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Released prisoners have a tearful reunion with families and friends after their release from prison as part of an amnesty deal following the end of the UPC. PHOTO: MNA

LET SOME PEOPLE GO

Prisoners released in amnesty deal to mark successful completion of first Union Peace Conference

ONE hundred and two prisoners were granted their freedom in honour of the successful completion of the first Union Peace Conference yesterday, according to the Ministry of

Home Affairs.

One foreign prisoner was among the prisoners released in an amnesty in accord with the sub-section (a) of the section 204 of the Constitution. The

foreign prisoner was released in view of maintaining bilateral friendship and relations, said the ministry.

The amnesty is aimed at allowing the citizen prisoners to

serve the national and regional interest and their own interest as well in cooperation with the people after understanding the state's goodwill, added the ministry.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Kyauk Pyu SEZ still in discussion phase

DISCUSSIONS are still being held between companies successful with tender bids for the Kyauk Pyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the Kyauk Pyu SEZ bid evaluation committee on the framework of an agreement in order to start the SEZ project, according to the commission.

The chairperson of the SEZ management committee, U Myint Thein, stated on 8 January that the implementation of the Kyauk Pyu SEZ, located seven miles from the township of the same name in Rakhine State and in the vicinity of Min Pyin, Kyaung Wa villages and Yenan mountain, project is still currently only in a discussion phase.

"We haven't done anything yet. Meetings are being held. The tender process has been completed but the responsibility are still being discussed, such as a framework agreement with those who made successful tender bids. There are many things to do yet on the information included in the contract. As for implementation [of the SEZ], we'll be able to start only once these things have been finished," explained U Ba Shwe, member of the Kyauk Pyu SEZ bid evaluation committee.

A vote was held in union parliament over the construction of the Kyauk Pyu SEZ, which resulted in a majority, 424 votes, in favor of the project with just 23 voting against it. The confirmation of the demarcated area of the site was then confirmed on 29 December, 2015.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw passes three bills

PYIDAUNGsu Hluttaw yesterday passed three bills, including the financial institutions bill, which was sent back to the parliament with presidential remarks.

The financial institutions bill came under discussion, with MPs going over it clause by clause and seeking parliamentary approval.

Finance Union Minister U

Win Shein proposed approving the Union tax bill of 2016, with Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann announcing the approval of the bill by parliament. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also passed the condominium bill, which sparked disagreement between the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw speaker meets Indian ambassador

PYIDAUNGsu Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann met the Ambassador of India to Myanmar Mr. Gautam Mukhopadhyaya at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning, officials said.

At the meeting, the speaker was accompanied by Pyithu Hluttaw's International Relations Committee Chairman U HlaMyintOo and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Japanese bank donates cash for further implementation of MWCDF's activities

THE Mizuho Bank donated US\$10,000 to the Myanmar Women and Child Development Federation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to further implement the latter's activities fostering maternal and child development in the country.

Daw Su Nyunt Oo, MW-CDF's Central Executive Com-

mittee member, and party received Mr. Tetsuro Nonaka of the Bank and members and elaborated on the ongoing work of the federation.

Following the cash donation ceremony, the CEC member presented gifts to the delegation of the Mizuho Bank.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar hosts secure Mekong navigation meeting

THE 14th Joint Committee on Coordination of Commercial Navigation on the Lancang-Mekong River (JCCCN) continued yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, with four participant countries signing a meeting agreement.

The representatives of Myanmar, China, Laos and Thailand gathered at the meeting to seek ways to secure the upper reaches of the Mekong river for com-

mercial navigation as part of the implementing of the international waterway development plan aimed at enhancing the safety of the navigation systems, promoting trade cooperation, carrying out rescue works and transporting and delivering oil and its products. For the third time, Myanmar will host the 15th JCCCN meeting in Mandalay Region next year.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Coordination of Commercial Navigation on the Lancang-Mekong River (JCCCN). PHOTO: MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets former Chilean President



Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets former Chilean President Mr. Ricardo Froilan Lagos Escobar. PHOTO: MNA

SPEAKER of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Mr. Ricardo Froilan Lagos Escobar, former Chilean President and member of World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present at the call were U HlaMyintOo, chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee, members of Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission and officials of the Hluttaw Office.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets former Chilean President

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Mr. Ricardo Froilan Lagos Escobar, former Chilean President and member of the World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call, they exchanged views on peace and stability in the post-election period, the peacemaking process in cooperation with the new government and further tasks for ensuring peace and development in the country.

Also present were Deputy

Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, senior military officers from the Commander-in-Chief Office, Ms Maria Elena Aguero, Deputy Secretary-General of the Club de Madrid and officials.—*Myawady*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for documentary photo along with Mr. Ricardo Froilan Lagos Escobar, former Chilean President and member of the World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid. PHOTO: MNA

World Peace Buddhist Conference's messages, discussions available at Sitagu website

MESSAGES and discussions of Myanmar and international Buddhist monks who are attending the World Buddhist Peace

Conference are available at the website www.thesitagu.org for readers. The conference is being held at Sitagu International Bud-

dhist Academy at Sagaing Hill in Sagaing, Sagaing Region as of yesterday.—*Myanmar News Agency*

JICA and MoE draw up 2017 - 2018 first grade curriculum

THE Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) the aid wing of the Japanese government will work together with the Ministry of Education to draw up a first grade curriculum for the coming academic year of 2017-2018.

Kindergarten will be taught with a new curriculum in this year of 2016-2017. Efforts are being made to draw up a new first grade curriculum of the coming academic year so that those current kindergarten students will be able to

continue their schooling following a new curriculum.

"It's been drawn up with the technical assistance of JICA so that those kindergarten children currently learning from the new curriculum will be able to continue following it once they reach first grade," said Dr. Win Aung, member of the curriculum committee.

It is known from the Ministry of Education that the kindergarten curriculum took JICA, together with Myanmar education experts,

roughly about three years to complete. "It's good that the changes have been made to the curriculum to keep it up to date. However, we don't want this curriculum just to be a trail on the students. It's also important that it's taught with effort. Only then will the level of education reach that of an international standard. There's also a need for wide ranging discussions with parents," said a mother from Yangon's Pazundaung township.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Four sublime states matter for peace and prosperity

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein attended the World Buddhist Peace Conference held at Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing yesterday.

Before his presence at the conference, the President paid homage to the Sacred Bone Relic of Buddha which was conveyed to Myanmar from India and is currently staying at the Academy.

Members of the Sangha led by Chairman Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhivamsa, Rector Sayadaw Dr Nandamarlabhivamsa, Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Ashin Nannisara and the Tibetan Sayadaw were present at the conference together with religious leaders of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam and local and foreign Buddhist experts.

First, the Chairman Sayadaw, Sitagu Sayadaw and the President lit the peace light and Tibetan monks recited the Buddhist verses.

Next, Sitagu Sayadaw extended greetings and President U Thein Sein supplicated religious matters.



World Buddhist Peace Conference in Sagaing. PHOTO: MNA

Following the representatives reading out the messages to the conference, Sitagu Sayadaw presented the peace flag to the President.

Accompanied by the Union ministers and officials, the President then paid homage to Buddha

images at Sitagu Vipassana Pagoda and observed construction works.

Next, the President and party visited Jade Pagoda in Amarapura Township Mandalay Region.

The World Buddhist Peace Conference is set to run for three

days from 22 to 24 January, involving more than 600 attendees that include foreign experts, local monks, religious leaders and observers. Paper reading session is also set to be held at the conference where resource persons from 52 countries will read out 67

Kyauk Pyu SEZ still in...

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The following day, an announcement was made by the Chinese consortium CITIC, composed of three Chinese companies and one Thai company, that they were given permission to construct a deep sea port, industrial zone and three housing projects within the Kyaute Phyu district wide developmental project.

The conduction of field studies in the area where the SEZ is to be implemented are yet to be carried out. However, consistent land purchases by businessmen of farmland and land plots around the area where the zone is to be constructed has caused a sudden sharp increase in land prices, according to local realtors.

A regional master plan of the SEZ, definitively drawn up by the CPG consultancy group of companies on September 24, 2015, was approved by union parliament during its nineteenth meeting of the same year.

Implementation began on the Kyauk Pyu regional project in 2012 and includes the townships of Kyauk Pyu, Yan Byay and Mann Aung.—Myitmakha News Agency

It's important to avoid the two extremes of greed and anger: President U Thein Sein

EVERY religion renders moral support to its followers and helps them to live a meaningful life, President U Thein Sein yesterday said at the World Buddhist Peace Conference at the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing Region.

Buddhism emphasises avoids the two extremes and takes the middle way, with the president describing the eventual emancipation from the rounds of rebirth as an eternal goal inspired by all Buddhists.

That goal is reachable by the arduous practice of morality, concentration and wisdom. The Buddha taught four sublime states of love, sympathy, delight and negligence that can ensure the way to peace, unity and prosperity. Not only is Buddhism indispensable to its followers but it also offers practical applications to all mankind, with no discrimination on grounds of colour, race and faith.

Globalisation has brought the whole world together, turning it into a multicultural society. Despite this, differences in skin colour, ideology and belief have triggered hate speeches flaming racial and religious tensions and giving rise to extremists.

The Great Discourse of Buddhism teaches the opposite exist-



President U Thein Sein and Sayadaws light candles at the World Buddhist Peace Conference. PHOTO: MNA

ence of anxiety and tranquility as well as dark and light. Trapped in ignorance, people find it difficult to distinguish the cause and effect of anxiety and its nature. Therefore, wars are like adding fuel to the flame.

Extremists are none but those

who set the world on fire. It is a natural phenomenon common to the people from different backgrounds. It is therefore important for religious leaders to encourage their followers to tread on the middle path and avoid all forms of extremes.

