

THRONGS AND THIRST

Development at Golden Rock has a dark side



Panoramic view of Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda. PHOTO: TUN WIN NAING

Thi Thi Min

EASY trips by truck along the mountainous road to Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda conjure memories of 7-hour treks by torchlight among Myanmar's older generations.

Modern roads to the coun-

try's famous pagoda, which is also known as Golden Rock, has cut the time from 7 hours on foot along the more than 7-mile-long jungle route to less than one hour by car.

However, the easy access has introduced new challenges

for hopeful pagoda tourists. The hotels and guesthouses are barely able to accommodate all of the pilgrims, and prices have shot way up.

When visitors fail to find affordable accommodation, they are forced to curl up on the pa-

goda platform with a blanket and brace themselves for the uncomfortable night ahead.

In the past, pilgrims were afforded free shelter religious buildings, but these, too, are in short supply. Many of the institutions that once hosted visitors

for free have been converted into guesthouses, capitalising on the high demand. These guesthouses have come under criticism from the public.

"We have permitted those who lost their shops in the 2014

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President U Thein Sein to address Parliament

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Sticky situation for sugar cane growers in Bago Region

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Fisheries federation requests permission to transport goods on passenger buses

THE Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) has requested that the Union Commodity Price Stability Committee permit the shipment of seafood to areas in Upper Myanmar where fish and shrimp are scarce, according to the federation.

As a result of the prohibition on transporting fish and shrimp on highway passenger buses to towns in Upper Myanmar issued

last November, those towns now face a shortage of seafood. The MFF lodged its request in the third week of January 2016 for permission to be reinstated.

"People in those upper regions used to be able to access fresh fish and shrimp because we could transport it via commercial passenger vehicles. Traders bound together to send up the

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Five migrant workers fall to their deaths

Aye Min Soe

FIVE migrant workers died after falling off the edge of a mountain while digging jade stones in Hpakant yesterday. The incident came after one man was confirmed dead and one missing following a landslide in Hpakant on Monday.

The five victims have been confirmed as Aung Kyaw Soe

Khaing, 24; Zaw Naung, 24; Naw Maing, 20; Tan Guam, 26; and Za Tann Daung Khaung, 39, according to local authorities.

The incident happened around 8:45pm on Tuesday.

The bodies of the men were sent to a nearby hospital.

In late November last year, a deadly landslide at the site left 115 migrant workers dead.

Failures to follow safety regu-

lations by both mining companies and migrant squatters have posed challenges for local authorities in preventing landslides around jade mines in Kachin State.

To prevent landslides, local authorities have suggested that migrant miners squatting in at-risk areas relocate to safer areas and that mining companies dump their waste soil in accordance with technical safety rules.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves joint committee's reports, discusses two bills



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE 13th regular session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continued for the 39th day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with parliamen-

tary approval given to the Joint Public Accounts Committee's reports and two others, and discussions on two bills.

Following the discussions of the members of Union-level organisations on findings and remarks of the Joint Public Ac-

counts Committee on the report relating to the Union Budget for 2014-2015, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced the parliamentary approval to the committee's report.

On the committee's report, Union Minister for Finance U Win Shein said that the ministry is supervising the budget implementation of the ministries concerned, following the suggestions of the committee in accord with existing rules and regulations and the Constitution.

In his discussion, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw said that the ministry is also overseeing projects being implemented and financed by Union, regional and other budgets in regions, states and districts.

Daw Khin Saw Oo, deputy governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, pledged that further

coordination will be made between the CBM and the Finance Ministry in accord with the suggestion of the committee.

Next, the process of approving the second draft of Myanmar Gemstone Law sent back by the President with remarks followed.

Then, Union Minister U Win Shein discussed the Joint Public Accounts Committee's findings and remarks on the Union Auditor-General's report, and the Pyithu Hluttaw approved it.

During today's session, committee members read out the Joint Bill Committee's report on its activities at the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session, and a parliamentarian presented the committee's report on the former President's security bill that has been debated by Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House).—*Myanmar News Agency*

MNHRC hosts TWG meeting of South East Asia National Human Rights Institution

THE Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, the chair of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum for 2016, hosted a technical working group meeting at its office in Yangon yesterday.

In his address, U Win Mra, chairman of the MNHRC, stated that the meeting is aimed at holding discussions on the follow-up activities relating to the decisions

of the 12th SEANF annual meeting in Malaysia and other human rights issues.

During the meeting, set to last for two days from 27 to 28 January, delegates from the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) presented an update of SEANF Permanent Secretariat and initial work on the drafting of the SEANF strategic plan for 2017-

2022, which was followed by further input from other delegates.

The meeting was attended by delegates from members of SEANF except Timor-leste. The SEANF comprises six independent national human right institutions from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Timor-leste. The meeting continues today. — *Myanmar News Agency*

MWWAF's annual meeting continues

THE Annual meeting of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation continued for second day in Nay Pyi Taw, with attendees to the meeting taking part in topics of discussions.

Discussions on capacity

building for women were led by Prof. Dr Khin Mar Tun, president of the federation, Daw Tin Tin Lat and Daw Khin May Soe, MWWAF's vice-presidents. Moreover, topics of discussions included microfinancing, vocational training, in-

come generation programs, ways to stop violence against women, anti-human trafficking, legal assistance for the victims, protection of women and children affected by conflicts and natural disasters.— *Myanmar News Agency*



Participants are taking part in annual meeting of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation. PHOTO: MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw sees reports presentation of respective committees



U Saw Hla Tun. PHOTO: MNA



U Nyi Nyi Myint. PHOTO: MNA

THE 13th regular session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) continued for 30th day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with the submission of reports on activities of its committees and commission to the Hluttaw.

MPs U Saw Hla Tun and U Nyi Nyi Myint read out a report of the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee and Pyithu Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee.

Likewise, presentations of reports by the Parliament by Hluttaw Rights Committee, Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Committee and Pyithu Hluttaw

Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission were also made.

In its presentation, Hluttaw Rights Committee suggested that the future parliamentary session be set to last for six months in maximum and parliamentary calendar for a certain year should be released early.

The committee also stressed the need of undertaking parliamentary activities by all MPs in cooperation with Defense Services Personnel representatives.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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Pilgrims set up temporary shelters on the platform of Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda. PHOTO: NAY LIN

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fire to run some buildings as guesthouses under a contract," said U Myo Aung, a member of the pagoda's board of trustees.

There are three registered hotels near the platform of the pagoda.

Another challenge pilgrims encounter is the surge in charity scams at shrines and along the roads leading to the pagoda, tarnishing the pagoda's image.

"We have received complaints about the forced charities and have taken action against those involved in them. Still, there are some weaknesses con-

nected with the issue of forced charities in areas we cannot reach," said U Myo Aung.

Moreover, the lack of sanitation and the scarcity of water also stoke frustrations among visitors to the Golden Rock.

"Water is expensive here, and sanitation in the toilets is not hygienic," said Daw Khin Shwe, a pilgrim from Mandalay.

Luckily, there are a few souvenir shops selling hand-made toys made of bamboo and beads on a jungle path to the pagoda, but not too many.

Meanwhile, environmentalists and local people are con-

cerned about how construction on the mountain will affect the environment.

"The construction of road and buildings in the mountains should only take place with advice from experts taking into consideration the sustainability of the mountain range," said U Yay Chan, chairman of the Kyaikhtiyo Mountain Range Lovers' Association.

As part of the environmental conservation effort in the mountains, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is drawing a plan for afforestation and the prevention of deforestation.

"Landslides reportedly happen every rainy season in the mountains. The incidents have alerted us of the urgent need to conserve the environment," said Ko Thiha Aung, a member of the Environmental Conservation Group.

President U Thein Sein visited the pagoda recently and gave instructions to authorities on the all-round development of the pagoda.

In accordance with his instruction, local authorities are drawing a master plan for the sustainability of the mountains and environment.



A woman throws away garbage litters. PHOTO: NAY LIN

Revenue on Mandalay trade falls short of predictions

THE Internal Revenue Department of Mandalay Region has announced that it has only collected half as much tax and revenue from commercial trade as the amount originally anticipated. The target amount was double the previous year's total collections.

Tax and revenue collected during the 2014-2015 fiscal year amounted to K52 billion (US\$40,268,800), prompting estimates that up to K115 billion (\$89,056,000) of revenue from trade could be collected during the

current fiscal year. So far, only K57 billion (\$44,140,800) has been collected.

"There are two months left in the fiscal year for the collection of tax. We will collect tax during these months. Taxation is also not a matter of forcible collection," said U Kyaw Aung Moe from Internal Revenue Department in Mandalay Region.

In previous years, tax and revenue collection added up to K42 billion (2010-11); K53 billion (2012-13), K40 billion (2013-14)

and K52 billion (2014-15).

Letters have been sent to townships informing the public to pay taxes; people who have yet to pay their taxes will be permitted to pay in instalments.

The last day of the 2015-16 fiscal year is 31 March. Efforts are being made to ensure that all taxes are paid before the next government comes to office, with legal action to be taken against those who fail to pay their taxes, if deemed necessary.—Myitmakha News Agency

President U Thein Sein to address Parliament

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein will address the 13th regular session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw today. The President's address at the Parliament will be broadcast live on MRTV's News Channel, Hluttaw Channel and radio program at 9.50 am.—Myanmar News Agency

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing donates tooth relic replica to Magway pagoda

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presented a replica of a Buddha's tooth relic to the Myathalon Pagoda in Magway for public obeisance yesterday.

The tooth relic replica was presented to his family by the monk of Buddha's Tooth Relic Temple in Beijing while the original tooth relic of the Buddha was conveyed from China to Nay Pyi Taw in 2011, said the Senior General.

Explaining his purpose of donation, the command-

er-in-chief also expressed hope for Magway to attract business activities that can contribute toward regional development following the public exposition of the tooth relic replica at the Myathalon Pagoda.

During the ceremony, the senior general and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla presented the tooth relic replica to the pagoda's board of trustees. In the afternoon, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and entourage visited the No. 13 Heavy Industry Plant in the Magway industrial zone.—Myawady

Fisheries federation requests permission to transport . . .

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food when transportation permission via highway buses was withdrawn, but our produce didn't reach the local markets in time. As a result, our fish cannot be consumed fresh anymore, causing prices to rise," said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of the MFF.

He continued that the government should grant permission for seafood to be transported by

highway vehicles since traders are not able to transport their catches in cold storage vehicles.

"Tourist carriers have said that they can't meet expenses by just ferrying passengers. Their business is only viable if they can also make earnings from transporting goods. As such, permission to transport goods should be brought back," said U Win Kyaing.—Myitmakha News Agency



Union Minister for Energy U Zeyar Aung is being welcomed by Ambassador of Australia to Myanmar Mr Nicholas Coppel on his arrival at a reception to mark the National Day of Australia in Yangon Wednesday. PHOTO: MNA

Sticky situation for sugar cane growers in Bago Region

SUGAR cane growers in the Pauk Kaung township of western Bago Region are finding themselves in a spot of bother after a fall in the price of the cane as well as a decline in the daily output of sugar from the Inngarkhwa sugar refinery, according to local growers.

