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New economic zones in favour

MINISTRY of Planning and Finance is carrying out plans for new economic zones and special economic zones as the quality of existing industrial zones is mediocre and upgrading them is difficult.

“If we look at the current economic zones and special economic zones we can see they are not doing so well because they were constructed a long time ago and not well established. It is near impossible to upgrade them now, so we think it’s better to construct new ones instead,” said Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Kyaw Win at a meeting with local and foreign business entrepreneurs at the Novotel Hotel on Saturday.

“If you think you can address this issue effectively, then please send us a proposal. Looking back on previous years, we can see it was not a very systematic development of the buildings, but rather it was appointed to those nearest in convenience. We need a good systematic plan for city development if we want good administration,” he added.

Yangon is known for being the economic capital of Myanmar and there are 29 industrial zones and over 6,200 small and medium-sized industrial businesses in the Yangon Region.

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A tunnel of light created with millions of LED lights was one of over 60 lighting displays at the First Myanmar Annual Lighting Festival, which opened last night at People’s Park in Yangon. The festival will be open until 30 April. PHOTO: PHOE KHWA

Gems and jade sales kick off in Nay Pyi Taw



PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY

THE emporium featuring thousands of uncut gems and jade stones exhibited for sale at Mani Yadana Gems Hall in Nay Pyi Taw began yesterday morning.

Altogether, 4,454 jade lots and 195 gem lots were on sale through the open tender and auction system only to local jade traders throughout the emporium.

“The emporium is open to businesses dealing in uncut gems and jade stones on a manageable scale working locally under license and not working extrac-

tion but in producing finished products”, said Deputy Director U Than Zaw Oo of the emporium organising committee. “So raw gems and jade stones are sold in kyats to them to create the market of finished products. By doing so there will be more job opportunity related to jade and gems businesses in Myanmar.”

During the emporium, price bidding forms for jade and gems will be submitted from 19 to 20 March and will be sold with open tender system on 21 March.

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

100-year-old office building abandoned after earthquake in Taikkyi



Tatmadawmen help move documents and furniture from a quake-hit building to a temporary office.

PHOTOS: U TUN HLAING

A 100-year-old office building was abandoned after a strong 13 March earthquake hit Taikkyi, the northernmost township of Yangon and destroyed several structures including homes, offices and religious buildings.

The moderate earthquake badly damaged some parts of the old building, which was more than one hundred years old and had been used as an office of the

Taikkyi Township Immigration and Population Department.

Office facilities and related accessories, as well as important documents stored in the quake-hit building, were moved to a new facility on 18 March with the assistance of 35 members of the Myanmar Armed Forces and 20 firefighters, said U Zaw Win Maung, an office staffer.

Currently, a temporary office

is being opened at the Shankyaunggyi Monastery. The township department used the building as its office starting in 1959. It bought the structure from the original owner in 2002, when the building was worth Ks1.7 million.

The department has already submitted a proposal to destroy the old building to construct new one to the relevant authorities.—

U Tun Hlaing

Network conference to be held in Yangon

NETWORK, Security & Telecommunication conference (Netcom 2017) organized by Myanmar Computer Professionals Association will be held for the first time in Myanmar in 2017.

The Netcom 2017 will be held for two days at MICT Park in Hlaing township on 26 and 27, March. The conference will be held with an aim to build the capacity of the network engineers, network security experts and telecom engineers to contribute towards systematic development of ICT technology sector and to share the knowledge with one another.

The theme of the Netcom 2017 is “Connect Secure Together”. The conference will be attended by the officials from Yangon region government, local network engineers, security professionals, telecom engineers, universities teachers and students.

The conference will bring together education talks related to network, security and telecom-

munication, discussion workshops, and panel discussions.

Besides, the conference sponsoring companies will exhibit their companies’ products and provide their services, demonstrate their products, freely distribute technical support documents, ICT technology information, video tutorials and software. Also, attendees will accept the certificate PDFs and delegates’ gifts.

Anyone interested in joining the conference should browser www.netcommyanmar.com and [netcom2017 page](http://netcom2017.page). The [netcom2017 page](http://netcom2017.page) will update the information concerning the conference. The netcom2017 has invited the speakers, who would like to provide educational talks concerning network, security and telecommunication technology, storage technology, cloud/virtualization management, XaaS, small data/dark data and big data, home automations and cyber security technology.—MMAL

New bridge being built in Mawlamyinegyun Township under government plan

A NEW bridge has been constructed in Mawlamyinegyun Township, Labutta District, Ayeyawady Region, under the government’s rural development plan.

With the use of a Ks48 million budget, the Township Rural Development Department is organising the construction of a new RC concrete bridge named Panmaukkhon in the target area.

The bridge will be 60 feet long and 14 feet wide. The

new facility will link with Gonhnyindan, Vanhsainggone, Panmaukkhon and Myinkakon villages.

Township authorities recently visited the project area to inspect the progress of the new construction.

The new bridge will help provide education, health and transportation benefits to those villages. There are a total of 3,652 people in 750 households in the four villages.—

Mawgyun Myint Aung

Telecommunication tower installations in Chin State almost complete

INSTALLATION of telecommunication towers in Cikha, a township in Chin State, is nearly complete, according to U Thet Paing, project engineer of Myanmar Padauk Co.

The project to build telecommunication facilities to link with networks provided by the Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications was initiated in the town in May of last year. Services are ex-

pected to be launched before the end of this month.

Surrounded by high mountains, Cikha Town is hard to get good telecommunications services because of its location. The town mainly relies on the MPT’s IPStar satellite services. This is a key reason why towers have been installed in the town under the government plan.

Due to various delays, the new communications facilities could not open on the target date as planned, said U Thet Paing, who added that project implementers mainly faced transportation barriers as the Natzang Bridge between Cikha and Tonzang towns was damaged during flooding.

Residents, including civil servants in the fur-flung town hope to enjoy access to the MPT’s telecommunications services after the project is finished.—Zo Hay Za



Telecommunication tower of Chin State with mountain background.

PHOTO: ZO HAY ZA

Providing health care to pregnant women every Wednesday

MANDALAY public health department, under the ministry of health and sport is providing health care to pregnant women every Wednesday at Nga Tha Yout township general hospital.

Township Health Officer Dr. Kan Min Aung and staff provided health care and treatment to pregnant women from the township at the medical ward of Nga Tha Yout township general hospital.

“Pregnant women must receive the health care and treatment at least four times

before giving birth. So, our Nga Tha Yout township public health department is providing the health care every Wednesday from 8 am to 4 pm to ensure safe deliver. To provide health care to pregnant women can reduce the maternal mortality. The health service personal are conducting the blood test for the pregnant women to find out whether they have any infectious or diseases and their babies have any foetal abnormalities,” said Dr. Kan Min Aung.—MMAL

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte arrives in Nay Pyi Taw

RODRIGO Duterte, the President of the Republic of the Philippines, arrived in Myanmar yesterday with his delegation and was welcomed at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Ministers Dr Pe Myint and Dr Aung Thu, Deputy Minister U Kyaw Tin and Mr Alex Chua, the Philippine ambassador to Myanmar.

Mr Rodrigo Duterte is scheduled to meet with President U Htin Kyaw to discuss the strengthening of bilateral relations between the Philippines and Myanmar.

"President Duterte's visit to Myanmar is significant in many respects. In particular, the discussion will include talks on improving trade and investment relations," said Alex Chua, Philippine Ambassador to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to

Philstar news.

The official visit, which will be from March 19 to 20, will coincide with the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Philippines-Myanmar bilateral relations.

"Commemorative activities have been held beginning last year and the president's visit to Myanmar this year is the culmination of the celebration of this milestone in our friendly relations with Myanmar," said Chua.

According to the envoy, the Philippine president's visit to Myanmar, an ASEAN member country, symbolises the Philippines' commitment to the shared aspirations and values of ASEAN. This year, the Philippines chairs ASEAN as the region celebrates the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the grouping.—GNLM



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte walks the red carpet as he arrives in Nay Pyi Taw International Airport. PHOTO MNA

600 star tortoises to be released to Minsontaung Sanctuary



Baby star tortoises (*Geochelone platynota*) are seen before released to conservation area. PHOTO: KHIN MYO MYO

PLANS are underway to release hundreds of star tortoises (*Geochelone Platynota*) to the Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary next year, said

Dr Kalyar of Turtle Survival Alliance. This is the fourth time the TSA has released the tortoises, a critically endangered species, to

the sanctuary since 2013, she added. The TSA first sent 150 star tortoises to the Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary in 2013, 300 tortoises in 2015 and an additional 300 tortoises in February of this year.

Under its project, experts from the TSA examine the health situation of those tortoises under the age of one year monthly before they go to the sanctuary.

Small radio transmitters have been installed on the back of each turtle's upper shell to provide information for follow-up healthcare to those land-dwelling reptiles in the sanctuary, Dr Kalyar said.

The rare species is native to the dry and deciduous forests in the country. It can be found in

Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. This kind of tortoise normally eats grass, weeds, leaves, flowers and other fibrous plants as well as earthworms and snails. The tortoises normally lay eggs up to four times a year.

There are three protected areas for star tortoises in the country: Lawkananda Wildlife Sanctuary in Bagan; Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary in Minbu Township and Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary in Natogyi Township. The Myanmar star tortoises are characterised by the highly distinctive star or radiating patterns on their upper shell. Males are distinguished from the females by a much thicker and longer tail.—200

Gems and jade sales kick off in Nay Pyi Taw

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It has been declared that jade lots ranging from No.1 to No.1500 will be submitted for price bidding forms from No. 0 to 1500 on 21st March and continue to be sold on 22nd March. Submitted price bidding forms from No.1501 to No.3000 will be on 22nd March and will be sold on 23rd March and submitted price bidding forms from No.3001 to No.4454 will be on 22nd March and will be sold on 23rd March with an open tender system.

The chairman of the natural resources and environmental conservation committee U Kyaw Thi Ha and members and Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee members U Min Thu and Daw Sabei Htwe visited the emporium yesterday, it is learnt.—Min Min Zaw (MNA)

Paper-reading session on media development concludes

THE Paper Reading session organised by the Myanmar Media Council continued its second day yesterday at Yangon City Hall.

Master of Ceremony Professor Dr. Maung Maung San and U Zayyar Hlaing read the papers for Myanmar and the International Media by U Aung Hla Htun, The Way to be a Good Journalist by U Chit Na-

ing (Seikpyinnyar), and Myanmar Media and Women by Daw Thin Thin Thar were presented.

In the evening session, Dr Zaw Than and U Khaing Myat Kyaw read the papers for Some Laws Journalists Should Know by U Han Nyunt (U Han Nyunt-Law), Politics and the Journalist's Strategic Vision by Dr Tin Htun

(Thahton Tin Htun), and Myanmar Media and Myanmar Politics by U Zayya and U Myo Ko Myo.

A total of 12 papers were read in the two-day reading session. In addition, there were 60 booths where newspapers, journals, magazines, books and broadcasting information were displayed and sold. The papers read during the event

will be published in a book to be used as a reference for journalists.

During the opening ceremony, Union Minister for the Ministry of Information, Dr Pe Myint, said the session was a task to support the development of media and encouraged the media council to hold more paper reading session in the future.—MNA

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LOCAL Business



A local trader evaluates a jade stone at the sales in Nay Pyi Taw on 19th March, 2017. PHOTO: MNA

Taxation on jade exports to be assessed in local currency

IN a bid toward ease of trade, the tax levied on exports of finished jade products in US dollar will now be assessed in Myanmar kyats, said U Myint Han, the vice chairperson of Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association.

