

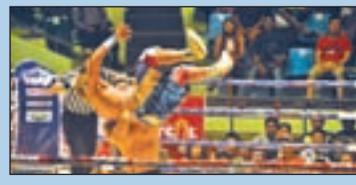
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Pay homage to the Buddha's footprints, cool ourselves in Mann Creek in Minbu



Photo shows Mann Shwe Settaw in Minbu during the pagoda's festival in 2015. PHOTO: KYAW SEIN WIN

Aye Min Soe

WITH a record number of pilgrims across the country, Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda festival was opened in Minbu yesterday.

The festival is one of the most significant pagoda festivals in Myanmar and lasts more

than two months.

"We have two reasons why we visit the festival. The first one is to pay homage to the footprints of the Buddha. The second is to go on a vacation, enjoying natural environment there," said U Tin Win from Yangon, who had visited the

festival several times.

"In fact, visit to the festival is not just for pilgrimage but also for taking bath in the Mann Creek passing through the two locations of Buddha's footprints, flowing into the Ayeyawady River," he added.

Due to its unspoiled forests,

mountains and the creek at the area, the Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda is considered the oasis of upper Myanmar.

The festival also attracts families throughout the country when the matriculation examination finished in mid-March.

Meanwhile, foreign travelers

listed the pagoda in their travel choices along with centuries-old monasteries and pagodas in Minbu and Sagu located in the same district.

"Among foreign tourists to Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda, Cambodians topped the list. They made group visits every year," said U Kyaw Sein Win, a member of the Pagoda Board of Trustees.

Just around 200 foreign travelers visited the pagoda last year, he added.

During their visit to Mann Shwe Settaw pagoda, foreigners can visit a sanctuary for golden deer and star tortoise both are endangered species.

The festival has also offered local products like dried bamboo shoots, mushroom and handmade products to local visitors.

Mann Shwe Settaw (The Golden Footprints) pagoda is one of the most venerated pagodas in Myanmar. There are two footprints namely the Auk Set Taw Ya or the Lower and the Ahtet Set Taw Ya, the Upper.

The pagoda history tells us that in the 12th year after Lord Buddha attained his Enlightenment, He came to this area with a retinue of 500 followers.

"There is no inconvenience for the visitors, including insufficient accommodation during days when the festival is crowded," U Kyaw Sein Win said.

AID REACHES PALAW FIRE VICTIMS

CANDLE FIRE BLAZE DESTROYS 600 HOMES IN PALAW TOWNSHIP

A FIRE broke out yesterday morning in Kyaukka village, Palaw township, Myeik District, Taninthari Region, engulfing about 600 houses, local firemen said. There were no casualties.

The cause of the fire was reportedly a child playing with a lit candle, according to the police.

The total cost of the fire, taking into account destroyed property and homes, sits at around K75 million.

As the area where the fire broke out was not accessible by fire engines, fire fighters, teaming with military personnel and local people, battled the blaze with the use of water pumps, bringing it under control in the late afternoon.

The victims were moved to nearby Yezagyo village where they were provided temporary shelters.

Coastal Region Command's Commander Brig-Gen Maung Maung Soe rushed to the scene of

incident where he provided victims with relief items including purified bottled water, noodles and other foodstuffs. The military command has sent its mobile medical team to provide health care to the victims.

In the evening, families of the navy, the army and the air forces sent 200 cartons of noodles alongside kitchen utensils on two military helicopters. —Myit Oo (Myeik)



Fire engulfs homes in Kyaukka Village in Palaw Township. PHOTO: MYINT Oo (MYEIK)

Earthen brick makers in Thahton face declining profits



Workers in an earthen brick workplace in Thahton Township. PHOTO: THE OO (THATHON)

LOCAL earthen brick makers in Thahton Township, Mon State reported a small decline in their profits as they are seeing low demand for their products this year compared with 2015.

"Although we have promoted the manufacturing of earthen bricks this year, we could not generate high profits," Brick Maker U San Khaing said.

A decrease in new

construction projects within the region, losses of finished bricks due to natural disaster and the increasing price of firewood are the main reasons why the brick makers are seeing low demand.

According to a township association there are about 40 earthen brick makers in Thathon Township. They normally operate between December and March. A firm can bake

nearly 400,000 bricks per season.

Last year, brick makers were selling an earthen brick at K37 (US\$0.03).

The price remains unchanged this season. However, this year's wages for workers have increased. The owners of firms increased wages up to K4,000 (\$3.29) from K3,300 (\$2.71) per worker, per day.—*The Oo (Thathon)*

The 127-year-old clock tower reopened

THE re-opening ceremony of a 127-year-old clock tower located in the compound of Myoma police station on Lanmagyi Street in Sittway Township was held as a gesture honouring the 69th anniversary Union Day.

Colonel Htein Lin, Minister for State Security and Border Affairs; U Maung San Shwe, Minister for the State Development Affairs Committee; and U Than Shwe, the chairman of the Township Development Committee formally opened the ceremony by cutting the ribbon.

This clock tower was built in 1887 and is now 127 years old. It was renovated for the first time in 1965, according to local people from Sittway Township.

The clock broke down in 1988 and has now been opened once again following renovations. —*Myat Wai*



The 127-year-old clock tower in Sittway. PHOTO: MYAT WAI

Crime News

Two fires break out in one day

A FIRE broke out at a dormitory on Mahar Swe road in Hlaing Thayar township on Wednesday. According to an investigation, an unattended rice cooker was the initial cause of the blaze. The fire quickly got out of control and spread to two other houses. The fire was put out by firemen with thirteen fire engines.

On the same day, a fire broke out due to mosquito coils on Nawaday road. According to the investigation Daw Myint, who lives in squatter's hut, used the mosquito coil and left the hut. A fire broke out and quickly got out of control. Local police have filed charges against Daw Myint, 43, and Ma Wah Wah, 26.—*Than Htet (HlaingThayar)*



Burnt houses seen on Mahar Swe road in Hlaing Thayar. PHOTO: THAN HTET (HLAINGTHAYAR)



Damaged houses seen in Sint Kwin village. PHOTO: THET MAUNG (KYAUKSE)

Fire destroys four houses in Kyaukse

A FIRE destroyed four houses in Sint Kwin village, Kyaukse township, Mandalay region on Tuesday. According to an investigation, the fire broke out when U Aung Swe Oo, 43, lit candles at a shrine at his home. The fire was put out by firemen with the assistance of neighbours. The police have filed charges against U Aung Swe Oo.—*Thet Maung (Kyaukse)*

One woman died, 15 injured following car accident

A WOMAN died on the spot and 15 others were injured in a bus car accident that occurred on Gaba Aye Pagoda road, Mayangone township, Yangon region on Wednesday.

A 96 line bus driven by Nay Soe crashed into a light truck when the driver lost control. The bus then turned over. One female passenger died on

the spot while the other 15 passengers suffered serious injuries. They are receiving medical care at North Okkalapa General Hospital.

The reckless bus driver fled the scene.

Police are searching for the driver and have filed charges against him.—*Zaw Gyi (Pamanita)*



A light truck seen overturned.

Man killed by agitated elephant

A MAN was killed by an elephant on Saturday at the Thene Forest Reserve, Nampan, Thabeikkyin township.

According to an investi-

gation, Tun Win Khine, 33, accidentally struck the elephant which reacted violently causing fatal injuries to the man.

—*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*



Vice President U Nyan Tun is seen off by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham as he departs from Nay Pyi Taw to the United States of America. PHOTO: MNA

VP U Nyan Tun leaves for US-ASEAN Summit in California

VICE President U Nyan Tun left Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning for United States to attend the US-ASEAN Summit to be hosted in Rancho Mirage, California from 15 to 16 February.

The Myanmar delegation led by the vice president was seen off at the airport by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win and Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, U Tint Hsan and

U Aye Myint.

On arrival at Singapore's Changi Airport in the afternoon, the Myanmar delegation was welcomed by the Myanmar ambassador to Singapore, embassy staff and military attachés.

Vice President U Nyan Tun was accompanied by Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Ye Htut and Dr Kan Zaw, Dr Tun Shin and officials. The Myanmar delegation stopped over in Singapore on the way to the US. —Myanmar News Agency

New breath of life to Bago real estate as Hanthawaddy Airport is given green light

REAL ESTATE agents have made it known that the signing of an agreement for the building of the Hanthawaddy International Airport on the outskirts of Bago has had a knock on affect on the local real estate market, causing it to flourish once more.

The Bago real estate market went cold during 2015 but the signing of an agreement between the government and airport construction companies has caused the price of land to rise again.

“The buying and selling of Bago real estate came to a halt because of incorrect reports that the international airport was no longer to be constructed in the region. The market fell. Dependent upon proximity with the road, a piece of 80 by 100 feet land in the new town of Okthar, which sits close by the location for airport construction, has a current price tag of around K100 million. The market has picked up again after reports of imminent project implementation. Plots of land are starting to be bought and sold for

prices of K10-20 million.” said Ko Than Htaike, secretary from the Bago real estate enterprise.

There was a slight buzz of activity during 2010 in the surrounding area of Kyauk Taing Kan village, the anticipated location of the Hanthawaddy International Airport, but that came to a halt not too long after it began. The Singaporean Yongnam Holdings Ltd, Changi Airports and Japanese JGC Corporation conducted lengthy analytical studies in 2014, which resulted in the signing of an initial contract in January of this year for the implementation of construction activities, while it is known that a conclusive agreement contract will be signed within the year. The buying and selling of Bago real estate halted with the temporary stopping of airport construction, while the recent news that construction will be restarted, along with news of a ring road to be built around the town of Bago, has given the real estate market another breath of life.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar hosts its first WWE-like wrestling

MYANMAR'S first wrestling event, similar to the famous World Wrestling Entertainment brand, took place at Theinbyu stadium, Yangon Region yesterday, attracting male and female wrestlers from Japan, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and

the United States.

The event was held to raise a flood relief fund, the organisers said, adding that all the profits would be allocated to the flood-hit areas. Yangon Press, the first Japanese Media in Myanmar, donated Ks10 million to the flood

relief fund.

Last July and August, 12 of 14 regions and states across the country encountered unprecedented floods which left hundreds of thousands homeless and destroyed farmlands.—*Ko Thet (Botahtaung)*



Two wrestlers competes in first WWE-like wrestling in Yangon. PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG WIN (KYEMON)



Members of the Tatmadaw loading aid onto a helicopter to send to fire victims in Palaw. MYAWADY (News on page 1)

Artists call for action against exploitation

WORKS of Myanmar art are being exploited in foreign countries, New Zero Art Space's Executive Director Ko Aye Ko said, calling for immediate action to prevent it.

“If we fail to prevent such cases, businesses engaged in the production and sale of the ten traditional forms of art will be on the verge of disappearance,” he said.