The sugar cane being harvested in this year's crop is being bought at the previous year's allocated price of 30,000 kyats per one ton. However, local farmers say there have been many losses because of an increase in price of expenses such as labour, pesticide and fertilizer.

"In the past, the sugar refinery used to give [us farmers] fertilizer, instructing us to plough our land and plant sugar cane. Now though, lots of people are growing sugar to the point whereby the sugar refinery can't buy it back from us anymore. We asked them to pay us more for our sugar because we can't meet expenses, but they didn't. They are controlling the price," explained

local sugar grower Ko Soe Than.

Signatures were collected and sent to the relevant departments twice during 2015-2016 requesting the price of sugar cane to be increased, and while it was increased by 2,000 kyats, it still falls short of the price requested by farmers.

"Western Bago Region boasts two sugar refineries. Sugar cane growers were given a price of 30,000 kyats per ton of sugar cane. But because of demand for an increase, those with authority increased the price by 2,000 kyats. The Oktwin sugar refinery in the eastern part of the Region is now paying 32,000 kyats per ton," said U Ohn Myint, director of the Inngarkhwa sugar refinery.

The Inngarkhwa sugar refinery used to be able to process 2,000 tonnes of sugar a day, but machinery malfunctions have caused fluctuations in the daily amount of sugar that can be refined, resulting in trucks transporting the sugar cane habitually having to queue up for days at a



Sugar cane growers in Bago Region. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

time outside the refinery.

This causes a reduction in the final weight of the sugar produced from the sugar cane, as it

dries out in the heat whilst waiting to be refined and because other foreign objects, such as litter, get mixed in, which has meant

that sugar cane growers receive less for their crops than estimated, resulting in financial losses.—Myitmakha News Agency



No 20. BEHS performed the U Shwe Yo and Daw Moe dance.

PHOTO: SHWE YE YINT

Developing faster reading

THE Public Relations and Information Department and Basic Education Department jointly organised an event for Developing Faster Reading at No. 13 Basic Education High School in Poppathiri Township, Oaktara District, Nay Pyi Taw on Monday.

At the ceremony, students from the 13 BEHS sang a song

"The School of Myanmar" for the opening ceremony.

Acting-director U Kyaw Sint of Head office of IPRD explained the role of the government in developing faster reading - giving educative talks to the students of the Basic Education School and holding competitions.

Head of Oaktara District Education Department U Ba Tun spoke words of thanks to the IPRD. Students from No 20. BEHS performed the U Shwe Yo and Daw Moe dance to the departmental officials, teachers, students and guests.—Shwe Ye Yint (Oaktara District IPRD)

Crime News

Motorbike accident kills child, injures one man

A MOTORBIKE collided head on with another motorbike between milepost 5/3-4, Yoma road, Yedashay township, Bago region, on Sunday, leaving a child dead and a man injured.

The motorbike, which was allegedly carrying teak planks crashed into the other being

driven by one U Tun Lwin, 20, with his wife and two children on board.

The collision killed a child on the spot and seriously injured U Tun Lwin. The motorbike drivers were deemed guilty of careless driving by the police station.—Ko Lwin (Swar)

Man snatches money in Bayintnaung

A MAN is wanted by police for snatching K 170,000 from a business man in Bayintnaung, Mayangon township, Yangon on 20 January. According to an investigation, U Aung Tin made off with the money after assaulting a local shop owner, leaving him unconscious. Bayintanaung police are still investigating.—Maung Say Aung

Opium and Yabba seized in Lashio

AN- Anti-drug squad in Lashio Oriental toll gate discovered opium weighing 15 grams and 28 yabba pills on one Hsan Aung, a passenger of a car heading from Kutkai to Mandalay, on Monday.

Members of the po-

lice further seized 900 yabba pills from one Thet Naing in Don Kon village, Patheingyi township. Local police have filed charges against the suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Three men charged with two counts of bike theft

LOCAL police have filed charges against three men on suspicion of two motorcycle thefts as they failed to identify that the bike belonged to them.

The police stopped Soe Naing, 46, Thet Naing Oo, 20, and Tayokegyi, 18, in Yamethin township, Mandalay re-

gion on 23 January.

Further investigation led to uncovering another bike theft case at Shwe Myin Tin Pagoda, Yamethin town last year.

The local police have filed charges against them.—Myanmar police Force

Vehicle crashes into the sign board of Myin Mu

A VEHICLE heading from Mandalay to Monywa being driven by one Pyae Sone with one Dar Bo on board crashed into the sign board when the driver lost control at the Myint Mu entrance gate on Monday. The accident injured the driver and the conductor. The vehicle driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by police.—Myanmar Police Force



Hsan Aung. PHOTO: MPF

Japan emperor, empress lay flowers to honour Filipino WWII dead

MANILA — The Japanese imperial couple laid flowers yesterday at the Heroes' Cemetery in Manila dedicated to Filipinos who fought and died in World War II, on the second day of their trip to pay respects to those who perished in the Southeast Asian country during the war.

Earlier in the day, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko attended a welcoming ceremony at Malacanang Palace, the official residence of the Philippine president in the capital.

They were greeted by President Benigno Aquino on the palace lawn as the two countries' national anthems were played and gun salutes fired, before the emperor and the president received a formal salute from the honour guard.

The imperial couple are on a five-day trip to the Philippines, where some 1.1 million Filipinos and around 518,000 Japanese, including civilians, lost their lives during the war.

The first-ever trip by a sitting Japanese emperor and empress is also aimed at commemorating the 60th anniversary of the normalisation of bilateral diplomatic ties.

After the ceremony, the emperor and empress held a meet-

ing with Aquino and other officials.

As the royal couple were being welcomed at the palace, Filipino women who were forced to work in Japanese military broth-

els during World War II and a group of citizens and activists staged a demonstration in Manila, seeking an official apology from the Japanese government and the emperor.

Around 200 demonstrators gathered, calling on Aquino to raise the plight of the aging "comfort women" with the Japanese emperor.

Meanwhile, the emperor

and empress paid a visit to the monument for Philippine national hero Jose Rizal (1861-1896) after leaving the presidential palace.

In the evening, the couple will attend a banquet to be hosted by the president at the palace, where the emperor is scheduled to deliver a speech.

Before returning home Saturday, the emperor and empress will offer flowers at a monument for the Japanese war dead in what will be one of the highlights of their trip to the country.

Japan occupied the Philippines, then a US colony, during the war.

Some 100,000 civilians lost their lives during the monthlong Battle of Manila fought by US and Filipino forces against the Japanese from early February 1945.

The emperor's father, Emperor Hirohito, posthumously known as Emperor Showa, was commander in chief of the Japanese military before and during the war, and Japanese soldiers at the time fought and died in his name.

The current emperor was 11 years old when Japan surrendered unconditionally in the war in August 1945.—*Kyodo News*



President Benigno Aquino greets visiting Japanese Emperor Akihito, while Empress Michiko watches, before the start of their meeting inside the presidential palace in Manila on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

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EDF signs preliminary deal to build six nuclear plants in India

PARIS — French utility EDF said on Tuesday it had signed a preliminary agreement with Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd (NPCIL) to build six nuclear reactors at Jaitapur, in the west of India.

EDF is taking over the long-delayed project, which could become the world's biggest nuclear contract, from fellow French state-controlled group Areva, which will sell its reactor arm to EDF later this year. The Jaitapur project is at the preliminary technical studies stage after getting initial environmental clearance in 2010, EDF said in a statement. A contract for pre-engineering studies was signed by Areva and NPCIL last April.

EDF said that in the next few months it would continue work started by Areva and NPCIL to secure certification for the European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) reactor in India and to finalise the economic and financial conditions.

The six 1650 megawatt EPR reactors with a combined capacity of nearly 10,000 MW would make Jaitapur one of the world's biggest nuclear sites and the contract, if finalised, one of the largest in the history of the nuclear industry.

But Indian legislation on

manufacturer's liability has long blocked French, US and Russian nuclear projects in the country.

General Electric Chairman Jeff Immelt said in September that GE will not invest in atomic energy in India until accident liability laws are brought in line with global practice. With the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy in mind, India's parliament passed a law six years ago that makes equipment suppliers responsible for an accident.

Strong local opposition to the project, haggling over price, massive delays and cost overruns at EPRs under construction in France and Finland and the takeover of Areva's reactor arm by EDF are

also delaying the huge project.

French President Francois Hollande, making a state visit to India, said on Monday that an agreement to build the six nuclear reactors should be concluded within a year.

Hollande and Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a joint statement they had agreed to hasten the nuclear talks and aim for construction to begin in early 2017. EDF also said its EDF Energies Nouvelles unit had agreed to a partnership with India's SITAC to build four onshore wind farms by the end of 2016 with a total capacity of 142 MW in the state of Gujarat. —*Reuters*



A policeman stands at a kiosk at the proposed site of the Jaitapur nuclear plant in Ratnagiri district, about 360 km (224 miles) south of Mumbai, in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

Singapore's Changi Airport sees record passengers in 2015

SINGAPORE — Singapore Changi Airport bounced back from a weak start to the year to handle a record 55.4 million passengers in 2015, a 2.5 per cent rise, helped by new carriers and growth in traffic from Thailand, Viet Nam and China.

Passenger movements in December last year were up 3.9 per cent to 5.29 million, the highest monthly traffic for the airport ever since it started operations in 1981, it stated yesterday.

Total cargo recorded was 1.85 million tonnes for the year.

"Economic uncertainty in many markets may dampen travel demand in the near term," Lee Seow Hiang, CEO, Changi Airport Group, said in a statement.

"However, low fuel prices should support airlines' profitability. The outlook for Changi is also bolstered by positive developments such as addition of new city links and airlines in the coming months," Lee added.—*Reuters*

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Daredevils of Indian Corps of Signals move with motorcycles during the 67th Republic Day Parade in New Delhi, India, on 26 January 2016. India on Tuesday displayed its military might at its 67th Republic Day parade in the national capital, with French President Francois Hollande as the chief guest. PHOTO: XINHUA

US, China must find way forward on North Korea, South China Sea: Kerry

BEIJING — The United States and China must find a way forward on the North Korea nuclear issue and the situation in the South China Sea, US Secretary of State John Kerry said yesterday during a meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Kerry, on a two-day visit to Beijing, had promised to press China to push for more curbs on North Korea after it said it had successfully conducted a test of a miniaturised hydrogen nuclear device on 6 January.

Beijing, Pyongyang's lone major backer, has criticised similar remarks by State Department officials as irresponsible, saying it has made great efforts to achieve denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula.

Though the United States and China had made good progress on issues from climate change to counter-terrorism, "clearly we have several important issues that we need to find the way forward on," Kerry told Wang, according to a pool report on the meeting.

"One is the nuclear programme of the DPRK, North Korea, a major challenge to global security, one of the most important issues for the security of the United States of America," Kerry said.

