legislation putting illegal immigrants in line for citizenship threatens to alienate Trump's core conservative voters.

Trump said in his speech that reform was possible if both Democrats and Republicans were willing to compromise. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Two geologists killed in Northern Thailand as land caves in

BANGKOK — Two geologists were killed due to the collapsing of land in a water tunnel in northern Thailand on Thursday.

The deceased, identified as Prachayawat Wasu-anant, 24, and Prathomporn Siriwat, 24, were surveying the construction site of the tunnel in Mae Taeng district of Chiang Mai province, about 700 kilometers north of the Thai capital, when the land just above the young geologists suddenly caved in, piled upon them and killed them, said Pairin Limcharoen, head of the branch office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation in the northern province.

Both geologists were employed by Italian-Thai Development Corp., the contractor for the construction of the 10-kilometer-long tunnel in which gigantic pipes will be laid to carry water from one dam to another. —Xinhua

Approval for half a billion dollar wind farm granted in Australia

SYDNEY — The Queensland government has granted environmental approval on Thursday for largest wind farm project in the state.

At a cost of 500 million Australian dollars (383 million US dollars), Australian Gas and Lighting (AGL) has passed the first hurdle of their 460 megawatt development, expected to power the homes of 240,000 residents.

The company will now have their development application scrutinised by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. If successful, the Coopers Gap wind farm, located in the Southern Queensland, is predicted to reduce carbon emissions by 1.1 million tons per year. AGL expects the project to be operational by 2020. —Xinhua

South Korea, US vow to strengthen cooperation on North Korea sanctions

SEOUL — South Korea's Finance Minister Yoo Il Ho and US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday agreed to strengthen the two countries' cooperative stance in enforcing financial sanctions on North Korea, according to South Korea's Ministry of Strategy and Finance.

During their first phone conversation since Mnuchin took office in mid-February, the two ministers also reaffirmed that the countries will continue to closely cooperate in the field of economy and banking.

"The two finance ministers expressed serious concerns over North Korea's recent test-firing of an additional missile," the ministry said in a statement. —Kyodo News

Oil pumping from Iraq's Kirkuk fields stops as Kurdish forces search for explosives

BAGHDAD — Oil pumping from Iraq's northern Kirkuk fields stopped on Thursday after Kurdish forces were deployed in the area to search for explosives said to have been planted by Islamic State, sources from the Kurdish security forces and oil executives said.

"They ordered the shutdown of the pumping station for security reasons and that caused a halt of Kirkuk oil exports to Turkey," through a pipeline that crosses Kurdish territory, a senior executive from the state-run North Oil Company said.

The executive was referring to Kurdish security forces who have controlled the area since 2014, when the Iraqi army withdrew in the face of Islamic State's advance. A Kurdish security officer confirmed taking control of the oil pumping station.

The Kirkuk fields were pumping around 120,000 barrels per day in the pipeline before the shutdown, the oil executive said. —Reuters

Driver dies after car hit by train, bursts into flames at crossing

NAGOYA — A man died after a car was struck by a train before exploding in flames at a railway level crossing in Aichi Prefecture on Thursday morning, police said.

After being struck by the train, the car was slammed into a utility pole alongside the tracks. The train's first car derailed and four passengers traveling in it were transferred to hospital feeling unwell, the police said.

The car apparently entered the level crossing despite the boom gates having lowered, according to the train driver.

The six-car train carrying approximately 280 passengers on the JR Tokaido Line collided with the vehicle at around 6:55 am in the city of Anjo, in the central Japan prefecture. The railway crossing is located in a residential district between the Nishi-Okazaki and Anjo stations. —Kyodo News

385 civilians killed in violence in Iraq in February: UN

BAGHDAD — Terrorist acts, violence and armed conflicts across Iraq killed a total of 385 civilians and wounded 609 others in February, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said on Wednesday.

A UNAMI statement said that figures of casualties did not include those of the security members.

Previous figures of security members' casualties were queried by Iraqi military authorities as "inaccurate," while UNAMI responded that "the military figures were largely unverified."

February's results also excluded the casualties in Iraq's western province of Anbar, where volatility of the situation on the ground disrupted figures from there, the statement said.

The UN envoy to Iraq and the UNAMI chief Jan Kubis condemned Islamic State (IS) deliberate targeting of civilians,

while saluted the Iraqi security forces for professionalism in pursuing the terrorists while seeking to minimize civilian casualties, according to the statement.

The UNAMI statement came as the Iraqi security forces backed by anti-IS international coalition are carrying out a major offensive to drive out the IS militants from its last major stronghold in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq.

Earlier, the UNAMI said that a total of 6,878 civilians were killed and 12,388 wounded in 2016, adding that the figures did not include the civilian casualty figures for Anbar province for the months of May, July, August and December.