Middle way is the combination of morality, concentration and wisdom. I believe all the teachings of every religion call for not committing the evil bad deeds and founders of all the religions teach followers to avoid extremes and to concentrate on mental calmness.

I hope for world peace through personal peace with my belief that peace is possible if everyone takes the middle way encouraging to avoid the two extremes.

In June, 1954, former prime ministers of China, India and Myanmar adopted Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that became main points of the United Nations General Assembly and declarations of world organizations. The five principles are as follows:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful coexistence

From the point of view of a Buddhist, the five principles are involved in the four cardinal virtues taught by the Buddha. I believe the World Buddhist Peace Conference will help to bring an end to wars and violent events around the world and to contribute to ensuring world peace and personal peace for the world people.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish those present including monks who strive for successful holding of the conference health and happiness.

MDA launches dental and oral health awareness month in Mandalay

THE Myanmar Dental Association has launched the fourth dental and oral health awareness month in Mandalay in cooperation with Colgate-Palmolive yesterday.

The launching ceremony was

held at the Mingalar Mandalay, Chanmyathasi Township in Mandalay on Monday, attended by the chairman and members of the association, faculty members and students from the University of

Dental Medicine (Mandalay) and enthusiasts.

In his address, Dr Pwint Phu, chairman of the association, said the launch of the health awareness month could help increase awareness and promote dental and oral health services for women and children.

Dr. Sompong of Colgate said that today's event was the first step for promotion of dental and oral health care in Myanmar.

During the ceremony, attendees were provided with dental and oral health care services free of charges. According to the association, dentists are set to conduct dental and oral health care services at hospitals and clinics, numbering 379, in Yangon, Mandalay and other major cities during the period from 1st to 29th February.—*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*



Dentists give oral health care to attendees. PHOTO: THIHA KO KO

Offertories donated to monks in memory of U Ba Khin



Monks and lay persons attend a ceremony held in memory of U Ba Khin. PHOTO: AUNG THURA

THE international meditation centre in Bahan township, Yangon Region, donated food and offertories to members of the Sangh on Tuesday in commemoration of the demise of U Ba Khin, a pioneer in the propagation of insight meditation

across the world.

The centre was founded by U Ba Khin in 1951. Satya Narayan Goenka, an international instructor of Vipassana meditation, was his disciple. U Ba Khin passed away on 19 January 1971.—*AungThura*

Yadanabon University's sports event kicks off

A SPORTS event organized by Yadanabon University was opened at the Mandalay Thiri sports ground in Chanmyathasi Township in Mandalay on Monday.

Athletes from various majors at

the university are set to compete in the sports event.

The opening ceremony was held with an address by Mandalay Region Social Affairs Minister Dr Win Hlaing.

The Sports and Physical Education Institute (Mandalay) and Yadanabon University played a football match to mark the opening of the sports event.—*Maung Pyithu (Mandalay)*



Crime News

Police seized yabba pills and raw opium

LOCAL police at a Lauk kai check point seized 180 yabba pills (a synthetic-amphetamine

based stimulant) from a vehicle being driven by one Li Phin Kyai with Kyu Kwe Htone on board

on Wednesday.

Police also discovered 8 kilos of raw opium on a motorbike heading from Pin Laung to Phekon driven by one Ma Nan Khan Ti. Police elsewhere again seized yabba pills and opium at a motel in Myawaddy. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the Ever Green Motel and found Zaw Min Tun and motel manager Than Kyi in possession of 1702 yabba pills. The police station has filed charges against both suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Ma Nan Khan Ti. PHOTO: MPF

Heroin and Stimulants seized

A local anti-drug squad seized heroin at a hut in Seikmu village, Phakant township on Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched a hut inhabited by Ma Moh Moh Win, and found 0.165 kilos of heroin.

Similarly, an anti-drug squad in Magupyan seized 0.66kilos of heroin and 6,000 pills of stimulants from a motorbike on 19 January. The police stopped and searched the motorbike driven by Bo Lay near Magupyan village and

discovered the drugs hidden in the vehicle. Local police seized 10,000 tablets of stimulants in a motorbike driven by Maung Na at Pinlaung- Loikaw road, near milepost 58/0. Besides, police found 5,000 pills of stimulants in a motorbike driven by Yan Cho Hpone with Ma Kyu Khwe on board at NamKham township.

The police filed charges against them under the anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Bo Lay. PHOTO: MPF

Welding fire destroys three ships in Pathein

A fire that began due to welding sparks has destroyed three ships in Shwe Hnin Si ward, Pathein township on Thursday.

The accident occurred in the early morning on board a passen-

ger vessel called the Pyae Sone Kywe Wa. It is a 96 foot long, 24 foot wide vessel. A ship repairman on board showered sparks onto a nearby sofa chair while working. A fire quickly started

and got out of control, spreading to another two ships.

It took 12 fire engines and a team of firemen to put out the blaze. The police are investigating the case.—*(Pathein Hla Kyi)*

Man killed by elephant in Mandalay

A man was killed by an elephant that has run amok on Tuesday in Thabeikkyin township, Mandalay. According to an investigation, one Kyaw Soe Moe alias Htee Han

was attempting to move the elephant when it attacked U Maung San.

He succumbed to the injuries and died on the spot.—*Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)*

Militant attacks in Asia inject new urgency into US bomb training

CHA'AM, (Thailand) — A major Asian city is rocked by a car bomb as VIPs arrive for a summit. Nearby, a man on a motorbike detonates his suicide vest. People gather, emergency crews arrive — then a third explosion rips through the crowd.

That's the all-too-familiar scenario recently presented to a select group of Southeast Asian police officers at a US-funded training course on investigating blast scenes.

The two-week course, taught by experts from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), is held at least once a year in Thailand. But recent events have added new urgency to an otherwise routine training.

On 14 January, just days after the course began, Indonesian militants launched an attack in central Jakarta with pistols and home-made bombs. Eight people died, including the four militants.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, raising fears of more violence by the group's supporters across the region.

Five months before that, another improvised explosive device (IED) tore through a popular shrine in Bangkok, killing 20 people, most of them foreign tourists.

"The whole world knows

there is a bomb threat in Southeast Asia now," said Gunalan Muniandy, one of eight Malaysian police officers taking the course with counterparts from Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. "We better get prepared for the future."

Key to that preparation are four blast-shattered vehicles parked on a firing range near the Thai seaside town of Cha'am.

On Sunday, ATF personnel made three IEDs from everyday articles, including a frying pan, a toolbox, a doorbell switch and magnets from a loudspeaker.

They packed the devices with an explosive mixture called ammonium nitrate fuel oil, used in what are popularly known as "fertiliser bombs", or with military-grade C4 plastic explosive. Or both.

Two of the IEDs were attached to cars on the range. The third, a suicide vest made from an orthopaedic back brace, is strapped to a mannequin on a motorbike and placed next to a third car.

The IEDs were then detonated from a safe distance. When the suicide vest exploded, the nearby car was briefly engulfed in a fireball before reappearing as a smouldering wreck.

"Everyone in that car is dead," said Michael A. Eldredge,



Experts from the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) prepare improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which will be detonated during a course on blast scene investigation, near Hua Hin, Thailand, on 17 January. PHOTO : REUTERS

a veteran ATF bomb technician based in Baltimore who worked the bloody aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013.

The students arrive the next day for what Eldredge calls "scene processing": combing the debris for evidence to show what kind of bomb caused each explosion.

The design of IEDs is similar the world over, says Eldredge, with blueprints available on websites produced by al Qaeda, Islamic State and many other groups. But the materials change depending on the country. Those used by Eldredge's team to build today's IEDs were sourced in Thai stores

"to make it more realistic for the participants", he said.

An IED has five main components: switch, power source, initiator (fuse), container and the explosive itself. The first three alone can tell students whether high or low explosive was used, said Eldredge. —Reuters

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Park says 5-way talks needed on North Korea's denuclearisation



South Korean President Park Geun-hye. PHOTO: REUTERS

SEOUL — South Korean President Park Geun-hye said yesterday it is necessary to hold talks among South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia to find ways to denuclearise North Korea, according to South Korea's presidential office.

"Rather than the six-party talks, we should seek various and creative ways in approaching (the nuclear issue) like holding the five-way talks excluding North Korea," Park said in a session of a policy report on foreign affairs, national defence and unification affairs. She said the six-party talks involving the two Koreas and four other countries could not be held for the past several years and thus it is questionable if the framework is still valid in resolving the crisis over North Korea's

nuclear weapons programme. The six-way talks have been deadlocked since late 2008.

Later Friday, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se said the envisioned five-way talks will send "a strong message" to North Korea. During a press conference, Yun cited the recent deal made on Iran's nuclear weapons programme between the six major powers — the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany — and Iran.

"In the case of Iran, related parties, known as six plus one, have become unified and sent a clear message to Iran."

"In the end, Iran has made the strategic choice of abandoning nuclear weapons for the benefit of its economy," he said. —Kyodo News

Australia's ex-PM Kevin Rudd candidate for UN chief

CANBERRA — Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is being considered for the role of secretary-general for the United Nations (UN), media reported.

Australian media reported yesterday that Rudd has been flagged as a potential replacement for outgoing secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, who will finish his term at the end of this year. Ban Ki-moon was elected to the role in 2006.

Member countries of the UN, including Australia, the United States and France, are expected to announce their nomina-

tions for the position in coming weeks as the contest to select the new secretary-general gathers momentum.

This means Australia's federal government, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, must decide whether they will support Rudd in his quest to succeed Ban Ki-moon. At the moment, he is not considered one of the favourites for the post.

Media reports said yesterday that the Turnbull government believes it would be able to avoid nominating any candidate if Rudd remained an outsider in the race. —Xinhua

North Korea detains US university student for 'hostile act'

BEIJING — North Korea has detained an American university student for allegedly committing a "hostile act" against the country, official media said yesterday.