The 15-member UN Security Council said at the time of North Korea's test that it would begin working on significant new measures in response, a threat diplomats said could mean an ex-



US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi shake hands before their bilateral meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing on 27 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

pansion of sanctions.

Since then diplomats said Washington and Beijing have been primarily negotiating on a draft resolution, but when asked on Saturday if they were nearing agreement, US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power said no.

Kerry also told Wang that the two countries had to make progress on "concerns and activities in the South China Sea".

China claims almost all the disputed waters in the potentially oil- and gas-rich South China Sea, parts of which are also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam.

It has been building up facilities on islands it controls, angering the Philippines and Viet Nam and drawing criticism from the United States, which has expressed deep concern that the

construction will exacerbate tension in the region.

Kerry was in Cambodia on Tuesday after a visit to neighbouring Laos as part of an effort to urge unity among leaders of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), before a summit with President Barack Obama in Sunnylands, California, next month. China insists any disputes should be handled bilaterally.—Reuters

China, Thailand vow to further promote military ties

BEIJING — China and Thailand on Tuesday vowed to improve military relations and cooperation in areas such as training and defence industry.

The pledge was made during a meeting between China's Defence Minister Chang Wanquan and visiting Chief of the Royal Thai Army General Teerachai Nakwanich.

Chang hailed cooperation between the two armed forces in recent years, especially in joint training. He said the People's Liberation Army attached great importance to the relationship with Thai armed forces.

Teerachai said Thailand cherishes bilateral cooperation in joint training and defence industry and wishes to further cooperation in various fields.—Xinhua

Malaysian police find more bodies of migrants from Indonesian boat

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police said yesterday they had recovered five more bodies from the waters off the southern state of Johor, a day after a boat carrying illegal migrants capsized in big waves.

Authorities launched a search on Tuesday after 13 bodies were spotted in the sea near the coastal town of Bandar Penawar.

District police chief Rahmat Othman said the boat had been travelling from Indonesia's Batam island and was believed to have been carrying up to 40 people.

"Some of the passengers managed to swim to safety, though it is unclear how many survived," he said in a text message.

The bodies of nine men and nine women had been taken to a hospital for a post-mortem. More bodies were expected to be found, Rahmat said. Indonesians travel to Malaysia to work in plantations and as domestic helpers.—Reuters

Denmark passes tough migrant law as Nordic refugee welcome dims



Police organise the line of refugees at on the stairway leading up from the trains arriving from Denmark at the Hyllie train station outside Malmö, Sweden, in November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

COPENHAGEN — Denmark's parliament passed measures on Tuesday aimed at deterring refugees from seeking asylum, including confiscating valuables to pay for their stay, despite protests from international human rights organisations.

The measures, which also include extending family reunification among refugees from one year to three years, are the latest sign that the Nordic welcome for refugees is waning as large numbers flee war in Africa and Middle East for a better life in Europe.

The "jewellery bill" is the latest attempt by Denmark's minority centre-right government to

curb immigration to a country that took in a record 20,000 refugees last year.

Under the bill, refugees could keep possessions amounting to 10,000 Danish crowns (\$1,450), raised from 3,000 crowns after criticism from human rights organisations. Valuables of special emotional value such as wedding rings will be exempt.

The Liberals Party government has just 34 out of 179 seats in parliament and depends on support of rightist parties, including the anti-immigration Danish People's Party (DF), to pass laws.

During a three and a half hour debate, dissenting voices

from small leftwing parties were heard including from Red Green Alliance.

But the bill passed with an overwhelming majority, backed by the main centre-left opposition party Social Democrats, highlighting a shift to the right in Denmark's political landscape thanks to DF's popularity and rising concern over refugee numbers. "I wouldn't say that I have become racist or anything," said Poul Madsen, a taxi driver, before the bill was passed. "But I may be more aware of the fact that this has some downsides and may be a potential problem for our society and our economy." — *Reuters*

Resentment simmers as Greece launches debate on pension reforms

ATHENS — Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras launched a vocal defence of plans to overhaul the country's pensions system on Tuesday as public unrest simmered over cutbacks that are a condition for the indebted country to receive more international aid.

Amid escalating protests, Tsipras said the country had no choice but to reform a system which had created chronic deficits and would collapse if left unchanged. He also challenged his main opposition rivals to come up with a better plan.

"Present and future projections leave no room for complacency. To pay pensions in 2016, the social security system — apart from contributions and state funding — will need to find additional funds of 980 mil-

lion euros," he said during a parliamentary debate, a preamble to a formal submission of the pension reforms bill expected in February.

Tsipras, a leftist who swept to power a year ago, must keep lenders onside to complete an overdue review of reforms, without alienating his electorate altogether.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, newly-elected leader of the Conservative New Democracy Party, accused Tsipras of 'fooling' Greeks, referring to the prime minister's u-turn on his pre-election promises to end austerity.

"In the space of a year, you turned hope into despair," said Mitsotakis in his first parliament speech as party leader. He is marginally leading Tsipras in opinion polls.

Farmers who have been blocking motorways across the country sporadically for days in protest at plans to cut tax breaks for farming as well as pensions said they would escalate action and bring the country to a standstill unless Tsipras backed down.

"We will step up action by blocking roads, ports and customs offices for more hours," said Vagelis Boutas, head of a national committee coordinating the farmer protests.

Greece's pension system costs about 28.5 billion euros a year, and lenders want cutbacks equivalent to 1 per cent of GDP per year.

But Tsipras said that did not necessarily mean cutbacks in pensions, suggesting some flexibility in reforms. — *Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Putin to chair \$22 billion Russian crisis funding meeting

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin is to chair a government meeting yesterday over a 1.7 trillion rouble (15 billion pounds) plan to protect the Russian economy from major economic crises, the *RBC daily* newspaper reported, citing government sources. It said at least 737 billion roubles were included in a contingency plan sent to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. The Russian economy, which is heavily dependent on energy exports, contracted by 3.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, mainly due to the falling price of oil amid an oversupply crisis. — *Reuters*

Police give all clear after Saudi, Qatar missions to UN evacuated

NEW YORK — Police cleared a suspicious package on Tuesday that had led to the evacuation of a building opposite the United Nations headquarters in New York that houses the UN missions of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

"It's all over," said John Miller, New York Police Department deputy commissioner for intelligence and counter-terrorism. "It's a couple of household items and a framed picture, no hazard."

"It may just be a gift to the mission, we don't know," he told reporters.

A UN security official said the package was found in the Saudi Arabian UN mission. — *Reuters*

More than 1,200 boat migrants rescued off Libya on Tuesday

ROME — Italy's coast guard said on Tuesday it had coordinated the rescue of 1,271 migrants from rubber and wooden boats in several operations off the coast of Libya.

Italy was long at the frontier of sea-borne migration from North Africa, but most of the hundreds of thousands of people arriving in Europe on rickety boats last year took a less risky route to Greece. Vessels from the Italian navy and coast guard and a Slovenian military ship working as part of the European Union naval operation EUNAVFOR MED conducted the rescues.

Italy used to run its own search and rescue mission for the boat migrants, but the Mare Nostrum or "Our Sea" project was stopped and replaced with the European Union's Frontex scheme, which had to be expanded as Europe faced its worst migration crisis since World War II. — *Reuters*

Photojournalists satisfied with lawmakers' decision

BELGRADE — Photojournalists welcomed on Tuesday the Serbian parliament's decision to reject the draft interpretation of the law on copyright and related rights, which considered electronic photographs to be "the result of mechanical actions, of routine, physical actions".

The Photography Development Centre and numerous associations of photojournalists thanked MPs for unanimously affirming the importance of copyright protection and the right of the public to be properly informed through news photographs.

Earlier on Tuesday, disgruntled photojournalists held a protest in front of the Serbian parliament building, urging MPs to reject this ridiculous proposal that threatened the dignity of the photographic profession. — *Tanjug*

After refugee centre attack, Swedish PM says police need more resources

STOCKHOLM — Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven has promised more resources for police after a 22-year old employee at a refugee centre for unaccompanied minors was stabbed to death.

The stabbing sparked concerns that authorities were being overwhelmed by the number of asylum seekers in the country.

A minor was arrested on suspicion of murder or manslaughter after the incident in Mölndal in western Sweden, news agency TT reported. Löfven's comments in Mölndal came as police said more staff were needed to deal with border controls, security at asylum centers and the terror threat. — *Reuters*

OPINION

Women's empowerment versus gender equality

Khin Maung Aye

GENDER equality is a human right. Nevertheless, all nations are being confronted with a constant gap between men and women in terms of having access to opportunities and decision-making power. Globally, women have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to basic and higher education, greater health and safety risks, and less political representation. Guaranteeing the rights of women and providing them with opportunities to reach their self-actualisation is of utmost importance not only for attainment of gender equality but also for fulfilling a vast range of international development goals. Empowered women and girls contribute to the health and productivity of their families, communities, and countries, creating a ripple effect that is beneficial to

everybody.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that women's empowerment is an important aspect to achieve gender equality. It includes increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power and control over her own life inside and outside her home and on top of all, her ability to effectuate change. Still, the gender issues are not concentrated on women alone; they are focused on the relationship between men and women in society. The actions and attitudes on the part of men and boys play a cardinal role in our attempt to achieve the gender equality.

The key areas of focus are education, health and safety as well as economic and political empowerment. Nations around the world have exerted and are still exerting due effort to promote gender equality in the above said areas, but globally, no nation has fully attained the gender equality. Even a highly developed country like the United States of America, which has set a very high value on human rights, is ranked by a recent World Economic Forum as the 19th in the world on its gender gap index. Although US is ranked higher in economic empowerment, the American women's earning power remains to be approximately 20 per cent lower than men's. Scandinavian countries are leading the world in the progress towards closing

the gender gap whereas the nations from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia are identified as those where the greatest gender gap prevails. As Myanmar is a Southeast Asian country, it does not have very big gender gap.

In this regard, the Global New Light of Myanmar would like to quote our first lady as saying at the annual general meeting of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF) in her capacity as the honorary patron of MWAFF that she would like to urge all the attendees of the meeting to find ways and means to empower the entire mass of Myanmar women in order that they can be given their due role in building a democratic nation.

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.

The El Nino is Creating Havocs as Predicted

Khin Maung Myint

WEATHERMEN, world over, had predicted that the latest El Nino weather phenomena would be the severest in history since its official recognition in 1950. Now, we are witnessing the accuracy of their predictions. We had seen history-making floods in India, the United Kingdom, in our country and the severe typhoons in the Philippines, during 2015. Furthermore, the year 2015 had taken its place in history as the hottest year since the 1880s,

Only a few days into the new year, 2016, many places around the world are experiencing severe cold weathers. Record-breaking winter storms causing heavy snowfalls in the United States of America are causing havoc: shutting down traffics, closing offices, business and schools, flight cancellations, causing great inconveniences and rising death tolls, etc. The latest cold weather in the US is making history as the most record-breaking one.