U Aye Ko suggested that historians conduct extensive research into the originality of the country's traditional handicrafts.

U Thardu, chairman of the Myanmar Handicraft Art Association, has issued a strong warning that failure to support art industries would entail labour shortages. —*Ko Moe*

LOCAL Business

Tourism services at Gokteik viaduct to be tendered out

WHILE running an RBE (Rail Bus Engine) service for local and foreign travelers to visit the Gokteik Viaduct in northern Myanmar, the Myanma Railways has a plan to tender out other tourism services at the site to private companies.

Myanma Railways has opened the RBE service which can carry up to 50 people due to the increasing number of native visitors as well as tourists to Gokteik.

“The RBE vehicle will run slowly across the Gokhteik viaduct in order for passengers to have the best chance to take in the view. The train stops at both ends of the viaduct. The trip takes around 10 minutes. The trip costs K5,000 per person”, said U Kyaw Kyaw Myo, deputy manager of the Passenger Business Department, Myanma Railway.

The Gokteik viaduct is recognised as the “The World’s Largest Trestle” and was built by the Pennsylvania Maryland Bridge & Construction Co. Ltd in 1930. The construction period was nine months and the entire project came in at a cost of £113, 200. A total of 4,300 tonnes of metal was used in its construction.



Gokteik Viaduct in northern Myanmar. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Myanma Railways has prohibited the walking tours along the world famous Gokteik Viaduct to maintain its durability

and ensure safety among tourists.

The Gokhteik viaduct situated near Nawnhkio station on

Mandalay-Lashio railway line was constructed in 1899. It is 2260-foot long.

Myanma Railways is also

arranging to provide local and foreign visitors with special tours to the side.—Aung Thant Khaing

Rice husk power plant to be built in Myaungmya

THE Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) and companies from Japan will cooperate to build a 22.3 megawatt rice husk power plant, which will generate electricity using rice husks.

“The main reason for constructing this power plant is to provide a widespread distribution of electricity. The electricity will be distributed to rice millers and factories around the plant,” said U Ye Min Aung, general secretary of the MRF.

The rice husk power plant will be built throughout 2016 and 2017 by the MRF, the Shwe

Hin Thar Company and Japanese corporations such as Fujita and Mitsubishi.

“This system is sustainable for remote areas. We will be able to reuse the husks and regenerate electricity,” said Dr Soe Tun, vice chairperson of the MRF.

Currently, Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corp. (Mapco) is constructing a 1.8 megawatt electricity plant at Kyaiklatt, Ayeyawady Region, which will begin distributing electricity to villages and factories this year.—Myitmakha News Agency

Telenor launches Mobile Phone Money Transfer

MOBILE operator Telenor has anticipated an excited reaction to its new mobile banking service unveiled this week.

“A banking service based on mobile systems raises the prospect of linking the country’s people that do not use

banking services with those who do”, said Peter Furberg, CEO of Telenor Myanmar, on Monday in Yangon.

Wave money, which is operating the mobile banking service in Myanmar, is joining hands with Yoma

Bank and has urged companies who are providing monetary services to prepare to expand its services as the government has set a goal of providing banking services to 40% of the population by 2020.—Myanma Alinn

Potters in Yamethin struggle for raw materials

POTTERY manufacturers in Nwar Koe village, Yamethin Township, Mandalay Regional Division are experiencing a scarcity of straw, the main fuel

source for the baking of pots, it is learnt.

Employers also are facing problems in sourcing chaff and firewood, also raw materials used

in the pottery business.

Nwar Koe villagers have been producing various kinds of earthen pots since ancient times.—Myanma Alinn

Divisive politics return as Modi eyes make-or-break state vote

MUZAFFARNAGAR, (India) — At a campaign rally in a north Indian city, a visibly drunk election worker from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist party climbs unsteadily onto the stage after being called to speak.

A year before Uttar Pradesh holds a state election that could make or break Modi's chances of a second term, political opponents, analysts and commentators say his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is re-testing a divisive formula at a by-election on Saturday in a troubled corner of India's most populous state.

It was here in Muzaffarnagar, in 2013, that at least 65 people were killed in communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims. Around 12,000 people were driven from their homes in the surrounding villages where farmers grow sugarcane.

The following year, the BJP won 71 of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh in a general election, handing Modi India's biggest parliamentary majority in three decades.

Despite two major state poll defeats since, the BJP recently re-appointed Amit Shah as its campaign manager, counting on



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

him to win again in the 2017 regional vote.

Shah, who holds the rank of party president, was banned by the Election Commission of India from campaigning in 2014 for statements promoting "hatred

and ill will" between religions.

A senior aide to Shah told Reuters the Muzaffarnagar campaign raised legitimate issues to expose the flaws of the state government, led by the left-wing Samajwadi Party that is widely sup-

ported by Muslim voters. "It's not illegal to voice the concerns of Hindus," said the aide, who did not want to be named.

"To assume that we will only win elections by polarisation is ridiculous.

Our work will prove a point and Modi's image will work the best for us."

At the BJP rally in Muzaffarnagar, a town of 300,000 people, a businessman chants a Hindu prayer and, to cheers, says girls should not fall for Muslim boys waging a "Love Jihad" against his community.

As the party worker totters off the wobbly podium, he gets a pat on the back from Sanjeev Balyan, a federal agriculture minister who was elected as the local member of parliament in the 2014 landslide.

Balyan, 42, is being tried in a Muzaffarnagar court for rioting, disturbing the peace and unlawful assembly during the 2013 clashes, his lawyer said. He spent 12 days in prison before being granted bail. Further hearings are pending, and Balyan has pleaded his innocence.

With this reporter present, Balyan gives no speech; only expressing gratitude to his voters. Asked later by Reuters about the broader significance of the Muzaffarnagar by-election for Hindu unity and for Uttar Pradesh, he described it as a prelude to "an all-out final attempt to protect Hindus."—Reuters

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China foreign minister urges US caution on missile system

BEIJING — The United States needs to proceed with caution on possible deployment of an advanced US missile defence system following North Korea's recent rocket launch and not use this as an excuse to affect China's security, the Chinese foreign minister said.

Speaking to US Secretary of State John Kerry in Munich, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed Beijing's opposition to the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, China's Foreign Ministry said late on Friday.

Wang "demanded the US side must act cautiously, not use the opportunity to harm China's security interests and not add a new complicating factor to regional peace and stability", the ministry said.

South Korea and the United States are expected to begin talks

next week on possible deployment of the system.

North Korea launched a long-range rocket on 6 February carrying what it called a satellite, drawing renewed international condemnation just weeks after it carried out a nuclear test.

It said the launch was for peaceful purposes, but Seoul and Washington have said it violated UN Security Council resolutions because it used ballistic missile technology.

Wang also repeated China's stance that sanctions "are not the aim" and that everyone should think of ways to restart talks on the North Korean nuclear issue.

"This completely accords with the interests of all sides, including China and the United States," Wang added, according to the statement.

In Seoul, the US military stationed in South Korea said it had deployed an additional Patriot



US Secretary of State John Kerry and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi chat before a bilateral meeting in Munich, Germany, on 12 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

missile defence unit to the country in response to recent North Korean provocations.

An air defence artillery unit from Texas is conducting ballistic missile defence training with existing troops deployed in the

South, the US Forces Korea also said in a statement.

The Patriot system is a high-velocity interceptor that defends against incoming ballistic and cruise missiles as well as aircraft.—Reuters

North Korea to halt search for Japanese abductees: KCNA

TOKYO — North Korea has declared void an agreement to reopen a probe into the fate of abducted Japanese citizens after Japan imposed sanctions in the wake of Pyongyang's rocket launch, according to North Korea's official KCNA news agency.

North Korea planned to disband a committee set up in 2014 to look into the whereabouts of Japa-

nese abductees, KCNA said, adding that Japan's "provocative acts of hostility" toward North Korea would ensure further counter-measures.

"The Abe regime has to hold full responsibility for causing such a grave consequence," it said.

Japan said on Wednesday it was imposing sanctions on North

Korea after a satellite launch seen by Washington and allies, including Tokyo, as cover for development of ballistic missile technology that could be used to deliver a nuclear weapon.

Pyongyang admitted in 2002 to kidnapping 13 Japanese citizens decades ago. Five abductees and their families later returned to Japan but Tokyo wants to

know the fate of the remaining eight, who Pyongyang has said are dead, and others that Japan believes were also kidnapped.

The government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has made resolving the emotive abductees issues a signature pledge of his political career, had stressed it hoped to keep the door to dialogue open.—Reuters

Ousted former Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra opens up to foreign press

BANGKOK — After living a low-profile life for almost two years, Yingluck Shinawatra, Thailand's ousted former prime minister and sister of fugitive premier Thaksin Shinawatra, opened her home to the foreign press corps in Bangkok on Friday for the first time since being overthrown by the country's 2014 coup.

Showing off her salad garden, the country's first female prime minister opened up about her life in the wake of the coup, and her hopes for the country's return to democracy.

Speaking in the hydroponic vegetable garden, filled with blossoming lettuces and colourful chilies, Yingluck's first post-coup meeting with international media came after she told reporters earlier she intended to speak out more, despite the military's bans.

A similar meeting was held in early January for Thai media, causing a stir for Thailand's Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-ocha, who had publicly issued several warnings to Yingluck to refrain from expressing her political views, with the threat of potential consequences such as travel restrictions and a ban on financial transactions.

"We need to find some space. We need to speak out sometimes if our message was misused or misled," Yingluck told reporters.

Besides multiple charges in court, Yingluck faces a five-year



Former Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra talks with foreign journalists during a reception at her residence in the northeastern suburb of Bangkok, Thailand, on 12 February 2016. Yingluck met with foreign journalists and attended a joint interview during a reception held at her residence on Friday. PHOTO: XINHUA

ban from politics after the junta-appointed National Legislative Assembly voted to impeach her over allegedly causing a huge loss through a rice-pledging scheme.

"We are trying to prove ourselves to the court and the public. We hope that one day people will understand. I will do my best," she said, while also expressing

hopes that her witnesses, who

were rejected by the National Anti-Corruption Commission and prosecutors, would be accepted by the court.

Besides keeping herself busy with the vegetable garden and preparing for the court cases, the former premier said she was enjoying a lifestyle she had missed while in office.

"To de-stress myself, I go to temples and meet my close

friends, who I have lost touch with over the past three years."

Yingluck stressed the importance of Thailand's general election and returning to democracy as a means of revamping the country's economy.

"We have to live with this constitution, so please make sure that it fits with Thailand," she said, referring to efforts to implement a new constitution in the

country, adding "it is important that the constitution must be people-centric" and that the political roadmap which was imposed by the National Council for Peace and Order — the ruling junta — must be followed.