The University of Virginia student, who entered North Korea "under the guise of a tourist," is now under investigation, according to the country's state-run Korean Central News Agency.

North Korea believes the student, identified as Otto Frederick Warmbier, entered the country "for the purpose of

bringing down the foundation of its single-minded unity at the tacit connivance of the US government and under its manipulation," according to KCNA. The news agency, in its brief report, provided no other details, such as when he was arrested. The announcement comes as North Korea appears to be trying to reach out to the United States for negotiations after conducting its fourth nuclear test, in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, earlier this month. —Kyodo News

Modi may bet on old faces and new to regain winning ways

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi may look to press the reset button on his leadership this spring to reinvigorate stalled economic reforms and appease critics, eyeing a mix of tried and tested allies and fresh blood, senior government sources said.

The government has overseen rapid economic growth but failed on tax and land reforms, and the euphoria that met Modi's 2014 election triumph has given way to investor disillusionment; stocks have erased all of their gains since he won power.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faces a crucial election test in the most populous state of Uttar Pradesh in 2017 that it probably needs to win if it wants to hold on to power nationally in 2019.

"Modi needs to identify new talent and bring changes in his government. It will be too late if he fails to do it now," said veteran newspaper editor and commentator Shekhar Gupta.

With an eye on Uttar Pradesh, Modi looks set to keep Amit Shah on as BJP president, the sources

said, extending his closest aide and election campaign manager's tenure by three years when it expires at the weekend.

But Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, responsible for delivering the Modi message to international investors, may move to defence after he delivers his annual budget in late February, sources said.

Jaitley, 63, has failed to push through a major tax reform and critics have faulted his stewardship over India's \$2 trillion economy, which is growing fast but not creating enough jobs to employ an expanding workforce.

A spokesman for Modi declined to comment on the move and an official in Jaitley's office said he had no knowledge of a possible reshuffle.

Moving Jaitley to defence, a post he also held in the early months of the Modi government, could better suit the veteran corporate lawyer and keep the strategically important portfolio in trusted hands.

It would also open the way for power and coal minister Piyush Goyal to take the finance



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, the president of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), wave to their supporters during a campaign rally ahead of state assembly elections at Ramlila ground in New Delhi, India, in January 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

portfolio, while underperformers in other minor posts may be weeded out.

A central minister and two BJP officials said Goyal, 51, was being groomed for his next big role, and a white paper on banking was recently shared with him to seek his inputs. A Goyal aide denied all knowledge of an impending promotion.

Goyal is a good communicator and has often travelled abroad

with Modi, but lacks political and electoral experience.

The ex-investment banker has turned around state-run Coal India, tackled chronic power shortages and backed renewable sources of energy.

Those are key wins for Modi, whose provision of 24/7 electricity as chief minister of Gujarat state helped him become prime minister.

"Goyal is doing a fine job —

he has brought a lot of energy to the coal and power sector," said Rajiv Kumar, senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi.

"But I'm not sure he can do justice to the complex finance portfolio," he said. "Goyal, with his micro orientation, might struggle to get to grips with multi-dimensional and serious macro-economic issues facing the country."—Reuters

Australian submarine tender narrows to Japanese and French bids, Germans lose ground

TOKYO — The competition for a A\$50 billion (\$34.55 billion) contract to build Australia's next submarine fleet is narrowing to a race between Japan and France as a bid from Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) loses ground over technical concerns, multiple sources said.

Australia is expected to decide the winner of one of the world's most lucrative defence contracts within the next six months, ahead of a national election in which the deal and the jobs it will create is expected to be a key issue for the conservative government.

TKMS is proposing to scale up its 2,000-tonne Type 214 class vessel, while Japan is offering a variant of its 4,000-tonne Soryu

boats made by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries.

France's state-controlled naval contractor DCNS has proposed a diesel-electric version of its 5,000-tonne Barracuda nuclear-powered submarine.

Australia has said it wants a boat in the 4,000-tonne class.

Scaling a submarine to twice its original size presents exponential technical challenges, experts say.

That puts TKMS furthest from having the experience to offer what Australia wants in a large, long-range, stealthy submarine to replace its ageing Collins-class fleet, said six industrial sources in Asia and Australia with

knowledge of the situation.

"The German proposal is an enlarged version of a smaller existing submarine, and that technically is risky," said one source.

TKMS and one of the sources in Australia, who has decades of experience in the global arms industry, cautioned against jumping to conclusions as each side jockey for the best outcome in what may ultimately be a political decision.

Australia wanted a partner to design and build a new submarine, which neutralises any perceived advantage with existing bigger boats, said TKMS Australia Director Jim Duncan.

"The rumours could well be right. Who knows," Duncan told Reuters when asked to respond to what the industrial sources said. "My only advice, having spent many years in this environment is: believe nothing that you hear and only half of what you see."

Officials at the Future Submarine Programme at the Australian Department of Defence did not respond to a request for comment.

DCNS Australia CEO Sean Costello declined to comment on his competitors, but said experience in large submarine design was critical for the Australian project.—Reuters

Japan to lift sanctions on Iran after nuke deal

TOKYO — Japan has decided to lift sanctions on Iran in the wake of confirmation by a UN agency that Tehran had implemented measures promised under the landmark nuclear deal reached in July, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said yesterday.

The lifting of sanctions, which included halts on new investment in the areas of oil and gas in the resource-rich country, paves the way for the signing of an investment agreement between Japan and Iran.

The pact will be signed "soon," Kishida told reporters, adding the Japanese government hopes to "further develop its traditionally friendly ties with Iran" following the lifting of sanctions.

The agreement, aimed at protecting rights and assets of Japanese firms operating in Iran, will facilitate investment by Japanese companies in the Middle Eastern country at a time US and European companies are racing to tap into the commercial potential of the Iranian market.

The sanctions included a ban on medium to long-term

trade insurance contracts by firms interested in exporting to and investing in Iran as well as the imposition of restrictions on conducting business with financial institutions in Iran.

The lifting of the sanctions may allow Japanese companies to return to a development project in Azadegan in southwest Iran, one of the world's largest oil fields. Japan withdrew from the project, in which it had a 75 per cent stake, in 2010.

On Japan's oil development in Iran, Kishida said, "That is an issue that businesses will decide on from an economic perspective, but the government is willing to support such businesses."

On 16 January, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Tehran had implemented measures promised under the deal in July between the Middle Eastern country and six major powers — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

They had agreed to lift sanctions in exchange for Tehran agreeing to the long-term winding back of its nuclear programme involving uranium enrichment.—Kyodo News



A visitor takes a picture of a model of Japan Maritime Self-Defence Forces diesel-electric submarine Soryu at the MAST Asia 2015, defence exhibition and conference in Yokohama, south of Tokyo in May 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Obama promises Merkel to ‘substantially’ support refugee efforts, Berlin says



A bus with refugees arrives from the Bavarian town of Landshut to the Chancellery building in Berlin, Germany, on 14 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BERLIN — US President Barack Obama has promised German Chancellor Angela Merkel to “substantially” support efforts to ease the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe, a German government spokesman said on Thursday.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble has called for “billions of euros” in new money to be transferred to states that border Syria, saying Europe had to realise that solving the crisis would cost “a lot more” than previously envisaged.

Obama and Merkel spoke by telephone on Thursday evening and the chancellor set out the goals of the planned donor conference for Syrian refugees which she will co-host in London on 4 February government spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

“The president promised

that the US government would contribute substantially,” Seibert said in a statement.

The spokesman added Obama and Merkel agreed that there could only be a political solution for the Syrian crisis, as well as for the stand-off in Ukraine.

Merkel is under pressure to limit the number of new migrants, which reached 1.1 million last year alone, eroding her popularity and fuelling support for an anti-immigration party.

Leaders meeting in the Swiss resort of Davos said on Thursday that the European Union could unravel if member states fail to agree a common approach to the refugee crisis and security challenges in the next few months.

Merkel has promised to “measurably reduce” arrivals this year, but has refused to introduce a cap, saying it would be

impossible to enforce without closing German borders.

Instead, she has tried to convince European partners to take on quotas of refugees, pushed for reception centres to be built on Europe’s external borders, and led an EU campaign to convince Turkey to keep refugees from entering the bloc.

EU leaders have pledged 3 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) to Turkey to help care for Syrian refugees, as part of measures aimed at reducing the numbers of refugees leaving Turkey and heading for Europe.

However, Italy has blocked this funding, senior EU officials said. German-Turkish government consultations on Friday in Berlin are expected to address the issue of helping Turkey with the cost of hosting migrants.—Reuters

Putin ‘probably’ approved murder of Litvinenko

LONDON — President Vladimir Putin probably approved a 2006 Russian intelligence operation to murder ex-KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko with radioactive polonium-210 in London, a British inquiry concluded on Thursday, prompting a row with Moscow.

Russia, which had declined to cooperate in the inquiry, cautioned pointedly that it could “poison” relations. Britain accused the Kremlin of uncivilised behaviour but did not immediately signal it would take any strong action.

Litvinenko, 43, an outspoken critic of Putin who fled Russia for Britain six years to the day before he was poisoned, died after drinking green tea laced with the rare and very potent radioactive isotope at London’s Millennium Hotel.

An inquiry led by senior British judge Robert Owen found

that former KGB bodyguard Andrei Lugovoy and another Russian, Dmitry Kovtun, carried out the killing as part of an operation probably directed by Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), the main heir to the Soviet-era KGB.

“The FSB operation to kill Mr Litvinenko was probably approved by Mr Patrushev, then head of the FSB, and also by President Putin,” Owen said.