Snow, sleet and icy winds are being faced in many countries in the region---China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan are reeling under heavy snow and freezing lakes. Even Vietnam and some subtropical islands in the Pacific Ocean are having snowfalls. Hong Kong had been hit by the coldest weather conditions in sixty years. Even in Thailand, where I am staying at the present, is facing unprecedented cold spells this year. Bangkokians, rarely seen in warm clothings are adorning them even in the afternoons to protect themselves from the chilly winds that are making the situations worse. Reports of cold weather related deaths, especially among the elderlies were in

the news.

All these freak weather conditions are the works of none other than the latest El Nino, which is predicted to be the most severe in history. More devastations, worse than the above mentioned could be further expected. Scarcities of water are starting to be seen in some countries where the lakes are starting to dry up and our country should be prepared to cope with such conditions during the coming dry season. Droughts are also to be expected if the El Nino conditions persist. As an agricultural country, water is most essential for our prosperity and development. Without water our economy would surely be crippled. Necessary measures to conserve and manage water resources should be properly thoughtout and implemented. These measures are just the short term or emergency solutions to thwart off water shortages. However, long term plans and actions should be implemented. To do so the present situations should be thoroughly and accurately assessed and analyzed. Good planning to implement sound and effective line of actions must be based on accurate analyses.

As an eco-conscious person, I had taken much interest in the climate change issues and had written and contributed many articles to GLNM to create public awareness of the causes and consequences of the deteriorating climate conditions. Again, I would like to take the liberty to repeat them, because I thought it necessary and believe this would get more attention now than ever before, as the effects of the climate change are quite visible at the moment.

Climate changes are caused by the global warming, a fact most people may be familiar, but

for the benefit of those who are not, I would like to explain briefly. So what are the factors that instigate the global warming? The greenhouse effects trap the sun's heat from being reflected back into space and thus resulting in the rise in temperatures that are the main causes of the global warming. The greenhouse effects are caused by the greenhouses gases: such as Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) gas, Methane (CH₄) gas and water vapours in our atmosphere. The more excessively these gases are emitted, the more severe the greenhouse effects would become and the chain reactions would result in the rise in temperatures causing the global warming that would trigger the climate change, culminating in the stronger El Nino phenomena that led to the current freak weather conditions.

Now that we know what are behind all these adverse weather conditions that are getting worse with the passage of time and if left unchecked, drastic actions should be taken urgently. Among the greenhouse gases, the CO₂ is the main contributor of the greenhouse effects. Thus cutting down the CO₂ emissions should be given the priority if we want to fight the climate change.

CO₂ emissions are generally caused by the industries and vehicles using fossilized fuels or bio-fuels, the forest fires and the slash and burn agricultural practices. The latest climate change conference, the COP21, held in Paris in December 2015 came up with a deal that included one clause, which is to reduce the use of fossilized fuels and to eventually phase out the fossilized fuel use altogether. If that objective could be achieved, it would benefit the humankind greatly. However, most critics of the COP21

were skeptical of that.

In my opinion, instead of waiting for those ambitious deals to take effect, we should be doing what we could, on our own. The most effective and easiest way would be to restrict timber extractions and grow more trees, which I had been advocating ardently, whenever the opportunities arose. Trees absorb the CO₂ gases present in the atmosphere and release the Oxygen back. More trees mean less CO₂ gases and less CO₂ gases mean less global warming and thus lesser effects on the climate change.

In one of my previous articles, I had mentioned about the carbon source and the carbon sink. Here, I would like to explain what the carbon source and the carbon sink are, for those who are not familiar with these terms. The carbon source is one that emits the CO₂ gases and the carbon sink is the one that absorbs the CO₂ gases and retains it for a long period before releasing the

Oxygen back into the atmosphere. Thus, if we could strike a balance between the two, we would be able to achieve a carbon-free condition, which would contribute greatly to the control of the temperature rise and help put a rein on the climate change.

If every nation should have been more responsible, in the past, and reduced CO₂ emissions by any means and had grown more trees to reduce the CO₂ presence in the atmosphere, these recent devastations caused by the freak weather conditions would not have occurred. However, we should not be waiting for others and before it's too late, we should start striving to become a carbon negative nation by growing more trees and conserving the existing forests by restricting loggings. If left unchecked, the weather conditions would get worse, a condition that could create more havoc than the present situations we are witnessing now.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

THANKS for the excellent coverage entitled Monkeys-Tigers-OHMY! Hukawng Valley Survey Delayed (GNLM, January 25). The editorial staff of your esteemed newsletter is highly appreciated for providing such an in depth and dedicated coverage highlighting wildlife conservation. This will not only keep the public aware of the rich wildlife heritage and biodiversity of the nation; but more importantly the younger generations in schools and colleges that are the citizens of tomorrow. GNLM support and initiatives in promoting environmental news, wildlife coverage and in providing subsequent headlines as a national newspaper with conservation priorities is greatly appreciated. Kudos to the staff for their back breaking work in collecting the conservation and wildlife news items and capturing accompanying images published in the newspaper.

*Thanking you
Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu*

Japan helps Yangon clear its drains

THE Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) has made it known that sewage drain cleaning initiatives in the city have begun with assistance from the Japanese.

In the past, drains used to be cleaned using only man power, but work is currently being carried out across six townships in Yangon using funded machinery from the Osaka based Japanese Sekisui Chemical company.

“We are cleaning with machinery in heavily populated areas. These [Japanese] machines use the force of water to suck out all the dirty water. We’ve only just started cleaning with this system,” said U Thein Min, deputy head of the YCDC Water and Sanitation Department.

The six township to receive the cleaning are Kyauktada, Botahtaung, Lanmadaw, Pazundaung, Latha and Pabedan, all located in downtown Yangon.

The Japanese Sekisui Chemical company donated machinery to examine and clean drains and sewage pipes located between apartment blocks.

The items donated include instruments to gauge hazardous chemicals in the water, breathing apparatus and water resistant cameras, it is known from the

aforementioned department of the YCDC.

“We’re carrying out this pilot project in advance of Japan’s drawn up master plan. The governments of Japan and Myanmar are working together on this,” added U Thein Min.

The project will involve a total of 35 municipal staff from the Water and Sanitation Department in the form of engineers and workers.

“Women can be involved in the process of examining [the drains] as modern equipment will be used. The machines will be able to check whether drains are cracked and whether there are chemicals in the pipes which are harmful to humans,” explained the assistant head of the Engineer Department of the YCDC.

Previously, workers used to descend into the drains and manually clean them, whereas now sewage drains can be inspected using CCTV cameras and be cleaned with machinery.

The activity of cleaning the back ally drains in Yangon is currently confined to six townships, but there are plans to continue such initiatives to other townships in the city at a later date, it is known.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Seintalone mangoes thrive in Pinlelbu

SEINTALONE mangoes thrive in Pinlelbu Township in Sagaing Region, with farmers planning to export some mangoes to the market in Phakant of Kachin State.

More than 800 Seintalone mango trees have been cultivated since 2007 near Thechaung, Khatat and Wella villages in Pinlelbu Township in Ywathaya Village-tract in Pinlelbu Township in Sagaing Region.

Farmers in the region are planning to expand their market and increase their sales with merchants in Muse, a border town, a local said.

Residents show greater interests in growing Seintalone plants this year. They currently purchase K500 (US\$0.39) per three-month-old plant and K1,000 (\$0.77) per one-year-old plant from Myeni Village in Kawlin Township.—*Sai Lu Min*



Seintalone mangoes. PHOTO: SAI LU MIN

Myanmar Hotels receive ASEAN Green Hotel Award 2016



Hoteliers seen after receiving the awards. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY BAYVIEW

EIGHT hotels from Myanmar won the ASEAN Green Hotel Award-2016.

The award was handed over on 22nd January during the Awarding Ceremony at the Mindanao Ballroom of Sofitel Philippine Place in Manila. The resort was nominated by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism to receive the prestigious Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) Green Hotel Award at the ASEAN Tourism Forum in Manila.

89 hotels and resorts received the ASEAN Green Hotel Award, eight hotels-- Amazing Bagan Resort, Amara Ocean Resort, Ba-

gan Thande Hotel (Old Bagan), Bayview-The Beach Resort, Blue Bird Hotel, Grand Andaman Hotel, Hotel Shwe Pyi Thar, Kempinski -NayPyiTaw-- are from Myanmar.

“This award is a great appreciation for our efforts to promote sustainable and green tourism in Ngapali. Furthermore it is also a mandate for us hotels to preserve the beauty of Ngapali Beach”, said Patrick Peukert, General Manager of Bayview – the beach resort. Mr Peukert has worked with the resort since 2012 and led it to one of the most prominent resorts at Ngapali Beach.

Bayview - the beach resort is a four star boutique hotel. It is located on the idyllic Ngapali Beach in Myanmar’s Rakhine State -- its coastline forms part of the Bay of Bengal. The resorts’ 45 deluxe bungalows and rooms including suites are all situated either directly at the beach or in a beautiful exotic garden under countless palm trees.

The award winning resort has two restaurants and offers a wide range of sport activities, a Spa with traditional and Western treatments, as well as guided tours with its hotel bus and boat.—*Lin Aung Htet*

Imported beauty products and mobile phones from China fall in price after anti-smuggling body disbanded

THE disbanding of anti-smuggling mobile teams from border trade points on the Myanmar-China boarder has resulted in a decline in the price of beauty products and mobile phones, according to traders.

“Those exporting beauty products or mobile phones through the Muse boarder trade route in the past used to really get screwed. If it was a beauty product, then there would be all these extra-charges for no reason. So, those products which incurred all these charges would be then subsequently be sold for a high price. As those goods inspectors have been removed, not

only is travel quicker, but a mobile phone that would have cost 50,000 kyats before can now be sold for a reduced price of 30,000 kyats,” exclaimed Ko Zeyar, a trader of products to Lashio and other regions. The anti-smuggling teams used to specifically arrest those importing mobile phones and beauty products. Now, in their absence, transportation of these goods has become easier, while the price which there are sold at has fallen.

“Ah, if it was Chinese then it would be confiscated. If it was a hand phone, everything would be confiscated. Those hand phones which weren’t appropriated would

then need to be sold for a higher price in order to make up for the loss of capital on the phones,” said a mobile phone trader, Ko Ahpanar. The food safety security and anti-smuggling enforcement mobile teams were completely disbanded with an official order from the President’s Office on December 30, 2015. A letter was issued from the President’s Office dated December 30, 2015 which instructed all mobile teams situated across the country to step down, over three years after the anti-smuggling enforcement committee originally started its operations.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Red dot celebrates first year in Myanmar

RED Dot, a widespread payments solutions service provider in Myanmar, celebrated its first birthday today by announcing business milestones including the reaching of 10,000 stores across Myanmar.

The company also announced a new initiative, launching a partnership with Viber, Myanmar’s most popular

messaging and VoIP operator, to provide Viber Out to local consumers. Viber Out allows Viber users to call non-Viber users directly to their landline and mobile phones both domestically and at a reduced price outside of Myanmar.

