

Gas and biomass power plant opened in Mawlamyine

PAGE 3



Blasts reported in Chinshwehaw

PAGE 2



Everybody need be involved in the change process

PAGE 8

President opens subpower station in Chaungson

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein yesterday unveiled the stone plaque to a subpower station in Chaungson, Mon State.

In giving a brief account of why the 66KV power station was constructed, Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe recounted the distribution of electricity to the area with two 500KVA generators four hours a day in 1980.

During his inspection tour of Chaungson in October last year, the president urged officials to take prompt measures to bring electricity to the town.

Construction works were completed last month at a cost of over K12 billion (US\$ 9.7 million) from government funding.

The subpower plant now enables 1,740 households in the town to have easy access to electricity around the clock.

The country's hydropower plants, gas-fired power plants, coal-fired power plants and diesel-fired power plants all generate up to 2,500 megawatts in 2016, up from 2,497 megawatts last year. On the whole, the country experiences a 15% annual increase in demand for electricity.

See page 3 >>



Employees of the Ministry of Electric Power have completed the installation of cables across the Thanlwin River on 16 January, bringing electricity to more than 1740 households around the clock. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY ELECTRIC POWER MINISTRY

BIDS IN FOR SKY VIEWS

RBE Service for travellers on Gokteik Viaduct tendered out



Gokteik Viaduct in northern Shan State. PHOTO: MAY MYO THU

MYANMA Railways (MR) has tendered out rail bus engine (RBE) service on the Gokteik Viaduct in northern Myanmar, inviting tender from local and foreign companies.

According to Myanmar Railways, the deadline for submitting the tender to its head office in Nay Pyi Taw is 29 February.

Tender forms have been sent out to applicants as of 18 February.

According the rules of the tender, RGC (Rail Gang Car) with a seating capacity of 20 or RBE with a seating capacity of 50 would be allowed to run along the Nawngkhio-Naungpain Route passing the Gokteik Viaduct.

The period of operating the business would be three years and the winner of the tender shall sign agreement with the MR every year, according to the rules.

"If the service is run by a private company, the market would be expanded with better services," said U Kyaw Kyaw Myo, Deputy General Manager of the Commercial Department of the Myanmar Railways.

Myanmar Railways is currently running the RBE service which can carry up to 50 people due to the increasing number of native visitors as well as tourists to Gokteik, running slowly across the Gokteik Viaduct in

order for passengers to have the best chance to take in the view and stopping at both ends of the viaduct.

The trip takes around 10 minutes. The trip costs K5,000 per person, according to Myanmar Railways.

The Gokteik viaduct is recognised as the "The World's Largest Trestle" and was built by the Pennsylvania Maryland Bridge & Construction Co. Ltd in 1899 and completed in 1900.

Myanmar Railways has prohibited the walking tours along the world famous Gokteik Viaduct to maintain its durability and ensure safety.

See page 2 >>

Induction programme empowers us and widen our horizons: Fresh representatives



Sai Thiha Kyaw



U Kyaw Soe



Edin Elgsaether



Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo



U Tin Aung Cho



Dr Thet Thet Khaing

SOCIAL media was rife with pessimistic criticisms of the recent induction programme the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw organised in Nay Pyi Taw from 15 to 19 February in partnership with international organisations, prompting the parliament to issue a statement on 18 February in a bid to erase the circulating rumours.

The parliament stressed that the event was jointly conducted with the experts from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), under their cooperation and assistance programmes.

The parliament explained that the statement was aimed to make the people aware of some social

media users spiked with malice towards the recent event. In interviews, participants expressed their views that the induction programme was designed to strengthen local representative institutions.

U Kyaw Soe, director—general at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said that the event focused on familiarising local representatives with the functions of other parliaments in the international community. He described the purpose of the programme as sharing of knowledge about passing legislation and conducting an oversight of the checks and balances.

Edin Elgsaether, programme specialist at UNDP's Parliament Democratic Governance Unit, said

that foreign representatives came to the induction programme just to share their knowledge and experience with the country's newly elected parliamentarians. The programme would benefit Myanmar in its transitional period, but the country had to find its own ways to adapt to its reform processes, the UNDP specialist added.