This action will go into effect starting in April, with finished jade products will be exported to foreign countries under a one stop service. The tax rate

will remain unchanged, he added.

To improve the jade finished products enterprise and to have wider access to more markets, taxation with the one stop service plan began in 2011. Previously, only C and D graded products were permitted to be shipped abroad under the one stop service system. In 2013, the quality finished products were also given the green light to operate with this system.—200

Capital goods imports decrease

THE IMPORT value from 1st April to 3rd March in the current fiscal year 2016-2017 amounted to US\$15.3 billion, which was up by only US\$41million from that of the similar period last year, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

The capital goods import showed a significant decline, but the other two import categories -- raw industrial materials and personal goods -- were up in value with an increase of over US\$990mil and US\$538mil, respectively.

The import sector surpasses exports in the country, so the

government is trying to reduce the trade deficit according to the second five-year National Development Plan, scrutinising the luxury import items except essential items.

Myanmar imports luxury products, personal goods, construction materials, agricultural machinery, raw materials, household goods, foodstuff and electronic devices mainly from neighbouring countries.

According to the ministry's official statistics, the country's export sector hit \$10.454 billion this fiscal year, sending minerals, fish products, animal prod-

ucts and agriculture products to the foreign countries through both normal trade and border trade camps, which was up by nearly \$400 million against that of last FY.

There is a trade deficit of over US\$4.8billion as of 3rd March this FY, whereas there were trade deficits of US\$91.9million in 2012-2013, US\$2.55 billion in 2013-2014, US\$4.91 billion in 2014-2015 and US\$5.4 billion in 2015-2016, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO).

— Ko Khant

Car showrooms and sales centres faces falling sales

CAR showrooms and sales centres are facing closure due to declining sales in the local vehicle market caused by the change in import in the Yangon Region.

Previously, only about five car showrooms and sale centres were shutting down per month in Yangon Region.

But now, about 15 car showrooms and sale centers are shutting down per month this year.

"Government closed the vehicle imports with Yangon license. So, vehicle importing with

Yangon license costs a lot. That's why, car showroom and sales centre are highly shut down. A few people buy the vehicle with region licenses. In the vehicle market, people are buying only the vehicle with Yangon licenses," said Ko Tun Tun Aung, an owner of Tun car showroom.

The Ministry of Commerce checked the car showrooms and sales centres to see if they had any credit taxes or monetary problems before allowing them to shut down.—200

Insurers negotiate to introduce crop insurance in Myanmar

A LOCAL insurer continues to negotiate with a top insurance company in Japan to introduce a crop insurance system in Myanmar, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation.

The establishment of the programme aims to protect growers against losses caused by crop failure.

U Ye Min Aung, general secretary of the MRF, said that the plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Planning and

Finance, adding that the new insurance system is ready to be launched after getting approval from the authorities.

Food crops in some parts of the country are annually affected by natural calamities. Farming is more hazardous than any other enterprise because changes in weather can be the difference between success and failure.

Crop insurance makes up the loss or damage to growing crops resulting from a variety

of causes such as flooding, hail, drought and plant diseases.

The new crop insurance will keep farmers in business, said U Ye Min Aung, who urged growers to buy crop insurance policies to protect their economic interest against possible loss.

Plans are underway to raise public awareness on the new insurance system by explaining the benefits of crop insurance and its rules and regulations, he added.—200

Myanma Insurance to launch new health insurance system

MYANMA Insurance, the state-owned insurance company, is reportedly introducing a new service system for health insurance.

Previously, a Ks50,000 premium paid for health insurance for a year, which covered up to 30 days for medical care for Ks15,000 a day.

In the new system, a health insurance premium of Ks44,000 (one unit) has to be paid per year. Those who purchase the health insurance will receive 60 days of hospital care for Ks20,000 a day.

Additionally, accidental death coverage paid Ks1million to a beneficiary. Once the new system launches, Ks2million will be offered for this coverage, double

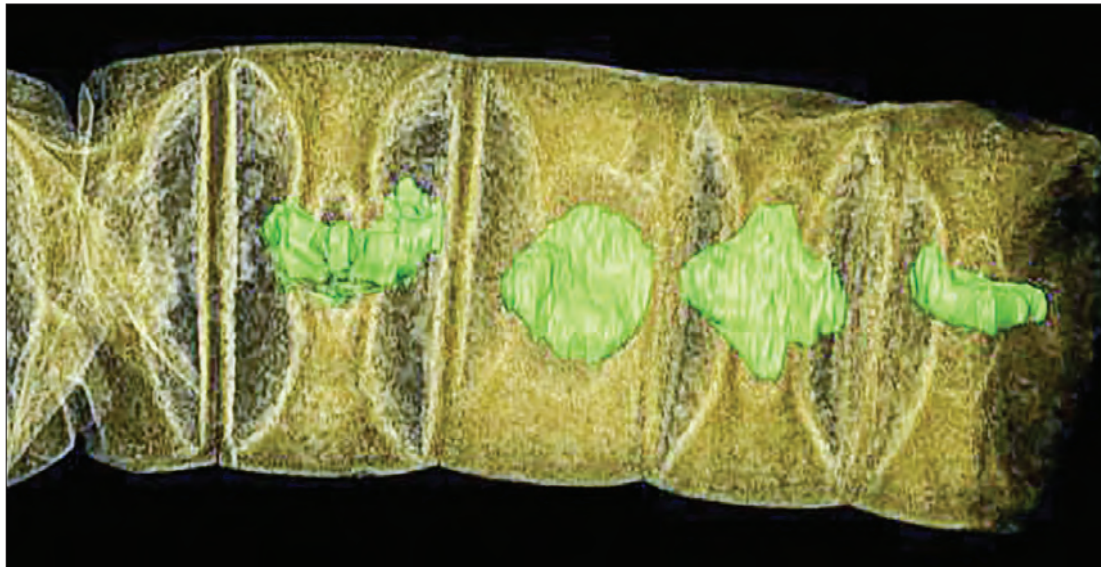
the benefit without an increase in the premium rate, said U Khin Maung Win, a general manager of Myanma Insurance.

Also, purchasers of health insurance were previously able to purchase up to five units. Starting in early April, they can buy up to 10 units.

Myanma Insurance will make efforts for health insurance to be widely known among public.

Out of 46 types of insurance provided by Myanma Insurance -- Fire Insurance, Seaman Life Insurance, Aviation Liability Insurance, Marine Insurance and Life Insurance -- are mostly purchased, according to Myanma Insurance.—200

Fossils from 1.6 billion years ago may be oldest-known plants



An X-ray tomographic picture of fossil thread-like red algae, tinted to show detail, unearthed in central India may represent the oldest-known plants on Earth, dating from 1.6 billion years ago, according to research published in the journal PLOS Biology in this image released on 13 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — Fossils unearthed in India that are 1.6 billion years old and look like red algae may represent the earliest-known plants, a discovery that could force scientists to reassess the timing of when major lineages in the tree of life first appeared on Earth.

Researchers on Tuesday described the tiny, multicellular fossils as two types of red algae, one thread-like and the other bulbous, that lived in a shallow marine environment alongside mats of bacteria. Until now, the oldest-known plants were 1.2-billion-year-old red algae fossils from the Canadian Arctic.

The researchers said cellular structures preserved in the fossils and their overall shape match red algae, a primitive kind of plant that today thrives in marine settings such as coral reefs but also can be found in freshwater environments. A type of red algae known as nori is a

common sushi ingredient.

“We almost could have had sushi 1.6 billion years ago,” joked Swedish Museum of Natural History geobiologist Therese Sallstedt, who helped lead the study published in the journal PLOS Biology.

Earth formed about 4.5 billion years ago. There is evidence indicating life first appeared in the form of marine bacteria roughly 3.7 to 4.2 billion years ago. Only much later did plants and subsequently animals appear in the primordial seas.

“Plants have a key role for life on Earth, and we show here that they were considerably older than what we knew, which has a ripple effect on our appreciation of when advanced life forms appeared on the evolutionary scene,” Sallstedt said.

The fossils were found in phosphate-rich sedimentary rocks from Chitrakoot in central India. The thread-like fossils contained internal cellular

features including structures that appear to be part of the machinery of photosynthesis, the process used by plants to convert sunlight into chemical energy.

Oxygen is a byproduct of photosynthesis and the advent of plants helped build the atmosphere’s oxygen content.

The fossils also contained structures at the centre of each cell wall typical of red algae.

At the time, Earth’s land surfaces were largely barren, life was mainly microbial and atmospheric oxygen was at 1 to 10 per cent of current levels, said study co-leader Stefan Bengtson, a Swedish Museum of Natural History paleobiologist.

The fossils also represent the oldest-known advanced multicellular organisms in the broad category called eukaryotes that includes plants, fungi and animals, indicating complex life flourished much earlier than previously assumed, the researchers said.—Reuters

Sleep apnea in children tied to changes in brain

CALIFORNIA — In children with a common condition that causes them to periodically stop breathing during sleep, areas of the brain involved with thinking and problem-solving appear to be smaller than in children who sleep normally, a study finds.

Researchers can’t say the brain changes actually cause problems for children at home or school, but they do say the condition, known as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), has been tied to behaviour and cognitive problems.

“It really does seem that there is a change in the brain or that the brain is affected,” said study author Paul Macey, who is director of technology and innovation at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Nursing.

Macey and colleagues write in Scientific Reports that up to 5 per cent of all children are affected by OSA. The condition causes the child’s airway to become blocked, which ultimately causes the brain to go without oxygen for short periods of time and may wake the child up. Previous studies on lab animals and adults with OSA have shown changes in the brain due to nerve cells dying, they add.

For the new study, the researchers used magnetic resonance imaging to analyze the volume of children’s gray matter, which is the outermost layer of the brain that allows for higher levels of functioning like problem solving.

They compared brain scans from 16 children with OSA and 200 children without the condition. All the youngsters were between 7 and 11 years old. Overall, children with OSA had decreases in gray matter volume in areas of the brain important for controlling cognition and mood, compared to the other children. Macey, who is also affiliated with the UCLA Brain Research Institute, said it’s unclear how closely changes in the brain are connected to behaviour, cogni-

tion and other issues.

“We know these two things are happening, but we’re not sure how much the reduced gray matter tracks with poor scores,” he told Reuters Health. The researchers also can’t say exactly why OSA is tied to reduce gray matter volume among children. A lack of oxygen may kill off brain cells or it may stop the brain from properly developing, for example. Macey’s team wants to see whether treating the condition helps children get back on track with their healthy peers.

“If we did that we would know better how people recover from it or not,” he said. Dr Eliot Katz, of Harvard Medical School and Boston Children’s Hospital, said previous research shows treating OSA by removing tonsils and adenoids improves children’s school performance, behaviour and sleep-related issues. Evidence is mixed on whether it improves cognition. Katz, who wasn’t involved with the new study, said the previous research on problems faced by children with OSA — like behaviour and cognition — is fitting nicely with the brain imaging studies. “This is really the first large, really well controlled study that has found decrements in gray matter in children with obstructive sleep apnea,” he told Reuters Health. He said parents should discuss symptoms of OSA with children’s healthcare providers. Those symptoms include chronic snoring and gaps in breathing while they sleep. “Sleep complaints are often not addressed in well child care visits,” he said, or in training programmes for pediatricians. He advises parents to “take a brief phone video of the breathing pattern that’s concerning to them and show it to their pediatrician.”