Due to the new initiative Myanmar is the very first market in the world where Viber has

been able to launch Viber Out to consumers.

In other countries Viber Out requires bank or credit card payments — a major issue in Myanmar’s predominantly cash-based society. Now, thanks to the partnership, Viber users can top-up their Viber Out accounts at any Red Dot outlet.—*Kyaw The-ein (MNA)*

UN chief Ban slams Israeli settlements as 'provocative acts'

UNITED NATIONS — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday slammed Israel's settlement activities as "provocative acts" that raise questions about the nation's commitment to a two-state solution amid growing Palestinian frustration over nearly 50 years of occupation.

The Palestinians want an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, areas Israel captured in a 1967 war.

The last round of peace talks broke down in April 2014, and Israeli-Palestinian violence has surged in recent months.

Israel confirmed on Thursday that it would appropriate a large tract of fertile land in the occupied West Bank. The land is near Jordan in an area where Israel already has many settlement farms built on land Palestinians seek for a state.

Ban said he was "deeply troubled" by reports that the Israeli government had approved plans for more than 150 new homes in "illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank."

"These provocative acts are bound to increase the growth of settler populations, further



United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon greets Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon (R) as Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin looks on (L) before a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East at UN headquarters in New York, on 26 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

heighten tensions and undermine any prospects for a political road ahead," Ban told a United Nations Security Council meeting on the Middle East. "Continued settlement activities are an af-

front to the Palestinian people and to the international community," he said. "They rightly raise fundamental questions about Israel's commitment to a two-state solution."

He said frustration was growing among Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed Ban's remarks, saying they only "bolster terrorism."

"The Palestinian murderers do not want to build a state; they declare publicly that they want to destroy a state," Netanyahu said in a statement. "The UN has long ago lost its neutrality and its moral powers."

US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power said Washington strongly opposed settlement activity.

"Steps aimed at advancing the Israeli settlement programme ... are fundamentally incompatible with the two-state solution and raise legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions," Power told the council.

About 550,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to Israeli government and think-tank statistics. About 350,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem and 2.7 million in West Bank.

Riyad Mansour, the chief Palestinian delegate at the United Nations, called on the Security Council take action against Israeli settlements.

"It must involve measures by all states and go beyond not rendering aid or assistance to holding Israel accountable for its actions," Mansour said.—Reuters

PYD Kurds won't be invited to Syria talks, Riyadh opponents to take lead: Fabius



People inspect a site hit by what residents said were airstrikes carried out by the Russian air force in the town of Turmanin, in Idlib Governorate near the Syrian-Turkish border, on 25 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — France's foreign minister said yesterday the United Nations' special envoy to Syria had told him that he would not be inviting Syrian PYD Kurds to peace talks in Geneva and that a Riyadh-backed opposition group would lead the negotiations.

"Mr (Staffan) de Mistura sent invitations ... the PYD group was causing the most problems, and Mr de Mistura told me he had not sent them

an invitation letter," Laurent Fabius told France Culture radio. Fabius said de Mistura had also confirmed to him that a Riyadh-formed opposition group would lead negotiations even though other opponents could also be present.

"I spoke to Mr (Riad) Hijab (opposition coordinator)... he will respond to De Mistura and Ban Ki-moon this morning. If I understand their position, they say yes to negotiations ... and at

the same time want details to be given in terms of who is participating, what's being done on the humanitarian front and what we are going to talk about."

France has been a key backer of moderate opposition forces battling Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and has been advising them on how to prepare for proposed UN-backed talks expected to begin on 29 January involving the Syrian government.—Reuters

Al Qaeda group releases video of Swiss hostage

DAKAR — Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released a video of a Swiss nun who had been kidnapped in northern Mali nearly three weeks ago in the first claim of responsibility for the hostage-taking, according to SITE Intelligence Group.

The video, which outlined the conditions for the release of Beatrice Stockly, a Swiss missionary who was based in Timbuktu, is the latest indication of deteriorating security in Mali's north just months after a peace accord was signed.

Stockly, who had been kidnapped once before in 2012, appeared in a veil and stated the clip was filmed on 19 January in the eight-minute video, which could not be independently verified.

"We, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Sahara region,

declare our responsibility for the kidnapping of this Christianizing kaffir Beatrice Stockly, who by her work, drove out many from the fold of Islam by seducing them with crumbs of this worldly life," said an English-speaking fighter.

The video also outlined the terms of the group's demands, which included the release of members imprisoned by the Malian government and Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, who is in the custody of the International Criminal Court.

Mali's expansive north has been unstable since 2012, when separatist rebels and jihadists seized the area. Although French forces scattered them from cities the following year, they have stepped up attacks in recent months.—Reuters



The Swiss Embassy is seen in Bamako, Mali. PHOTO: REUTERS

Obama calls for rapid Zika research as virus seen spreading

CHICAGO/WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Tuesday called for the rapid development of tests, vaccines and treatments to fight the mosquito-transmitted Zika virus, which has been linked to birth defects and could spread to the United States in warmer months.

US health officials are stepping up efforts to study the link between Zika virus infections and birth defects, citing a recent study estimating the virus could reach regions where 60 per cent of the US population lives.

Obama was briefed on the potential spread of the virus by his top health and national security officials on Tuesday.

“The president emphasized the need to accelerate research efforts to make available better diagnostic tests, to develop vaccines and therapeutics, and to ensure that all Americans have information about the Zika virus and steps they can take to better protect themselves from infection,” the White House said in a statement.

The virus has been linked to brain damage in thousands of babies in Brazil. There is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, a close cousin of dengue and chikungunya, which causes mild fever and rash. An estimated 80 per cent of people infected have no symptoms, making it difficult for pregnant women to know whether they have been infected.

On Monday, the World Health Organisation predicted the virus would spread to all countries across the Americas



The forearm of a public health technician is seen covered with sterile female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes after leaving a recipient to cultivate larvae, in a research area to prevent the spread of Zika virus and other mosquito-borne diseases, at the entomology department of the Ministry of Public Health, in Guatemala City, on 26 January 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

except for Canada and Chile.

In a blog post, National Institutes of Health Director Dr Francis Collins cited a Lancet study published 14 January in which researchers predicted the Zika virus could be spread in areas along the East and West Coasts of the United States and much of the Midwest during warmer months, where about 200 million people live.

The study also showed that 22.7 million more people live in humid parts of the country where mosquitoes carrying the virus could live year round.

Given the threat, Collins said “it is now critically important to confirm, through careful epidemiological and animal studies, whether or not a causal link

exists between Zika virus infections in pregnant women and microcephaly in their newborn babies.” Microcephaly results in babies being born with abnormally small heads.

There is still much to learn about Zika infections, experts said. For example, it is not clear how common Zika infections are in pregnant women, or when during a pregnancy a woman is most at risk of transmitting the virus to her fetus.

Collins said the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease is conducting studies to more fully understand the effects of Zika in humans, and to develop better diagnostic tests to quickly determine if someone has been infected. The NIAID is

also working on testing new drugs that might be effective against the virus.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention also announced new instructions for pediatricians treating infants whose mothers may have been exposed to the virus during pregnancy.

In those guidelines, the CDC made clear that it considers the Zika virus a nationally notifiable condition, and instructs doctors to contact their state or territorial health departments to facilitate testing of potentially infected infants.

Dr Kathryn Edwards of Vanderbilt University, who serves on the American Academy of Pediatrics’ committee on infectious disease, said the guidelines were intended to help establish whether Zika causes microcephaly and to help pregnant women who may have been infected with the virus.

Microcephaly is a lifelong condition with no known cure, the CDC website said. Symptoms range from mild to severe.

In mild cases, infants often have no symptoms other than small head size, but doctors still need to check their development regularly. In severe cases, babies may need speech, occupational and physical therapy.

The guidelines for testing infants affected by Zika infections follows CDC guidelines for caring for pregnant women exposed to Zika virus, which were first reported by Reuters. The CDC said last week it is trying to de-

termine how many pregnant women may have travelled to affected regions in the past several months.

On Tuesday, the CDC added the US Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic to its list of countries and territories with Zika transmissions, bringing the total to 24.

The CDC has told pregnant women not to travel to countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean affected by Zika. Travel companies, including United Airlines, have begun offering refunds or allowing pregnant women to postpone trips to regions affected by Zika with no penalty.

There are no global estimates for how many people in the world have been infected by the Zika virus, World Health Organisation spokesman Christian Lindmeier said on Tuesday.

He said that because Zika has such mild symptoms, the virus has “not really been on the radar.”

Lindmeier said it was not yet clear whether the virus affecting Brazil and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean was a mutated version of the virus that has caused prior outbreaks.

He said the WHO was working with the CDC, the Institut Pasteur in France and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to establish that.

“There is a lot of effort going into this now, on the ground, in the laboratories, everywhere,” Lindmeier said.—Reuters

Oxford researchers to develop new technique for stroke prevention

LONDON — Researchers at the University of Oxford are developing a simpler and more accurate MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scanning technique to spot the potentially dangerous plaques that cause stroke, according to a press release published Monday by the university.

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Most occur as a consequence of plaque building up in arteries in the neck, which is a condition called atherosclerosis. If a piece of this plaque breaks off, it can lead to a clot forming in the brain and cause a stroke.

Plaque in the neck arteries is common, but the ones most likely to rupture have a large amount of cholesterol at their core. Doctors can try and identify them using an MRI scanner, a machine which uses magnetic fields and radio waves to produce detailed images in the body. But the current method is complicated to

administer and provides results which are difficult to interpret, according to the researchers.

Dr Luca Biasioli at the university will investigate if a new type of MRI scan offers a more accurate and easier way of identifying the most dangerous build-ups.

“If successful, this new test will provide doctors with a better tool for making decisions about treatments that could save someone’s life. It would mean they could act early against plaques at risk of causing strokes, but also help people avoid unnecessary operations on ones that were less dangerous,” said Biasioli.

In the UK alone, there are around 240,000 hospital episodes attributed to stroke every year, causing around 40,000 deaths.

“Stroke is a major cause of death and disability, so it’s important we try to find those who are at highest risk,” said Biasioli.—Xinhua

Record hot years almost certainly caused by man-made warming

OSLO — A record-breaking string of hot years since 2000 is almost certainly a sign of man-made global warming, with vanishingly small chances that it was caused by random, natural swings, a study showed on Monday.

Last year was the hottest since records began in the 19th century in a trend that almost all scientists blame on greenhouse gases from burning of fossil fuels, stoking heat waves, droughts, downpours and rising sea levels.

“Recent observed runs of record temperatures are extremely unlikely to have occurred in the absence of human-caused global warming,” a US-led team of experts wrote in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Written before 2015 temperature data were released, it estimated the chance of the record run — with up to 13 of the 15 warmest years all from 2000 to 2014 — was between one in 770 and one in 10,000 if the series were random with no human influence.