Iraq has witnessed intensifying violence since the IS extremist group took control of parts of its northern and western regions in June 2014. —Xinhua

Iraqi forces block Islamic State counter-attack in western Mosul — officers



An Iraqi special forces soldier fires as other soldiers run across a street during a battle in Mosul, Iraq, on 1 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

BAGHDAD — US-backed Iraqi forces advancing in the Islamic State group's stronghold in western Mosul fought off a counter-attack by the militants during bad weather in the early hours of Thursday, officers said.

Some militants were able to

get near elite Iraqi units in the southwestern part of the city, hidden among people displaced by the fighting, a senior officer told Reuters.

Iraqi forces captured the eastern side of Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting and

launched their attack on the districts that lie west of the Tigris river on 19 February.

Defeating Islamic State in Mosul would crush the Iraqi wing of the caliphate declared by the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in 2014.—Reuters

With Libya's transition paralysed, a would-be premier projects power in Tripoli

TRIPOLI — In a cluster of luxury residences that survived Tripoli's battles almost unscathed, a self-declared defender of Libya's revolution has set up base as one of three claimants to the country's premiership.

A handful of guards and two armoured white SUVs are stationed at Khalifa Ghwell's compound, and loyalists control surrounding roads with checkpoints and patrols.

Few consider Ghwell a serious contender for power. But in recent weeks the ex-prime minister has bolstered his presence at his base four km from the heart of the capital, in an increasingly brazen challenge aimed at undermining a U.N.-backed government that was meant to shepherd Libya towards peace. Six years after the NATO-backed uprising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi's over 40-year rule, Ghwell's reappearance and his ability to mobilise powerful armed support have set the capital on edge, leading to some unusually violent fighting.

They expose Libya's deep fractures and how little traction Western efforts have gained in stabilising the oil-producing desert state.

Libya remains a byword for chaos. The North African country has more than doubled oil output to 700,000 barrels per day in recent months, though this is well below the more than 1.6 million bpd it pumped before Libya's 2011 uprising.

That recovery and gains against Islamic State are fragile. The south and west are crisscrossed with smuggler routes, and armed brigades skirmish in turf wars on the streets of Tripoli.

In the capital, Prime Minister Fayez Seraj's UN-endorsed Government of National Accord (GNA) has drifted half-formed, largely unable to provide services to despairing citizens or exert authority even on its doorstep, as Libya's neighbours and Western states scramble to salvage their plan.

In the east of the country

another premier also lays claim to power from the city of Bayda, backed by a parliament that sits in Tobruk, near the border with Egypt. It won international recognition but is now largely inactive.

They are aligned to an anti-Islamist figurehead, Khalifa Haftar, who is based in the town of Marj and whose forces have long been fighting for control of the nearby city of Benghazi. Haftar has been nominating military governors and threatening to move on Tripoli, emboldened by support from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates,

and Russia.

Haftar's forces control most of Libya's oil, and cooperate with the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation despite earlier attempts by eastern factions to sell oil independently.

Divisions that flared into conflict across Libya in 2014 have not healed. Ghwell himself was installed by an Islamist-leaning alliance of former rebels that won control of Tripoli that year from groups aligned with Haftar.

Their alliance then fractured, complicating an already messy

political landscape.

Since the GNA stalled, Ghwell has been trying to rebuild his position with support from his home city of Misrata.

"What has this government achieved during this year?" Ghwell asked during a rare interview with Reuters, speaking in a wood-paneled office in a complex built by Gaddafi for favoured functionaries.

"Unfortunately the international community sees the results of their support. We thank them for their work but the result is very negative. If they persist with this, nothing will change."

In an example of the bewildering nature of the country's post-revolt politics, he says he is now in contact with the eastern-based government aligned with Haftar, trying to strike a deal over the heads of the GNA that they both oppose.

But he says if Haftar tried to seize power in the capital, he would be outgunned. "We are ready for this," Ghwell said. A year ago, Ghwell tried and failed to prevent the GNA leadership from even getting to Tripoli.

He shut down the air space over Tripoli, but was outmanoeuvred when Seraj travelled from Tunisia by ship in late March, landing at a naval base that is still his headquarters.

Ghwell accuses the GNA of trying to impose itself without popular backing, creating further layers of institutional confusion and overseeing a steady decline in living standards.—Reuters



Khalifa Ghwell, a self-declared prime minister, arrives for an interview with Reuters, in Tripoli, Libya, on 1 February, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

France's Macron targets political sleaze ahead of manifesto release



Emmanuel Macron, head of the political movement En Marche!, or Onwards!, and candidate for the 2017 French presidential election, attends a political rally in Angers, France, on 28 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — French presidential frontrunner Emmanuel

Macron said on Thursday he would ban lawmakers from employing family members and from carrying out consulting activities, seizing on his conservative rival's legal troubles to project a clean

image.

Standing as an independent centrist, Macron is tipped by opinion polls to defeat far-right leader Marine Le Pen in a run-off vote in May.

He has shot to the position of frontrunner after

conservative Francois Fillon was embroiled in a financial scandal over his wife's employment as a parliamentary assistant and summoned by a judge on Wednesday.