Macey said daytime tiredness and mood issues can also be symptoms of OSA. Children who are overweight and obese are at higher risk for the condition.—Reuters

Russian space firm launches production of new spacecraft for lunar missions

KOROLYOV (Moscow Region) — Russia’s Energiya Space Rocket Corporation has launched the production of a new spacecraft called Federatsiya (Federation) and intended for near-Earth flights and lunar missions, Energiya CEO Vladimir Solntsev said on Friday.

“It is in the active stage of work. Actually all design documentation has been issued and we are now producing separate assembly units,” he said.

The first Federatsiya spacecraft is designed for a flight into a low-Earth orbit, he added.

The Federatsiya spacecraft will be 80% made of composite materials and the descent vehicle of aluminum, he said.

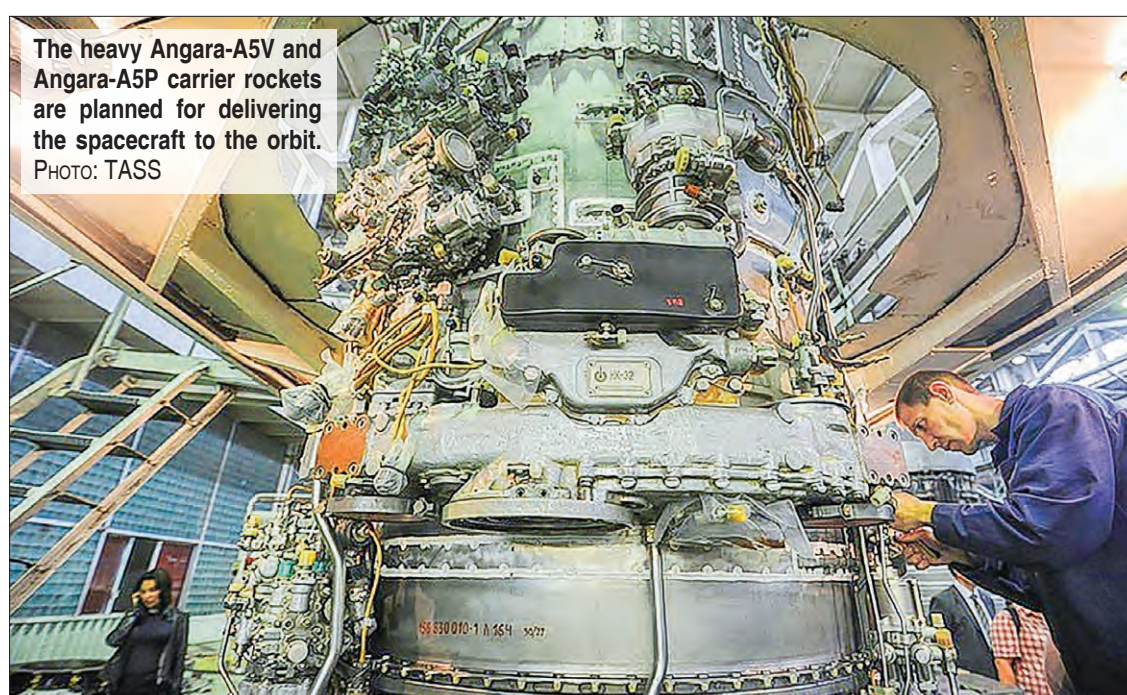
“The question is what the descent vehicle should be made of. Today we are working with

aluminum but simultaneously it is important not only to produce the spacecraft but also to make it competitive,” Solntsev said.

The spacecraft Federatsiya designed by the Energiya Space Rocket Corporation is intended for delivering humans and cargoes to the near-Earth orbit and to the Moon. Its crew will comprise up to four members.

The spacecraft will have an endurance of up to 30 days and up to twelve months as part of an orbital station. The heavy Angara-A5V and Angara-A5P carrier rockets are planned for delivering Federatsiya spacecraft into orbit.

The first unmanned launch of the Federatsiya space vehicle is scheduled for 2021 and the first manned flight for late 2023.—Tass



President Xi meets US Secretary of State

BEIJING — President Xi Jinping met here on Sunday with visiting US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, saying that cooperation is the only correct choice for both countries.

There are important development opportunities resulting from China-US relations, said Xi during the meeting in the Great Hall of People in Beijing.

Xi said he had maintained sound communications with his US counterpart Donald Trump through telephone calls and messages, and that they had agreed that the two countries could be good cooperative partners.

To advance China-US ties in a healthy and steady manner, both sides, Xi expressed, could enhance exchanges at high level and various levels; expand cooperation in bilateral, regional and global fields; and properly address and manage sensitive issues.

The two sides should grasp

the general direction for the development of China-US relations in an attitude responsible for history and future generations, said Xi.

Xi suggested that the two countries increase strategic trust and mutual understanding, review bilateral ties from long-term and strategic perspectives and expand fields of cooperation for win-win outcomes.

The two countries should also enhance coordination on regional hotspot issues, respect each other's core interests and major concerns and encourage friendly exchanges between the two peoples, said Xi.

Xi also extended welcome to President Trump for a visit to China. Tillerson said President Trump valued communication with President Xi, and looked forward to meeting Xi and the opportunity for a visit to China.

The US side is ready to develop relations with China based on the principle of no conflict, no con-



Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) meets with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China on 19 March 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

frontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, said Tillerson.

It is Tillerson's first visit

to China since he assumed office last month. State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minis-

ter Wang Yi held separate meetings with Tillerson on Saturday. —Xinhua

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Indonesia plans to file WTO complaint over EU biodiesel duties

JAKARTA — Indonesia plans to file a World Trade Organization complaint this month against European Union anti-dumping duties on biodiesel exports from the Southeast Asian country, trade officials said on Sunday.

Indonesia said in a statement the EU duties on biodiesel were inconsistent with the WTO's Anti-Dumping Agreement and disputed the calculations that they were based on.

"We are ready to file the suit at the first meeting in 29-30 March at WTO headquarter in Geneva," Indonesia's Director of

Trade Security Pradnyawati said.

In November 2013, the EU set duties of 8.8 per cent to 20.5 per cent for Indonesian producers and between 22 per cent and 25.7 per cent for Argentine producers, to apply for five years in both cases.

The EU argued that by imposing duty on the raw product, soybeans in the case of Argentina and palm oil for Indonesia, they gave an advantage to domestic producers, which allowed them then to "dump" product at unfairly low prices.

Argentina and Indonesia,

major exporters of biodiesel, have called the EU measures protectionist. Both have previously brought complaints before the WTO, with Argentina securing rulings in favour of several of its claims.

The cases have also brought legal challenges, with the General Court of the European Union, the lower of the two EU courts. Indonesia said the EU duties had caused sales of biodiesel to slump from \$625 million in 2013 to an expected \$9 million in 2017, according to Trade Map data. —Reuters

Malaysia expects more arrests in Kim Jong Nam murder probe -report

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police are expected to make a few more arrests, including an "important person", in connection with the murder of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, state media reported on Sunday.

Police chief Khalid Abu Bakar declined to elaborate on details when speaking to the state media, adding that the arrests would be made at the appropriate time.

"I don't deny we are targeting new individuals including North Korean nationals involved in this murder and we will use all legal channels to apprehend them. Although I can't reveal who they are, we believe there is an 'important person' among them," he told state media.

The police chief did not respond immediately when contacted by Reuters for comment.



Malaysia's Royal Police Chief Khalid Abu Bakar (C) speaks during a news conference regarding the apparent assassination of Kim Jong Nam, the half-brother of the North Korean leader, at the Malaysian police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 22, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Malaysian police have previously identified eight North Koreans wanted for questioning in connection with the killing of Kim Jong Nam, some of them hiding in the North Korean embassy. A Vietnamese woman and an Indonesian woman have already been charged in the case.

Kim Jong Nam was killed on

Feb. 13, when Malaysian police say two women smeared super toxic VX nerve agent on his face at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. On Thursday, police said Interpol issued a "red notice", the closest to an international arrest warrant, for four North Koreans wanted in connection with the murder. —Reuters

Chinese defence minister to visit Sri Lanka, Nepal

BEIJING — Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan left on Sunday for official visits to Sri Lanka and Nepal, the Defence Ministry said, trips that could unnerve neighbouring India.

China is vying to increase its influence in Nepal, which serves as a natural buffer between China and India, challenging India's long-held position as the dominant outside power in the landlocked nation.

China has also invested heavily in Sri Lanka, funding airports, roads, railways and ports, and including the island nation of 21 million people on its "One Belt, One Road" mission to create a modern-day "Silk Road" across Asia.

The ministry, in a short statement, said Deputy Naval Chief Su Zhiqian would accompany Chang.

It gave no other details.

China's Defence Ministry said in December that China would hold its first military drills with Nepal in 2017.

In 2014, Sri Lanka allowed a Chinese submarine and a warship to dock at its port in the capital Colombo, prompting concern in New Delhi.

India, which has a festering border dispute with China, has looked at the latter's strategic ambitions in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean with some nervousness.

China has close defence ties with India's long-time rival Pakistan, and has been getting closer to Bangladesh and the Maldives too. Chinese warships now increasingly drill in the Indian Ocean too, as Beijing becomes more confident about projecting power far from its shores.—Reuters



Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan speaks at the Xiangshan Forum, in Beijing, China, October 11, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hindu saint sworn in as chief minister of India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Yogi Adityanath (C) is greeted after he was elected as Chief Minister of India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, during the party lawmakers' meeting in Lucknow, India on 18 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW DELHI — A controversial Hindu saint and a five-time parliamentarian of the country's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was on Sunday sworn in as the Chief Minister of India's most populous and politically important state of Uttar Pradesh.

Yogi Adityanath was administered the oath of office by Uttar Pradesh's Governor Ram Naik in a special ceremony in state capital Lucknow, attended by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several senior Indian Ministers and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states.

Along with him, two Deputy Chief Ministers — Keshav Prasad Maurya, the saffron outfit's Uttar Pradesh chief, and Dinesh Sharma, Mayor of Lucknow —

also took oath. At least 41 other Ministers were also sworn in.

Yogi Adityanath name as the Chief Minister propped up only late Saturday evening, a week after the BJP swept the crucial assembly polls in the state, winning 312 out of 403 seats, by decimating regional parties like Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

After the 44-year-old's name was announced for the top post, the Hindu religious leader thanked Modi, who was the face of BJP's political campaign in Uttar Pradesh. "I will take the state forward with his motto of sabka saath sabka vikas (With All, Development For All)," he told the media.

But Yogi Adityanath is no

stranger to controversies and his anti-Muslim rhetoric. He once said that minorities that oppose yoga (a form of exercise) should leave the country and once compared Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan with Pakistani terrorist leader, Hafiz Saeed.

The Hindu religious leader is also a strong supporter of laws protecting cows, considered as holy in the country.

He recently hogged limelight for praising a travel ban ordered by US President Donald Trump to block immigration from a group of Muslim-majority countries.

Uttar Pradesh has a population of 200 million people. And about a fifth are Muslims. —Xinhua

North Korea's Kim Jong Un says engine test is 'new birth' of rocket industry

SEOUL — North Korea has conducted a test of a new high-thrust engine at its Tongchang-ri rocket launch station and leader Kim Jong Un said the successful test was "a new birth" of its rocket industry, the reclusive North's official media said on Sunday.

The engine would help North Korea achieve world-class satellite launch capability, KCNA said, indicating the test was of a new type of rocket engine for long-range missiles.

The United States and China pledged to work together to get the North to take "a different course" and move away from its weapons programmes after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met his Chinese counterpart on Saturday.