A man cools off in a water sprinkler in a park during a hot summer morning in central Kiev, Ukraine in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lead author Michael Mann, a professor of meteorology at Pennsylvania State University, told Reuters that the group’s computer simulations indicated those odds including 2015 had widened to between one in 1,250 and one in 13,000. “Climate change is real, human-caused and no longer subtle — we’re seeing it play out before our eyes,” he wrote in an

e-mail. Natural variations include shifts in the sun’s output or volcanic eruptions, which dim sunlight. “Natural climate variations just can’t explain the observed recent global heat records, but man-made global warming can,” Stefan Rahmstorf, a co-author from the Potsdam Institute of Climate Impact, said in a statement.—Reuters

Trump pulls out of Republican debate in Iowa

IOWA CITY — US Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump withdrew on Tuesday from a debate with party rivals this week out of anger at host Fox News, leaving the last encounter before Iowa's pivotal nominating contest without the front-runner.

Trump's campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, told reporters after a combative news conference held by the candidate that Trump would definitely not be participating in the debate scheduled for Thursday in Des Moines, Iowa, and co-hosted by Google.

During the news conference before he addressed a large crowd in Marshalltown, Iowa, Trump expressed irritation that Fox News planned to leave in place as a moderator the anchor Megyn Kelly, whose questioning of Trump at a debate last August angered him.

He also expressed displeasure at a Fox News statement on Monday night saying Trump would have to learn sooner or later that



A protester holding a sign against racism and hatred is removed from US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's campaign rally at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa, on 26 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

"he doesn't get to pick the journalists" and that "we're very surprised he's willing to show that much fear about being questioned by Megyn Kelly."

"I was all set to do the debate, I came here to do the debate. When they sent out the wise-guy press release done by some PR per-

son along with (Fox News Chairman) Roger Ailes, I said: 'Bye bye, OK'"

"Let's see how much money Fox makes without me in the debate," the billionaire businessman added.

Trump has been engaged in a public spat with Fox News since the network hosted the first debate and

Kelly asked Trump about his treatment of woman, prompting a stream of insults from the candidate.

The debate is scheduled for just days before Iowa's caucuses on Monday, the first nominating contest for the 8 November presidential election.

Trump's campaign

announced that instead of participating in the debate, he would hold a fundraiser for "Veterans and Wounded Warriors."

Fox News responded by releasing a statement charging Trump's campaign manager with threatening Kelly, saying during a call Lewandowski had referred to her "rough couple of days" after the previous debate she moderated and added that he would "hate to have her go through that again."

"We can't give in to terrorizations toward any of our employees," Fox said in a statement.

The network added that Trump remains welcome to participate in the Thursday night debate.

Trump's Republican rivals quickly criticised him for opting out of the debate.

"The fact that Donald is now afraid to appear on the debate stage, that he doesn't want his record questioned, I think that reflects a lack of respect for the men and women on Iowa," Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who is in a tight race with Trump for

first place in the state, said on Mark Levin's radio programme.

"If Donald is afraid of Megyn Kelly, I would like to invite him on your show to participate in a one-on-one debate between me and Donald, mano-a-mano," Cruz said, adding: "If he thinks Megyn Kelly is so scary, what exactly does he think he'd do with Vladimir Putin?"

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush criticised Trump on Twitter, saying: "exactly" in response to a conservative commentator who cast doubt on whether Trump could run against Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton if he were afraid of Kelly.

In the Democratic contest, news channel MSNBC and the New Hampshire Union Leader newspaper sketched out plans to host a debate in New Hampshire among Clinton and challengers Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley, a few days before the state's primary election on 9 February.—*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KOTA HASIL VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA HASIL VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T./A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BIAK VOY NO (456N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BIAK VOY NO (456N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING
LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

Garrulous Maduro has addressed Venezuela for 500 hours

CARACAS — President Nicolas Maduro has spent more than 500 hours addressing Venezuela since winning power nearly three years ago, demonstrating a loquacity reminiscent of his late predecessor Hugo Chavez, according to a watchdog.

The tally, from the local Citizens' Monitor group which is critical of the government, was based on Maduro's so-called "chain" speeches, when all local broadcasters are required to transmit his words live.

Counting other speeches, carried only by state TV, the 53-year-old former bus driver and foreign minister has in fact spent far more time giving public addresses. "In the first few weeks of this year, he surpassed 500 hours," the group said this week in a blog. "Every time the presidency holds a 'chain', they are denying Venezuelans their control over freedom of information and entertainment."

The 'chain' broadcasts were a cornerstone of Chavez's communicational strategy during his 1999-

2013 presidency before he died of cancer. While often delighting supporters with his folksy style, jokes and songs, Chavez also irritated people by sometimes obliterating baseball games or soap operas.

Though a far less gifted speaker than Chavez, his self-styled "son" Maduro eagerly continued the 'chain' broadcasts after winning election to the OPEC nation's presidency in April 2013. He frequently says they are necessary because otherwise hostile media would not cover his welfare policies. "Given the veto private media have on me, and given the invisibility of this march, we are going to hold a popular, democratic, free and revolutionary national chain," he began one such transmission from an oil workers' march this month.

Citizens' Monitor, which keeps track of the time Maduro speaks via a 'Chain-o meter' at its web site monitoreociudadano.org, estimated the state spends 255,000 bolivars for each minute of a transmission.—*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KULSAMUT VOY NO (13/15)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KULSAMUT VOY NO (13/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W-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 KULNATEE CO LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (103N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (103N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Zimbabwean farmers fear the worst as cattle, crops succumb to drought

MAFOMOTI (Zimbabwe) — In the dusty village of Mafomoti, southern Zimbabwe, farmers have already lost cattle and crops in the severest drought to hit the nation in a quarter of a century. But the worst may be yet to come.

Midway through the farming season, the fields around the village are normally green at this time of the year but now they lie barren. Local people, who should be looking forward to the harvest in late March, are instead awaiting its failure and wondering how to make do with meagre supplies of food aid.

"It will not take us far so we will have to eat spar-

ingly," said Jesta Kugarira, 65. Apart from a few showers in mid-January, it hasn't rained in Mafomoti since September and her maize, millet and sorghum crops have been destroyed.

Kugarira, who has 12 children and grandchildren aged between three and 24, said her family is surviving on one meal a day. She has just six kg (13 pounds) of cereal, two kg of beans and some vegetable oil that she has received from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to keep them fed for a month.

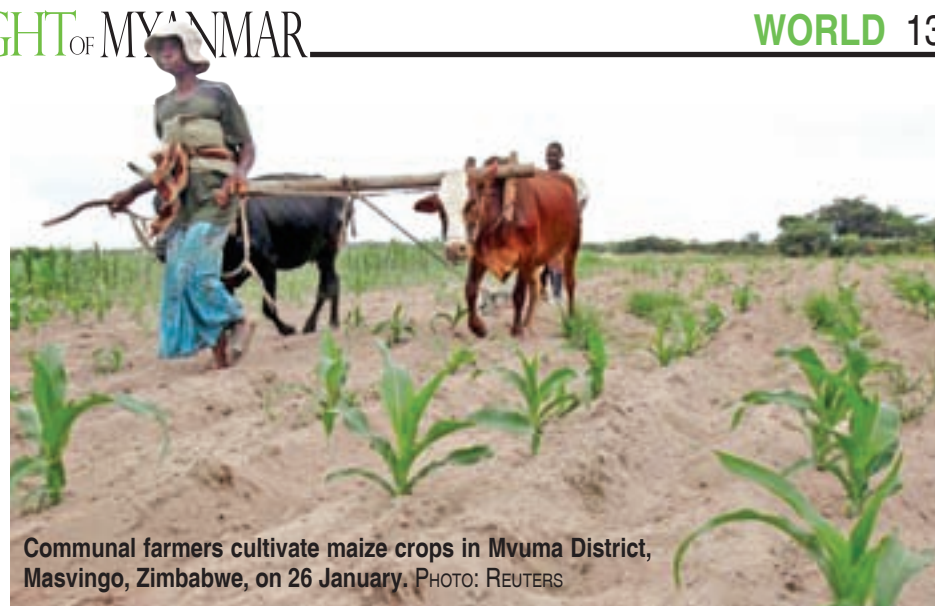
The drought is likely to damage harvests across southern Africa and about 14 million people are at

risk, the WFP says.

But whereas neighbouring South Africa is wealthy enough to tackle the problem of food shortages, the impact is looking particularly serious for Zimbabwe where 70 per cent of the population still survives on farming.

Zimbabwe's economy has been struggling for five years to recover from a catastrophic recession that was marked by billion per cent hyperinflation and widespread food shortages. Strained relations between President Robert Mugabe and aid donors such as the European Union have complicated matters.

Agriculture is critical



Communal farmers cultivate maize crops in Mvuma District, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, on 26 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

to Zimbabwe's economy, generating 30 per cent of export earnings and contributing 19 per cent to GDP. But a report by the government and international aid agencies last year said 16 per cent of Zimbabwe's population - which numbers 13 million - required food up to March 2016.

In drought stricken areas, emaciated cows root around the bare earth trying to find something to eat. Some livestock are too weak to stand while birds flock around the carcass of a dead donkey.

Around Mafomoti, 500 km (300 miles) south of the capital Harare, 375 families

have received aid which is expected to feed a total of 2,784 people.

Villagers said they were being forced to sell their surviving cattle, prized possessions in rural Zimbabwe which families usually keep to fund future family expenses such as educating the next generation.—Reuters

No evidence of shots fired at Naval Medical Centre

SAN DIEGO — A report of an active shooter and shots fired at the US Naval Medical Centre in San Diego triggered a heavy law enforcement response on Tuesday but was apparently unfounded, Navy officials said.

A lone witness reported hearing three shots at about 8am PST (1600 GMT) in the basement of a building at the sprawling medical centre, the officials said. Police interviewed the witness and continued to clear the building into Tuesday afternoon but there was no sign of foul play.

"We did an initial clearing of the building and found nothing that would indicate any kind of dangerous situation," Navy Captain Curt Jones, commanding officer of the Naval facility, told a news conference.

California and the United States remain on edge after a married couple inspired by Islamist militants shot and killed 14 people last month in San Bernardino, about 100 miles (160 km) north of San Diego.

The city is home to the US Navy's Pacific Fleet.

Seven law enforcement agencies, including US Marshals, SWAT teams and an armored car from the San Diego Coun-

ty Sheriff's Department were involved in the response to the reported shooting. Police with rifles and dogs searched the building where the shots were reported, as workers filed out with their hands in the air.

"As of right now, we have found absolutely nothing that indicates there were any shots fired," Jones said.

A post on the medical centre's Facebook page had earlier advised occupants to "run, hide or fight," the protocol advised by the US Department of Homeland Security in response to an active shooter.

All non-emergency response staff were asked to stay away from the compound. The shooter was reported in building #26, which is home to a "wounded warrior" programme to help seriously injured and ill Navy sailors and members of the US Coast Guard.