In an interview with *Le Parisien* newspaper published on Thursday, Macron said if elected, he would pass a law to "moralise" French politics and fight conflicts of interest.

"If we're for zero tolerance, it must be for everyone," Macron told the daily.

"There can't be zero tolerance for young people from poor neighbourhoods and indulgence towards the powerful and white-collar fraud," he said.

The 39-year old is set to unveil his full manifesto at a news conference in Paris later on Thursday.

Last week, the former

economy minister outlined a broad economic plan mixing tax cuts, a reduction in government jobs and higher investments as well as a pledge to keep France's budget deficit below 3 per cent of economic output.

Macron resigned from President Francois Hollande's Socialist government last August.

He has built up his own party machine and attracted endorsements from both the left and right of the political spectrum. In the *Le Parisien* interview, Macron also said he would seek to smooth out differences between France's 37 pension systems, would penalise companies using too many short-term contracts, and ban mobile phones in primary and secondary schools.—*Reuters*

Bolivia's Morales travels to Cuba for medical evaluation

LA PAZ, (Bolivia) — Bolivian President Evo Morales took an "emergency trip" to Cuba on Wednesday to seek treatment for a throat condition, presidential minister Rene Martinez said, adding that the president would receive a "routine evaluation."

The throat complications have been going on for "quite some time" and have caused Morales, 57, to have difficulty speaking and prompted him to cancel public appearances, Martinez told reporters.

"Per medical advice, it was decided that our president would have a routine

evaluation in Cuba," Martinez said. "Once it started getting worse, because he was having a lot of trouble speaking, this emergency trip was planned."

Morales took office in the Andean country in 2006 and was elected to a third term in 2014.

He said last year he may run for a fourth consecutive term in 2019 elections despite losing a referendum that would have reformed the country's constitution to allow him to run again.

Martinez said that within a few days, a preliminary report about Morales' health would be made public.—*Reuters*

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MANDALAY REGION GOVERNMENT MANDALAY CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MANDALAY URBAN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Invitation for Prequalification

Date: March, 2017

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Invitation of Prequalification No: MYWW/4.0/01

Contract No: MYWW/4.0

Contract Title: Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities.

1. Mandalay City Development Committee has received financing from the Asia Development Bank towards the cost of Mandalay Urban Services Improvement Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards payments under the contract for Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities.
2. Mandalay City Development Committee now invites applicants to submit sealed prequalification documents for Design, Build and Operate (DBO) of Nankad Lake Waste Water Treatment Plant and associated facilities to be constructed in calendar year 2018, 2019 and 2020 with an Operation of Maintenance Period of 3 years.
3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures as specified in the ADB's Guidelines for procurement of goods and works; the bidding documents shall be addressed only to the prequalified eligible firms following the evaluation result of the prequalification.
4. Interested firms may obtain the prequalification documents (PQD) from Project Manager, Project Management Office (MUSIP), Mandalay City Development Committee, wsdd@mandalaycity.info and acquire the prequalification documents during office hours 10:00 to 16:00 hours at the address given below.
5. A complete set of prequalification documents (PQD) in English may also be downloaded at: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/coso/mya3316-PQ-%20MYWW-4.0_Nankad%20.pdf
6. Application for prequalification must be delivered to the address below on or before local time 16:00, 28th April, 2017. Electronic application of prequalification will not be permitted. Late application will be rejected.
7. A site visit (Nankad Lake and Ket Kyaw Pumping Station) and prequalification meeting will be held tentatively from 09h00 until 12h00 on 13th March, 2017, at 26th street between 71st and 72nd street, Mandalay City Development Committee. A data room shall be opened on the same day and location from 12h00 until 16h00
8. The address referred to above para 4 and 5 are:
Attention : Project Manager
Project Management Office (MUSIP)
26th street between 71st and 72nd street
Mandalay City Development Committee
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Telephone : +95 261631
E mail : wsdd@mandalaycity.info

Britain says EU trade deal would ease Irish Brexit border riddle

BRUSSELS — Britain believes a post-Brexit free trade deal with the European Union would ease problems that its withdrawal from the EU will create on the Irish border, London's Northern Ireland minister said on Wednesday.

Speaking to Reuters after meeting EU officials and lawmakers in Brussels, James Brokenshire echoed calls from Dublin and the EU for Brexit negotiations to ensure a new EU external land border across the island of Ireland would remain "frictionless" to avoid disrupting peace in the troubled British province.

Negotiations will not start until Prime Minister Theresa May formally triggers Britain's withdrawal some time this month but Brokenshire said he had been assured of understanding in Europe of the significance of preserving a 19-year-old peace deal under which people and goods now cross unimpeded across the border.

For travellers, he stressed the importance of an arrangement between London and Dublin dating back to Irish independence nearly a century ago, and the fact that EU member Ireland is, like Britain, not in the bloc's Schengen

passport-free zone.

Asked about the potential disturbance to trade once Britain leaves the EU's single market as May has said it will do, Brokenshire said London was open to deals on the EU customs union rules that could ease the flow of goods across the island.