North Korea has conducted five nuclear tests and a series of

missile launches, in defiance of UN sanctions, and is believed by experts and government officials to be working to develop nuclear-warhead missiles that could reach the United States.

Kim Jong Un has said North Korea is close to a test-launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

KCNA said the test was carried out at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, where North Korea has conducted long-range rocket tests. South Korea's military declined to comment.

The Washington-based think tank 38 North said last week satellite imagery indicated activity at the site's vertical engine stand, possibly in preparation for a rocket engine test.

"The rail-mounted environmental shelter has been moved up

against the engine test stand since 5 February, either for maintenance or to position a rocket engine for testing," 38 North said in a note.

It said North Korea had installed the environmental shelter in late 2015 to conceal detection of test preparations.

KCNA cited leader Kim as saying the significance of the test would soon be evident.

"He noted that the success made in the current test marked a great event of historic significance as it declared a new birth of the Juche-based rocket industry," KCNA said. Juche refers to North Korea's homegrown ideology of self-reliance.

"He emphasized that the whole world will soon witness what eventful significance the great victory won today carries," it said.—Reuters



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un provides field guidance at the construction site of Ryomyong Street in this undated picture provided by KCNA in Pyongyang on 16 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Recent Laukkai incidents cannot be seen in isolation

Tha Sein

THE progress the country is making is clear evidence that reforms continue to be implemented and continued support needs to be given to achieve these aims. The fact that all the national brethren are focusing on real, lasting solutions to internal conflicts is a major step forward. In the latest twist in making the ongoing peace process a success, the government has come up with a way to ensure that the peace process is inclusive and equal, in which the NCA non-signatories are well accepted and re-

garded as welcome organizations that could create an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding among all.

Given the continued fragility of the ceasefires, and the inevitably slow pace of reconciliation following decades of war, a solution to internal conflicts seem to be elusive, despite significant achievements in building trust and viability among warring groups. Many a round of negotiations have taken place but to date, no quantifiable results can be seen.

There is a general

feeling that the MNDA is not devoting sufficient attention to its responsibilities for embracing reconciliation and lack of knowledge traditionally formed the bedrock of attacks launched by the armed group that took a battering in the north of the country.

Taking into account a prevailing feeling of uncertainty among many in the country, they should consider all factors pertinent to the current situation.

We see the prospects for peace in a different light and we believe that the means by which we seek to

achieve peace are fair, just and all-inclusive.

The conflicts have always been a bone of contention between Myanmar and the other country and had cast a cloud over a long-standing relationship between the two countries. In the context of the scope and nature of these conflicts, what is happening in the Laukkai region cannot be seen in isolation, and more need to be done to rein in the armed group whose existence further fuels instability and impedes progress in the areas where they operate.

Celebrating seventy years of Myanmar Foreign Ministry

Sayar Mya

Continued from 19-3-2017

In response to the changes, world major powers have lifted international sanctions. The United States has stepped up diplomatic relations with the country.

As a result of these transitional reforms, global powers began reestablishing ties with Myanmar. The United States, European Union, Australia, and Japan dropped some economic sanctions, and multinational companies began showing interest in investment in the country.

Every cloud has a silver lining and it means that you should never feel hopeless because difficult times always lead to better days. Difficult times are like dark clouds that pass overhead and block the sun.

In April 2012, UK Prime Minister David Cameron became the first major Western leader to visit Myanmar in twenty years. The World Bank subsequently earmarked \$245 million in credit and grant funding for the country, marking the first international lending to the nation in twenty-five years.

Before that in 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar on a goodwill mission. During the visit, she met with the then President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It was agreed to boost humanitarian aid, and announced the United States would no longer block assistance from the International Monetary Fund

and World Bank.

In 2012, Washington announced further steps for cooperation, including the reestablishment of a USAID mission and easing the bans on the export of U.S. financial services and new investment. The administration also named its first ambassador to the country in twenty-two years.

U.S. relations with Myanmar further warmed with landmark visits by both President Obama to Yangon in November 2012 and President U Thein Sein to Washington in May 2013. On his second visit to Myanmar for the 2014 East Asia Summit, Obama reasserted the U.S. commitment to the country's political transition.

Getting closer ties with Washington has challenged Myanmar long-standing strategic and economic partnership with Beijing. China is the largest investor, and there is growing resistance within Myanmar to Chinese infrastructure investment. However, Myanmar government maintains friendly "Phauk Phaw" relations with China.

As soon as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi became foreign minister, she invited Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. She received Wang Yi in Nay Pyi Taw and it has been reported that the discussion was successful, but did not involve any issue of China's controversial projects in Myanmar.

Myanmar-Chinese ties remained unchanged, it was learnt. State Counsellor Daw Aung

San Suu Kyi undertook her first foreign trip as leader to a major power country by visiting China at the invitation of Chinese Premier Mr. Li Keqiang. At the meeting, their discussions focused on the five principle of peaceful coexistence, enhancement of bilateral relations and closer cooperation in transportation.

In addition to the lifting of US sanctions on Myanmar that came as result of a historic meeting at the White House between President Obama and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, there will be several other initiatives that were agreed upon in Washington, including global health security and improved language instruction.

"The President and the State Counsellor committed to mark this new era in the bilateral relationship by announcing a US-Myanmar Partnership. This Partnership anchored by annual dialogues led by the US Department of State and the Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will allow the two countries to broaden and deepen their cooperation across a range of sectors," read a statement issued by The White House.

In the light of historic partnership, the US and Myanmar agreed to game-changing initiatives.

The international relations move ahead in full swing, however, Myanmar's transition to democracy remains weighed down by ethnic problems.

Earlier, in October 2015, the government signed a nationwide cease-fire agreement (NCA) with eight armed ethnic groups after more than two years of negotiations. By all means, the peace, stability and prosperity would prevail as the current approach is based on negotiations at the table and all inclusive standpoints.

addressing the problem in the area.

At a broader level, the international community stands ready to help Myanmar. The foreign assistance will probably take the form of increased aid, technical advice, training, trade and investment. Thanks to the Myanmar foreign policy shifts.

In addition to profuse ties

Myanmar's foreign policy will remain consistently neutral and nonaligned; although the country will inevitably become increasingly bound to its Southeast Asian neighbors as ASEAN realizes its goal of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Currently, Myanmar's domestic peace building efforts are clearly based on greater transparency and legislation to bring laws and practices in line with international norms.

Moreover, Myanmar's admittance of international observers — including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon — at the recent Panglong Conference is a welcome development. The approach would boost confidence in the fairness and legitimacy of its proceedings.

Similarly, appointing former UN Secretary General Dr. Kofi Annan to head a commission on Rakhine State may enhance Myanmar credibility in

with the western countries, Myanmar's foreign policy will remain consistently neutral and nonaligned; although the country will inevitably become increasingly bound to its Southeast Asian neighbors as ASEAN realizes its goal of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Here, the writer as a retired Myanmar Foreign Service officer would like to use the term "Towards the people-centered foreign policy" as all the good diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been working earnestly and diligently in promoting the national interest of our beloved country.

Senior General visits Magway war veterans

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attended the 1st handing over ceremony of Magway's advanced housings for war veterans.

In the ceremony, the Senior General spoke on the bravery of the war veterans who sacrificed their lives for their country and the efforts made by the nation in accordance with the law to grant the veterans with their well deserved rights and opportunities.

The current location for the housing was chosen with easy access to water and electricity, and accessible routes to schools, hospitals and paths to job opportunities in mind.

A lot was invested in the construction of the housing for war veterans and their families so it is hoped that individuals do not exploit the housings for their personal businesses.

Afterwards Adjutant-Lieutenant General San Oo conferred certificates for households and

keys to the housings to the war veterans and their families while responsible officials conferred images of the Buddha, food items and kitchen utensils and Quarter-master-Lieutenant General Nyo Saw conferred gifts of longyi to the war veterans and certificate of honor to the construction company.

Next the Senior General, his wife and entourage engaged in warm discussions with the war veterans and their families.

The housing for war veterans in Magway is the 5th one to be constructed with housings in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon and various others constructed before and with a total of 750 housing buildings allotted war veterans and their families.

Later, the Senior General and his wife visited the Tatmadaw Hospital in Magway and warmly greeted the patients and their families.

In the afternoon the Senior General and his wife visited the



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla at the ceremony for Housing for War Veterans in Magway. PHOTO: MNA

Myathalun Pagoda in Magway.

Afterwards they travelled to Nagapwat mountain in Minbu where a restoration effort by Tat-

madaw families and donors was completed following the 24 August 2016 earthquake destroyed various areas.

Finally, the Senior General and entourage visited the Shinsakkeintel Pagoda in Minbu.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar Law Students' First Participation in an International Moot Court Competition

Dr. Myint Zan

TWO students from the Yangon University Law Department has participated in the 15th International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Moot Court competition held in Hong Kong from 8 to 11 March 2017.

This is the first time in decades that students from Myanmar participated in an international moot competition.

I have volunteered to and help train them at the Yangon University Law department for about a total of ten hours spread over four days.

A moot is a 'mock court' where law students argued on behalf of the applicant and respondent teams on a hypothetical legal problem. Since 1994 the

writer has had the experience of judging in the International Law Jessup moot court competition (different from the IHL Moot Court Competition) in which as of 2016 over 70 countries participated. I have been a Jessup moot court judge in the national rounds in Malaysia and Australia and the international final rounds held in the United States.

I have also had the experience of training both the students who participated in the IHL moot competition and have been both trainer and judge in the Hong Kong Asia-Pacific rounds three times. In December 2007 the students that I trained as a principal trainer at the Multimedia University from Malaysia won the national rounds and was runner-up in the Asia-Pacific in-

ternational rounds held in Hong Kong in March 2008.

International humanitarian law is a genre of international law which deals mainly with regulating the conduct of parties involved in armed conflicts and wars. Its inchoate beginnings can be traced to over 3000 years ago in the Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana and in the modern era the four different 1949 Geneva Conventions deal with land, naval warfare, protection of prisoners of war and civilians in times of war. The 1949 Geneva Conventions are truly universal convention where nations which are parties to the Convention (194, I think) exceeded those States who are members of the United Nations (193, I think)!

Ever since 2008 when I as

a trainer and judge became involved with the Malaysian national rounds and Asia-Pacific rounds of the IHL Competition in Hong Kong I have been told by personnel from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that they have been trying to urge or almost 'cajole' the Myanmar authorities to let Myanmar students to participate in the IHL Moot. THE ICRC's efforts bear fruit this year and the Myanmar students' first participation in an international law moot needs to be commemorated.

When I trained the students ask questions in English though I gave my feed back and general commentary in Myanmar. Nang Kay Si Kham (a Master of Research in Law) and Aye Thu Thu

Thant (Master of Law student) tried assiduously to make their mark or at least their contribution to the inaugural participation by Myanmar in this prestigious international moot court competition. Dr Su Su Mon, a Lecturer from the Yangon Law Department have accompanied them to Hong Kong.,

Should this piece see the light of day, the 15th International Humanitarian Law moot court competition in Hong Kong would probably be over and whatever the results or the Myanmar teams' ranking among the 24 teams from 16 countries that participated in the Moot competition would be the ICRC, the Myanmar government and the students are to be congratulated for their efforts.

New economic zones in favour

>> FORM PAGE 1

In realising these new industrial zones we will not allow one entity to monopolise it but rather give opportunities to those who are able to effectively carry out the task, said Union Minister U Kyaw Win.