The medical centre, about two miles (3 km) north of downtown San Diego, includes a 272-bed hospital and a staff of more than 6,500 military and civilian professionals, the centre's website said.

A local middle school and two high schools in the area were initially placed on lockdown as a precaution.—Reuters

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Individual Consultant
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development
Department of Rural Development (DRD)
Myanmar : National Electrification Project (NEP)
Off-Grid - Solar PV Implementation Advisor
IDA Project No. 152936
Reference No. C2-TA13

1. This Request for Expressions of Interest follows the general procurement notice for this project that appeared in *Development Business* online on November 3, 2015.
2. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the *International Development Association (IDA)* and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing to payments under the contract for a Solar PV Implementation Advisor for National Electrification Project (NEP).
3. The National Electrification Project includes an off-grid electrification component with \$90 million in IDA credits. IDA support in off-grid areas will target communities located far beyond the existing national grid and, thus, unlikely to receive grid-based access in the next 10 or more years. More importantly, the IDA support will be directed to the peripheral States/Regions with social and ethnic cohesion and peace building. Off-grid electrification will be technology neutral, depending on technology assessment for target communities, including solar photovoltaic (PV), mini-hydropower, wind, diesel, and hybrid (eg. diesel/solar). Deployment of household solar PV systems in target communities includes households, public institutions (schools, health clinics and other community building) as well as public street light. The Solar PV Implementation Advisor shall guide Department of Rural Development - Project Management Office (DRD-PMO) to successfully implement the off-grid electrification component using solar home systems (SHS) for households, and public sector Solar PV Systems.
4. The primary responsibility of the Advisor is to support the DRD-PMO to ensure the efficient, effective and on-schedule implementation of the off-grid PV component. The Advisor will support DRD-PMO beginning with the implementation of the first SHS and public facilities tender, serving as the owner's engineer during bid evaluation and negotiation of contract, oversee supply and installation of the PV systems, and help setup maintenance service networks.
5. The Department of Rural Development now invites eligible individual consultants to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested individual consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the Services (CV with academic background, experience in similar assignment, knowledge of local conditions (if any) etc.) Consultants may be invited for interviewing, if necessary. The evaluation criteria are:
 - (i) At least Professional engineering qualifications and University degree which amount to a Master's level in a relevant field such as renewable energy or engineering are necessary.
 - (ii) More than 10 years' developing country experience in off-grid solar PV tendering, hands-on experience in PV systems specifications, PV systems procurement and installation, in maintenance of such systems and in construction supervision.
 - (iii) Experience in setting up organizations for PV systems maintenance and providing PV-related training services in developing country context will be an advantage.
 - (iv) Fluency in written and spoken English and extensive off-grid PV work in experience in developing countries is required. Fluency in Myanmar language will be an advantage, but not required.
6. A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out the World Bank's *Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers dated January 2011 (revised July 2014)* ("Consultant Guidelines"). The attention of interested consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the Consultant Guidelines, setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
7. Interested individual consultants may obtain the Terms of Reference at the address given below from 09.30 to 16.00 hours. DRD will provide prompt responses to all interested individual consultants, should there be any questions.
8. Expressions of interest must be delivered by registered mail or by e-mail to the address below by no later than February 11, 2016.

Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development

Attention

U Myint Oo, Deputy Director General and Chairperson of the Procurement Committee
National Electrification Project (NEP)
Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development
Office Number 14, Nay Pyi Taw Territory, Myanmar, Tel/ FAX: +95 67 409529, +95 67 409071
E-mail: dr.soesoeohn@gmail.com, neppmo.drd@gmail.com, ksaung@gmail.com

Miley Cyrus joins Woody Allen's new Amazon series

LOS ANGELES — Singer Miley Cyrus is returning to acting with Woody Allen's new series for Amazon.

The 23-year-old singer confirmed the news with an Instagram post.

"...Stoked to be in Woody Allen's first series!!!! I had claimed 2016 to be my year, but next to my bed for a few years now has been this portrait of WA & I was looking into his eyes when I got the call to be apart of the cast and work alongside Elaine May & the dude himself! 1960zzzz here I come," Miley wrote alongside a photo of a painting resembling the 80-year-old famed director.

The yet untitled, six half-hour-episode series, will mark the first collaboration between the former Disney star and Allen. Filming of the project will begin in March.—PTI



Miley Cyrus
PHOTO: REUTERS



Actress Carol Burnett poses for a portrait in Pasadena, California on 7 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Comedian Carol Burnett 'gobsmacked' at SAG lifetime award

LOS ANGELES — She may already have won some of the biggest US honours but beloved American comedian Carol Burnett says she was "gobsmacked" when told she would receive the Screen Actors Guild 2015 lifetime achievement award.

Comedy duo Tina Fey and Amy Poehler will present Burnett with the honour on Saturday at the Screen Actors Guild annual award ceremony in Los Angeles.

"To use my friend Julie Andrews' comment, this is very British, I was gobsmacked," Burnett said. "Gobsmacked, what a great, great word that is and it really describes what I feel."

Burnett, 82, the Emmy-win-

ning star of the 1960s and 1970s TV sketch series "The Carol Burnett Show," is regarded as a pioneer for women in comedy.

"I've been told that Amy (Schumer), and all of them, mention my name but if I'd never been born, they'd be doing what they're doing," Burnett said. "They would be where they are today. I appreciate the trailblazer label but I don't think that's really the case."

"The Carol Burnett Show" won 23 Emmy Awards and Burnett went on to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, and became a Kennedy Center honoree in 2003.

More recently, she appeared in the TV series "Ha-

waii Five-O" and in the 2014 Broadway production of "Love Letters."

Asked about her legacy, Burnett said she hoped to be remembered as someone who had made people laugh.

"Well, I would hope they wouldn't say, 'Who was she?' I would hope they say, 'She made me laugh. She made me feel good,'" Burnett said. "That's the legacy one would want to leave — that you made people feel good at a time when maybe they weren't feeling so good."

Burnett joins the ranks of other recent Screen Actors Guild lifetime achievement honorees including Debbie Reynolds, Betty White and Dick Van Dyke.—Reuters

Rihanna's 'Anti' is finally complete

LOS ANGELES — Singer Rihanna is done with the work on her much awaited eighth studio effort "Anti".

The 27-year-old "Umbrella" hitmaker shared the news on Twitter with a picture of her listening to the record.

"Listening to 'Anti'," Rihanna captioned the photo in which she is wearing her USD 9,000 rhinestone encrusted golden headphones.

Before the singer, producer Kuk Harrell who has worked with the songstress on the album took to Instagram to announce, "Mission accomplished!" to which she responded with a red balloon in the comment section. Rihanna has not announced the official release date for the follow-up to 2012's "Unapologetic".—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan's 2015 box office revenues hit 2nd highest on record

TOKYO — "Jurassic World," "Big Hero 6" and other high-grossing sequels to popular US films led box office revenues in Japan to the second highest levels on record in 2015, according to a film industry group.

Revenues from Japanese and foreign films combined came to 217.1 billion yen (\$1.8 billion), up 4.9 per cent from the previous year, the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan said Tuesday. The takings are only exceeded by the results from 2010, when the nation's box office had the biggest commercial success at 220.7 billion yen.

Although revenues from Japanese films surpassed those from foreign movies for the eighth year in a row at 55.4 per

cent to 44.6 per cent, the difference narrowed with grossing of foreign movies jumping 12.1 per cent.

"Jurassic World" was the top-grossing foreign film with 9.53 billion yen, followed by "Big Hero 6" at 9.18 billion yen.

Other high-ranking Hollywood sequels included "Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation," "Avengers: Age of Ultron" and "Terminator Genisys."

Japanese films were led by the children's animation "Yo-Kai Watch: Tanjo no Himitsu da Nyan!" with 7.80 billion yen. Yo-kai Watch had already been popular as a TV animation series before the December 2014 release of the film, with the story revolving around

a boy who can see numerous yokais (monsters) invisible to others in his town because of the special watch he is wearing.

The Japanese film ranking was dominated by animation films, occupying six of the top 10 spots, including "The Boy and The Beast" that came second with 5.85 billion yen.

Yusuke Okada, head of the association, said animation films, both Japanese and imported ones, fared well in 2015. "Foreign films are gradually recovering their market share. Japanese and foreign films are expected to compete against each other."

The association consists of four major Japanese film companies; Shochiku Co, Toho Co, Toei Co and Kadokawa Corp.—Kyodo News

'Fast and Furious 8' to shoot 'big explosion' scene in Iceland

LOS ANGELES — "Fast and Furious 8" crew has reportedly planned to film a scene involving the "largest explosion" ever in Iceland.

Director F Gary Gray will partly film "Fast and Furious 8" in Arkanes, Iceland. The town mayor, Regina Asvaldsdottir, confirmed the report and said that Vin Diesel and the film crew members would arrive in April, reported Aceshowbiz.

As Universal Pictures stated earlier, the studio "is currently in the process seeking approval from the United States and Cuban governments to explore shooting a portion of the next installment of the 'Fast & Furious' series in Cuba."

The majority of filming, however, will take place in New York and Atlanta.—PTI

Surge of Americans tests limit Cuba’s tourism industry



A man takes selfies in front of the passengers cruise ship MSC Opera in Havana on 13 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

HAVANA — Cuba’s tourism industry is under unprecedented strain and struggling to meet demand with record numbers of visitors arriving a year after detente with the United States renewed interest in the Caribbean island. Its tropical weather, rich musical traditions,

famed cigars and classic cars were for decades off limits to most Americans under Cold War-era sanctions, but those restrictions are fading. Once a rare sight, Americans are now swarming Old Havana’s colonial squares and narrow streets along with Europeans and

Canadians. Entrepreneurs and hustlers have responded by upping prices on taxi rides, meals, and trinkets. Cuban women who pose for pictures in colourful dresses and headwraps while chomping cigars are now charging \$5 instead of \$1. Cuba received a record 3.52 million visitors last

year, up 17.4 per cent from 2014. American visits rose 77 per cent to 161,000, not counting hundreds of thousands of Cuban-Americans. Industry experts worry the island will be unable to absorb an even greater expected surge when scheduled US commercial airline and ferry services are due to start this year. As it is, foreigners face extreme difficulties booking hotels and rental cars, and those who hoped to discover Cuba before the hordes arrive realise they are too late. “Cuba is over the top with tourists right now. I’ve seen so many Americans, it’s not even funny,” said Ana Fernandez, 44, of Nashville, Tennessee. Gisela Hoiman, 46, a schoolbook editor from Berlin, hoped to see Cuba “before it changes” but was disappointed to find long airport lines, ubiquitous hucksters and masses of tourists. She was stranded in Havana when she was unable to get a spot on the bus leaving for the eastern

city of Santiago.” It was too much to handle, too many other tourists. We stood in line and were sent back and forth to different counters,” she said from an Old Havana cafe with her large backpack parked on the floor. “I don’t think Cuba is prepared.” The United States and Cuba agreed in December 2014 to end five decades of animosity and have since restored diplomatic ties, igniting international buzz about Cuba. The opening has benefited Cuba’s small private sector, which offers restaurants and rooms for rent in family homes. But the tourism infrastructure, with just 63,000 hotel rooms nationwide, is still largely a function of the state and has languished under decades of US economic sanctions and underdevelopment. “From offloading at the airport to restaurant availability, infrastructure is maxed out,” said Collin Laverty, founder of Cuba Educational Travel, which organises tours for

legally permitted travel for Americans. A select number of foreign-run hotels, such as those of Spain’s Melia Hotels International SA (MEL.MC), fill up fast, leaving many visitors with little option but tired state-run motels or rooms in private homes. Some have been priced out or bumped from hotels, especially in Havana, where high-end US groups reserve blocks months in advance and pay higher prices. “It is kind of a slap in the face as it has been the Canadian and European tourists who have helped keep the Cuban economy afloat for the past 25 years,” said Keri Montgomery, owner of Vancouver-based Finisterra travel. The government is seeking more foreign investment and has plans to reach 85,000 hotel rooms nationwide by 2020, but the pace is slow and development has mostly favored beach destinations rather than Cuba’s cultural centres. —Reuters