Were the EU to agree to British proposals of a comprehensive free trade agreement, that would address Irish economic issues:

"We're very clear on having a desire to have that free trade agreement," Brokenshire said. "I think that that is the best way to facilitate trade and business and to support the economy on the island of Ireland. That ability for businesses to be able to conduct their work in that integrated way is an important part."

But EU leaders are reluctant to agree to the sweeping free trade deal May wants if, as she also wants, Britain ceases to accept free immigration from the EU or EU judicial supervision.

Businesses on both sides of the Irish border fear disruption if EU rules apply in the south but not the north, adding to fears of a resurgence in militant violence, some of it



Britain's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire arrives for a cabinet meeting in Downing Street, London, 31 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

linked to organised crime, if physical border controls were reintroduced.

Brussels officials say they would like to start talks on the Irish issue early in negotiations but are reluctant to open talks on trade in general before London agrees to other EU demands, including settling its outstanding bills to the Union.

Brokenshire declined to comment on whether negotiations on the Irish

issue and the trade deal should be run in parallel.

Asked whether efforts to ensure an open border on Ireland could mean obstacles for people or goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, he ruled that out:

"The concept that we would creating a new border across the Irish Sea is absolutely not what we are talking about," he said.—*Reuters*

Storms that killed three in US Midwest roll east with wind, hail

CHICAGO — The remnants of tornadoes and storms that killed at least three people and destroyed homes in the US Midwest rolled across the Southeast on Wednesday, sweeping the region with hail and high winds, the National Weather Service said.

Severe thunderstorm warnings were scattered across the Southeast and wind gusts of 50 or 60 miles per hour (96 kph) were recorded as the system headed toward the Atlantic coast, said Jared Guyer, a forecaster with the Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

Although the chance of a tornado could not be ruled out, the system has lost much of the punch that kicked up a spate of twisters from Iowa to Tennessee late on Tuesday, he said.

"It's kind of the last gasp, if you will, of this multi-day round of severe weather that we've had," Guyer said. "The main thing that we're expecting from there is wind and



Pedestrians cross a street during a rain shower in New York, US, on 1 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

damaging hail." The line of thunderstorms, which included a wind gust of 78 mph (126 kph) in Quantico, Virginia, just outside Washington, cut power to tens of thousands of customers, downed trees and damaged homes, according to local officials and media reports.

As the storms rolled

east, communities were left to dig out. The National Weather Service said tornado spotters reported at least 23 twisters in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Tennessee and Indiana on Tuesday evening.

Two people were injured and falling trees damaged homes on Wednesday

in Clarksville, Tennessee, around 50 miles (80 km) northwest of Nashville, police said.

A 24-year-old man was killed near Perryville, Missouri, on Tuesday night when his vehicle was blown off a highway by high winds, authorities said.

About 90 miles (145 km) southwest of Chicago, in LaSalle County, Illinois, a man was killed by a falling tree when a tornado struck at around 5 pm on Tuesday, authorities said.

"A tornado came through and pretty well put a direct hit on the LaSalle County Nursing Home, LaSalle County Highway Department, the town of Naplate and the city of Ottawa," Sheriff Tom Templeton said at a news conference.

In the rural town of Crossville in southeastern Illinois, several homes were leveled, and one person was killed by a storm on Tuesday, Treasurer Hannah Riley said by telephone.—Reuters

37 people suspected of violating drone flight rules since late 2015

TOKYO — A total of 37 people in 36 cases were suspected of violating drone flight rules in the year after the revised Civil Aeronautics Law went into effect in late 2015, the National Police Agency said Thursday.

Of the 36 cases in which police had taken action by the end of last year, most involved unmanned flights over prohibited areas, while the rest concerned breaches of regulations on appropriate operation of drones.

The law was revised to regulate drone flights after a small drone was found on the roof of the prime minis-

ter's office in central Tokyo in April 2015. The law allows police officers to destroy drones if necessary.

The revised law was first applied in January last year against a male photographer who flew a drone over a crowded residential area in the city of Takamatsu in southwestern Japan without authorization.

Meanwhile, a separate report by the agency showed that the number of animal abuse cases reached a record 62 last year, with the number of people suspected of abusing animals hitting a record 66, the highest number since

the agency began keeping relevant data in 2010.

Dogs were targeted in 18 cases and cats in 36 cases. In one case, Tokushima police arrested a man in March last year on suspicion of violating the animal welfare law for killing a rabbit and ferret.

Police also found 62 people in 32 cases allegedly involved in food safety violations, including the sale to consumers of beef cutlets that major Japanese curry chain operator Ichibanya Co. had intended for disposal. The figure has remained almost flat since 2011.

—Kyodo News

Lightning strike at New York airport disrupts dozens of flights

NEW YORK — Dozens of flights were delayed and many were canceled after a lightning strike briefly shut down a runway at New York's LaGuardia Airport on Wednesday, officials said.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the three major airports in and around New York City, said the approach area of one of the airport's two main runways was damaged after it was hit by

lightning at 11:18 am ET. The damage was quickly repaired and the runway was reopened at 12:40 pm, it said.