The ousted leader said she had kept in close contact with her fugitive brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, who has expressed hopes of seeing the election and the country's return to its normal state.

"His heart is here in Thailand," Yingluck said. "He wants to see the power returned back to the people."

About her political plan, she said "It is too soon to talk about the future."

When asked what she misses the most about her political life, she said, "I miss the people and my good friends. I still follow how well they are. I devoted myself to serving the Thai people. That is why I need to follow how well they are."

Yingluck Shinawatra was ousted from her position as prime minister by a coup in 2014.

Thaksin Shinawatra, meanwhile, has been living in self-imposed exile abroad, after being ousted from his post as prime minister in a separate coup in 2006. He fled the country in 2008, and was convicted in absentia and handed a jail sentence for abuse of power during his time as prime minister.—*Kyodo News*

India expresses disappointment at US decision to sell fighter jets to Pakistan

NEW DELHI — India yesterday said it was disappointed with the US decision to sell eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan.

The Indian External Affairs Ministry made it clear that it refused to buy the US argument that the deal, worth nearly 700 million US dollars, will help Pakistan combat terrorism. "We are disappointed at the decision of the Obama Administration to notify the sale of F-16 aircrafts to Pakistan. We disagree with their rationale that such arms transfers help to combat terrorism," Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup tweeted. He added: "The record of the last many years in this regard speaks for itself. The US Ambassador will be summoned by the Ministry of External Affairs to convey our displeasure."

The Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees the sales of arms abroad, has claimed that the eight fighter jets will let the Pakistani Air Force carry out counter-terrorism operations in all-weather conditions.—*Xinhua*

US Congress passes tougher North Korea sanctions, sends bill to Obama

WASHINGTON — The US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation on Friday broadening sanctions to punish North Korea for its nuclear programme, human rights record and cyber crimes, and sent the measure to President Barack Obama to sign into law.

Lawmakers said they wanted to make Washington's resolve clear to Pyongyang, but also to the United Nations and other governments, especially China, North Korea's lone major ally and main business partner.

The package includes sanctions targeting North Korea and "secondary sanctions" against those who do business with it.

The vote was 408-2, following a 96-0 vote in the Senate on Wednesday.

Impatient with what they see as Obama's failure to respond to North Korean provocations, many of his fellow Democrats as well as the Republicans who control Congress have been clamouring for

a clampdown since Pyongyang tested a nuclear device in January.

Pressure for congressional action further intensified after last weekend's satellite launch by North Korea.

Obama is not expected to veto the bill, given its huge support in Congress.

White House spokesman Eric Schultz told reporters on board Air Force One that the administration was "deeply concerned" about North Korea's recent actions and would not oppose the legislation.

"We're philosophically and intellectually in the same place as the Congress on this," Schultz said.

The legislation would sanction anyone who engages in, facilitates or contributes to North Korea's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms-related materials, luxury goods, human rights abuses, activities undermining cyber security and the provision of materials for such activities.

Penalties include seizure of assets, visa bans and denial



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un provides field guidance to the Kim Jong Suk Pyongyang Textile Mill, in this undated file photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in Pyongyang on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

of government contracts.

Unusually, the measure makes most of the sanctions mandatory instead of giving the president the option to impose them. He can temporarily waive them by making the case that doing so would threaten

national security.

The House had backed the sanctions measure 418-2 in January, but the Senate included some new provisions, including cyber security measures, in its version, sending it back to the House.—*Reuters*

After 1,000-year split, pope and Russian patriarch embrace in Cuba



Pope Francis (L) and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill hug each other after signing agreements in Havana, on 12 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

HAVANA — Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill embraced and kissed on Friday in a historic meeting, uniting to issue a global appeal for the protection of Christians under assault in the Middle East.

Nearly 1,000 years after the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity split apart, the meeting at an airport terminal in Cuba was the first ever between a Roman Catholic pope and a Russian Orthodox patriarch.

“In many countries of the Middle East and North Africa whole families, villages and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely exterminated,” they said in a joint declaration in apparent reference to violence by militant groups such as Islamic State.

“Their churches are being barbarously ravaged and looted, their sacred objects profaned, their monuments destroyed.”

They also said large-scale humanitarian aid was required to tend to refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq, lamenting the “massive exodus of Christians.”

Cuban President Raul Castro stood to the side during the ceremony, enjoying another moment in the international limelight after receiving Francis last year and restoring diplomatic relations with the United States recently, meeting President Barack Obama in Panama in April.

Cuba is also sponsoring peace talks between the Colom-

bian government and leftist rebels seeking to end a 50-year war.

“If it continues this way, Cuba will be the capital of unity,” Francis said.

“Now what’s left is Colombia,” Castro told reporters after the pope boarded his plane for Mexico, where Francis arrived on Friday evening for a five-day visit to some of the poorest and most violent corners of the country.

“If it continues this way, Cuba will be the capital of unity.”

Pope Francis

Dissidents in Cuba’s one-party political system have remarked on the government’s willingness to promote dialogue for foreigners while dismissing political opponents as mercenaries doing the bidding of the United States.

The two religious leaders, guests of a Communist government, came together only a week after the encounter was announced. Such a meeting had eluded their predecessor, but Francis had issued a standing invitation to meet anytime, anywhere.

The moment came while Kirill was visiting the Caribbean island and Francis added a brief stop on his way from Rome to a long-scheduled visit to Mexico.

“Finally,” Francis said as

he and Kirill entered through doors on opposite sides of a room at Havana airport. “We are brothers.”

Francis, dressed in white with a skullcap, and Kirill, wearing a tall, domed hat that dangled a white stole over black robes, joined arms and kissed on both cheeks.

“It is very clear that this is the will of God,” Francis said.

Their meeting carried political overtones, coming at a time of Russian disagreements with the West over Syria and Ukraine.

The Russian Orthodox Church is closely aligned with the Kremlin, which is in turn an ally of Cuba.

The Argentine pontiff helped the rapprochement between the United States and Cuba after more than five decades of estrangement.

The pope, leader of the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics, is seeking to repair a much longer rupture. Eastern Orthodoxy split with Rome in 1054.

The declaration called for Europe to remain faithful to its Christian roots and restated several traditional Christian teachings such as opposition to abortion and marriage being reserved for a man and a woman.

The Russian Orthodox Church takes a stronger stand on these issues in public than Pope Francis, who supports these teachings but often speaks of other issues such as poverty and protecting the environment, which were also mentioned in the text.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

US and Cuba to sign aviation pact on 16 February

WASHINGTON — Top US officials will travel to Havana on 16 February to sign an aviation pact that restores scheduled airline service between the United States and Cuba for the first time in more than 50 years, the US Transportation Department said on Friday.

The signing brings into effect an arrangement the Cold War foes agreed upon on 16 December US airlines still must apply for permission from US regulators to fly specific routes before they sell tickets to Cuba.

While charter flights already connect the countries, the accord is expected to increase tourism and business on the communist-ruled island. Airlines expect a gradual payout from the arrangement as well.

US Transportation Department Secretary Anthony Foxx and Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Charles Rivkin will participate in the signing, the Transportation Department said in a news release.—Reuters

Two girls fatally shot at Arizona school in apparent murder-suicide

GLENDALE, (Ariz) — Two 15-year-old girls who were believed to have been romantically involved were found shot dead on Friday at an Arizona high school in an apparent murder-suicide that initially triggered a security lockdown of the campus, police said.

The pair, whose identities were not made public, were both 10th-grade students at Independence High School in the Phoenix suburb of Glendale, and a suicide note was recovered from the scene of the shooting, according to a police statement.

After a report of gunfire at the school, the two girls’ bodies were found near the cafeteria under a covered patio, each having sustained a single gunshot wound, and a weapon was discovered nearby.

Although the incident remained under investigation, evidence from the scene has led homicide detectives to determine that one of the girls apparently killed the other before taking her own life, and that no other students witnessed the shooting, police said.—Reuters

Former governor of Afghanistan’s Herat Province kidnapped in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD — Unidentified gunmen kidnapped former governor of Afghanistan’s western Herat Province, Sayed Fazalullah Wahidi, in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, on Friday, police and the embassy sources said.

Wahidi, who had also served as governor of eastern Kunar, during the government of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, had arrived in Islamabad along with his family to get the UK visas, diplomatic sources said.

“The embassy has formally registered a case with the police,” a diplomatic source said. Several embassy officials visited the Kohsar Police Station to register the First Information Report.

Earlier a police official said that Wahidi was staying at a guest house at Islamabad’s F-7 sector and was “kidnapped” by some unidentified people near Rana Market.—Xinhua

Nepal to form political body to resolve federal demarcation issue

KATHMANDU — Nepal’s three major political parties and the United Democratic Madhesi Front reached an agreement on Friday to set up a political mechanism to resolve the issue of federalism.

A meeting summoned by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at his official residence decided to resolve the issue of demarcation of provincial boundaries.

The issue has been behind the unrest in southern plains of the country, which left over 50 people including police dead last year.

“The task force made up of four parties is scheduled to resolve the issue through a separate political body prior to prime minister’s India visit,” leaders told the media after the meeting.

Prime Minister Oli is set to pay an official visit to India starting on 19 February.

The ethnic- Madhes based parties have been in agitation for nearly five months, citing reservations on seven-province federal model in the constitution that was adopted on 20 September last year.

The agitating parties formally announced end to the border blockade this week, but they have launched other forms of protests across the country.—Xinhua

OPINION

General Aung San, the role model of youth

Khin Maung Aye

TODAY is the 101st anniversary birthday of General Aung San, our national hero and the architect of Myanmar independence, should he be still alive. Although he fell victim to crooked assassins over 70 years ago, he is still remembered by the entire mass of people, who are always honouring him, having high respect for him, being proud of his bravery and patriotic spirit.

General Aung San is always a hero, role model

and charismatic leader. People love him for his sacrificing spirit, honour him for his bravery and respect him for his possession of six characteristics of a patron. His honesty, uprightness, wisdom and good leadership skills have won him the love and trust of his fellow politicians and military personnel. Throughout his life, he has been resolved to wrestle back independence, freeing his country from under the yoke of British colonialists.

In this juncture, it is worth mentioning that General Aung San's birthdays are held annually to make the young people emulate his moral characters, to make him their role model, to behave like him and, to follow in his footsteps. General Aung San was a man of principle, free from graft and corruption, sacrificing his own interests for the sake of the country. This is the reason why he could have won the respect of even the international community.

The youth of today are asked to imitate General Aung San, our national hero and architect of independence, instilling in them the noble spirit, honesty,

uprightness, self-sacrificing spirit and bravery in order that they can possess good leadership abilities and skills. Then only will the youth of today be ready to take over the responsibilities of the state upon growing up. The Global New Light of Myanmar believes in the youth's ability to perform whatever tasks assigned to them, exerting relentless effort and with undaunted spirit like the hero they keep as their role model.