Kitty-in-Boots: New Beatrix Potter story found after 100 years

LONDON — A story by children’s author Beatrix Potter, written more than a century ago, is to be published for the first time after the rediscovery of the tale which features some of her best-known characters such as Peter Rabbit. “The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots”, penned by Potter in 1914, was found by publisher Jo Hanks after she came across an out-of-print biography of the author from the 1970s which referred to the

story in a letter Potter had sent to her then-publisher and an unedited manuscript. Hanks then discovered three handwritten manuscripts in children’s school notebooks which were in the archive of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum along with a rough colour sketch of Kitty-in-Boots. “The tale really is the best of Beatrix Potter. It has double identities, colourful villains and a number of favorite characters from other

tales (including Mr Tod, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, Ribby and Tabitha Twitchit),” Hanks said in a statement. “Most excitingly, our treasured, mischievous Peter Rabbit makes an appearance — albeit older, slower and portlier.” Penguin Random House are to publish the new story in September with drawings provided by Quentin Blake, one of Britain’s most renowned illustrators. “Once upon a

time there was a serious, well-behaved young black cat,” the book starts, according to an extract on the Penguin website. “It belonged to a kind old lady who assured me that no other cat could compare with Kitty. She lived in constant fear that Kitty might be stolen — ‘I hear there is a shocking fashion for black cat-skin muffs; wherever is Kitty gone to? Kitty! Kitty!’” —Reuters

(28-1-2016 07:00 am~ 29-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh		
07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Daingnak Style
07:39	Am	Civic Duty
07:51	Am	Cultural Shows: Composer Ma Mya Lay
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Local Tour Guide: Pho Khant
08:39	Am	Insight Myanmar: Manuscription (Epi-2) Forgotten Illustrated Manuscripts
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	“Myanmar’s Traditions and Culture” Tea
09:51	Am	Thin Byu Mat
10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	Myanmar Masterclass: Artist Than Kywe

10:39	Am	Lantern Floating Festival in Kyauk Kyi Township
10:54	Am	Goldsmith

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	A Visit To Today’s Along-Daw-Katthapha
07:43	Pm	One of the Useful Purposes of Bamboo
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar “Development for Child Literature”
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP- 4) Tumbling Doll, Pyit Tine Htaung
08:38	Pm	Shop Shop Shop - Bogyoke Market
08:51	Pm	Distinguished Myanmar Ladies “Ma Myint Zu”

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

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

Entertainment Channel

(28-1-2016, Thursday)

6:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Mirror Images of The Musical Oldies	8:40 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Musical Programme
6:15 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pyi Thu Ni Ti	9:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teleplay
6:30 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fashion Show	9:40 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">China In Myanmar Cultural Show
6:40 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Nay Ma Win Ah Hla Myar	10:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Myanmar Video
7:05 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">TV Drama Series	Midnight <ul style="list-style-type: none">Close Down

From 28.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm
To 29.1.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm
This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

News Channel in Brief

(28-1-2016, Thursday)

6:00 am <ul style="list-style-type: none">Paritta By Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw	2:30 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fine Arts-Bosom of Dramatic Performance
7:35 am <ul style="list-style-type: none">Weekly Entertainment News	3:35 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Real Story Real Movie
9:35 am <ul style="list-style-type: none">Beautiful ASEAN	4:35 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Football Magazine
10:35 am <ul style="list-style-type: none">MRTV Job Opportunity Programme	5:35 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">People Talks
11:35 am <ul style="list-style-type: none">Science and Technology Programme	6:35 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Current Affairs
12:50 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teleplay (Part-3)	7:15 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">TV Drama Series
1:10 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">TV Drama Series	8:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">News / International News/ Weather Report
2:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">TV Drama Series	9:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">News
	9:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">TV Drama Series
	CLEVER

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Murray subdues Ferrer to continue British charge

Britain's Andy Murray celebrates after winning his quarter-final match against Spain's David Ferrer at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS



ANDY Murray continued Britain's Australian Open success when he overcame David Ferrer 6-3, 6-7(5), 6-2, 6-3 in a grueling tussle to reach the semi-finals for the sixth time in seven years yesterday.

The world number two was forced to scrap for almost every point but finally subdued the indefatigable Spanish eighth seed after three hours and 20 minutes of punishing baseline tennis on Rod Laver Arena.

With compatriot Johanna Konta having reached the last four in the women's draw earlier yesterday, Britain has two representatives in the semi-finals of a grand slam for the first time since 1977.

Murray's brother Jamie has also reached the last four of the

men's doubles with Brazilian Bruno Soares.

"Johanna Konta has done unbelievable," said the younger Murray. "It's very exciting to have a British woman in the latter stages of a slam, that's not happened for a long, long time."

"And I'm very proud of Jamie of course."

Murray will next face Milos Raonic or Gael Monfils as he bids to reach a fifth Australian Open final.

The 28-year-old has lost on all four of his previous visits to the Melbourne Park final but will certainly be battle-hardened for his assault on the title this year.

"That was a pretty brutal match," he said. "It was pretty physical and I held up pretty good I think."

If, as some believe, a resurgence of serve-volley is on its way in the men's game, Ferrer is unlikely to be in the vanguard.

The 33-year-old Spaniard is difficult to wear down and he scuttled along the back of the court firing returns from all angles.

Lapses of concentration cost him dear, however, and he was 40-0 up in the fourth game of the contest when a string of unforced errors allowed Murray to clinch the break that won him the set.

Ferrer evened up the contest after a thrilling tiebreak featuring rallies of 27 and 31 shots that brought an end to an absorbing 71-minute second set.

Murray grabbed a break for 3-1 in the third and, with a storm approaching, play was immedi-

ately suspended so the roof over the court could be closed.

Ferrer's protested that there was no rain and was right to be concerned as he was always chasing the match thereafter, his groundstrokes losing some of their venom in the new conditions.

"I like playing indoors," said Murray. "I grew up in Scotland and the weather is not as good as here so I grew up playing most of my tennis indoors."

Murray grabbed another break for 4-2 in the fourth set and, appropriately for such an intense match, it was errors from Ferrer's racket rather than winners from the Scot's that gave him victory.

"It was a good match. It was a lot of rallies. It was tough," said Ferrer.—Reuters

Disappointed Azarenka finds positive in return to form

MELBOURNE — Victoria Azarenka's hopes of a remarkable comeback Australian Open victory crumbled under Angelique Kerber's winners yesterday but the Belarusian was pleased with solid three weeks Down Under that made her feel she had turned a corner.

The twice champion at Melbourne Park had been battling a foot injury for two years, which combined with a plummeting ranking and the breakdown in a personal relationship had contributed to bouts of depression.

The 26-year-old, however, reproduced some of the tennis that had made her world number one over the last three weeks in Australia, with many tipping her as a potential winner of the year's opening grand slam. She stormed to the Brisbane title, dispatching Kerber in the final, by dropping just 17 games over five matches.

At Melbourne Park, she lost just 11 games in the first four rounds and was hitting the ball as cleanly as she had when she won successive titles on the blue hard courts in 2012 and 2013.

"I think I've been playing pretty well," Azarenka told reporters. "Three weeks of good tennis, you know, solid effort."

"I'm in the right direction."

Her 6-3, 7-5 loss on Wednesday, however, could be put down to "a bad day at the office" as she said, though it was more due to two periods of extreme hitting by the seventh-seeded German. Kerber raced out to a 4-0 lead in the first set and then while facing three set points at 2-5 in the second, began to swing for the fences and reeled off winner after winner that left the Belarusian looking bereft as to what to do.—Reuters

Liverpool reach League Cup final after penalty drama

LONDON — Keeper Simon Mignolet proved the shootout hero as Liverpool reached the League Cup final on penalties after a gripping last-four second leg tie at Anfield ended 1-1 on aggregate on Tuesday.

Mignolet saved twice in the shootout, including a brilliant stop to deny Marc Muniesa in sudden death, which allowed Joe Allen to stroke home the decisive spotkick and send Liverpool to Wembley.

It was a fortunate end to an uncomfortable evening for the hosts, who were under pressure for much of the encounter which

ended 1-0 to Stoke City after extra time.

Stoke took the lead in first-half stoppage time when Marko Arnautovic swept the ball home from an offside position but the assistant's flag stayed down and the goal was allowed to stand.

Liverpool struggled to breakdown a resolute Stoke defence and after neither side could add to the scoring for the remainder of the match, it went to penalties and Allen's effort gave the hosts a 6-5 win in the shootout.

It was a thrilling end for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp who could not bear to watch as

Allen's final penalty hit the net.

"It was great, the atmosphere was special," the German told Sky Sports. "It was a good game for my side against a difficult side to play..."

"Wembley is a cool place to play football, but we go there to win. It's not much fun to lose."

Liverpool will face either Everton or Manchester City in the final on 28 February, with Roberto Martinez's side holding a 2-1 lead heading into Wednesday's second leg.

For Stoke manager Mark Hughes, there was little consolation to be had other than his

side's positive performance.

"I thought we merited a win," he said. "We got a win on paper — goodness knows how long it's been since we won here — but the objective was to get to a Wembley final which we didn't."

Having not won at Anfield in any competition since 1959 with 36 fruitless visits in the interim, they were sharp, well-organised and the better team for the majority of Tuesday's tie.

Liverpool, the record eight-times League Cup winners, struggled to create any chance of note in the first 45 minutes

with their forays into Stoke territory frequently ending with a misplaced pass or a timely Stoke tackle.

The visitors got their reward for blunting Liverpool's attack with a stoppage-time goal that prompted an angry response from the hosts, with Arnautovic having strayed a metre offside when he stroked home Bojan's cross. Liverpool's Firmino rattled the outside of the post shortly after the interval, but Stoke continued pile on the pressure with the hosts' defence looking increasingly erratic as the encounter wore on.—Reuters