LaGuardia, which serves US and Canadian cities, mostly in the eastern half of North America, continued to operate during the runway closure as all landings and takeoffs were diverted to its second runway, the Port Authority said.

The squeeze of flights onto one runway, in ad-

dition to the effects of stormy weather in New York, led to reported flight delays and cancellations.

The Federal Aviation Administration did not have an immediate estimate on the extent of the disruptions, but FlightAware, a private service that tracks global flight data, put the number of LaGuardia's delayed incoming or outgoing flights at 159 and the number of cancellations at 35.

—Reuters

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.3.2017 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 EVERGREEN SHIPPING
LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV PYIYA STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PYIYA STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.3.2017 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 CONTINENTAL SHIPPING
LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BALI VOY. NO (023)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BALI VOY. NO (023) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.3.2017 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 SILKAGO LOGISTICS PTE
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PHOTO: REUTERS

Adele may cancel fireworks on Australian tour

SYDNEY — The remainder of British pop singer Adele's Australian concert tour may not include pyrotechnics, after the performer revealed Wednesday evening, that her four-year-old son was hit in the eye with debris from fireworks leading up to her Perth show on Tuesday.

"Up until last night, we did have fireworks for you. My son was watching in the crowd... a bit of debris went in his eye so we got rid of them," she said.

Adele's tour promoters, Live Nation, along with her management group have not confirmed whether fireworks would be included for the remainder of the concerts in Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and New Zealand. But with 10 sold-out stadiums performances yet to come, it looks like Adele may have to rely on her booming voice to provide the fireworks for the tens of thousands of fans. Her son was not seriously injured.—Xinhua

Lady Gaga performs "Moth into Flame" at the 59th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, US, on 12 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS



Lady Gaga replaces pregnant Beyonce at Coachella music festival

LOS ANGELES — Lady Gaga will step in for Beyonce at this year's Coachella music festival after the R&B singer, who is pregnant with twins, dropped out of her headlining slot due to doctor's orders.

Gaga, 30, made the announcement late Tuesday on her social media pages with an image of the three-day lineup at the festival, her name at the top of the second day's schedule, accompanied by the caption, "Let's party in the desert!"

Beyonce, 35, was due to headline the annual Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival in the Southern California desert on 15 April and 22 April. She pulled out last week, saying in a statement that she was "following the advice of her doctors to keep a less rigorous schedule in the coming months."

Gaga's Coachella headlining slot follows her performance at February's Super Bowl, where she sang, danced and soared over the stage suspended on cables, delivering a flawless choreographed medley of her hits that include "Poker Face" and "Born This Way."

The singer is also due to kick off her world tour in support of her latest album "Joanne" in August.

Coachella is the first major US festival of the summer live music scene and hosts two consecutive weekends of the same line-up. Beyonce and her rapper husband Jay Z, who have a five year-old daughter Blue Ivy, have not said when the twins are due. The singer said she'll headline Coachella next year.—Reuters

'Beauty and the Beast' features Disney's first gay character

NEW YORK — Walt Disney Co's live-action adaptation of "Beauty and the Beast," one of the most anticipated movies of the year, will feature a gay character for the first time in Disney's history, according to the film's director.

Director Bill Condon said in an interview with Attitude, a British gay lifestyle magazine, that LeFou, the goofy sidekick to the film's primary villain, Gaston, will come to terms with his sexuality. The character is played by actor Josh Gad.

"LeFou is somebody who on one day wants to be Gaston and on another day wants to kiss Gaston," Condon said.

"And that's what has its payoff at the end, which I don't want to give away. But it is a nice, exclusively gay moment in a Disney movie," he told Attitude.

Social media reaction was mixed. While some people welcomed Disney's move to be more inclusive, many were disappointed with the choice of Disney's first gay character.

Twitter user Ian Miles Cheong (@stillgray) wrote: "Disney's making its first gay character with LeFou and he's a clown-



Director Bill Condon and actors Dan Stevens, Emma Watson, Luke Evans, and Josh Gad (L-R) pose for photographers on the red carpet for the film "Beauty and the Beast" in Shanghai, China, on 27 February 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

ish sidekick who exists to prop up his straight best friend. Great job."

User Jessica (@xwith-mywoes) wrote: "In regards to LeFou being Disney's first openly LGBTQ character, it is bittersweet."

Disney was not immediately available for a comment.

The remake of Disney's 1991 animated movie, starring Emma Watson and Dan Stevens, hits US theaters on 17 March. There are already hundreds of sold-out showtimes, according to movie ticketing service Fandango.

Disney shares were up 1.1 per cent at \$111.28 on Wednesday.—Reuters

Really tremendous: Trump mimic Alec Baldwin co-authors White House 'memoir'

LOS ANGELES — Actor Alec Baldwin is taking his "Saturday Night Live" impersonation of US President Donald Trump from the screen to the pages of a satirical White House memoir due for release later this year, Penguin Press said on Wednesday.