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.

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, MNHRC

Dr. Khine Khine Win

WITH the mandate to promote and protect the fundamental rights of the citizens of Myanmar as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was established on the 5th of September 2011 by a presidential decree. In order to fully comply with the Paris Principles and to effectively promote and protect the Rights of citizens enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Human Rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nation and international human rights instruments applicable to the State, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission law was enacted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw with the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. (21/2014). Under the provisions laid down in Section (4) and Section (9) of this law, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was reconstituted on 24 September 2014. The Commission is situated at No.27, Pyay Road, Hlaing Township in Yangon.

Vision of the Commission is to ensure respect for human dignity, social justice, non-discrimination, and the rule of law through the promotion and protection of human rights. Eleven Members of Commission and 61 staff members of Commission Office are earnestly striving to bolster the momentum of the promotion and protection activities of the Commission. Five divisions in Commission office have been carrying

out their respective functions.

Promotion and Protection of human rights is the main function of Commission. As provided under Chapter 5 of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law, the commission has mandate to investigate and make inquiries related to complaints and allegations of human rights violation, commission can travel to the scene of violations and make inquiries based on complaint or news — prisons, jails, detention centers and places of confinement. Any person may lodge a complaint with the commission on his/her own behalf, or on behalf of another person or on behalf of a group of persons with a similar cause of complaint concerning any alleged violations of human rights.

After hearing the complaints and making inquiries, the complaints were forwarded to the Office of the Union Government, respective Ministries and Office of the State and Regional Government. In accordance with Section 38 of the MNHRC law, a request was made for a response to be given within 30 days. However, few cases met the dead line and most of the replies were received only after 90 days had elapsed.

Due to having the power to inspect the scene of human rights violations — prisons, jails, detention centers, places of confinement — the Commission inspected 32 times during 2011 September to December 2015.

With regard to MNHRC law, the commission shall not inquire the cases that have been failed by any court, cases under trail before any court, cases under appeal or revision on the decision of any court and cases that have been finally determined by any court.

To coordinate and cooperate with the international organizations, regional organizations, national statutory institutions, civil society and nongovernmental organizations related to human rights is one of the objectives of MNHRC law. Therefore, the Commission has been carrying out activities to promote and educate the public and advancement has been made by the commission in relation to its objectives.

Giving human rights lectures to National Defense Colleague and Central Institute of Civil Service (Lower and Upper Myanmar) is one of the activities of human rights awareness raising activity of the Commission. Commission believes that human rights awareness raising activities promote attitudes and encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. The commission also conducted training workshops for government offi-

cial of State and Regions for two days to enable them to understand basic principles of human rights. In order to promote public awareness of human rights, the commission held human rights education talks at townships levels and also conducted one day workshop with CSOs and NGOs at grass root level. To raise human rights knowledge awareness extensively to the people, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was not only translated into the Myanmar language but also into Kachin, Mon and Shan languages and the translated versions were widely distributed. A film script on article 26 of the UDHR (The right to education) was produced and screened during television programmes.

Any citizen may send complaint to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission when his or her fundamental rights in the Constitution of the Republic

of the Union of Myanmar are violated. If the Commission concludes that the alleged violations of the fundamental rights in the Constitution against a citizen are true, it will take steps in accordance with complaint procedures to promote and safeguard the fundamental rights.

The Commission pledges to fulfill its vision to create a society where human rights are respected and protected in line with the provisions of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law in cooperation with the relevant organizations.

Dr. Khine Khine Win
Director
Human Rights Education and
Promotion Division
Myanmar National Human
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01-654675, 09421039756

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

Thanks for the report, Mainmahala Island Wildlife Sanctuary protects endangered crocodiles (GNLM, Jan 5). It is important to mention that endangered salt water crocodile has been wiped out of the majority habitats in South and SE Asia. Mostly restricted in the Sunderban mangroves of India and Bangladesh; Bhitarkanika Mangroves of Orissa (India) and the Mangrove belts of the Andaman and Nicobar islands of India, in small numbers in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines. Large populations are still reported from East Timor, Papua & New Guinea and Australia. The species have become extinct in China, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. Once large populations existed across Mekong delta; however they are

now limited only to the Ayerawady delta mainly within Myanmar. Myanmar represents the last breeding stocks of the wild saltwater crocodiles of the old Indo-China region. Hence any step taken to conserve this beautiful species must be appreciated. Hopefully the conservation efforts initiated in Myanmar can multiply the number of saltwater crocodiles and serve as stepping stone in reintroducing them to their broader habitats across SE Asia. Furthermore, the front page picture of beautiful flamingos in the Nay Pi Taw zoo is greatly appreciated.

Thanking you
Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu
Apt 6-409, 43 Street South,
Lethbridge AB Canada T1J 4B3

Myanmar International Furniture Expo 2016 opened in Yangon



Visitors look at the furniture at Myanmar International Furniture Expo 2016 at the Tatmadaw Hall. PHOTO: SOE WIN (MLA)

THE four-day Myanmar International Furniture Expo 2016 was opened at the Tatmadaw Hall in Yangon on Friday in grand fashion.

The Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association (MRBEA) and the Wood-Based Furniture Association (WBFA) organised the event for member entrepreneurs to showcase their furniture products and

for the public to inspect furniture at one location. At the event, furniture will be sold at affordable prices, said U Nyan Win, chairman of and the Wood-Based Furniture Association (WBFA).

This Expo is very interesting; we are seeing improvements as this year's expo is up to international standard. The furniture manufacturers have started to produce higher quality products

and prices are affordable, said a buyer.

The member entrepreneurs of the Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association (MRBEA) and the Wood-Based Furniture Association (WBFA) are exhibiting their products at 174 booths.

The Expo is set to be held from 12 to 15 February. —*Soe Win (MLA)*

17th Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bicycle Rally held



Cyclists seen at the 17th Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bicycle Rally. PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG(IPRD)

TO promote the bilateral relationship between Myanmar and Thailand and to strengthen ties between citizens of both countries the 17th Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bicycle Rally was held at the No. 1 Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge in Myawady yesterday.

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung and State Minister U Naing Min Soe Thein for the Planning and Commerce of Kayin State, members of the Kayin State Government, the Tourism and Sports Minister of Thailand Kobkarn Wattanarangkura and party attended

the opening ceremony.

The ministers and representatives of both countries exchanged souvenirs and cut ribbons to open the Friendship Bicycle Rally.

Over 1,000 cyclists from both countries participated in the rally. —*Htein Lin Aung(IPRD)*

Water-sellers in NyaungU see profits during transition from winter to summer

WATER-SELLERS in NyaungU Township, Mandalay Region generate income by selling drinking water by car across the region, especially in areas facing an acute shortage of clean water, locals say.

A victim said, "We, all residents from Kabarni, Sitha, Yaytwinnyaungpin, Indaing, Nyaunggyi and nearby villages in the region are currently facing shortage of water during the transition from winter to summer."

"Although we need to buy potable water for daily use as there are many tube-wells in the

region, we face drinking water problems every summer."

A resident said, "We have not received water from an Australian-funded river pump for five months. It is one of the reasons why the region has a lack of water supply."

Currently, residents purchase a tub that holds 50 gallons of water for K800 (US\$0.66).

"We normally collect water from the Kyaukku River Pump and a drain near Myenaelay Village," a water-seller said. "This business produces good profit because of the falling price of petroleum."—*Myo Min Aung*



A water bowser seen. PHOTO: MYO MIN AUNG

Sales of Chinese garlic fall in Tachilek as prices rise

IT is known from those within the garlic market in the eastern Shan State town of Tachilek that fluctuations in the value of the Chinese RMB has caused the price of the imported commodity to rise in this month of February, causing a fall in sales.

The price of garlic started to increase during the last week of January to a point at which sales have fallen by around fifty per cent. "Garlic is imported from China so the value of it follows that of the Chinese currency. There hasn't been much sale of garlic after its rise in price. We were pushing about 8 kilos of the stuff a couple of months back. But sales have eased up in this second month of the new year. We're managing to sell only around 4 kilos a day at the moment. A kilo of garlic from the wholesalers costs 68 Thai baht and is then resold at 75 baht," said U Than Win, a garlic seller from Tachilek.

"Our wholesalers buy up

to 150 bags of garlic at one time which each weigh over 20 kilos. When reselling the produce, we downsize and re-bag the garlic into 10 kilo bags. As the market is about to be flooded with a new harvest of garlic the price of it will fall again in the coming month," explained Ma Than Than from the Tachilek garlic wholesalers.

The exchange rate of the Chinese RMB in Tachilek on 27 January was 507 yuan to K100,000. A few days later on 1 February and K100,000 would buy 514 yuan, while last Monday the same amount of kyats would get you 530 yuan and only the other day on Thursday K100,000 was equivalent to 537 yuan. Chinese garlic is mainly purchased and consumed foreign import from China within the Tachilek district, arriving in the region from the golden triangle epicentre of Mong La, located further north on the Myanmar side of the Chinese border.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Iraq says moving troops, preparing offensive to retake Mosul

BAGHDAD — Iraq's military said on Friday it was mobilising troops to prepare for an offensive the government has pledged to launch this year to retake the northern city of Mosul from Islamic State.

Hundreds of forces from the army's 15th division reached Makhmour base, 70 km (45 miles) south of Mosul, and more forces, including Sunni Muslim tribal fighters, were expected to arrive in coming days, said Brigadier-General Yahya Rasool, spokesman for the joint operations command.

Defence Minister Khaled al-Obaidi told Reuters last month that Iraq would launch the Mosul operation in the first half of the year and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has said 2016 would see the "final victory" against the militants.

Some US officials have endorsed that assessment, but a top US intelligence officer told Congress this week any operation to retake Mosul would be long and complex and unlikely to finish this year.

With more than a million people still living there, Mosul is the largest city controlled by Islamic State, which declared a 'caliphate' in swathes of territory it seized in Iraq and neighboring Syria in 2014.

Retaking it would be a



An Iraqi soldier launches a rocket-propelled grenade towards Islamic State militants, west of Falluja, on 4 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

huge boost for Iraqi forces who, backed by air strikes from a US-led coalition, reclaimed the western city of Ramadi from Islamic State in late December.

Mosul, however, is a far larger city with a populace made up of many sects. And even in Ramadi, Iraqi forces are still working to secure that city and its environs.

Iraq's Rasool told Reuters on Friday that troop movements south of Mosul were being co-

ordinated with the peshmerga, the armed forces of the autonomous Kurdish region north and east of Nineveh which are expected to join the campaign.

"Once we complete all the preparations, we will officially announce the date for the start of Mosul operations," he added.