“I have concluded that there is a strong probability that when Mr Lugovoy poisoned Mr Litvinenko, he did so under the direction of the FSB. I have further concluded that Mr Kovtun was also acting under FSB direction,” he said.

Litvinenko’s death marked a post-Cold War low point in Anglo-Russian ties, marred further by Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support for Syrian President

Bashar al-Assad. But Britain’s measured early response to the report appeared to acknowledge a need for Russia to exert its influence over Assad in negotiations to end the Syrian civil war.

Prime Minister David Cameron said he would not rule out further action, but added:

“Do we at some level have to go on having some sort of relationship with them because we need a solution to the Syria crisis? Yes we do. But we do it with clear eyes and a very cold heart.”

Interior minister Theresa May, appearing before parliament, spoke of “a blatant and unacceptable breach of the most fundamental tenets of international law and of civilised behaviour”, while the opposition Labour Party described an “unparalleled act of state-sponsored terrorism”.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least eight migrants drowned off Greek island

ATHENS — At least eight migrants including two children drowned when a wooden boat carrying them capsized north of the Greek island of Kalolimnos early yesterday, a coastguard official said, as the refugee flow towards Europe continues despite the winter cold.

“Eight bodies have been recovered and 26 have been rescued and taken to the island,” a Greek coastguard official said. “They were on a wooden sailboat. We do not yet have a clear picture of how many were on board.”

A search and rescue operation was ongoing off Kalolimnos, a small island in the southeastern Aegean Sea close to Turkey’s coast, assisted by a helicopter and other vessels, the official said. It was not clear why the vessel capsized, the official said.—Reuters

Germany backs development of Serbia

BERLIN — The German institutions and business community will back the sustainable development and growth of the Serbian economy through joint projects of dual education and incentives to entrepreneurship, it was said in meetings which President of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (PKS) Marko Cadez had in Berlin.

He discussed further steps in implementing bilateral and regional initiatives in separate meetings at German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s office, the foreign ministry, ministry for economic affairs and energy, and ministry for economic cooperation and development and the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

In mid-March, another Serbia-Germany business forum will be held in Frankfurt, bringing together top state officials.

President of the Kosovo Chamber of Kosovo Safet Grdazliju is on the visit to Berlin together with Cadez.—Tanjug

Japan to pay 8bn USD over next 5 years to host US forces

TOKYO — Japan and the United States yesterday inked a deal stipulating the budget for hosting US forces here will be maintained by Tokyo.

At a signing ceremony held in the capital, the Japanese government retired its stance that its military cooperation with the US remained essential.

“The presence of US forces in Japan is indispensable for the security of Japan and for the peace and security of the region,” Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said.

Kishida cited an increasingly severe security situation in the region, in light of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear test earlier this month.

US Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy, for her part, said at the ceremony that the US-Japan alliance remained steadfast.—Xinhua

For third time, Colombian drug kingpin pleads guilty in US

NEW YORK — For the third time in 15 months, a Colombian drug kingpin pleaded guilty on Thursday to US charges that he conspired to manufacture and distribute hundreds of tons of cocaine annually that he trafficked throughout the world.

The plea in Manhattan federal court clears the way for sentencing Daniel Barrera, who authorities say was one of the most prolific drug traffickers of the last two decades before his capture in Venezuela in 2012 following years in hiding.

Barrera, also known as “Loco” (Crazy), was extradited from Colombia in July 2013 to face three indictments filed in federal courts in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Miami, and pleaded guilty in 2014 in the New York cases.—Reuters

Three missing after boat capsizes off Hainan island province

HAIKOU — Rescuers are searching for three people who remain missing more than a day after a fishing boat overturned off the coast of south China’s island province of Hainan on Thursday morning.

The boat, coded “Qionglinyu 11198,” hit a reef near Wenchang City at 2:30am. Eleven people fell into the water, with six managing to swim ashore. At 5:20pm, a rescue vessel pulled two of the missing from water near the shipwreck. The provincial maritime search and rescue center has dispatched more than 60 vessels, and local residents are also helping with the operation.—Xinhua

OPINION

Intensify our response to the coming of record-high El Niño

Kyaw Thura

THIS year's El Niño is expected to bring about a major global increase in health hazards in many parts of the world until the end of this year, the World Health Organisation said in its news report yesterday. The report estimates that 60 million people will be vulnerable to climate hazards, such as severe drought, flooding, heavy rains and temperature rises, all

of which can lead to food insecurity, malnutrition, disease outbreaks, acute water shortages and the disruption of health services.

The impact El Niño is likely to have on public health is unavoidable, with Director of WHO's Emergency Risk Management and Humanitarian Response Department Dr Richard Brennan urging world nations to speed up their preparedness and response measures to prevent unwanted mortality.

Weather experts expect its effects to peak in the first quarter of this year and trigger adverse climate conditions affecting the health of millions of vulnerable people in the tropics, with drier conditions forecast in Southeast Asia as well. Last July and August, our country underwent the unusual heavy rains that caused the widespread flooding in 12 of 14 states and regions.

U Tun Lwin, a former director general of the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, has

warned on his Facebook of extreme drought and acute water shortages in the arid regions of the country. The time has come for all of us to take preventive measures to raise public awareness of El Niño-related hazards and health risks. Though death is a natural phenomenon, deaths resulting from preventable causes are intolerable.

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 khinmaungaye@hotmail@gmail.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.

Diplomacy, Diplomatic Language

U KHIN MAUNG
(A retired diplomat)

OXFORD Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "diplomacy" as "the activity of managing relations between different countries, the skill in doing this." It is "international diplomacy" Diplomacy is better than war. From another point of view" diplomacy used in relation to international politics is the act of forwarding one's interest in relation to other countries. And according to Sir Ernest Satow, who had the experience of a long and distinguished career in the Majesty's Diplomatic Service of the United Kingdom, "diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states. In brief, Sir Ernest Satow defined "diplomacy" as the conduct of business between states by peaceful means.

In the diplomatic handbook, second edition of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomacy is defined explicitly. From it, I would like to mention just an extract. It reads as follows: "The very first and normal conduct of diplomacy is a general attitude of friendliness and persuasion, the way of polite argument of approach based on reason and interest. The second one is compromise. In es-

sence, diplomacy is the first line of defence, and war is the final act of diplomacy. In this connection, I would like to mention the latest news item about 10 United States sailors who were taken into custody in the Gulf and then released on the next day by the Iranian authorities, thanks to diplomacy. H.E John Kerry, the United States Secretary of State thanked Iran and also credited the critical role diplomacy has played. Thus he said, "today this kind of critical issue can be resolved peacefully and efficiently and it is a testament to the critical role diplomacy plays in keeping our country safe, secure, and strong".

From my own point of view, I think, diplomacy can be analytically defined as follows:

D= Deep desire, dedication and determination to defend one's native land.

I= Intelligence, integrity

P= Persuasiveness, perseverance

L= Loyalty to the mission

O = Oath of allegiance to one's native land

M= Maturity, magnificence

A = Ability, Allegiance, alertness

C = Compromise, competence

Y = Yearning for mission accomplished

Diplomatic Language

A diplomat is a trust-

ed, truthful and intelligent person sent abroad as the representative of the sending state. So, a diplomat's main mission is to keep his country safe, secure, and strong, through diplomacy. To make this mission accomplished, a diplomat must be persuasive, precise, tactful and eloquent, in addition to his so many other qualifications and talents. A diplomat should never hurt his counter-part's feelings, let alone causing or intending to cause him to feel offended or making insulting remarks. In this sense, diplomats would like to say, "May I beg to differ from you" instead of saying "I do not agree with you."

May I now present to you a few examples of expressions in diplomatic language as follows:

(i) When dealing with difficult or sensitive subjects or difficult or sensitive people, it is sensible to use words carefully. So, instead of expressing "this is a problem, a diplomat might say, "this could be a problem", in order to leave open the possibility to find to a solution to the problem.

(ii) While presenting his view as a question, not a statement, a diplomat might say "how

about offering them £ 10000, instead of "we'll offer them £10000", in order to leave the matter for further discussion.

(iii) A diplomat might use "not" with a positive word, instead of the obvious negative word. For example, instead of saying "I don't agree, a diplomat might say "it is not very convenient".

(iv) Adding "I am afraid" to make clear that he recognizes the unhelpfulness of his response, a diplomat might say, for example, "That's the most we can offer I am afraid."

Well, my dear reader, may I hope that my article might be of some interest to you to give it a reading. Thanks a lot.

Reference: (1) Diplomatic handbook, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yangon.

(2) Legal English- Rupert Haigh.

(3) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

(4) The Global New Light of Myanmar.

POEM:

This I dream for my country

- * A school in every village. Good teachers in every school.
Every school a good school. And every child in school.
Every student taught well, to his or her full potential,
In all the hills and valleys of Myanmar.
- * A smiling friendly people, goodwill towards all,
Tolerant and generous. A nation of all races and religions,
Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, Muslim, and non-believer.
Citizens of diverse origins, united in loyalty to country and flag,
Working and living side by side in peace and harmony.
- * Hard toil in the fields rewarded with bountiful harvests.
A fair price paid for crops. Skilled workers in factories,
And masons and carpenters on building sites,
Diligent and proud of the work completed.
All paid a living wage, enough for each family's needs.
- * A thriving economy and work for all graduates,
In hotels, restaurants, banks, and other services.
Office workers, professionals, university teachers, managers,
Well educated, and trained for the work required,
Paid salaries befitting learning and skills.
- * Expanded Health Services, care for the sick and elderly,
For expectant mothers, and for children at school.
Hospitals staffed with caring doctors and nurses.
A healthy population, a productive population.
Affordable housing for all.
- * Parks, gardens, streams of clear water, forests of cool shade.
For deer, tiger, rhino, elephant, peacock, and all Nature's creatures.
Our environment clean and green. All wild life valued and protected.
A government that truly cares for each and every citizen.
All public officials competent, honest, accountable.
- * This I dream for my country. Dare you dream along with me.
Let us join hands you and I, and everyone else too,
And help make this dream come true.