The co-authored parody political narrative "You Can't Spell America Without Me: The Really Tremendous Inside Story of My Fantastic First Year As President," by Baldwin and real-life novelist and radio host Kurt Andersen, is set to hit bookstores on 7 November, the publisher said.

Viewer ratings have soared for "Saturday Night Live," NBC's long-running weekly comedy sketch show, since Baldwin started appearing as Trump in a series of skits mocking the billionaire reality TV star turned politician in October.

The parodies, in which Baldwin portrays Trump as a dim-witted commander-in-chief with a short attention span, an oversized-ego and a Twitter addiction, have become an "SNL" staple, while also drawing the real-life ire of the Republican



Alec Baldwin. PHOTO: REUTERS

president.

Trump criticized the NBC show in December, calling it "totally unwatchable" and a "hit-job."

"He was elected because he was the most frank presidential candidate in history, a man always eager to tell the unvarnished truth about others' flaws as well as his own excellence," Penguin said of Trump in a statement announcing the parody memoir. "Now that refreshingly compulsive ... candor is applied to his time as leader of the free world."—Reuters

Life’s no hoot for owls in Tokyo cafes, activists say

TOKYO — Owls fluff up their feathers and preen beneath the stroking fingers of customers at Owl Village, one of many cafes dedicated to the birds, seen as a symbol of good luck in Japan, that have sprung up amid a boom in animal cafes.

But behind the squeals of delighted children in a cafe that is fully booked most days lurks a darker story of careless treatment that may endanger the nocturnal birds, activists say.

Just disrupting their natural sleep cycles, and tying their feet to perches, as many cafes do, can con-

stitute animal abuse, said Chihiro Okada, of the Animal Rights Center in the Japanese capital.

“When they think of animal abuse, people think of kicking or hitting animals, but it isn’t limited to that,” Okada added.

“Confining an animal to a small space is certainly a form of abuse. Showing them off like products is also a stressful situation. They can’t move and drink freely.”

Cafes in Japan that spotlight animals from cats and goats to hawks and hedgehogs have become a tourist draw. But many

have also been criticized over the animals’ treatment, prompting curbs on working hours for cat cafes, for example.

For owls, as birds of prey accustomed to ranging far and wide in their nightly hunts, conditions are especially difficult. Their keen hearing and vision make it difficult to adjust to the brightness and noise of crowded cafes.

As a result, many can develop neurotic behavior, such as pulling at their feathers, pacing and rocking back and forth, activists say.

But the problem seems

unlikely to be resolved soon, as cafes with lax attitudes have surged in recent years.

“We were particularly shocked to learn that seven owls died in one year at an owl cafe,” Okada said.

Owl Village manager Aya Matsuda said she tried to keep the birds free of stress with frequent breaks and by ensuring staff helped guide their interactions with customers.

“In our cafe staff are able to enter the owl room with customers and explain how to play with them, and when the owls look tired, they can rest,” she said.



An owl is pictured at an owl cafe in Tokyo, Japan, on 27 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

A properly managed shop that puts the birds first should pose no problems, said veterinarian Nobumoto Izawa.

“Most importantly, we need to make sure the birds are happy and not stressed,” the avian specialist added.—Reuters

Rio’s Portela wins Carnival samba school parade with water theme

IO DE JANEIRO — Rio’s premier Portela samba school was crowned champion samba school on Wednesday, winning its first Carnival parade in 33 years with a spectacular performance that highlighted the environmental importance of rivers.

One of its massive

floats recalled the impact the collapse of a tailings dam had on the River Doce in 2015 in what is considered Brazil’s worst environmental disaster ever.

The collapse at the Samarco mine, a joint venture between the world’s largest mining company BHP Billiton Ltd and the big-

gest iron ore miner, Vale SA, killed nine people and coated a two-state area with mud and mine waste.

The dazzling costumes of some of Portela’s 3,400 dancers created the sensation of running water as they danced along Rio’s half-mile Sambadrome parade ground. Others depict-

ed ancient civilizations that emerged on river banks and creatures that live in river waters, including one wing of crawling dancers dressed as alligators.

A panel of judges gave Portela 269.9 points for its parade, just beating out runner up Mocidade Independente for the title.

“It’s great. I’m speechless from all the excitement. I want to thank God and my orishas (Yoruba deities),” said Bianca Monteiro, a member of Portela, one of Rio’s oldest samba schools founded in 1923.

Though it had not won the Carnival parade since

1984, Portela holds 22 titles, more than any other samba school.

This year’s samba parade was beset by accidents: 32 people were hurt when a float crushed spectators against a barrier and the top of another float collapsed throwing off dancers.—Reuters

Pandas back on display at Tokyo zoo after mating

TOKYO — A Tokyo zoo put a pair of pandas back on display Thursday after they mated for the first time in four years earlier this week, raising hopes for the birth of a baby panda.