The United States, which is leading an international campaign in both Iraq and Syria to defeat the jihadist group, has said its strategy is to regain

territory at the heart of Islamic State's cross-border state, take Mosul and the Syrian city of Raqqa, and destroy the confidence of its fighters that it can expand as a magnet for jihadis.

Iraq's army, weakened by years of corruption and mismanagement following the US-led invasion in 2003, is trying to rebuild itself after collapsing 18 months ago in the face of Islamic State's lightning advance.—Reuters

Iran readies to put rivalries aside with Saudi Arabia

MUNICH — Iran and Saudi Arabia must overcome strained relations and work for stability in Syria and the Middle East, Iran's foreign minister said on Friday, a day after Syrian peace talks brought the rivals to the same table for the first time in months.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference hours after his Saudi counterpart addressed the event, Mohammed Javad Zarif said he wanted to stop the bickering and had a simple message: "We need to work together."

"Iran and Saudi Arabia cannot exclude each other from the region," he said, referring to Riyadh as "our Saudi brothers". "We are prepared to work with Saudi Arabia ... I believe Iran and Saudi Arabia can have shared interests in Syria."

Arch-rivals for regional hegemony, the two oil producers are on opposite sides in Syria's war and increasingly bad-tempered exchanges between the conservative Sunni-ruled kingdom and the revolutionary Shi'ite theocracy bode ill for the region.

Ties have worsened since the kingdom's execution in January of prominent Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr prompted attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran. Saudi Arabia subsequently cut all ties with Iran.

Zarif said he took inspiration from Iran's historic nuclear deal with world powers last July, saying that agreement and the lifting of sanctions that have followed showed how deep-seated problems can be resolved through diplomacy.

"We have a common opportunity, common challenges, common threats," Zarif said, adding that it was time to "set aside the past and have a new narrative, a new paradigm for the future."

Iran and Saudi Arabia were at the same table during six hours of talks in Munich among world and regional powers on Thursday to discuss Syria's civil war, agreeing a "cessation of hostilities" to take effect in a week's time.

There was no consensus on the future of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who Iran and Russia are backing in a military assault to take back territory from rebels seeking to oust him.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, who spoke in Munich before Zarif, made no references to Iran and underscored the differences over Assad's future, telling EU ministers and diplomats that the Syrian leader would be removed. "That's our objective and we will achieve it," he said.—Reuters

Israel says has mended fences with EU in Netanyahu-Mogherini call

JERUSALEM — Israel said on Friday it had resolved its differences with the European Union after weeks of diplomatic tension following an EU decision not to allow goods produced in settlements in the occupied West Bank to be labeled "Made in Israel".

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke by phone with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, Israel's foreign ministry said.

The two "agreed that relations between the two sides should be conducted in an atmosphere of confidence and mutual respect," it said.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon said that Israel would no longer insist on the exclusion of EU bodies from peace talks with the Palestinians over a two-state

solution to the Middle East peace process.

Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians broke down in April 2014 and there have been no signs of them resuming.

While the United States has traditionally played the lead role in peace efforts in the region, the EU is Israel's largest trading partner and is the biggest donor to the Palestinians, and is looking to play a larger role in peace negotiations.

"The conversation resolved the tensions and we are, Israel and the EU, back to good and close relations," Nahshon said in a text message to the media.

In November, the EU said that goods produced in settlements could not be labeled "Made in Israel" and should be marked as coming from settlements,

which the EU considers illegal under international law.

The EU holds the position that the lands Israel has occupied since the 1967 Middle East war, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, are not part of the internationally recognised borders of Israel.

After the guidelines were published, Israel suspended contact with EU bodies involved in peace efforts with Palestinians, although the government said bilateral ties with nearly all EU countries remained strong.

The Palestinians want the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied West Bank for their future state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Nahshon said Mogherini had expressed solidarity with

Israel at a time of heightened Israeli-Palestinian violence and had strongly opposed attempts by various groups to boycott Israel.

Since October, 27 Israelis and a US citizen have been killed in near-daily Palestinian attacks that have included stabbings, shootings and car-rammings.

Israeli forces have killed at least 157 Palestinians in the same period, 101 of them assailants, according to Israeli authorities. Other Palestinians have died during violent anti-Israeli protests.

The bloodshed has been partly fueled by Palestinian frustration over the stalled peace talks and anger at perceived Jewish encroachment on a contested shrine in Jerusalem.—Reuters

Suspected microcephaly cases in Brazil rise to 5,079

RIO DE JANEIRO — Possible cases of microcephaly in Brazil have increased by 6 per cent in the last 10 days to 5,079, the government announced on Friday.

Among them, 462 cases have been confirmed, 765 ruled out and the remaining 3,852 are still under investigation, the Ministry of

Health said in a press release.

The rapid increase is attributed to the Zika virus, which has been spreading across the country. However, for the moment, no formal link has been established between these congenital malformations in newborns and the virus.

The 6-per cent increase is

smaller than the rate of growth seen in previous announcements of new cases. In last week's update, the pace was 14 per cent.

But it is suspected that the annual Carnival festivities, which took place last week, might have slowed down the reporting process of new cases.

Furthermore, according to the press release, of the new 462 cases, 41 babies have been confirmed as having links to the Zika virus through the mother during pregnancy.

As for the 765 eliminated cases, they were all incidents where fetuses presented a malformation but later exams proved they were normal or the malformation had no link to Zika.

Additionally, 24 babies have died in the country due to microcephaly and accompanying damage to the nervous system. However, 59 more deaths are under investigation and may be linked to the same conditions. These numbers included newborns and still-born fetuses.

Of all the registered cases of microcephaly, 29 per cent originated in the northeastern state of Pernambuco.—*Xinhua*



Rosana Vieira Alves holds her 4-month-old daughter Luana Vieira, who was born with microcephaly, in the sea in Olinda, Brazil, on 4 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Zika link to birth defects could be proven within weeks: WHO



World Health Organization (WHO) Assistant Director-General Marie-Paule Kiény addresses a news conference on Zika virus in Geneva, Switzerland, on 12 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

GENEVA/LONDON — The suspected link between the Zika virus and two neurological disorders, the birth defect microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome, could be confirmed within weeks, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday.

A sharp increase in microcephaly cases in Brazil has triggered a global health emergency over the mosquito-borne virus, which had previously been viewed as causing only a relatively mild illness, and spurred a race to develop a vaccine, medicines and better diagnostic tests.

The WHO said US government scientists and an Indian biotechnology firm were the front-runners in the vaccine effort but said it would take at least 18 months to start large-scale clinical trials of potential preventative shots. The UN health agency also for the first time advised pregnant women to consider delaying travel to Zika-affected areas.

Brazil is at the centre of the Zika outbreak that has spread to more than 30 countries. Researchers there are working to determine whether Zika has caused a big rise in cases of microcephaly, a birth defect in which babies are born with abnormally small heads and may have developmental problems.

Brazil's health ministry issued fresh figures on Friday, reporting 4,314 suspected and confirmed cases of microcephaly, up from 4,074 cases on 2 February. The ministry said it had confirmed 462 of those cases as microcephaly or other alterations to the central nervous system. Researchers have identified evidence of Zika infection in 41 of these cases, either in the baby or in the mother. But scientists have not confirmed that Zika can cause microcephaly.

"It seems indeed that the link with Zika (and microcephaly) is becoming more and more probable, so I think that we need a few more weeks and a few more studies to have this

straight," Marie-Paule Kiény, WHO assistant director-general for health systems and innovation, told a news briefing in Geneva. Studies of Zika-infected pregnant Latin American women who were due to deliver their babies soon should yield evidence, Kiény said, adding that data also was coming from studies in French Polynesia and Cape Verde.

Kiény said Zika-hit areas also have experienced increased cases of the neurological disease Guillain-Barre, adding: "The direct causality has still to be demonstrated but the association in time and in location seems to be clear."

Guillain-Barre syndrome, in which the body's immune system attacks part of the nervous system, causes gradual weakness in the legs, arms and upper body and sometimes total paralysis.

In a statement, the WHO reiterated it was not recommending any general travel or trade restrictions related to the virus. But it added, "Women who are pregnant should discuss their travel plans with their healthcare provider and consider delaying travel to any area where locally acquired Zika infection is occurring."

Brazil is set to host the Olympics in August in Rio de Janeiro, an event expected to draw hundreds of thousands of athletes, officials and spectators.

Many scientists are convinced the link between Zika and birth defects is real. New evidence of Zika in the brain of an aborted foetus, reported on Wednesday, added to the case.

Speaking at an American Association for the Advancement of Science news conference in Washington, another WHO official, Christopher Dye, reiterated the agency's strong suspicion.

"If we take all the information we have at the moment, the case for a causal link is quite strong," Dye said. "We should now say that Zika is guilty until proven innocent."—*Reuters*

Scientists bid comet lander Philae farewell after radio silence

FRANKFURT — European scientists have given up hope of restoring contact with space probe Philae, which successfully landed on a comet in a pinpoint operation only to lose power because its solar-driven batteries were in the shade.

The German Aerospace Centre (DLR) said on Friday it suspects Philae is now covered in dust and too cold to operate.

"Unfortunately, the probability of Philae re-establishing contact with our team at the DLR Lander Control Centre is almost zero, and we will no longer be sending any commands," Stephan Ulamec, Philae Project Manager of the DLR, said in a statement.

Philae came to rest on a comet in November 2014 in what was considered a remarkable feat of precision space travel. But it closed down soon after because it was in the shade and could not be recharged.

The probe woke up in June as the comet approached the sun, giving scientists hope that the lander could complete some experiments that it had not done before its solar-powered batteries ran out. But the lander has not made contact with its Rosetta orbiter since 9 July, and a last-ditch attempt to re-establish contact with the robotic lab has failed.

"It would be very surprising if we received a signal now," Ulamec

said. While the project team believes that Philae is likely ice-free, the solar panels that recharge its batteries are probably covered with dust. In addition, night-time temperatures can now fall below 180 degrees Celsius below zero (-292°F) as comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko moves away from the sun, which is much colder than Philae was designed to withstand.

While Philae did not have as much time as initially hoped after landing for experiments, information it has collected is reshaping thinking about comets, and it has been a useful lesson for designing

future missions.

Scientists expect to get a final glimpse of the lander in the European summer, when the Rosetta spacecraft snaps some pictures during close fly-bys, before landing on the comet itself when its mission ends in September.