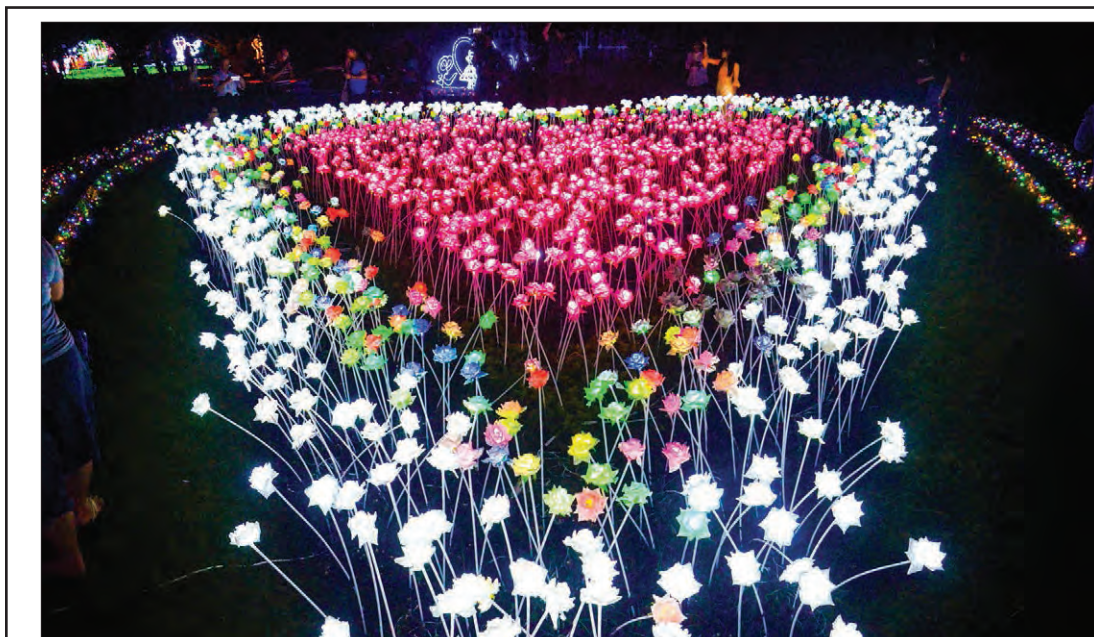
"We will grant permission to both foreign and local companies that are capable of completing their projects within the allotted time. But we will not grant permission to those who take the chance for granted, you cannot succeed by borrowing other's capital. We do not allow one entity to monopolise the business in establishing a new city, this is our basic policy," he said.

In realising this project, the West Yangon Regional Development Company, Shwe Poppa

International Construction Company, and Business Capital City Development Ltd. were selected from submitted tenders in the previous government's administration.

The Master Plan for establishing a new Yangon City was planned in detail with guidance from the Yangon Region Chief Minister and will be carried out annually, step by step, in a systematic manner, stated Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe in the 2nd Yangon Region Hluttaw Meeting.

Apart from the new city project, the regional government has appropriated construction of a port in the south of Yangon city. After completion of this project, it will place new Yangon City in a strategic position. —*Ko Moe*



An LED flower garden at the First Myanmar Annual Lighting Festival at People's Park in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Germany rejects Trump's claim it owes NATO and US 'vast sums' for defence



German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen briefs the media as she arrives at a European defence ministers meeting in Brussels, Belgium on 15 November, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BERLIN — German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday rejected US President Donald Trump's claim that Germany owes NATO and the United States "vast sums" of money for defence.

"There is no debt account at NATO," von der Leyen said in a statement, adding that it was wrong to link the alliance's target for members to spend 2 per cent of their economic output on defence by 2024 solely to NATO.

"Defence spending also goes into UN peacekeeping missions, into our European missions and into our contribution

to the fight against IS terrorism," von der Leyen said.

She said everyone wanted the burden to be shared fairly and for that to happen it was necessary to have a "modern security concept" that included a modern NATO but also a European defence union and investment in the United Nations.

Trump said on Twitter on Saturday — a day after meeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Washington — that Germany "owes vast sums of money to NATO & the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany!"

Trump has urged Germany and other NATO members to accelerate efforts to meet NATO's defence spending target.

German defence spending is set to rise by 1.4 billion euros to 38.5 billion euros in 2018 — a figure that is projected to represent 1.26 per cent of economic output, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble has said.

In 2016, Germany's defence spending ratio stood at 1.18 per cent.

During her trip to Washington, Merkel reiterated Germany's commitment to the 2 per cent military spending goal. —Reuters

Person in custody after incident at White House gates — Secret Service

WASHINGTON — One person was in custody after a suspicious vehicle drove up to a White House checkpoint on Saturday night, the Secret Service said, after CNN reported that the driver claimed to have a bomb.

CNN, citing two law enforcement sources, said there was no confirmation of any device in the vehicle but that security at the White House had been upgraded.

The Secret Service said an unidentified driver was taken into custody after a suspicious vehicle approached a checkpoint, but made no mention of any claims of an explosive device.

Several streets around the White House were closed.

Other authorities could not be reached immediately to confirm more details. It was the second scare at the White House on Saturday after a person earlier jumped over a bike rack in a buffer zone in front of the White House.

US President Donald Trump

was in Florida at the time of both incidents. In the first incident, the unidentified person was not able to make it over the fence into the grounds, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said on Twitter.

Two Secret Service agents reportedly tackled the individual in that incident, which occurred at

the start of a buffer zone between the main White House fence and the sidewalks.

The Secret Service had been criticized after it said a man who scaled the White House fence last week was on the property's grounds for 16 minutes before being detained. —Reuters



A restricted area sign is seen outside of the White House in Washington on 27 November, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

New flight links Yinchuan, Thailand

YINCHUAN — A flight between the landlocked Chinese city of Yinchuan and the island of Phuket, Thailand, will begin next month, according to Ningxia airport.

The China Southern Airlines flight, operated with a Boeing 738, will ply the route three times a week starting from 10 April, with a stop in the Chinese city of Zhengzhou.

The Phuket-bound flight will depart from Yinchuan, capital of northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, 7:20 pm on Monday, Thursday and Saturday and will land in Phuket at 1:40 am the next day. It will return to Yinchuan an hour after its arrival in Phuket. —Xinhua

Another Turkish rally possible in Germany before referendum, Erdogan spokesman says

ANKARA — There is a possibility that Turkish ministers could plan another rally in Germany ahead of an 16 April referendum on changing the constitution, President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman said on Sunday, a move that could further heighten tension with Berlin.

Turkey has been locked in a feud with both Germany and the Netherlands after both countries prevented its ministers from addressing rallies of expatriate Turks, citing safety concerns.

Erdogan spokesman Ibrahim Kalin made the comment in an interview with broadcaster CNN Turk. Kalin said that "Turkophobia" was on the rise in Europe, as Ankara points out the West's mistakes, adding that Turkey remains a country friendly to international investors. —Reuters

Egypt's Sisi to visit Washington in first week of April — newspaper

CAIRO — Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will make his first state visit to Washington during the first week of April at the invitation of US President Donald Trump, Egyptian state-owned newspaper Al-Ahram reported on Sunday.

The trip will be Sisi's first US state visit since being elected president in 2014 as former US President Barack Obama had never extended an invitation.

Sisi was elected a year after leading the military's ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood's President Mohamed Mursi after mass protests. Trump invited Sisi in January but the date of the visit had not been announced. —Reuters

Japan, China agree to hold next round of finance talks soon in Japan

BADEN-BADEN, Germany — Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso and his Chinese counterpart Xiao Jie agreed on Saturday to hold the next round of a bilateral finance dialogue at an early date in Japan, Japanese officials said.

The two ministers met on the sidelines of a Group of 20 finance chiefs' meeting in Germany.

"We exchanged views about economic developments in both our countries and cooperation," Aso told reporters. It was the two ministers' first one-on-one talks since Xiao assumed his post in November.

The two countries are expected to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation in the financial sector during the planned dialogue. The last round was held in Beijing in June 2015.

A round scheduled to be held in November last year in Japan was postponed after the change of Chinese finance minister from Lou Jiwei to Xiao that month. —Kyodo News

Three suicide bombers kill four outside northeast Nigeria's Maiduguri

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — Three suicide bombers killed four people and injured eight others in a village near the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri, a police spokesman said on Sunday.

The blasts, around 7 kilometres (4 miles) from the city worst hit by jihadist group Boko Haram's eight year insurgency, occurred on Saturday around 9:00 pm (2000 GMT), said Maiduguri police spokesman Isuku Victor. —Reuters

Iraqi forces close in on Mosul mosque as residents flee

MOSUL — Iraqi army helicopters strafed and fired rockets at Islamic State positions in Mosul's Old City on Sunday as troops on the ground closed in on the strategic and symbolic prize of the al-Nuri Mosque.

Federal Police troops had advanced past the train station in western Mosul closer to the mosque. A police commander said they were very close to taking control of it.

Residents fled from the area, carrying bags of belongings and picking their way through the wrecked buildings as shells and gunfire echoed behind them. Most of them were women and children.

"Federal Police and Rapid Response forces resumed their advance after halting operations due to bad weather. The troops have a target of retaking the rest of the Old City," a police spokesman said.

The battle to recapture Islamic State's last stronghold in Iraq has now entered its sixth month. Iraqi government forces, backed by US advisers, artillery and air support, have cleared the east and half of western Mosul and are now focused on controlling the Old City.

Recent fighting has targeted the centuries-old al-Nuri Mosque, with its famous leaning minaret. Its capture would be a blow for Islamic State as it was from there that IS leader Abu Bakr al-Bagh-



Buses carrying rebel fighters and their families who evacuated the besieged Waer district in the central Syrian city of Homs, after an agreement was reached between rebels and Syria's army, arrive on the southern outskirts of the Syrian city of al-Bab, Syria on 19 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

dadi declared a caliphate in July 2014 after the hardline militants had seized swathes of Iraq and Syria.

US officials estimate about 2,000 IS fighters remain inside Iraq's second largest city, resisting with mortar fire, snipers and suicide car bombs that plough into army positions.

The black Islamic State flag

still flew from the mosque's minaret on Sunday.

Federal Police moved in on foot from near the train station towards the Old City, trotting through rubble-filled streets.

Police commander General Khalid al-Obedi told reporters on the frontline: "We are advancing toward the Old City. Their resistance is weakening. They are most-

ly using car bombs and that shows they are losing on the ground."

He barked orders into his radio as mortar rounds landed beyond his position.

Reporters saw an air strike hit Islamic State positions about 300 metres (yards) ahead on the frontline. Helicopters circling overhead fired rockets and raked the ground with machinegun fire.

Federal police also arrested Husam Sheet al-Jabouri, the local chief of Diwan al-Hisba, an IS unit responsible for enforcing strict Islamic rules, in Mosul's Bab al-Sijin area, a police statement said.

As fighting has entered into the narrow alleyways and densely populated parts of west Mosul, more residents are fleeing liberated areas where food and water are scarce and homes are often caught in shelling.

Families with elderly relatives and children marched through western Mosul's muddy streets, past buildings pockmarked by bullet and bombs on Saturday. Some said they had hardly eaten in weeks, scrambling for supplies handed out by a local aid agency.

"It is terrible, Islamic State have destroyed us. There is no food, no bread. There is absolutely nothing," said one resident.

As many as 600,000 civilians may be caught inside the city with the militants. About 255,000 people have been displaced from Mosul and surrounding areas since October, including more than 100,000 since the military campaign in western Mosul began on 19 February, according to United Nations figures.