Hla Maung

Ayeyawady parliament discusses land allocation for internally displaced persons (IDPs)

OVER 40 families left homeless by Cyclone Nargis in 2008, which devastated the low-lying delta town of Labutta, Ayeyawady Region, will finally be granted new plots of land, according to the Ayeyawady Region government, announced regional finance minister U Win Ko Ko. The families remained on the land allocation list since 2008 for varying reasons.

The finance minister, who is also the spokesperson for the Ayeyawady Region government, made the announcement in response to a question posed by U Zaw Win, the regional MP for Labutta Township, during the third day of the parliament's 14th session on 20 January. The MP asked whether the Ayeyawady government had a plan to provide land to the families that still remain on the list of those awaiting land allocations.

"There is a desire to know whether there really is a plan to provide land or not to those left [awaiting land allocation] from Thone Maing Myo Thit in Labutta Township. News is circulating

that just 20 of the 41 households on the list were given land on which to live. As such, I would like to ask how [the government] intends to provide land for the remaining 21 households," said MP U Zaw Win.

He also asked how provisions could be made for 135 households of a total of 176 made homeless in Labutta by Cyclone Nargis, who were affected by the floods every rainy season.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, the government rented out farmland to make space for families left homeless by the natural disaster, while the government of Norway provided financial assistance for the construction of housing.

In May 2015, the IDPs were removed from the rented farmland by the landowners, and settled in a new town three miles outside Labutta.

Minister U Win Ko Ko said the Ayeyawady government allotted the land in response to applications it received, adding that the government will continue to provide land to the remaining

households in accordance with government procedure.

"We will inspect those remaining households, and should their information prove them eligible, we will continue providing them with a place to call home. Land has been allocated so far through a ballot system, with temporary ownership documents issued. We have instructed the department responsible for issuing the ownership documents to continue doing so. I want people to know that while there is some flooding during the rainy season in those areas allocated, it's not as high as 5 feet or so [as people claim]," he said.

Surveys were conducted on 3 July and 21 September 2015 on the allocation of land to families left homeless in Labutta Township after Cyclone Nargis. A total of 135 households were each given a 40-foot by 60-foot parcel of land. According to the region's finance minister, the regional government will also build new roads in the areas where land was provided.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

New Pyin Oo Lwin-Mandalay road to be completed by end of 2018

THE construction of a new road between Pyin Oo Lwin and Mandalay will be completed by the end of 2018, according to Axion Mandalay Highway Construction, the company building the road.

The construction of the new road section began on 18 January 2016.

"The road will be laid from the south-eastern side of Yankin. It will then join the old road at Ani Sakan. However, now we are just carrying out clearing activities to prepare for the laying of the road," said U Soe Myat Thu, a spokesperson for the con-

struction company.

The 50-foot-wide road is expected to facilitate the movement of two-way traffic.

Over 20 bridges will have to be built between Mandalay and Pyin Oo Lwin for the construction of the road, which will be approximately 5 miles shorter than the current road that runs between the two towns.

"The aim is to finish by the end of 2018. It's been said that the first section to be built will be a 22-mile stretch. The company will incur all the expenses involved.

The Mandalay Region gov-

ernment has given the green light for the construction of the road because there is congestion on this one and only road that links Mandalay and Pyin Oo Lwin," explained U Kyaw Hsan, the Mandalay Region Minister of Road Transport.

Axion Mandalay Highway Construction has estimated that the road construction will incur a total expense of approximately K8 billion (US\$6,191,471).

The current Mandalay-Pyin Oo Lwin road is 40.8 miles long and also connects Mandalay to Lashio further to the north.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Prikstoks ready to test soil quality of dams, dykes in delta regions

THE Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation plans to test the soil quality of dams and dykes in the Ayeyawady Region with the use of Prikstoks donated by the Neth-

erlands, said the ministry.

According to the ministry, 150 prikstoks will be used for maintenance of dams and dykes in the delta region.

The Netherlands presented prikstoks to Myanmar under the bilateral agreement on cooperation in development or water resources in Myanmar.—*Soe Win*



Prikstoks donated by the Netherlands are being used to test the soil. PHOTO: SOE WIN

Traditional earthen pots marketable in Magwe Region



Earthen pots. PHOTO: KYAW SWA

TRADITIONAL earthen pots manufactured from Taung-dwingyi Township are marketable in Magwe Region, a merchant says.

The clay products made by pottery makers from Kokkukhwa Village located near Beikthano ancient city which has been incorporated into the World Heritage List, are popular in the regional market due to its excellent quality and designs.

It is believed that the traditional techniques of making earthen materials have been developed since Pyu or Iron Age as numerous utensils made of clay decorated with ancient architectures were found near the city.

Although new generations of family pottery businesses show no interest in continuing

such business, local pottery industries traditionally produce different sizes of vases, stoves, cup of oil lamp and toys.

Locals in the village are engaged in production of earthen pots for many years. These earthenware products are mainly sent to the market in Magwe, Taungdwingyi and Minbu townships.

"We could produce 200 finished pots per day," a pottery maker said who believes that earthenware products will continue to exist at any age.

Normally, merchants sell out a clay water pot at price ranging from K1,000 in minimum to K1,500 in maximum. A pottery vase is worth K500 to K150.—*Kyaw Swa*

Vocational basic welding course concluded in Zayarthiri Township

ORGANISED by the Rural Region Development Department of Oaktara District, the closing ceremony of a vocational basic welding course was held at the Sebingyi village in Zayarthiri Township on Thursday.

The Rural Region Development Department opened the course with the aim of ensuring job opportunities and developing the socio-economies status of the rural people.

At the ceremony, U Ko Ko Naing, Region Head of Rural Area Development Department of Nay Pyi Taw in Union Area, made an opening speech, and U Win Myint, District Head

of Oaktara District Department of Rural Region Development presented the certificates to the trainees. A trainee, on the behalf of the trainees, spoke words of thanks. And then region staff officer and officials donated tables and TV stands made by the trainees to the Sebingyi Monastery.

Also present at the ceremony were Region Head of Rural Region Development, District Head of OaktaraThiri District Department of Rural Region Development, staff officer U Than Win Soe, Village Administrators, townsenders and 35 trainees.—*Shwe Ye Yint (Oaktara Thiri District IPRD)*

US gives troops broader order to strike Islamic State fighters in Afghan

WASHINGTON — US military commanders have been given the authority to target Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan, the Pentagon said on Thursday, the first such order beyond Iraq and Syria, where the militants control parts of both countries.

The US State Department said last week that it had designated Islamic State's offshoot in Afghanistan, known as Islamic State-Khorasan, as a foreign terrorist organisation.

US forces could previously strike Islamic State in Afghanistan but it was under more narrow circumstances, such as for protection of troops.

Senator John McCain of Arizona, a Republican who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the administration of President Barack Obama, a Democrat, "seems to be waking up to the fact that more than a year into the US military campaign, ISIL's reach is global and growing."

McCain told a hearing on Thursday that the authorisation given by the White House was much needed and "many of us may be interested to know that we confined our attacks on ISIL to Iraq and Syria."

ISIL is another name for the Islamist militant group, which has supporters and sympathizers around the world who have carried out bombings and gun



General John Francis Campbell (C), current commander of the International Security Assistance Force and United States Forces in Afghanistan, speaks to soldiers during a Christmas day visit on forward operating base Gamberi in the Laghman Province of Afghanistan in December 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

attacks on civilians, notably in Paris in November and San Bernardino, California, in December.

A Pentagon spokesman, Capt. Jeff Davis, said there had been an adjustment to the authorisation for US forces in Afghanistan, but he did not give details on when exactly it was given.

"As part of this mission, we will take action against any terrorist group that poses a threat

to US interests or the homeland, including members of ISIL-Khorasan," Davis said.

Davis said there had been "some" strikes on the group in recent days.

The change in the authorisation was first reported by the *Wall Street Journal*. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to the State Department, Islamic State-Khorasan

was formed in January 2015, based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, made up of former members of the Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban.

US Army General John Campbell, who leads international forces in Afghanistan, has said Islamic State had coalesced over the last five or six months in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces and had been fighting the Taliban for several months.—Reuters

UN draft calls for 12-month mission to verify Colombia peace deal

UNITED NATIONS — Members of the United Nations Security Council on Thursday received a draft of a resolution that calls for establishing a UN mission to oversee disarmament should Colombia's government and leftist FARC rebels reach a final peace deal.

Colombia's government and FARC agreed on Tuesday to ask the 15-nation council to help monitor and verify rebel disarmament should the two sides reach a deal to end their 50-year-old war.

The text, drafted by Britain and seen by Reuters, would have the 15-nation council "establish a political mission to participate for a period of 12 months ... to monitor and verify the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and the laying down of arms." To begin the process of creating the mission, it would ask Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "to initiate preparations and to present detailed recommendations to the Security Council for its consideration and approval." It added that the council would establish "a political mission of unarmed international observers" and welcomed the willingness of members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States to contribute personnel. The draft said Ban would submit his recommendation on the size and operational details of the mission within 30 days of the signing of a final ceasefire deal by the Colombian government and FARC.—Reuters

Pakistan Taliban commander vows more school attacks in video

DERA ISMAIL KHAN — A senior Pakistani Taliban commander released video footage yesterday of four fighters he said carried out Wednesday's deadly assault on a university in Pakistan's northwest that killed 20 people and vowed more attacks on schools in future.