And in around six years, Philae and Rosetta will near the Earth again when the comet returns to circle the sun again. Rosetta is a mission of the European Space Agency, with contributions from its member states and US space agency NASA. The Philae lander was provided by a consortium headed by the DLR.—*Reuters*



Andrea Accomazzo (R) Spacecraft Operations Manager (SOM) of the European Space Operations Centre (ESOC) seen on a video projection behind a model of the Philae lander, reacts after the successful landing of the Philae lander on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko. PHOTO: REUTERS

Young blacks more open to Bernie Sanders' White House bid



US Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders speaks to a supporter at a campaign rally at Iowa Wesleyan University in Mount Pleasant, Iowa in a 29 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

ORANGEBURG, (S.C.) — If Democratic hopeful Bernie Sanders has a chance of drawing African-American voters away from rival Hillary Clinton in South Carolina's presidential nominating contest on 27 February, his best opportunity will be among the young.

African Americans support former Secretary of State Clinton by more than a 3-to-1 margin nationwide,

but among young blacks 18 to 29 years old, that margin shrinks to 46 per cent for Clinton versus 33 per cent for Sanders, according to recent Reuters/Ipsos polling.

African Americans overwhelmingly back Democrats, but opinion polls in the run-up to the 8 November presidential election show younger blacks more apt to reject an establishment candidate. They seem less

inclined than their parents to reward Clinton for the outreach of her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and more drawn to Sanders' outspoken views on reducing income inequality, cracking down on Wall Street, and cutting the cost of college.

Reuters/Ipsos polling last year showed that 36 per cent of blacks between 18 and 29 years old thought the country was on the "wrong

track," compared with 23 per cent of blacks who were at least 60 years old.

For Sanders, a US senator from Vermont who describes himself as a democratic socialist, this trend could help him chip away at Clinton's firewall of minority voters in the southern states, after his strong showings against her — especially among the young — in the early Democratic Party contests of Iowa and New Hampshire, both more than 90 per cent white.

The voting-age population in South Carolina, one of the next stops on the primary trail, is about 67 per cent white and 27 per cent black, the US Census Bureau says. In Orangeburg, South Carolina, students at the historically black schools of South Carolina State University and Claflin University appeared split this week over which of the two candidates to support.

Students praised Clinton's work on behalf of women and minorities and her years of Washington experience. But many said they also were intrigued by Sanders' plans to raise taxes on

wealthier people and Wall Street firms, provide universal healthcare and offer free public college tuition.

"The history is important. But at the same time ... you still need a plan," said Travis Pascoe, 25, a second-year graduate student at Claflin. He said Sanders' plans for reducing inequality by taxing the wealthy and expanding Medicare to cover all Americans should resonate with the black community.

"I think that would help the black community because we're the least privileged," he said.

Eight of 16 students interviewed were undecided voters. Of the eight students whose minds were made up, four students said they planned to vote for Clinton.

Ethel Hillman, 25, a freshman who served in the military before going to college for social work, said she and many of her fellow students were voting for Clinton. She described Sanders as too aloof. "He's not socially connected, I would say, to the black community," she said. "He cares from a distance." —Reuters

Germany's Merkel says getting confident about UK deal with EU

HAMBURG — German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Friday she is becoming more confident a deal to keep Britain in the European Union will be reached, but she warned more compromises may be needed on both sides.

Speaking at an event in Hamburg attended by British Prime Minister David Cameron, Merkel said issues such as changes to social security systems needed to be placed in a European context, not only a British concern.

"The way the talks have progressed so far are putting me in a confident mood," she said. However, she said she did not know how long negotiations would last.

Cameron has said he hopes to come to an agreement with EU leaders over his plans to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the bloc at an EU summit on 18-19 February, paving the way for a British referendum on EU membership this summer.

British and EU negotiators agreed much of a reform package on Thursday, leaving Prime Minister Cameron to settle tricky final issues, notably on migration, at a summit next week.

"Europe needs Great Britain and Great Britain needs Europe," Merkel said in Hamburg, repeating her previous support for continued British membership. The EU's "ability to compromise" will be needed by all to resolve the package of changes Britain is seeking, she said.

"I wish that the United Kingdom will in the future too remain an active member of a successful European Union," she said. That would be in both British and German interests, she said.

Some concerns that Cameron had raised were "not only reasonable, but also supported by us (Germany)," Merkel said, including competitiveness, transparency and reduction of bureaucracy. Every member state should also be in the position to "maintain the strength" of its social security system, she said. Such issues were not only British, she said. —Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DOLPHIN STRAIT VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DOLPHIN STRAIT VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CMA CGM LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MAENAM 1 VOY NO (540N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MAENAM 1 VOY NO (540N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.2.2016 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 WAN HAI LINES PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

Thousands of Egyptian doctors protest over alleged police brutality

CAIRO — Thousands of Egyptian doctors demonstrated in Cairo on Friday in a rare protest at what rights groups call police impunity after two doctors were alleged to have been assaulted in a hospital in the city last month.

The Egyptian Medical Syndicate held an emergency meeting on Friday and called for the prosecution of police officers involved in the alleged assault in Matariya, a district of northern Cairo. The syndicate says the officers have not been held accountable.

Protests involving thousands of people on the streets of Cairo have become rare since a strict law was passed allowing for jail sentences of up to seven years for those participating in demonstrations without prior police approval. The syndicate said on Friday that if the officers involved are not brought to trial they will continue to protest. "The general assembly of the syndicate decided to escalate the situation and is organizing a protest across all hospitals on 20 February," Dr. Rashwan Shaaban, assistant secretary-general of the syndicate, told Reuters. "It's a way to escalate



Egyptian doctors demonstrate in front of the Doctors Union in Cairo, Egypt, on 12 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

the situation should none of the police officers that assaulted the Matariya doctors be referred to the prosecutor," she said. Shaaban said the meeting on Friday was called to address "daily assaults on medical staff" that are being ignored by the authorities. Human rights groups say that police brutality is widespread in Egypt and that there is a culture of impunity. Trials are rare and when they do occur, sentences are usually appealed and subsequently reduced.

The demonstration comes after the body of an Italian student was found by a roadside in Cairo marked with cigarette burns and other signs of torture. Italy has demanded those responsible

be brought to justice. Egypt has dismissed suggestions its security services could have been involved.

Several human rights groups spoke out in solidarity with the doctor's syndicate on Friday and called for greater accountability.

"The authorities (must) end the overall impunity enjoyed by police today to prevent the constant recurrence of such incidents," the Cairo-based Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights said in a statement. Earlier this week a police officer in Egypt's eastern city of Ismailia was sentenced to eight years in jail for beating a man to death in custody and falsifying police records, judicial sources said. —Reuters

Greek farmers clash with police, parade tractors in pensions protest

ATHENS — Angry Greek farmers clashed with riot police in Athens then paraded their tractors and pickups outside parliament on Friday, in their first big protest in the capital against pension reform plans after weeks of road blockades.

Officers guarded the entrance to the agricultural ministry and fired tear gas to disperse protesters who hurled tomatoes, eggplants and stones at the building, smashing windows and using shepherd's crooks to repel police during scuffles.

"They won't make us bend!," the protesters shouted.

After the afternoon violence died down, farmers drove their vehicles through crowds outside parliament, blocking the road and shouting slogans against the pensions overhaul which will bring in tax hikes and a tripling of their social security contributions.

Cheered on by supporters waving Greek flags, they honked horns as police in riot gear stood guard. A few demonstrators burnt olive branches while others unfurled a large banner reading: "Take back this monstrous reform plan."

Some farmers pitched



Greek farmers from the region of Crete clash with police during a protest against planned pension reforms outside the Agriculture ministry in Athens, Greece, on 12 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

tents on Syntagma Square, the scene of violent clashes during anti-austerity protests in recent years.

"We live on loans, this reform will destroy us," said olive oil producer Manolis Niolakis, a 50-year old father of four. "We won't back down, there is no way. If we do, we'll starve."

Citizen Protection Minister Nikos Toskas criticised the violence, telling state TV: "This is not how social battles should be

fought. This is not the right way of expression."

The pension reform has also angered lawyers and doctors and members of other professions.

The government says the changes are necessary to ensure future pensions for the farmers, whose benefits have so far been almost completely subsidised by the debt-ridden state.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, elected last year promising to end austerity but then forced to accept a

third bailout in July, is struggling to conclude a bailout review with lenders and convince angry Greeks that after six years of belt-tightening were worth it.

His task is not made any easier by the fact that his government has only a tiny majority in parliament.

Earlier this week, Tsipras said he was willing to hold talks with the farmers on possibly amending the pension reform bill to lessen the pain, but they rebuffed his overtures.—Reuters

UNSC denounces deadly terrorist attack on UN mission in Mali

UNITED NATIONS — The UN Security Council on Friday condemned "in the strongest terms" the deadly terrorist attack earlier in the day on a UN mission camp in Mali.

Six peacekeepers from Guinea were killed and many others injured in the complex assault, which targeted the camp of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in the northern town of Kidal.

"The members of the Security Council called on the government of Mali to swiftly investigate this attack and bring the perpetrators to justice and stressed that those responsible for the attack should be held accountable," the council said in a statement.

The 15-member body underlined that "attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law."

It reaffirmed that "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes a threat to international peace and security."

Following the attack, which lasted for less than two hours, security measures have been reinforced

around the base, which is part of an attempt by the UN to end violence in Mali following a takeover of the north by rebels in 2012. A year later a French-led intervention force pushed the armed separatists out of key towns in the region.

Despite these efforts, violence has not stopped and rebels have expanded their attacks in recent months into other parts of Mali and beyond.

Recent assaults include one on a hotel in the Malian capital of Bamako in November, in which 20 people died, and one on the Burkina Faso capital of Ouagadougou in January, in which 30 were killed.

Earlier Friday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the deadly attack, underscoring that attacks targeting UN peacekeepers constitute war crimes under international law, and calling for the perpetrators of the attack to be brought to justice.

Mali is now in the process of restoration and rebuilding with the help of UN and African regional bodies, including the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.—Xinhua

Immigrants arrested in US raids say were misled on right to counsel

WASHINGTON — US immigration authorities violated their own rules by telling some of the 121 Central American women and children they arrested in raids last month that they had no legal recourse to dispute their deportations, according to several of the women and their lawyers.

The accusation centres on the 2-4 January raids that were the US administration's first large-scale operation since mid-2014 to deport hundreds of families who crossed the southern border illegally.

Four of the women — three of them in statements to Reuters through their lawyers and one in an interview with Reuters — said that ICE agents had misled them on their right to legal counsel while they were detained at a detention facility in Dilley, Texas. ICE, which oversees deportation operations, denied that its officers told the women they had no legal re-

course in their case.

"Upon arrival at the centre in Dilley, Texas, ICE officers provide incoming residents with a notice of right to legal counsel," said ICE spokesman Carl Rusnok. "The residents in question all had an opportunity to meet with legal counsel."

Under US law, immigrants are guaranteed access to a lawyer, even after they have been given a deportation order. In practice, many cannot afford a lawyer or are caught in a backlog of cases seeking a pro bono lawyer.