The last week has seen the highest level of displacement yet, with 32,000 displaced between 12 and 15 March.—Reuters

Germany supports group behind Turkish coup attempt — Erdogan spokesman

ANKARA — Turkey on Sunday accused Germany of supporting the network of a US-based Muslim cleric it blames for last year's attempted coup, comments likely to aggravate a diplomatic feud between Ankara and Berlin.

On Saturday, German news magazine Der Spiegel published an interview with the head of the BND foreign intelligence agency, who said Ankara had failed to convince it that the cleric Fethullah Gulen was responsible for the coup attempt.

"Turkey has tried to convince us of that at every level but so far it has not succeeded," Bruno Kahl was quoted as saying.

President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman said Kahl's comments were proof Germany was supporting Gulen's network, which Ankara refers to as the "Gülenist Terrorist Organization" or "FETO".

"It's an effort to invalidate all the information we have given them on FETO. It's a sign of their support for FETO," Ibrahim Kalin told broadcaster CNN Turk.

"Why are they protecting them? Because these are useful instruments for Germany to use against Turkey."

Germany and Turkey have



US based cleric Fethullah Gulen at his home in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, US on 29 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

been locked in a deepening row after Berlin banned some Turkish ministers from speaking to rallies of expatriate Turks ahead of a referendum next month, citing public safety concerns.

Kalin said there was a possibility Erdogan could plan a rally to address Turks in Germany before the 16 April referendum on changing the constitution, a move that would further heighten tensions with Berlin.

The constitutional change would give Erdogan sweeping new powers. Critics say it would

give him too much power

The Turkish government blames Gulen's network of followers in the military for the abortive putsch in July, when a group of rogue soldiers seized tanks, helicopters and war planes to attack parliament and attempt to overthrow the government. More than 240 people died in the attempt.

Gulen, a former Erdogan ally who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999, has denied the charges and condemned the coup.—Reuters

Syrian govt forces, rebels clash at east Damascus edges — monitor

BEIRUT — Syrian government forces battled rebel groups at the fringes of Damascus on Sunday, after the insurgents launched an attack from the east of the heavily fortified capital, a monitoring group said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the army and allied forces had engaged in heavy clashes with rebels in the Jobar district, at the eastern edge of Damascus. Insurgent groups attacked government positions in the area, including with two suicide car bombs, in an attempt to storm their defence lines, the Britain-based Observatory said.

The district stands between Damascus and the besieged rebel stronghold of Eastern Ghouta in the suburbs, which government air strikes have battered in recent weeks. Warplanes pounded the Jobar area on Sunday, while rebel shells hit several nearby districts in Damascus, including Bab Touma, Rukn al-Din and the Abbasiyin area, the Observatory said.

Syrian state television said the army was fighting to repel an attack by militants in Jobar.

Sounds of shelling and gunfire could be heard in Damascus since the morning, a resident said.—Reuters

Somalia asks Saudi coalition to investigate refugee boat attack

MOGADISHU — The Somali government condemned a helicopter attack on a boatload of Somali refugees off the coast of Yemen and called on the Saudi-led coalition fighting in the country to investigate, officials said on Saturday.

At least 40 Somali refugees were killed when a helicopter attacked the boat they were travelling in late on Thursday, the United Nations refugee agency said.

It was not immediately clear who carried out the attack. "The prime minister condemns the unfair killing of the Somalis who were sailing on the shores of Yemen ... the victims were innocent, unarmed and were mostly women and children," Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairi's office said in a statement.

"The prime minister has ordered an investigation of the act and those behind it," the statement said.—Reuters

Deputy director of Britain's MI5 to head GCHQ spy agency

LONDON — The deputy director-general of Britain's internal security service is to become the new head of intelligence eavesdropping service GCHQ, the Sunday Times newspaper reported without citing the source of its information.

The Sunday Times reported MI5's Jeremy Fleming, who it said had worked at the intelligence agency for at least 20 years, would be named GCHQ head this week. The previous head of GCHQ, Robert Hannigan, who had been in post since 2014, said in January he was stepping down for family reasons. Last week, in a rare public statement, GCHQ dismissed claims made on a US television station that

it helped former President Barack Obama eavesdrop on Donald Trump after last year's US presidential election. On Friday Trump stood by the unproven claims and shrugged off a dispute with Britain over the notion their spy agency had a hand in it.

"Jeremy will be expected to make a trip to the US very early on to seek reassurances from our partners," the Sunday Times reported an anonymous source as saying. "It'll be important to remind our partners there that more consideration and respect need to be afforded to the intelligence communities by the Trump administration." GCHQ could not immediately be reached for comment.—Reuters

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chel-lan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 27th MARCH 2017 (Armed Forces Day), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

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Dated 20 March 2017

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Russia to float out 4th Borey-class submarine in second quarter of 2017

MOSCOW — The fourth Borey-class strategic submarine will be floated out in the second quarter of this year, Vice-President for Warship Construction of Russia's United Ship-Building Corporation Igor Ponomaryov said on Friday.

"The Project 955A Borey-class nuclear-powered underwater strategic cruiser Prince Vladimir is planned to be floated out in the second quarter of this year," he said.

The sub's delivery to the customer "will take place in accordance with the approved schedule," he said.

The Corporation's vice-president for warship construction also said that the second Project 885 Yasen-class multipurpose nuclear submarine "will be floated out in the first quarter of this year."

As a source in the defense and industrial sector told TASS, the second Yasen-class submarine was planned to be float-



Project 955A Borey-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine. PHOTO: TASS

ed out on 30 March and the fourth Borey-class sub in August-September this year.

The Prince Vladimir was laid down in 2012 and will become the fourth submarine in the series of eight Borey-class underwater cruisers and the first submarine of the improved Borey-A Project. Three

submarines of this class have already been delivered to the Navy. Each such submarine carries 16 Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The Yasen-class fourth-generation multipurpose nuclear-powered submarines have been designed by the St Petersburg-based Malakhit

Design Bureau of Marine Engineering. The first Project 885 underwater cruiser Severodvinsk was delivered to the Russian Navy on 17 June, 2014 and underwent operational evaluation until the spring of 2016. Overall, seven submarines of this class are scheduled to be built.—TASS

Chinese police boss jailed for buying Australian property with graft money

SHANGHAI — A Chinese court has sentenced a senior police officer to 17 years in prison for his part in a bribes-for-projects scandal, proceeds from which were used to buy two homes in Australia, according to court documents.

The corruption case comes amid an Australian government crackdown on foreign investors who have

skirted overseas investment rules.

The 59-year-old police boss of Guta district of Jinzhou City in the north-eastern Chinese province of Liaoning accepted a total of 6.8 million yuan (\$985,510) in bribes for contracts, according to the court documents published in early March.

He used part of the money to buy two Aus-

tralian properties for his family.

In 2009, Wang accepted a bribe of 2.36 million yuan from a developer to buy a property in Australia for his eldest daughter.

He accepted a second bribe of 4 million yuan from the same person in 2013 to buy a second house for his second daughter, the court said. Wang doled out construction projects

in return for the bribes, it said.

The use of loopholes in Australian property rules by foreign investors has left the country grappling with the politically sensitive issue of unaffordable homes and a surge of cash from wealthy Chinese that has prompted regulators to consider tighter anti-money laundering rules.—Reuters

Indian police kills 6 Naxals in Chhattisgarh gunfight

NEW DELHI — Six Naxals were killed and two policemen wounded on Saturday in a fierce gunfight in India's central state of Chhattisgarh, police said.

The gunfight broke out at Dantewada district, about 350 km south of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

"Today six armed insurgents were killed in Dantewada district," a police official said. "The District Reserve Group (DRG) of police was on a search operation in Bur-gum- Toyapara hills near Aranpur of southern Bastar

region when the maoists fired upon them this afternoon. The team responded swiftly and has succeeded in killing at least six Naxals."

Police officials claim they have recovered three bodies and three assault rifles from the spot.

According to police, the two DRG Jawans were removed to the nearest medical facility for treatment.

Reports said paramilitary reinforcements were rushed to the area and stand-off was going on between Naxals and police-

men when the last reports poured in.

Naxalites are also known as "Maoists".

Maoist insurgency has its genesis in the violent left-wing rebellion that began in 1967 at village Naxalbari in the Indian state of West Bengal.

Currently Maoists are active in more than a third of the total 600-odd districts across central and eastern India.

Former prime minister Manmohan Singh once termed the Naxalite movement as India's "greatest internal security challenge."

New Delhi has deployed several companies of its paramilitary forces to take on Naxals in their strongholds.

The insurgency reportedly has claimed more than 6,000 lives and rendered thousands of poor inhabitants homeless.

Last week 12 personnel of India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed and five others wounded after Naxals ambushed them in adjacent Sukma district. The Naxals later looted 10 service rifles from the slain troopers.—Xinhua

Abe vows beef-up of defence, calls N Korea missiles “serious threat”



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2nd from L) attends a graduation ceremony at the National Defence Academy in Yokosuka, southwest of Tokyo, on 19 March, 2017.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday reiterated his intention to strengthen Japan's defence capability, citing the “severe” security environment surrounding Japan, including North Korea's recent test-firing of missiles.

Speaking at the National Defence Academy, Abe said North Korea's launching of four ballistic missiles on 6 March, all of which fell within or near Japan's exclusive economic zone in the Sea of Japan, posed “a very serious situation in terms of our country's security.”

“As the security environment becomes severe, we must enhance our own

defence capability and aim to expand the role we can play,” the premier said at a graduation ceremony at the academy in Yokosuka, southwest of Tokyo.

Touching on the recent decision to end the Self-Defence Forces' participation in a peacekeeping mission in South Sudan at the end of May, Abe hailed Japanese troops' contribution to the African country.

He said their five-year participation in the mission was the “largest-ever achievement” by Japanese peacekeepers.

Abe announced on 10 March that Japan will pull

SDF personnel out of conflict-torn South Sudan, citing a diminishing need for the troops' help in building infrastructure.

Defence Minister Tomomi Inada, who also attended the graduation ceremony, criticized China's growing assertiveness in the South and East China seas.

China has strengthened maritime assertiveness “by unilaterally changing the status quo and handling the matter as accomplished facts,” Inada said.

“We have strong concern about the future direction” of China, she added.—Kyodo News

Netanyahu's rift with finance minister fuels talk of early Israeli election

JERUSALEM — A dispute between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his finance minister over broadcast regulation sparked speculation on Sunday that Netanyahu could seek an election two years ahead of schedule.

A national vote could delay any US peace moves under new President Donald Trump and also put off Netanyahu's possible indictment over suspected corruption.

The speculation came after Netanyahu said late on Saturday that he was abandoning an agreement with Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, a key coalition partner, on establishing a new public broadcasting authority to replace the existing one.

Netanyahu cited concerns over job losses for his abrupt change of heart.

The prime minister flew to China for a three-day official visit on Sunday, leaving behind talk of a coalition crisis and an early election in Israeli newspapers.

The Israeli media quoted Netanyahu as telling ministers from his Likud party that he would dissolve the government if Kahlon didn't fall into line. Kahlon heads the Kulanu party, a centre-right partner in Netanyahu's Li-

kud-led coalition.

Some commentators said Netanyahu hoped a snap election would postpone a decision, expected within weeks, by the attorney general on possible criminal charges.

Others speculated that Netanyahu, after a visit by a US envoy last week, was unsettled by the course the Trump administration might set in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts and wanted to delay diplomacy.