The Ueno Zoological Gardens said the male panda Ri Ri and female panda Shin Shin, both aged 11, mated three times Monday and began to lose interest in each other afterwards.

The zoo in Tokyo’s Taito Ward pulled the pandas from public viewing 22 February after they came into heat. It said it will monitor Shin Shin for changes in



Visitors to the Ueno Zoological Gardens in Tokyo watch male panda Ri Ri on 2 March 2017, when the zoo put Ri Ri and female panda Shin Shin back on display after they mated for the first time in four years, raising hopes for the birth of a baby panda. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

behavior and appetite to see if she has become pregnant.

The pair had a cub in

2012 but it died six days after birth due to pneumonia. In 2013, Shin Shin showed

signs of being pregnant, but later proved not to be.—Kyodo News

Meat lovers eat steak standing up at new restaurant in New York City

NEW YORK — Carnivores who stood in a late morning line for roughly 30 minutes to dine at a new Japanese steakhouse in New York City remained standing once inside, part of a plan to allow customers to wolf down their food and move on.

Ikinari Steak, which opened last week in Manhattan’s East Village, is seatless because, the restaurant said, it can sell more steaks, make more money and serve more customers if they are in and out in all of 30 minutes.

want too big of a cut so it’s something a little bit less,” said Novak. “I’m very happy with that.”

Eli Kies opted for a chuck eye steak, salad, soup and rice that cost \$20 dollars.

“I think it’s a really good experience because I can burn calories as I eat,” Kies said. “I’m standing up. Keep good posture. And eating some protein, so not bad.” To make money, the restaurant must pull in 200 customers a day, and founder Kunio Ichinose said there is more of a market for stand-up dining than in years past.

There are no appetizers on the one-page menu of the Japanese steakhouse chain, no desserts or coffee.

Customers like Jacob Navok and his wife, Chihiro, found themselves at the butcher station choosing from rib eye, sirloin and filet and deciding how many ounces they wanted. The scale showed that their 5-ounce (142-gram) sirloin would cost \$19.

“It’s morning. I didn’t

“When I wanted to open in New York, people said, “Hey, American people don’t want to eat steak when they’re standing,” said Ichinose. “It was the same in Japan and there wasn’t a culture. Now there’s a culture.”

Ichinose said he intends to open 10 locations in New York this year and aims to list his company on the Nasdaq exchange in three years.—Reuters

Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(3-3-2017 07:00am ~ 4-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes “Lisu: Their Life and Customs (Part-1)”
07:48	Am	ABU Radio Song Festival
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	A Chance to Change Their Future
08:44	Am	Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre- Chaw Dwin Gone
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Karaweik Palace-A Symbol Of Glorious Myanma Culture
09:41	Am	International Dances in Myanmar
10:03	Am	News

10:26 Am The Green Corner (Epi-15) CD Tray

10:35 Am Tour of The National Heritages and Archeological Site

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

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake
07:47	Pm	He can do it
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part - 4)
08:53	Pm	My Life & My Art

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

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

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

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

Barca run riot before coach bombshell, Real falter

MADRID — Barcelona thrashed Sporting Gijon 6-1 to go top of La Liga on a dramatic night in Spain on Wednesday as Luis Enrique announced he was stepping down as the Catalan club's coach at the end of the season.

Barca sneaked ahead of arch-rivals Real Madrid in La Liga after Zinedine Zidane's side came from behind with 10 men following the sending-off of Gareth Bale to draw 3-3 at home to Las Palmas thanks to two late strikes from Cristiano Ronaldo.

Lionel Messi scored for the fifth league game in a row to put Barca ahead in the ninth minute, heading Javier Mascherano's floated pass over goalkeeper Ivan Cuellar.

Sporting defender Juan Rodriguez clumsily knocked Luis Suarez's angled shot into his own net to double Barca's advantage two minutes later but Carlos Castro pulled one back for the visitors in the 21st minute from close range.

Suarez restored Barca's two-goal lead by ruthlessly volleying home and the Uruguayan was taken off at halftime, replaced by Paco Alcacer who got the fourth goal early in the second half following a layoff from Messi.

Barca had scraped 2-1 wins over Leganes and Atletico Madrid in their two games since the harrowing 4-0 defeat by Paris St Germain in the Champions League but got back into their groove



LEFT: Barcelona's Ivan Rakitic celebrates a goal at Camp Nou stadium, Barcelona, Spain, on 1 March 2017. RIGHT: Real Madrid's Gareth Bale (2nd R) is sent off by the referee during Spanish Liga Santander at Santiago Bernabeu stadium, Madrid, Spain, on 1 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS



against second-bottom Sporting.

Neymar struck a fifth in the 66th minute by curling a free kick inside the near post and Ivan Rakitic capped a resounding attacking display by thumping home from inside the area.

The result was overshadowed by Luis Enrique's revelation in his post-match news conference that he would quit Barca at the end of the season after three years in charge.

"I would like to thank the club for the confidence they have shown in me, it's been three unforgettable years," the former Bar-

ca midfielder said.