Although President Barack Obama has taken steps to ease the deportation threat for undocumented immigrants with substantial ties to the United States, he has faced criticism from immigration rights advocates and Latino leaders over the January raids. US officials say the raids were intended to send a message of deterrence to Central American families to prevent a reprise of a 2014

border crisis in which tens of thousands of migrants from the region streamed across the Mexican border.

Some women detained in the January raids may have had a strong legal case for asylum because they were fleeing violence in Central America, said Ian Philabaum, an advocacy coordinator for the CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project, a group of lawyers made up of four immigrant advocacy groups.

The lawyers representing the women are all from CARA. The women were among 35 people who received an emergency hold on their deportations from the Justice Department and who are now seeking asylum. Dozens of women and children detained in the raids were deported from 4-7 January.

The four women said they never received the legal rights presentation that ICE said it provides.—Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)

(2 / 2016)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-074(15-16)	600 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (2) Sets	US\$
(2)	IFB-075(15-16)	900 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (1) Set	US\$
(3)	IFB-076(15-16)	1500 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (4) Sets	US\$
(4)	IFB-077(15-16)	Mud Agitator Unit with (15KW) Motor (4) Sets	US\$
(5)	IFB-078(15-16)	Spares for GM 8V-71 Engine Ex Cementing Unit (21) Items	US\$
(6)	IFB-079(15-16)	Assorted Sizes of Butterfly Valves(12)Items	US\$
(7)	IFB-080(15-16)	Spares for Drawwork and Catwork(28)Items	US\$
(8)	IFB-081(15-16)	Adaptors, Flanges and Gate Valves(24)Items	US\$
(9)	IFB-082(15-16)	Rig Floor Handling Accessories (41) Items	US\$
(10)	IFB-083(15-16)	Fire Fighting Truck (5000 L) (1) Unit	US\$
(11)	IFB-084(15-16)	Low Bed Trailer (50 Ton) (2) Nos	US\$
(12)	DMP/L-013(15-16)	Generator (18KVA) with Diesel Engine (1) Set	KS
(13)	DMP/L-014(15-16)	95mm ² Cable, 1 Core, Aerial Bundle Cable, AL / XLPE (3500) Meters	KS
(14)	DMP/L-015(15-16)	10 HP Induction Motor Complete with Motor Starter (10) Sets	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 9-3-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 10th February, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph. +95 67-411097/411206

Murdoch, Jerry Hall to celebrate marriage at 'journalists' church' St Bride's

LONDON — Media mogul Rupert Murdoch and former supermodel Jerry Hall will hold a marriage service next month at St Bride's church on London's Fleet Street, the spiritual home of British journalism.

The 84-year-old executive chairman of News Corp and 21st Century Fox Inc and Hall, 59, announced their engagement last month in a classified advert in the Times newspaper, one of the papers his group owns.

The couple's nuptials will be celebrated on 5 March at the historic church, famed for its wedding-cake spire and designed by Christopher Wren who was also responsible for the nearby St Paul's Cathedral.

"He will be having a service to celebrate the marriage," Claire Seaton from St Bride's told Reuters. She said the actual wedding ceremony would take place elsewhere.

The three-times-married

media tycoon and Hall, the former longtime partner of Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger, got engaged in Los Angeles, where they had been attending Hollywood's Golden Globes awards ceremony.

Murdoch divorced his third wife, Wendi Deng, a former executive at Murdoch-owned Star TV in China, in 2013 after 14 years, saying their marriage had been irretrievably broken.

Hall was married to Jagger

for more than 20 years but in divorce proceedings in 1999 the British musician claimed they were never legally married.

There was no immediate comment from Murdoch's spokesman, but Britain's Guardian newspaper said the couple's former partners were not expected to attend. Among the 150 or so guests would be Robert Thomson, News Corp's chief executive and Rebekah Brooks, chief executive of his British media

arm, the paper said.

St Bride's link with journalism dates back centuries from a time when Fleet Street was home to Britain's national newspapers and to many offices of regional and international papers.

It was Murdoch himself who hastened its demise as the hub for journalism in 1986 when he moved his print works to a plant in Wapping, east London, after some 6,000 newspaper workers went on strike.—Reuters

'Midnight Special' film at Berlin takes sci-fi look at parenting

BERLIN — The director Jeff Nichols has a knack for turning his personal life into cinema, and he's done it again in "Midnight Special," a sci-fi-tinged movie about a boy with extraordinary powers inspired by his own son.

Starring Michael Shannon, Joel Edgerton, Adam Driver and Kirsten Dunst, the film was shown on Friday at the Berlin film festival, in competition for the festival's top prize, the Golden Bear.

The protagonist is about an eight-year-old boy named Alton (Jaeden Lieberher), who has the power to detect encrypted government data transmissions -- among other things. He also has eyes that can emit laser-type beams, which makes the government think he may be a secret weapon.

His father Roy (Shannon) and mother Sarah (Dunst) have to take extraordinary steps to keep Alton from being captured by the FBI, or by a religious cult

who believe he is the Messiah.

Nichols was widely praised for his 2012 feature film "Mud," about two boys who befriend a drifter who lives on an otherwise deserted Mississippi River island. He has said that film was inspired by his experiences as an adolescent boating on the Mississippi.

His new film had its genesis in an illness suffered by his young son, and the realization of how important parenting was.

"If anything ever happened to him out in the world I would be devastated, and I had no control over that, and this fear kind of overtook me because I realised how delicate this situation was and this relationship was," Nichols told a news conference.

"And I think 'Midnight Special' began as a way for me to process that fear. I think the reason why we love our children so much is because of this fear and I made a film about it."

The importance of rela-

tionships in childhood became a theme of the press conference, with Dunst being asked how she had managed the often awkward and sometimes fatal transition from child actress to adult screen star.

"It's hard to be a child actress and make sure it's balanced with school and friends and all of that stuff and I always had that so I got lucky with growing up in that way," she said.

"But there is a point I think with any job that you do if you do it that long that you question whether you want to continue doing that and I definitely had that and I kind of, I think when I was around 27, I kind of shifted the way I worked and it made me love it even more.

"So in a way I have kind of waited more for projects the older I get and, you know, been a little pickier because I have to be extremely passionate about something in order to do a role."—Reuters

BFFs no more: Kanye West, Taylor Swift feud over his 'Famous' song



Kanye West (L) interrupts the acceptance speech from best female video winner Taylor Swift (R) at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards in New York, in 2009. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Looks like Taylor Swift and Kanye West are never, ever getting back together.

Just six months after two of the biggest names in music publicly put a long-running feud behind them, the "1989" pop star and the rapper have fallen out again over West's claim in a new song that he made Swift famous.

"I feel like me and Taylor might still have sex, I made that bitch famous," rapped West, while unveiling his new single "Famous" on Thursday to an online audience of some 20 million.

The fallout came four days ahead of the Grammy awards ceremony in Los Angeles, where Swift has seven nominations and will be the opening performer. West has four nominations.

West's new song referred to an infamous 2009 MTV Video Music Awards (VMA) incident in which he snatched the microphone from Swift during her acceptance speech and declared that Beyonce should have won.

West, who is married to reality television star Kim Kardashian, and Swift put that to rest at the VMA show in August when she presented him with a lifetime award and praised his talents. West later sent Swift dozens of white roses and she called him her BFF (Best Friend Forever).

West said on Friday that

Swift, whose "1989" album was the world's best seller in 2014, had approved the lyrics to "Famous."

"I did not diss Taylor Swift and I've never dissed her," West said in a string of Twitter postings. He tweeted that Swift came up with the idea for the song and that she thought the line "was funny and gave her blessings."

But the country-turned-pop star denied it and called West a misogynist.

"Kanye did not call for approval, but to ask Taylor to release his single 'Famous' on her Twitter account," Swift's representative said in a statement. "She declined and cautioned him about releasing a song with such a strong misogynistic message. Taylor was never made aware of the actual lyric, 'I made that bitch famous.'"

Swift's brother, Austin Kingsley Swift, responded to the song by posting an Instagram video of himself throwing a pair of West's Yeezy brand of sought-after fashion shoes into the trash.

West is due to perform on TV sketch show "Saturday Night Live" this weekend to promote his new album "The Life of Pablo." It was not clear on Friday whether he would attend the Grammys on Monday.—Reuters



Actors Kirsten Dunst, Joel Egerton, Michael Shannon, Jaeden Lieberher and director Jeff Nichols (L-R) arrive on the red carpet for the screening of the movie 'Midnight Special' at the 66th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, on 12 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

Roses and roaches: Cold-hearted Valentine's Day ideas

NEW YORK — With the coldest air in more than a decade forecast to grip the United States this Valentine's Day weekend, the holiday dedicated to love is flashing its frigid side with an array of events designed for jilted lovers seeking revenge.

Beyond the usual weddings and romantic dinners, Valentine's Day celebrations in 2016 also are geared toward spurned sweethearts, who have a chance to retaliate, though often to benefit a good cause.

The "Donate Your Ex's Stuff" campaign has flooded Goodwills in Las Vegas and Sarasota, Florida, with goods that may bring heartache to the donor but create jobs for the needy, said Florida's Goodwill Manasota spokeswoman Kelly Davis Strausbaugh.

"If your ex-girlfriend was always trying to dress you, you can donate that sweater she gave you that's too painful to look at," Strausbaugh said on Friday.

Other donors just find the idea therapeutic. "(We) got a call from a man who asked, 'Can I donate some dirty socks? Because after 10 years, that's all my ex left me,'" Strausbaugh said.

"Name a Roach," a campaign to benefit New York's Bronx Zoo, has been so wildly popular among rejected lovers and others



A horse carriage crosses a bridge in Manhattan's Central Park during a snowfall in New York City, on 5 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

that printed naming certificates for the zoo's Madagascar hissing cockroaches are sold out and only a digital version remains available.

DirtyRottenFlowers.com, meanwhile, is selling an "I Love You, Not" flower bouquet with broken stems and a teddy bear gutted of its stuffing.

Some single Americans faced the day marked on calendars with a heart shape by posting on Twitter under the hashtag #Rea-

sonWhyIDoNotHaveAValentine. "I'm waiting to get one after 14th February," tweeted Jared Montana at @Jarmadillos, "when all the candy goes on sale."

"No one's allowed in my pillow fort," tweeted Ms. Em at @Emphoto21. Those Romeos and Juliets whose relationships are still intact this Valentine's Day may heed forecasters prediction for record-breaking cold in the US Northeast on Sunday—and decide

to stay home by the fireplace and perhaps their laptops.