Netanyahu, 67, is a suspect in two cases, one involving the receipt of gifts from businessmen and the other related to conversations he held with an Israeli newspaper publisher about limiting competition in the news sector in exchange for more positive coverage.

No charges have yet been brought against Netanyahu, who was reelected two years ago and has denied wrongdoing.

Israel is not due to hold a general election until November 2019 but many coalition governments have not lasted a full term.

“A decision to call new elections will suspend the investigations and might even do away with them,” commentator Nahun Barnea wrote in the Yedioth Ahronoth daily.

“If he survives (the ballot) he will argue ... the people have cleared him of any wrongdoing. And then he will form the same coalition he has grown fed up with today,” Barnea said.

Yariv Levin, a Likud cabinet minister, denied any link between Netanyahu's decision on the broadcasting authority and the police probes.

Under coalition agreements, Likud has the final word on communications issues, Levin told Army Radio. Two other Likud ministers voiced opposition to an early ballot.

In the Maariv newspaper, commentator Ben Caspit said a new election would buy Netanyahu another six to 12 months to gear up for an “ultimate deal” from Trump on peace with the Palestinians and the future of Jewish settlements.

“(Netanyahu) now realises just how misplaced the right wing's adulation over Donald Trump the Messiah was,” Caspit wrote.

Trump has rolled back on any quick move of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a city at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and has called on Netanyahu to “hold back on settlements for a bit”.—Reuters

No other countries will quit EU after Britain: EU chief Juncker

BERLIN — European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker is not worried about other EU countries leaving the bloc after Britain because Brexit will make them see it is not a good option, he said in a newspaper interview.

Asked by Bild am Sonntag newspaper if other member states would follow Britain's example in quitting, Juncker said: “No. Britain's example will make everyone realise that it's not

worth leaving.”

He added: “On the contrary, the remaining member states will fall in love with each other again and renew their vows with the European Union.”

The EU's 27 leaders plan to declare “Europe is our common future” during a meeting in Rome next week to mark 60 years of the bloc.

Juncker said Britain would need to get used to

being treated as a non-member.

“Half memberships and cherry-picking aren't possible. In Europe you eat what's on the table or you don't sit at the table,” he added.

Juncker said more countries would join the EU in future, although not during his time in office, which runs until 2019, because none of the candidates fulfils the conditions yet.—Reuters

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Rock 'n' roll pioneer Chuck Berry dead at 90

NEW YORK — Chuck Berry, who duck-walked his way into the pantheon of rock 'n' roll pioneers as one of its most influential guitarists and lyricists, creating raucous anthems that defined the genre's sound and heartbeat, died on Saturday at his Missouri home. He was 90.

Police in St Charles County, outside St Louis, said they were called to Berry's home by a caretaker and found him unresponsive. Efforts to revive him failed and he was pronounced dead at 1:26 p.m. local time.

Considered one of the founding fathers of rock 'n' roll, Charles Edward

Anderson Berry was present at its infancy in the 1950s and emerged as its first star guitarist and songwriter - a nearly 30-year-old black performer whose style electrified young white audiences and was emulated by white performers who came

to dominate American popular music.

Although Elvis Presley was called the king of rock 'n' roll, that crown would have fit just as well on Berry's own carefully sculpted pompadour.

Berry hits such as "Johnny B Goode," "Roll Over Beethoven," "Sweet Little Sixteen," "Maybelene" and "Memphis" melded elements of blues, rockabilly and jazz into some of the most timeless pop songs of the 20th century.

He was a monumental in-

fluence on just about any kid who picked up a guitar with rock star aspirations - Keith Richards, Paul McCartney, John Lennon and Bruce Springsteen among them.

Bob Dylan called Berry "the Shakespeare of rock 'n' roll," and he was one of the first popular acts to write as well as perform his own songs. They focused on youth, romance, cars and good times, with lyrics that were complex, humorous and sometimes a little raunchy.

Both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, as well as the Beach Boys and scores of other acts - even Elvis - covered Berry's songs. "If you tried to give rock 'n' roll another name,"

Lennon once said, "you might call it 'Chuck Berry'."

Paying tribute to Berry on Twitter on Saturday, Springsteen called him "rock's greatest practitioner, guitarist, and the greatest pure rock 'n' roll writer who ever lived."

Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger tweeted: "Chuck you were amazing & your music

is engraved inside us forever."

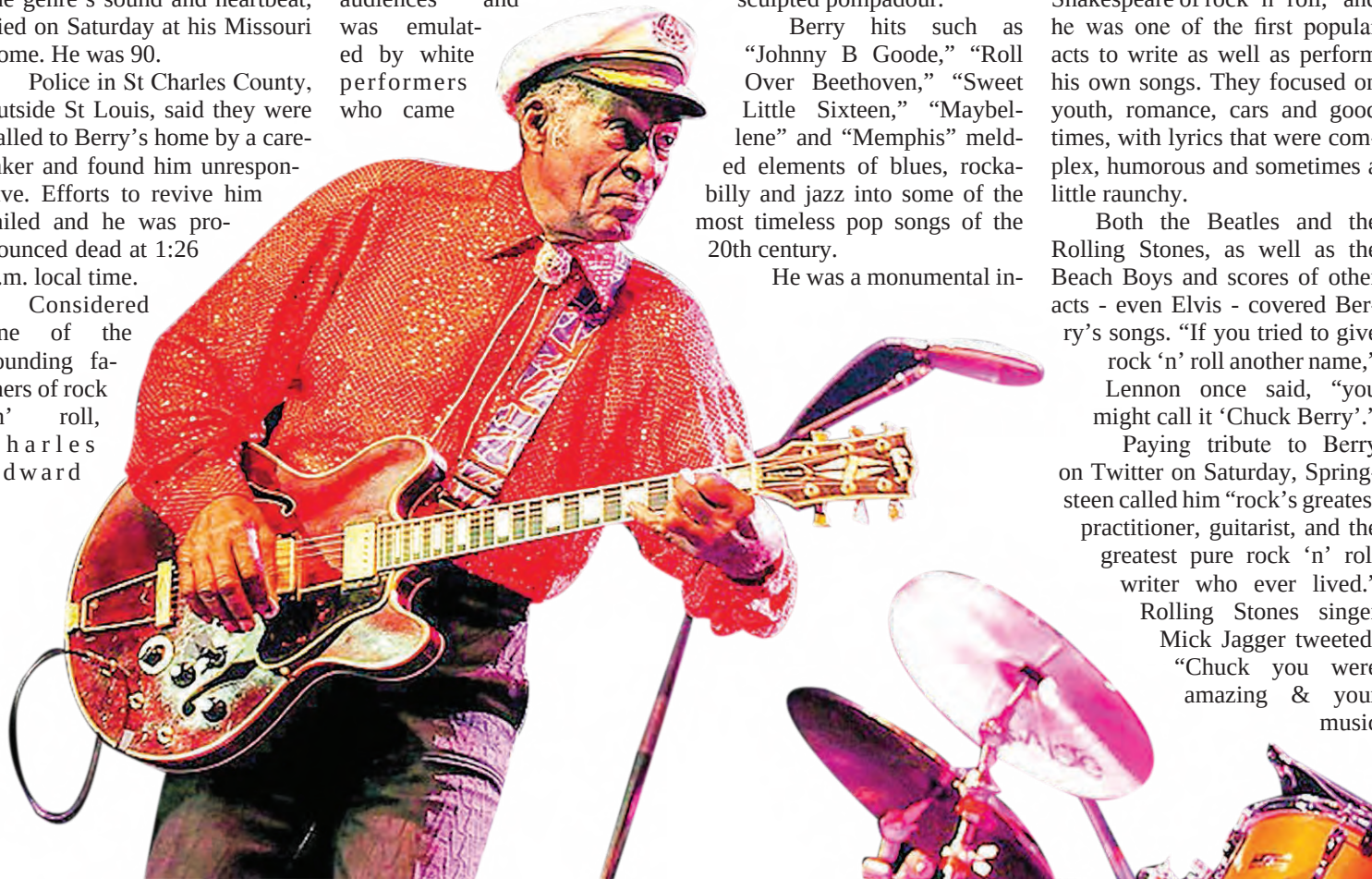
When Richards inducted Berry into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, he said: "It's very difficult for me to talk about Chuck Berry because I've lifted every lick he ever played. This is the gentleman who started it all."

His death came five months after Berry announced plans to release his first album of new music in 38 years some time in 2017 — a collection of mostly original material recorded and produced by Berry, titled "Chuck" and dedicated to his wife of 68 years, Themetta "Toddy" Berry.

"My darlin' I'm growing old! I've worked on this record for a long time. Now I can hang up my shoes," Berry wrote in a statement for the occasion, coinciding with his 90th birthday.

Berry listed T-Bone Walker, Carl Hogan of Louis Jordan's band and Charlie Christian from Benny Goodman's band among his guitar influences, but his lyrical style was all his own. Punchy wordplay and youth-oriented subject matter earned him the nickname "the eternal teenager" early in his career. His legacy was tarnished, however, by his reputation as a prickly penny-pincher and various run-ins with the law, including sex-related offenses after he achieved stardom.

—Reuters



The musician, who was found unresponsive on Saturday afternoon, was pronounced dead later. PHOTO: TASS

Depeche Mode return with new album 'Spirit'

BERLIN — Depeche Mode are back, releasing their 14th studio album which the British synth-pop musicians describe as "bleak".

The Syrian conflict and rise of nationalism in Europe are cited by the band as inspiration for their songs on "Spirit". "I think it is a quite bleak album, it doesn't view humanity very kindly but ... by calling it 'Spirit', maybe that helps to get us back on the right path," guitarist and keyboardist Martin Gore told Reuters in an interview.

"We knew it was a little bit dangerous to make an album that could be construed as being political but we felt that it was necessary in these times."

The group, which was formed in the 1980s, premiered their latest work at a Berlin concert on Friday night. The first single "Where's the Revolution?" was inspired in 2015. "The world was not as bad as it is today but there were a lot of things going on, one of the big things for me was Syria, maybe it's got worse but it was awful back then," Gore said.

"Nationalism is popular again... Remember the last time we saw nationalism before the Second World War, and there's potential for some really bad things to happen," keyboardist Andrew Fletcher said, adding the group were "not known for mak-

ing political statements."

The band say they were "baffled" by comments by alt-right leader Richard Spencer, who was quoted calling Depeche Mode "the official band of the alt-right". Spencer later wrote on Twitter he was "joking" and that he was "a lifelong Depeche Mode fan".

"You can look at any of our albums, any of our songs and we're a very left-leaning band," Gore said.

"I personally think he said it as a bit of a joke because there is nothing in our lyrics or what we've said over the years to even put us anywhere near that," Fletcher added.—Reuters



Singer Dave Gahan (L) and guitarist Martin Gore of English electronic music band Depeche Mode perform at the Optimus Alive Festival in Alges, on the outskirts of Lisbon on 13 July, 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

Dragon not a typical superhero film

MUMBAI — Alia Bhatt will next be seen in Ayan Mukherji's sci-fi fantasy film "Dragon" and the actress says there is a lot of action in the movie but it is just not like any other superhero film. The film is said to have a mythological backdrop. "There will be lot of action around me. I don't think I will be beating up anybody. It is not a typical superhero film. It's a sci-fi, supernatural film," Alia told PTI.