The footage raised fresh questions of a possible split in the fractured Taliban leadership, whose official spokesman has denied the group was behind the assault. Militants scaled the walls of Bacha Khan University in Charsadda on Wednesday morning and killed 20 people before being gunned down by army commandos and police.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Khorasani issued a written statement that evening disassociating the group from the attack and calling it un-Islamic. But the same day, a Taliban faction commander Umar Mansoor told Reuters his fighters had targeted the campus because it prepared students to join the government

and army. Mansoor is considered close to Mullah Fazlullah, the embattled leader of the fractious Pakistani Taliban group.

The reason for the conflicting claims by the official spokesman and Mansoor was not immediately clear but has led to speculation of a possible split in the Taliban lead-



A man walks down the blood-stained stairs leading down from the roof of a dormitory where a militant attack took place, at Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, Pakistan on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

ership. "Now we will not kill the soldier in his cantonment, the lawyer in the court or the politician in parliament but in the places where they are prepared, the schools, the universities, the colleges that lay their foundation," a bearded Mansoor said in the video, holding an admonishing finger aloft.

"With the mercy of god, our attacks on all universities and schools will continue."

The video also shows four attackers, two of them in their mid teens, practicing shooting as part of their training before carrying out the Charsadda attack.

Pakistan has killed and arrested hundreds of suspected militants under a major crackdown launched after Taliban gunmen massacred 134 children at a military-run school in the northwestern city of Peshawar in December 2014. The Peshawar school attack was seen as having hardened Pakistan's resolve to fight militants along its border with Afghanistan.—Reuters

Bomb kills nine in Cairo suburb as police raid hideout



Damaged cars are seen at the scene of a bomb blast in Giza, Egypt, on 21 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

CAIRO — Nine people, including six policemen, were killed on Thursday in a Cairo suburb near the pyramids when a makeshift bomb went off as police prepared to raid a militant hideout, security sources said.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that its security forces had arrived in their vehicles to raid an apartment and found the

building booby-trapped. The device off when they tried to defuse it. Ten people were wounded, the sources said. Islamist militants have stepped up attacks on Egyptian soldiers and police since the army toppled president Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 after mass protests against his rule. Civilians have also been killed.—Reuters

Despite oil glut, Tullow launches huge new deepwater production vessel



A view of Tullow Oil's Floating Production, Storage and Offloading vessel (FPSO) Prof. John Evans Atta Mills which was completed at Sembcorp Marine's Jurong Shipyard in Singapore on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

SINGAPORE — Amid one of the deepest oil price crashes in history, Britain's Tullow Oil (TLW.L) is sending one of the world's biggest floating deep-water oil production platforms to West Africa to pump crude for at least 20 years.

The 340-metre long production vessel, named after late Ghanaian president Prof John Evans Atta Mills, was converted in Singapore

from a Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) super-tanker, and is expected to set sail this weekend to Ghana, where it is scheduled to gradually ramp up production from the TEN deepwater oilfield from July/August this year, the company's chief operating officer Paul McDade said on Thursday.

With costs (operating plus capital expenditure) of around \$20

per barrel and an expected production life of 20 years or more, London-listed and Africa-focused Tullow hopes it can weather a storm which has seen crude prices LCOc1 tumble over 70 per cent in 18 months to around \$30 per barrel.

Despite its low production costs, McDade said the current downturn was causing the industry

huge pain, and he added that he did not expect a sharp rise in oil prices as happened in 2009 after the last crash during the global financial crisis.

"It feels more like a 1986 than a 2008. It's a more fundamental shift. 2008 was a financial crisis, today is very different. We have oversupply, that's structural and takes longer to adjust to," he said,

referring to low oil prices in the decade following the price crash of 1986.

Despite the outlook for excessive global output, McDade said the John Evans Atta Mills Floating Production, Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessel was going ahead as scheduled.

"We are very much on schedule for a July/August gradual start of production. The aim is to hit peak production in early 2017," McDade told Reuters in Singapore.

The TEN oilfield off the coast of Ghana lies at a water depth of 1,000-2,000 metres and has a maximum capacity to produce 80,000 barrels per day (bpd) of a light sweet crude quality close to Brent, and Tullow plans to operate at full production.

Tullow already produces similar grade crude from the offshore Jubilee oilfield, also in Ghana, and the company said once TEN was at full production, combined net output from West Africa would reach 100,000 bpd in early 2017.

In the midst of a huge global production overhang, with 1-2 million barrels of crude pumped every day in excess of demand, West Africa is one of the few regions that is expected to see production increases and further investment this year.

Analysts at AB Bernstein said they expected "Africa ... as the most active basin in 2016", in terms of developments and investments of potential offshore projects.

"In Ghana, we're kind of blessed with high quality, low cost assets," McDade said.

He said that Tullow's overall cash operating costs were around \$15 per barrel.—Reuters

Hitachi may be asked to join Toshiba-Sharp white goods alliance

TOKYO — A government-backed fund is considering asking Hitachi Ltd. to join the envisaged alliance of white goods businesses currently possessed by scandal-hit Toshiba Corp and struggling Sharp Corp, sources familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The participation of Japanese industrial conglomerate Hitachi would create a major player in the white goods business with combined sales of 1.2 trillion yen (\$10.3 billion) on a par with Panasonic Corp.

The plan being floated by the Innovation Network Corporation of Japan would help the alliance boost investment in new technologies under the concept of the "Internet of Things," or the network of interconnected devices, and

compete with rivals in China and South Korea. Hitachi is expected to examine the plan if it is officially presented by the fund.

Details still need to be worked out as to how to form such a multi-party alliance.

One option is for the INCJ to acquire Toshiba's white goods business and integrate it with that of Sharp, the sources said. Under another plan, each company will transfer its own unit that produces home appliances to a new entity to be created by the INCJ.

The public-private fund is expected to decide on a framework to integrate the white goods units of Toshiba and Sharp by the end of March, according to the sources.

For the business year ended last March, Hitachi's white goods

unit reported 662.8 billion yen in sales, while Toshiba logged 225.4 billion yen and Sharp 315.0 billion yen in sales. Toshiba is reeling from an accounting scandal that led to a spate of downward revisions to financial statements totaling 224.8 billion yen on a pretax basis for nearly seven years.

Sharp is also trying to get back on its feet as its liquid crystal display business has continued to lose money. The INCJ is considering spinning off the LCD unit and integrating it with Japan Display Inc., a maker of small and midsize LCDs in which the fund owns a stake. Toshiba is also exploring a merger of its personal computer business with those of Fujitsu Ltd. and Vaio Corp., a spinoff from Sony Corp.—Kyodo News

IMF boss Lagarde will run for second mandate

PARIS — The managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said yesterday she will run for a second term.

Christine Lagarde has no obvious challengers and has said previously she was open to serving another term.

"I am candidate to a new mandate. I was honoured to receive from the start of the process the backing of France, Britain, Germany, China, Korea," she told France 2 television in an interview from Davos.

Lagarde has been accused of negligence over a payout of some 400 million euros (\$430 million) to businessman Bernard Tapie while she was France's finance minister. Last month a French court ordered her to face trial and she has said she



PHOTO: REUTERS

will appeal that decision.

"I feel that I always acted in the state's interest and within the law. I have my conscience for me in this affair. I hope the courts ... will agree with that," she told France 2.—Reuters

Powerful snowstorm threatens US East Coast; flights cancelled

WASHINGTON — Washington DC, New York and other East Coast cities readied fleets of snow plows, thousands of flights were cancelled or delayed and residents stocked up on groceries ahead of a winter storm expected to dump up to 30 inches (76 cm) of snow on the region.

At least five states had declared emergencies by Thursday afternoon, as the season's first major Atlantic Coast storm started to move over the Mid-South before barreling on an expected north and eastward course bringing up to two feet of snow to some areas.

Blizzard warnings were out in the nation's capital and Baltimore, with extreme conditions expected to begin on Friday afternoon, while New York City was under a blizzard watch for Saturday morning.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, which includes the second-busiest US subway system, said it would suspend operations from late on Friday through Sunday.

The Virginia Nation-

al Guard said it planned to bring in up to 300 troops to assist in response operations.

Federal employees in the Washington area were told their offices would close at noon to let them go home early.

Grocery store shelves were being stripped of bread, milk and other essentials as millions of residents in the storm's path prepared to hunker down for a wintry weekend. Consumer watchdogs warned against illegal price gouging for such essentials as generators, batteries, flashlights and hotel lodging.

Airlines began cancelling Friday and Saturday flights, with many of the more than 2,400 cancellations for Friday at Washington and North Carolina airports, according to FlightAware.com.

American Airlines Group Inc scrapped all Friday flights into North Carolina's Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and Delta Air Lines Inc cancelled about 120 flights in the Southeast region. Amer-



Commuters make their way towards the US Capitol from Union Station on a chilly morning after a light snow fell in Washington on 21 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

ican scrapped most Saturday flights into Washington, New York and Philadelphia, and Delta was poised to cancel many of the same.

The National Weather Service said blizzard conditions could be life-threatening across much of the mid-Atlantic on Friday night and early Saturday.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser and New

York Mayor Bill de Blasio urged motorists to stay off roads, starting on Friday.

"Anyone who has the illusion you're going to be taking big trips over the weekend, get that out of your mind," de Blasio said at a news conference.

Bowser said the US capital's public schools would be shut on Friday.

Asked on Thursday

how she thought Washington would cope with the blizzard, Patricia DeWolf, a 63-year-old retiree, said, "If last night was an indication, not very well." She spoke outside a Safeway grocery store, where she had been loading up on supplies.

The National Weather Service put Washington and Baltimore under blizzard warnings from 3pm

Eastern (2000 GMT) Friday through Sunday morning.

It forecast up to 2 feet (61 cm) of snow in the capital, and as much as 30 inches (75 cm) in western suburbs, with winds gusting to 50 miles per hour (80 kilometres per hour).