Tweeting the secret to keeping passion burning will be the longest-married Americans, John and Ann Betar, who eloped in 1932 to avoid an arranged marriage her parents were planning. John, 104, and Ann, 100, of Fairfield, Connecticut, are set to answer questions on Sunday on Twitter sent to @Handy and marked #longestlove.—Reuters

App shakes up earthquake science by turning users into sensors

NEW YORK — Smartphones could become the makeshift quake detectors of the future, thanks to a new app launched Friday designed to track tremors and potentially save the lives of its users.

MyShake, available on Android, links users to become an all-in-one earthquake warning system; it records quake-type rumblings, ties a critical number of users to a location, and could eventually provide a countdown to the start of shaking.

Its inventors say the app, released by the University of California, Berkeley, could give early warning of a quake to populations without their own seismological instruments.

"MyShake cannot replace traditional seismic networks like those run by the US Geological Survey," said Richard Allen, leader of the app project and director of the Berkeley Seismological Laboratory.

"But we think MyShake can make earthquake early warning faster and more accurate in areas that have a traditional seismic network, and can provide life-saving early warning in countries that have no seismic network." —Reuters

For Valentine's Day gift, forget diamonds: try ichnusaite

PARIS — Far rarer than diamonds or emeralds, some minerals on Earth are known only from thimbleful samples, according to a first list of 2,550 obscure minerals on Friday that could have future uses, ranging from industry to exotic Valentine's Day gifts.

Ichnusaite, fingerite, amicite and nevadaite are among truly rare minerals — defined as those known to come from five or fewer places worldwide — and form only under extremely unusual conditions, the scientists wrote.

"Diamond, ruby, emerald, and other precious gems are found at numerous localities and are sold in commercial quantities, and thus are not rare" alongside those in the study, they wrote in the journal American Mineralogist.

"If you wanted to give your fiancée a really rare ring, forget diamond. Give her Sardinian ichnusaite," Robert Hazen, a co-author of the study at the Carnegie Institution, wrote in a statement. Ichnusaite forms from thorium and lead-like molybdenum and only one tiny

whitish crystal has ever been found, in Sardinia. "Some of the other rare minerals are also only known from a thimbleful," he told Reuters.

Of 5,090 minerals known worldwide, fewer than 100 make up 99 per cent of the Earth's crust. Most are from common elements such as oxygen, silicon and aluminum. Some of the 2,550 rare minerals defined in the study might have commercial properties, from electronics to batteries, if they could be manufactured, the authors said. —Reuters



Diamonds are seen during an exhibition in Gaborone, Botswana, in November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

<p>Today Fresh</p> <p>07:03 Am News</p> <p>07:26 Am Ancient Shwe-San-Taw Pagoda</p> <p>07:41 Am Rakhine Traditional Wedding Ceremony</p> <p>07:55 Am [Doctor] [Painter]</p> <p>08:03 Am News</p> <p>08:26 Am A May Yay Yin Nat Festival (Ep-II)</p> <p>08:42 Am Visiting A Serene Village In The Northwest Of Myanmar</p> <p>08:57 Am Human Right Human Dignity International Film Festival</p> <p>09:03 Am News</p> <p>09:26 Am Mrauk U, Treasure Trove of Rakhine Culture</p> <p>09:45 Am Talking Shwe Thway (Children Journal)</p> <p>10:03 Am News</p>	<p>10:26 Am Living in Off-Season</p> <p>10:38 Am A Visit To Ye</p> <p>(11:00Am-03:00Pm)-SaturdayRepeat(07:00Am-11:00 Am) (03:00Pm-07:00 Pm)-Today Repeat(07:00 Am-11:00 Am)</p> <p>Prime Time</p> <p>07:03 Pm News</p> <p>07:25 Pm The Hills Of Phowintaung And Shwebataung</p> <p>07:43 Pm The Storytellers</p> <p>07:50 Pm Today Myanmar: Fire Insurance</p> <p>08:03 Pm News</p> <p>08:26 Pm U Kyaw Thu: From Artist to Philanthropist (Part-II)</p> <p>08:45 Pm Myanmar Masterclass: Performance Art</p> <p>(09:00Pm-11:00Pm)-TodayRepeat(09:00Am-11:00 Am) (11:00Pm-03:00Am)-SaturdayRepeat(07:00Am-11:00Am) (03:00Am-07:00Am)- Today Repeat (07:00 Am-11:00 Am)</p> <p>(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)</p>	
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(14-2-2016, Sunday)

<p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw <p>8:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society) <p>9:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Entertainment <p>10:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem for Children <p>11:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV Migrant Workers <p>12:50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Movie <p>3:45 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ooredoo MNL-1 2016 (Live) (Yadanarbon FC Vs Zeyar Shwe Myay FC) 	<p>6:20 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary <p>7:15 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV (70)th Anniversary (Zaw Paing) <p>8:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News / Weather Report <p>8:30 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV Documentary (5) + (6) <p>9:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News • Documentary • Teleplay (MRTV)
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Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Injured Bale will not be rushed back by Real, says Zidane

MADRID — Real Madrid will not take any risk in rushing forward Gareth Bale back from injury and the Wales international will only return when he is ready, manager Zinedine Zidane said.

Bale has not played since 17 January after damaging a calf muscle in a La Liga match against Sporting Gijon.

Spanish media have reported that Bale, whose Real career has been blighted by a succession of injuries, suffered a setback in his recovery.

Zidane said Real needed to be “calm” about an injury that has been “going on for a bit more time for him”.

“If he’s uncomfortable and it hurts him, it’s normal that he could have a setback,” Zidane told a news conference on Friday.

“He’s a very important player

for us and we’re not going to take any risks. We want him at 100 per cent, not at 80 or 85.”

Zidane said Bale was “in good spirits” although he is set to miss at least the first leg of Real’s Champions League last-16 clash with AS Roma in Italy on Wednesday.

“Every player has a different recovery process and he has suffered with his pains. There’s no need to keep going over it,” the Frenchman said. “We have to give him time.”

Real, third in La Liga, four points behind leaders Barcelona, host sixth-placed Athletic Bilbao on Saturday (1500).

Zidane said Croatian midfielder Mateo Kovacic would start in place of Isco while defender Marcelo, who injured his shoulder earlier this month, remains sidelined.—Reuters

Euro 2016 hopeful Gudjohnsen joins Solskjaer’s Molde



Eidor Gudjohnsen of Island (C) poses with Chu-Young Park of South Korea (L) and Yannick Sagbo of France (R) during the official team photo of A.S Monaco soccer team in Monaco in 2009. PHOTO: REUTERS

OSLO — Former Chelsea and Barcelona striker Eidor Gudjohnsen has signed a two-year deal with Norwegian side Molde as he bids to secure a place in Iceland’s 2016 European Championship squad.

Gudjohnsen, capped 84 times, made three appearances in qualifying and scored one goal as his country reached the finals of a major tournament for the first time.

“Obviously I want to play for the national team, these are exciting times for Iceland,” the 37-year-old told the Verdens Gang newspaper on Friday.

“But I didn’t sign only for that. I have had many good references about Molde and I still love playing football.”

Gudjohnsen, who spent last

season at Chinese side Shijiazhuang Ever Bright, will boost Molde’s resources after their disappointing sixth-place finish in the top flight in 2015.

“It’s fantastic for us as a club to have signed such an experienced player and such a good player as Eidor,” said coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in a statement.

Former Manchester United striker Solskjaer is in his second spell in charge of Molde after winning back-to-back titles with them in 2011 and 2012.

Gudjohnsen won two Premier League titles with Chelsea and the Champions League and La Liga with Barcelona. He also landed the Dutch top-flight crown with PSV Eindhoven. Euro 2016 in France starts in June.—Reuters

Rafael Nadal through to semis in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES — Spanish tennis star and world number 5, Rafael Nadal, advanced to the semi-finals of the Argentina Open on Friday, beating Italy’s Paolo Lorenzi, 7-6(3), 6-2.

Without showing his best game, the former world number 1 showed his dominance in the first set tiebreak to beat an on-form Lorenzi, who made matters difficult.

In the second set, Nadal turned on the pressure and, after breaking the Italian in the third game, took the set and match, in broiling conditions where the mercury topped 40 degrees Celsius.

“The conditions were extreme and cost me a bit today. My stomach is in a little bit of pain,” said Nadal after the match, while thanking the Argentinean crowd for their support.

Tomorrow, in order to contest a place in the final, Nadal will face Australia’s Dominic Thiem, who saw off Serbia’s Dusan Lajovic in the quarter-finals.—Xinhua



Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal hits a return to Argentina’s Juan Monaco during the match of the ATP Argentina Open at Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, on 11 February. PHOTO: XINHUA

FIFA ethics committee bans Valcke for 12 years

ZURICH — Former FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke became the latest high-profile football official to be kicked out of the sport when he was banned for 12 years on Friday after causing “considerable financial damage” to its scandal-plagued governing body.

Valcke was found guilty by FIFA ethics judge Hans-Joachim Eckert of misconduct over the sale of World Cup tickets, abuse of travel expenses, attempting to sell TV rights below their market value and destruction of evidence.

“Valcke acted against FIFA’s best interests and caused considerable financial damage to FIFA, while his private and personal interests detracted him from his ability to properly perform his duties as the Secretary General of FIFA,” FIFA’s ethics committee said in a statement.

The Frenchman, whose job was to ensure the smooth running of FIFA and in particular its flagship World Cup tournament, had been right-hand man to now banned president Sepp Blatter for nearly eight years.

FIFA is mired in the worst crisis in its 111-year history, with corruption investigations under way in Switzerland and the United States. Several dozen people including senior football officials have been indicted.

The ethics committee has already banned Blatter and European football boss Michel Platini for eight years apiece. More than a dozen other officials have been suspended over the last four years.

Valcke’s US lawyer Barry Berke said in a statement that the ethics committee “is not a credible, independent or objective decision-making body.”

He described its Friday decision as “unsupported, unjust and politically motivated” and said Valcke’s evidence had been ignored.

“Mr. Valcke is confident that when all the facts come out, it will be clear that he did absolutely nothing wrong in carrying out his duties for the good of FIFA and the sport.”

Valcke was initially investigated over potential misconduct linked to the sale of

tickets for FIFA World Cups. Other cases were uncovered by Cornel Borbely, FIFA’s chief ethics investigator, during the course of the inquiry, the ethics committee statement said.

It was found that Valcke had travelled at FIFA’s expense for “purely sightseeing reasons” and had repeatedly chosen private flights over commercial ones “without any business rationale for doing so.”

“Mr Valcke gained an advantage for himself and relatives,” said the statement.

The investigation also found that Valcke attempted to grant the 2018 and 2022 World Cup television and marketing rights for the Caribbean region to a third party for a fee which was “far below their actual market value”, said the statement.

In another incident, Valcke “deliberately tried to obstruct the ongoing proceedings against him by attempting to delete or deleting several files and folders relevant to the investigation,” the statement said.—Reuters