The 24-year-old star says all the actors and people working on the film requires a lot of prep work to understand the world of this film. "There will be some extensive prep work not for the acting part much but for the world, it's a new world. There is no dialect or anything that we have to learn," she says. "Ayan said there is no Ranbir and Alia there in the film, there is just one character, it is that tighter love story," she says. Joining them in the tentatively titled film "Dragon" will be megastar Amitabh Bachchan in a pivotal role and the "Dear Zindagi" actress hopes she has a few scenes to do with him. She says the shooting of the film will begin after Ranbir wraps up Rajkumar Hirani's biopic on Sanjay Dutt. —PTI



Alia Bhatt

PHOTO: REUTERS

Visitors to Universal Studios Japan hit record high in FY 2016

OSAKA — Movie theme park Universal Studios Japan in Osaka attracted a record number of visitors in fiscal 2016, with new attractions based on Japanese animation “One Piece” and the “Jurassic Park” film series the main draw, operator USJ Co said on Friday.

The company is projecting total visitors to the amusement park on Osaka’s seafloor at 14.50 million in the current business year ending this month, topping the previous record of 13.90 million visitors in fiscal 2015 and setting a new high for the third consecutive year.

Shows based on smash-hit manga series “One Piece,” which started in July, and a roller coaster associated with the “Jurassic Park” movie series that



Universal Studios Japan in Osaka celebrates on March 17, 2017, after attracting a record number of visitors in fiscal 2016. The theme park’s operator expects visitors to total 14.5 million in the year ending March 31, up from the previous record of 13.9 million in fiscal 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

began operating in March 2016 proved popular, it said.

USJ also attributed the rise in visitors to commemorative events last summer to mark the 15th anniversary of the theme park’s opening.

A time-limited attraction based on the role-playing video game “Dragon Quest” also started Friday, with visitors able to battle monsters using weapons from the game.

A new area featuring Nintendo Co video game characters will open by around 2020. Tokuhei Murata, an executive officer of USJ, said the operator hopes to increase the number of visitors by 2 million to 3 million through this and other projects. —Kyodo News

JR East’s luxury train unveiled to public

TOKYO — A luxury sleeper train, which is being touted as an example of Japanese-style modernity and aims to have passengers experience the vibrancy and depth of the country’s four seasons, has been unveiled to the public.

East Japan Railway Co will begin operating trips in May on the 10-car Train Suite Shiki-Shima, which was open for public viewing on Thursday.

Tickets will cost up to around \$8,000 and take passengers from Ueno Station through parts of Japan, including the northernmost main island of Hokkaido and the Tohoku northeastern region.

Package tours using super-luxury trains have been attracting passengers such as retired couples and foreign tourists. Kyushu Railway Co ventured into

the new business in 2013, introducing the Seven Stars superliner for tours through famous destinations on the southwestern main island, while West Japan Railway Co. will begin operating its Twilight Express Mizukaze in June.

Features of the Shiki-Shima Suite and Deluxe Suite rooms include a bathtub made of Japanese cypress. The Shiki-Shima Suite room is a duplex, with a bed on the first floor and a Japanese-style room with tatami mats on the second floor. An accessible suite is available for passengers with disabilities.

The wall pattern in the train’s lounge elicits an image of a serene forest, while the luxuriant dining room will serve cuisine with ingredients from the eastern Japan region and has large windows between each ta-

ble to view the outside scenery. There are observatory cars at the front and rear of the train.

Most of the furnishings in the cars, such as the seats and lighting, were produced by companies in areas that the train will travel through. Passengers will be offered the use of an exclusive lounge at the terminal

in Tokyo. East Japan Railway will offer a four-day, three-night journey through Hokkaido, Tohoku and other areas and a two-day, one-night trip, mainly through Yamanashi, Nagano and Niigata prefectures.

Tickets for the longer trip will cost up to 950,000 yen (about \$8,300) per person. —Kyodo News



Photo taken on 16 March 2017, at JR Ueno Station in Tokyo shows the dining room inside Train Suite Shiki-Shima, East Japan Railway Co.’s new luxury sleeper train. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Rodin marble masterpiece ‘Andromeda’ up for auction in Paris

PARIS — French sculptor Auguste Rodin’s newly re-discovered marble masterpiece titled “Andromeda” will be up for sale in Paris in May, auction house, Artcurial, said on Friday.

The auctioning of the sculpture is of particular importance as it has remained in the hands of the same family for roughly 130 years, according to the director of Artcurial’s impressionist and modern art department, Bruno Jaubert.

Rodin, renowned the world over for works like his bronze “The Thinker” and “The Kiss” made from marble, gave his sculpture of the mythical woman Andromeda to a friend and

client, a Chilean diplomat living in Paris in the late 19th Century.

“The family who received it as a present from Rodin in 1888, from generation to generation, conserved it until 2017,” Jaubert explained, proudly adding that he and a colleague found it earlier this year during an inventory in Spain.

The sculpture is estimated to auction for between 800,000 and 1 million euros (\$859,400 to \$1.07 million US dollars) and will be on exhibition at the auction house from 18 to 28 March, coinciding with the centenary of Rodin’s death in 1917. —Reuters



The marble ‘Andromeda’ by French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) is displayed at the auction house Artcurial in Paris, France on 17 March, 2017 which is set to be auctioned in Paris on May 30. PHOTO: REUTERS

Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(20-3-2017 07:00am ~ 21-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Exquisite Myanmar Silk
07:45	Am	Traditional Thatch Roof - Thet Nge
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	A Way of Life: Karate-do
08:39	Am	YUFL
08:53	Am	Young Talents: Animator Swan Thura Htun
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar’s Traditions and Culture Novicehood in Myanmar
09:49	Am	Well-Trained Elephants
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Clam Farming
10:43	Am	Myanmar Childhood Games (Episode-1)
10:52	Am	Black Gold (Part-1)

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

Prime Time			
07:03	Pm	News	
07:27	Pm	Food Trip (EP-4)(Part-2)	
07:51	Pm	Yoghurt Vendor	
08:03	Pm	News	
08:26	Pm	Discovering Tribes- Bwe	
08:54	Pm	Myanmar Chef (Japanese)	
(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) -	Today Repeat	(09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)	
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)-	Sunday Repeat	(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)	
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -	Today Repeat	(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)	

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

Chelsea march on, Arsenal's Wenger will soon reveal his future after loss



Chelsea manager Antonio Conte celebrates after the game. PHOTO: REUTERS

Chelsea's Gary Cahill celebrates scoring their second goal. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Chelsea continued their seemingly irresistible surge towards regaining the Premier League title as a late Gary Cahill goal saw them eke out a 2-1 win at Stoke City and move 13 points clear of their pursuers on Saturday. The latest triumph for Antonio Conte's unstoppable charges came after London rivals Arsenal's season continued to unravel with a third straight 3-1 away league defeat, this time at West Bromwich Albion.

The Gunners' fourth loss in five league games raised further questions about the future of under-pressure manager Arsene Wenger, who announced intriguingly afterwards: "I know what I will do. You will soon know".

Conte had been without the in-form Eden Hazard through injury for what always promised to be an awkward fix-

ture for Chelsea at Stoke and, just as they had recently held Manchester City at home, the Potters again made life difficult.

Willian put the leaders ahead after 13 minutes thanks to a blunder by Stoke goalkeeper Lee Grant but Jon Walters equalised with a penalty before halftime after being fouled by Cahill.

The England defender made amends in the 87th minute with a deserved winner and, after Phil Bardsley had been sent off for Stoke in added time, Conte celebrated with his staff on the touchline as Chelsea moved on to 69 points, leaving all the pressure on their nearest pursuers who play on Sunday.

Second-placed Tottenham Hotspur, who host Southampton, and third-placed Manchester City, who welcome fourth-placed Liverpool to the Etihad Sta-

dium, now both have to win to get back within 10 points of the leaders. Arsenal's defeat came amid more protests from some of the more vociferous of the Gunners' faithful about Wenger as the manager acknowledged that his side were in the middle of "a unique bad patch" in his two-decade managerial reign.

After dismal defending saw West Brom's Craig Dawson head home twice from corners in a convincing win for Tony Pulis's men, Wenger told reporters: "We lose game after game at the moment and that for me is much more important than my future."

Yet as the debates about his prospects became ever louder — one airplane trailed a banner over the ground that declared "Wenger Out" while another trumpeted "In Arsene We Trust" — the Frenchman said he would clarify his

future soon. His team, though, now look in serious jeopardy of not enjoying a 20th successive season of Champions League football in 2017-18 — and if Manchester United win at Middlesbrough on Sunday, Arsenal, currently fifth on 50 points, will drop to sixth, two points behind Jose Mourinho's men. Basement club Sunderland were held 0-0 at home to poor travellers Burnley, while third-bottom Hull City were trounced 4-0 by Everton, for whom league-leading scorer Romelu Lukaku scored twice in added time, taking his season's tally to 21. The Belgian became the first Toffees' striker to hit 20 league goals in a season, since Gary Lineker 31 years ago, though his goals were bitter-sweet for Everton fans who know he could leave after this week rejecting a new contract offer.—Reuters



Leicester City manager Craig Shakespeare. PHOTO: REUTERS

Leicester continue revival under Shakespeare

LONDON — Leicester City continued their revival under new manager Craig Shakespeare as a 3-2 win at West Ham United on Saturday gave the English champions their first away league win of the season.

Shakespeare's fourth successive victory in all competitions since he took over from Italian Claudio Ranieri last month left Leicester in 14th position on 30 points from 28 games, six above the relegation zone.

The visitors produced a su-

perb first half as early goals by Riyad Mahrez and centre back Robert Huth gave them a 2-0 lead and Jamie Vardy made it 3-1 after Manuel Lanzini had pulled one back with a brilliant free kick.

The Foxes were on the back foot after Andrew Ayew headed in West Ham's second and goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel producing two stunning saves to deny Andy Carroll while Ayew blasted over the bar with the goal at his mercy.—Reuters

Srisaket wins WBC super flyweight title in bloody decision

NEW YORK — Srisaket Sor Rungvisai of Thailand won a majority decision over Nicaraguan champion Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez in a bloody, 12-round slugfest to win the World Boxing Council super flyweight title on Saturday.

It was non-stop action at Madison Square Garden with both boxers punching relentlessly, and the previously unbeaten Gonzalez covered in blood from a clash of heads that gave him a deep gash near his right eyebrow in the third round.

Two judges scored it 114-112 for Srisaket, while the other judged it 113-113.

Srisaket improved to 42-4-1, while Gonzalez dropped to 46-1 in the co-featured bout on the card ahead of the middleweight championship match between Gennady Golovkin and Daniel Jacobs.

Srisaket set the tone early, knocking Gonzalez down with a short, powerful right to the body in the first round, the first time since 2006 that the Nicaraguan had hit the canvas.

An accidental butt of heads in the third round opened a deep gash on Gonzalez, who fought with heightened urgency from then on as blood covered the right side of his face.

The Thai left-hander kept working on the area of the cut, and the corner had trouble stemming the flow of blood.

Gonzalez had Srisaket in trouble in sixth when he followed up a thudding left to the body with a left to the jaw. Trapped in the corner, the challenger knocked heads again and was deducted a point for the head butt.

Chocolatito fought on gamely despite the blood that also stained his chest as the two battled fiercely to the end.

Earlier on the undercard, Carlos Cuadras, who once owned WBC crown improved to 36-1-1 mark with a 10-round unanimous decision over gritty fellow Mexican David Carmona, who slipped to 20-4-5.

Undefeated Ryan Martin improved to 18-0 by stopping fellow American Bryant Cruz (17-2) at 45 seconds of the eighth round in a 10-round lightweight clash.—Reuters