"In my work I'm constantly looking for solutions and that means I get no time to rest, I need to rest and that's my main motive for leaving."

Barca top the standings on 57 points, one ahead of Real, who have a game in hand on their arch-rivals as they seek a first league title since 2012.

Zidane's side clawed back from 3-1 down against Las Palmas thanks to Ronaldo, who converted a penalty and headed home from a corner one minute from time.

Real had looked to be on their

way to a comfortable win over a Las Palmas side who had lost their last four games and had never won at the Bernabeu when Isco beat the offside trap to score in the eighth minute.

Las Palmas midfielder Tana responded with a brilliant piece of skill to skip past Sergio Ramos and blasted into the roof of the net two minutes later.

The game turned against Real when Bale was shown two yellow cards in under 10 seconds, first for kicking out at Jonathan Viera and then for pushing the striker in anger.

Viera fired Las Palmas into the lead from the penalty spot in the 56th minute after a handball by Ramos and Kevin Prince-Boateng stretched their lead three minutes later but Real, who had three goals ruled out, refused to give in.

"We are not happy with how we've been playing recently and things haven't been going our way in the last few games but you will always have moments like this in a season," Zidane told reporters.

"But we can't go crazy because we have done things very well this season."—Reuters

Federer stunned by Russian Donskoy in Dubai

DUBAI — Roger Federer blamed a lack of commitment for his shock 3-6, 7-6(7), 7-6(5) loss to world number 116 Evgeny Donskoy of Russia in the Dubai Open second round on Wednesday.

Swiss Federer, playing his first tournament since winning his 18th grand slam title at the Australian Open in January, wasted three match points in the second set and led 5-2 in the third before the 26-year-old Donskoy fought back.

Third seed Federer, seven-times champion in Dubai, surged 5-1 ahead in the deciding tiebreaker but qualifier Donskoy reeled off six points in a row to secure a remarkable victory.

"Maybe I wasn't really committed enough, I think," the 35-year-old Federer said.

"Commitment in tennis is a big thing. Today I wasn't, really. That sort of is a feeling you get and it trickles in an entire game.

"Legs also felt slower out here tonight. I felt tired all day. I tried to get myself in shape, and, you know... It's just a tough loss tonight. So many chances. It was crazy. There's no excuses there."



Evgeny Donskoy hits the ball during Dubai Open, Men's Singles, against Roger Federer of Switzerland in Dubai, UAE, on 1 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Federer, who skipped last year's tournament because of a knee surgery which sidelined him for the back end of the season, refused to be downbeat over his first loss of the year.

"I just think it's still the beginning of the comeback," said Federer, who is scheduled to play at Indian Wells next week.

"I got to take the positives out of playing again in a tournament where I feel I'm quite healthy. I'm happy I got over the (groin)

injury I sustained at the Australian Open."

Donskoy will next face French seventh seed Lucas Pouille, who beat qualifier Marius Copil 6-1, 6-4 in the quarter-finals.

Top seed Andy Murray, who is playing in his first tournament since a fourth round defeat at the Australian Open, beat Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-2, 6-0 to reach the quarter-finals, where he will face Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber.—Reuters

Nadal, Djokovic advance in Acapulco

ACAPULCO, (Mexico) — Second-seeded Rafael Nadal remained perfect in matches at the Abierto Mexicano Telcel ATP event in Acapulco, Mexico, by easing past Italian Paolo Lorenzi 6-1, 6-1 in a second-round match Wednesday.

Nadal improved his record to 12-0 at this event, needing only 66 minutes to get past Lorenzi.

Nadal broke Lorenzi's serve five times and lost only five points on his serve, never facing a break point.

Nadal's opponent in the quarterfinals will be Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan, who eliminated Aussie Jordan Thompson 6-4, 3-6, 6-0. Nishioka defeated seventh-seeded Jack Sock in three sets in the first round.

Top-seeded Novak Djokovic faced a strong challenge from Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro on Wednesday, but the Serb emerged with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

Next up for Djokovic is a quarterfinal matchup with

sixth-seeded Nick Kyrgios of Australia, who defeated Donald Young of the United States 6-2, 6-4.

"I played really well today," Kyrgios said. "I'm really enjoying my time here."

American Sam Querrey recorded the biggest upset of the day, eliminating fifth-seeded David Goffin of Belgium 6-2, 6-3 in 69 minutes. Querrey lost only four points on his first serve.

Third-seeded Marin Cilic of Croatia was pushed to three sets but won the critical points to beat 20-year-old Borna Coric of Croatia 6-3, 2-6, 6-3. Cilic, who fired 12 aces, had only two break-point opportunities in the third set but converted both to improve his record against his countryman to 4-0. Cilic's quarterfinal opponent will be American Steve Johnson, who eliminated Ernesto Escobedo 7-6 (5), 6-3.

Fourth-seeded Dominic Thiem of Austria scored a 7-5, 6-3 win over France's Adrian Panarino.—Reuters