In North Carolina, two women died late on Wednesday in car accidents on slippery roadways, the governor's office said.

The storm was expected to deliver a slightly weaker wallop to the New York and Long Island areas with blizzard conditions from Saturday morning through Sunday.

New York cancelled its Winter Jam in Central Park, set for Saturday, even after the snow-starved city had spent days making artificial snow for the winter sports festival.

Governors in Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Pennsylvania joined Bowser in declaring states of emergency, and the governor of West Virginia declared a state of preparedness.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (025N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (025N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV THAI BINH 688 VOY NO (12/2015)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH 688 VOY NO (12/2015) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W-1 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S G-LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

IAEA urges Japan to enhance technical competence for nuclear restarts

TOKYO — The International Atomic Energy Agency said yesterday that Japan should "strengthen its technical competence," after a team of experts of the UN nuclear watchdog concluded a 12-day mission the same day to assess the regulatory framework for nuclear and radiation safety in Japan.

The country's Nuclear Regulation Authority "needs to further strengthen its technical competence in light of upcoming restarts of nuclear facilities" idled after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, the team said in its initial report. The final mission report will be released in about three months.

The latest Integrated Regulatory Review Service followed the first review in Japan in June 2007, marking the first assessment since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami caused the Fukushima nuclear crisis. The NRA was established in 2012 to oversee stricter regulations.

The team of 19 nuclear experts also found Japanese authorities need to amend relevant legislation to allow the NRA to conduct more effective inspections.

"What we found is the

system that is regulating or defining the framework for inspection is very complex and very rigid," Philippe Jamet, the head of the mission team, said at a joint press conference held by the team and the NRA.

"It doesn't give enough freedom for the inspectors to react immediately," Jamet said. Shunichi Tanaka, the chairman of the NRA, said the Japanese regulatory body will work more closely with power companies to improve its inspection operations. "We have to talk to operators more thoroughly to improve the inspection method," Tanaka said. The mission team also said the NRA should work to attract more experienced staff and strengthen staff skills through education, training and international cooperation. The group of nuclear specialists from 17 countries visited Tokyo Electric Power Co's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which was crippled by the 2011 disaster, Kansai Electric Power Co's Takahama plant at which the company plans to resume two reactors this and next month, and other nuclear facilities.—Kyodo News

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BANG SAOTONG VOY NO (177)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BANG SAOTONG VOY NO (177) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W-6 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S WONGSAMUT OCEAN CO LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV UBC CANADA VOY NO (45)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV UBC CANADA VOY NO (45) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T-4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MERIDIAN SHIPPING AGENCIES PTE LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon South Dagon Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of South Dagon KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (595xxx) of South Dagon Exchange will be replaced with the numbers which start with (234-8xxx) of Ahlone ZXSS10SS1B (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 19th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of South Dagon KY Exchange Area will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon Htauk Kyant Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (600xxxx) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be replaced with the numbers which start with (943-7xxx) of Mayangone Soft-X3000 (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 12th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications.

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Silence is golden for big Hollywood stars on Oscar boycott

NEW YORK — Will Smith and Spike Lee may be shunning the Oscars party next month but while the absence from the contest of actors of colour for a second year has sparked hand-wringing in Hollywood, few other celebrities plan to follow their lead.

A week after nominations were announced for the highest honors in show business, only four stars — Smith, Lee, director Michael Moore, and Jada Pinkett-Smith — have announced their intention to stay away from the 28 February ceremony in protest over long-running lack of diversity in the movie industry.

Be it concern over causing offence, opting to lobby for change behind the scenes, or a chance to attend the world's biggest showcase, big stars among 2016 nominees have been largely silent.

Others, like Oscar winners George Clooney and Lupita Nyong'o, have called for change but have signaled no intention to stay at home.

"I think a lot of people in the industry know that the real problem is with movie studios and agencies. It's not the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences," said Variety re-



Mark Ruffalo.
PHOTO: REUTERS



Will Smith.
PHOTO: REUTERS



Brie Larson.
PHOTO: REUTERS

porter Tim Gray, who has covered the Oscars for more than 30 years.

Of the class of 2016, Mark Ruffalo, supporting actor nominee for Catholic Church abuse probe film "Spotlight," said on Thursday that while he supported calls for diversity, "I will

be going to the

Oscars in support

of the victims of clergy sexual abuse and good jour-

nalism."

Brie Larson, a first time Oscar nominee for her role in abduction drama "Room," on Wednesday shared her Hollywood Reporter magazine cover with Twitter's #Oscarssowhite feed. "This is a conversation that deserves attention," added Larson, 26, but said nothing to suggest she would boycott the ceremony.

While Chris Rock has come under pressure from some black celebrities to step down as Oscars host, the acerbic black comedian may feel he can do more good by remaining in

the game. "I think this is a great opportunity to reach a worldwide audience and talk about this issue," Gray said.

Some Latino groups, whose movie talent is also vastly under-represented historically during awards season, don't support a boycott.

"Many of the actors who can barely get a role are not about to bite the hand that feeds them," said Felix Sanchez, chairman of the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts.

African American Film Critics Association president Gil Robertson opposed a boycott, calling the Oscars a well-respected institution that does a lot of good work.

And double Oscar winner Dustin Hoffman suggested that the United States has bigger issues to tackle. Hoffman told the BBC "there's a bigger problem with young black individuals being killed on our street by police."—Reuters

Britain honours stars at National Television Awards

LONDON — Britain's National Television Awards honoured Scottish actor and comedian Billy Connolly with a Special Recognition Award on Wednesday while hit show "Downton Abbey" took the best drama prize.

"It's probably the biggest honor I've ever been given," Connolly said on the red carpet. "I'm not usually in the line for these things but it's kind of bewildering me."

"Downton Abbey" creator Julian Fellowes was on hand to pick up the award for the series, which has won fans worldwide during its six seasons. "Well you know it's fun to win things, I mean don't let's be under any illusion about that, and it's fun because we are at the end of the show, when we win things now it's rather a nice kind of marker to go out on," he said on arrival. "But you know, I hope everyone wins." The awards, which honor British television shows, drew stars from the world of music as well. Speaking on the red carpet, singer Boy George said he was still shocked by the death of music veteran David Bowie this month.

"Yeah it was a real shock, real shock," he said. "I'm still kind of getting over it I mean I'm still kind of you know, still a little bit shocked by the whole thing really."—Reuters

Miley Cyrus, Liam Hemsworth engaged again?

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Miley Cyrus and actor Liam Hemsworth have reportedly got "officially" engaged for the second time, two years after calling off their first engagement.

Multiple sources say the pair is ready to tie the knot, reported E! Online.

While the two have not gone public with their reconciliation, they were spotted together at an Australian music festival called Falls Festival in Byron Bay earlier this month.

At that time, Cyrus and Hemsworth, 26, were reportedly indulged in PDA.

She was in good company as she joined his brothers Chris Hemsworth and Luke Hemsworth as well as their wives on the VIP area at the music festival.

A few days ago, the 23-year-old "Wrecking Ball" hitmaker was spotted wearing apparently her engagement ring which she co-designed with Liam back in 2012. "The ring is special because Miley and Liam worked on it together," a source said of the ring.

"Miley specifically wanted it set in gold. She didn't want platinum. She liked the gold because it was different and unique, like her. She didn't want anything classic or generic."

Most recently, the Disney alum ignited speculations that she's moving in with the hunky actor again as she was spotted at his home in Malibu.

The blonde beauty reportedly had been gradually moving her stuff to Liam's home, with the weekend marking "the finale of her week-long moving process."—PTI

'Avatar 2' won't get Christmas 2017 release?

LOS ANGELES — The much-awaited sequel to James Cameron's 2009 blockbuster "Avatar" will reportedly not be ready for its previously-planned Christmas 2017 release.

No new release date has been yet set for the movie, reported TheWrap.

The report comes just a month after the director said that the production team targeted the holiday release date. The previous release date was, however, never officially confirmed by 20th Century Fox. The studio refused to comment on the report while individuals close to the situation confirmed it.

Some sources cited the production preparation as the main cause of the delay. Soundstage construction and some computer animation work are still in the early stages. Furthermore, a start date for filming "Avatar 2" has not been set yet. Meanwhile, other sources speculated that the decision to delay "Avatar 2" might also be affected by Disney's announcement to move "Star Wars Episode VIII" to 15 December, 2017.—PTI



Liam Hemsworth
& Miley Cyrus.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Mamma Mia! ABBA come together for new restaurant venture

STOCKHOLM — The four former members of Swedish band ABBA, whose catchy tunes still have fans dancing around the world decades after their release, reunited — albeit very briefly — for the opening of a new restaurant-entertainment venture in Stockholm.

Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid Lyngstad all made it for the opening of Mamma Mia! The Party, in which a restaurant at Grona Lund amusement park has been transformed into a Greek

taverna as seen in the “Mamma Mia!” musical and film, both filled with ABBA songs.

The foursome, known for a string of 1970s and early 1980s hits such as “Waterloo”, “Dancing Queen” and “Take A Chance On Me”, split in 1982. They are rarely seen all together these days and have ruled out a reunion.

“We’re here to have a party as everyone else,” Ulvaeus said on arrival at the Wednesday night opening.

“Appearing together? I don’t think so. No. And I

expect the others have answered the same thing to that question right? I hope so. Otherwise there will be headlines tomorrow”.

While they arrived separately, the foursome later came together on stage inside the restaurant for a brief period to wave to fans and pose for pictures, according to local media posting diners’ videos and photos online. “It will be lovely, I’m sure. I think I’ve heard them before,” Faltskog said on arrival when asked about how she felt about hearing ABBA music again.



Former Abba member Bjorn Ulvaeus and his wife Lena Kallersjo arrive for the premiere of ‘Mamma Mia! The Party’ at Tyrol restaurant in Stockholm, Sweden, on 20 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ulvaeus is executive producer of the venture, which he said borrowed the mood from “Mamma Mia!” but not the plot, with guests treated to a Greek-style party full of ABBA songs.

“At the end of the show they (audiences) are very happy,” Ulvaeus said, referring to the musical.

“They’re standing up in the aisles dancing and the idea was to try to take that with us into a restaurant environment ... and have a really good party with good food, wine and singing and dancing.”—Reuters

Japan Expo held in Thailand, AKB48 concert featured

BANGKOK — Japan Expo Thailand, the biggest event of J-pop culture in the country, started yesterday, drawing massive attention from fans and Japanese culture lovers.

The event, being held for three days at Bangkok’s Central World shopping

mall, features Japanese music, anime, manga, food, art and design, fashion and drama. Among the highlights is a pop music performance by all-girls idol group AKB48 whose five members — Haruka Shimada, Mariya Suzuki, Aeri Yokoshima, Rina Izuta — will perform

on Sunday. The tourism zone features booths from various Japanese prefectures offering information for self-guided travellers, whose numbers have risen dramatically since July 2013 when visa requirements for short-term visits were lifted.

The “Study in Japan”

zone is attracting attention from students of the Japanese language. Representatives from 19 schools and universities in Japan are participating in the event.

Chonmanee Kaewtim, a 16-year-old high school student from Bangkok, said she studies Japanese be-

cause she likes Japan’s culture and food, as well as the character of its people.

“I want to study at Shizuoka University because I want to have a new experience...They also provide scholarships to students,” she said, while pointing out how Japan is one of the saf-

est places in the world for students from overseas to study. Organisers expect the expo, being held for the second time, will attract some 600,000 visitors through Sunday, or double the number who came when it was last held in 2014.—Kyodo News

New York City tourism climbs to record high in 2015 for 6th year

NEW YORK — The number of tourists visiting New York City rose to a record high in 2015 for the sixth consecutive year, with nearly 60 million people travelling to the biggest city in the United States, officials said on Thursday.

The tourism boom continued apace even though last year brought also a spike in security threats, fueling concern that domestic attacks carried out by sympathisers of the militant group Islamic State were possible in New York.

Following the Paris attacks in November that killed 130 as well as the



A tourist poses for a photo with One World Trade Centre in the background from the observation deck of the Empire State Building in New York in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

December shooting in San Bernardino that killed 14, New York City officials repeatedly sought to reassure the public that the city was equipped to

handle any threat.

The New York City Police Department’s enormous counterterrorism apparatus was out in full force for signature events

like the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade and the annual New Year’s Eve celebration in Times Square, which drew more than 1 million people to the centre of Manhattan to ring in 2016.

“As the safest and most exciting big city in America, we have so many rich offerings that continue to make the five boroughs a global draw,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said in a statement.

The city’s more than 100,000 hotel rooms saw a record number of bookings in 2015, according to the city’s official tourism and marketing arm, NYC & Company.—Reuters

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(23-1-2016, Saturday)

6:00 am

• Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:35 am

• Hyper Sports

8:35 am

• The Farmer

9:35 am

• MRTV’s Youth Programme

10:35 am

• Science and Technology Programme

11:35 am

• Game For Children

12:50 pm

• Round Up of The Week’s Local TV News

1:30 pm

• Round Up of The

Week’s Hluttaw

2:10 pm

• Teleplay

2:30 pm

• TV Drama Series

4:35 pm

• MRTV Job Opportunity Programme

5:35 pm

• Poem For Children

7:15 pm

• Radio Drama

8:00 pm

• News / International News/ Weather Report

9:00 pm

• News

• Gitadagale Phwintbaohn

• Pyi Thu Ni Ti

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(23-1-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm

• Classical Songs

6:15pm

• Real Story, Real Movie

6:35 pm

• Musical Programme

6:45 pm

• Myanmar Series

7:00 pm

• Cassette Drama

8:10 pm

• Fashion (Music)

8:25 pm

• Dramatic Arts

9:40 pm

• Pyi Thu Ni Ti

10:05 pm

• Myanmar Video

Midnight

• Close Down

From 23.1.2016 (Saturday) 06:00 Pm
To 24.1.2016 (Sunday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

mitv Myanmar International

(23-1-2016 07:00 am~ 24-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon - The Repository Of Buddhist Scriptures And Archives
07:42	Am	Toddy Palm Product Shop
07:54	Am	TECH School
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Kyaik Hmaw Wun Yele Pagoda Festival
08:36	Am	Bago: A City Of Famous Historic Pagoda
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Today Myanmar & ICT “Social Development and ICT”
09:49	Am	Myanmar’s Export: Mango
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-6)

10:46	Am	Temple Stalls
10:52	Am	A Star for Great Achievement

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	To My Dream City (Part- 1)
07:49	Pm	Today Myanmar: Auto Market Amid The Policy Changes
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Stories Of The Great Souls (Daw Saw Mone Nyin- A Living Literary Legend Of Myanmar)
08:54	Pm	Now in Yangon

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Friday Repeat (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

2020 Tokyo committee in partnership deal with 4 newspapers

TOKYO — The Organising Committee of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics said yesterday that four Japanese newspapers have become official partners for the event.

The committee tied the deal with The Asahi Shimbun Co., Nikkei Inc., The Mainichi Newspapers Co. and *The Yomiuri Shimbun* under the contract category of “news-papers.” They were ranked just below the “gold” status accredited to highest-ranked sponsors.

Only one company is chosen from one business category in principle but the International Olympic Committee granted an exception. The deals were agreed with four companies to boost the mood in the country for the Games, a committee source said.—*Kyodo News*

Federer defuses Dimitrov challenge to seal 300th slam win

MELBOURNE — A patient Roger Federer weathered a second set storm from Grigor Dimitrov before slapping down the Bulgarian challenger 6-4, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 to reach the fourth round of the Australian Open and clinch his 300th win in grand slams.

Long in the shadow of the Swiss master, Dimitrov played some irresistible tennis to prise a set but was powerless to maintain the intensity under a closed roof at Rod Laver Arena.

Federer, however, simply lifted a gear, taming an occasionally wayward forehand before speeding away from the Bulgarian player nicknamed ‘Baby Fed’.

Capturing an early break in the final set, four-time champion Federer sealed the match with an imperious forehand to set up a clash with another young gun in Belgian David Goffin.—*Reuters*

Arsenal must prepare for ‘battle’ with Costa: Wenger

ARSENAL must be prepared to battle Chelsea striker Diego Costa when the two London rivals meet in the Premier League on Sunday, manager Arsene Wenger has said.

Costa was at the centre of controversy in their last meeting earlier this season as his first-half scuffles with Laurent Koscielny and Gabriel eventually led to the Brazilian being sent off for retaliating.

Gabriel’s red card was later rescinded, but the defender was given a one-match suspension for failing to leave the pitch quickly enough, while Costa was slapped with a three-match ban and both clubs were fined for not controlling their players.

“We have to be prepared for a battle because Costa gives you a fight. After that, it’s down to the referee,” Wenger told British media.

“We have to focus on our performance. It’s another game where people look at us and see how we behave.”

“It will be an intense game, as usual in the Premier League. Overall, I think because of the qualities of the players on the pitch and what is at stake for both teams, it will be a very intense battle.”

Costa seems to have recovered from his slump, having scored five goals in his last five appearances in all competitions for champions Chelsea, who are 14th in the table after 22 games.

Arsenal are top of the table with 44 points, 19 points ahead of the Blues, and head into the clash having lost just once in their last 12 games in all competitions.—*Reuters*



Arsenal manager
Arsene Wenger.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Sharapova re-dresses for success to reach fourth round



Russia’s Maria Sharapova celebrates after winning her third round match against Lauren Davis of the US at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 22 January.
PHOTO: REUTERS

MELBOURNE — Former champion Maria Sharapova found inspiration in a change of dress to put away unseeded American Lauren Davis 6-1, 6-7(5), 6-0 at the Australian Open on Friday and set up an intriguing fourth round match with rising Swiss talent Belinda Bencic.

Up 2-0 in the second set and closing in on victory, the Russian’s serve crumbled, allowing Davis to reel off five consecutive games and eventually capture a tense second set tiebreak.

Fifth seed Sharapova left the court for a lengthy comfort break between sets but re-emerged with a fresh outfit and a renewed

focus, and proceeded to hammer the hapless American.

Bashing consecutive aces with her first two serves, Sharapova roared through without dropping a game, closing out the match when her 103rd-ranked opponent swiped a backhand long.

“I don’t have a chat in the mirror, I think I get fined for that,” Sharapova said courtside of her trip to the locker-room.

“I changed my dress and felt a little bit lighter which made me move better. But other than that, that’s all I can share.”

The win was 28-year-old Sharapova’s 600th on tour and the five-time grand slam cham-

pion now faces an inter-generational battle against teenager Bencic.

“Yeah, an impressive player,” said Sharapova. “A newer generation that’s already established herself in the past season, beaten a lot of top players.

“It’s a tough fourth round. We haven’t played against each other before, but I’m sure we’ll be playing many times.” Long touted for big things, 12th seed Bencic was the first player into the round of 16 after fighting back from a set down to overhaul Ukrainian Kateryna Bondarenko 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 in the earlier match at Rod Laver Arena.

Easily outstripping her previous second round best at the tournament, Bencic also became the first Swiss woman to reach the fourth round at Melbourne Park since her mentor Martina Hingis and Patty Schnyder in 2007.

The 18-year-old said she was not intimidated by the prospect of playing a five-times grand slam winner as she looks to reach a second quarter-final at a major by matching her breakthrough run at the 2014 US Open.—*Reuters*