Sai Thiha Kyaw, representative of the Mairal constituency, commented that new representatives were in need of such a capacity building programme, stressing that they needed to know how other parliaments played their legislative roles.

Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo, representative of the Kyauktan con-

stituency, spoke in support of Sai Thiha Kyaw's view, saying that fresh representatives were ready to receive advice and listen to parliamentary stories from any resource person.

Dr Thet Thet Khaing, representative of the Dagon constituency, expressed her delight at the opportunity to learn how the legislative, executive and judicial sectors interact in checks and balances.

Representatives from Australia, Bhutan, East Timor, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, United Kingdom and United States shared their experience in parliament with the country's fresh representatives.—*Nyi Kyaw Min Han, Photos: Htet Thu*

Artillery shells explodes in Lashio, wounding three

TWO artillery shells fell on Pyidaungsu Road near Hopaik Village, Lashio Township, on Friday, injuring three people.

Two minutes after a military convoy passed between mile posts 184-6 and 185-0 on the road around 10.30 pm, two artillery shells exploded near the three civilian vehicles including

two passenger buses and one truck. The attack was assumed to have come from a hill nearby.

Kyaw Hla, 31, Min Aung, 33, and Nyi Nyi Naing, 19, sustained injuries. They are receiving medical treatment at Lashio People's Hospital. The three vehicles were also damaged by the attack.—*Han Htay (Lashio)*

RBE Service for travellers on Gokteik Viaduct tendered out

from page 1 >>

CROWDS of local and foreign visitors continue to flock to the bridge over the Gokteik Viaduct every day, despite the prohibition against tourists crossing the bridge, according to a spokesperson for the Gokteik Railway Station.

The Gokteik Viaduct is the highest bridge in Myanmar and was the largest railway trestle in the world when it was completed. It is situated in Nawngkhio Township in north-

ern Shan State, approximately 100 kilometres northeast of Mandalay.

Generally, the Gokteik Viaduct receives over 200 people per day. The number occasionally rises to 700, especially on weekends and holidays. "Around 500 visitors passed over the viaduct every day before the prohibition was announced. Some visitors behaved unsafely on the bridge and broke the rules set by the authorities," a local resident said.

Blasts reported in Chinshwehaw

TWO blasts were reported on Kunlon-Chinshwehaw Road in Laukkai Township yesterday, inspection revealed that the road had been damaged.

It was discovered that two mines were planted on the left and right sides of a drainage across the road which exploded at around 12.20 am, leaving a hole 24 ft wide and 6ft deep.

During an investigation at the site, authorities found that the responsible individual(s) took position about 20 metres north of the site to blast the mines. The blast site is located near the Chinshwehaw Police Station. Police responded by closing the section of road but traffic returned to normal at around 8.30 am.—*Han Htay (Lashio)*



Photo shows the area on Kunlon-Chinshwehaw Road damaged by the two blasts. PHOTO: HAN HTAY (LASHIO)

MHD urges depts to brace up for El Nino

METEOROLOGY and Hydrological Department has warned authorities to brace up for record breaking temperature in this summer.

In the announcement yesterday, the weather bureau's chief predicted that Myanmar can see drought and high temperature due to El Nino effect in March, April and May. He urged those who are engaging in agriculture, food security, water supply, electricity, health, fishery, water transportation and tourism sectors to take precautionary measures.

Meanwhile, Myanmar Rice Federation has urged the government to buy rice for state reserves following the possible impacts of El Niño. The Myanmar Fisheries Federation also warned of the impact of El Niño on fish farming, calling for necessary measures to be undertaken to avoid possible losses.

The world meteorological organizations have predicted that Myanmar will face the impact of strongest El Nino weather pattern during the first half of 2016. Meteorologists warned that due to the El Nino effect, temperature will be above the average and record breaking temperatures will happen during March, April and May.—*GNLM*

Gas and biomass power plant opened in Mawlamyine

MYANMA Alinyaung Co Ltd yesterday opened its gas and biomass power plant in Mawlamyine, Mon State.

President U Thein Sein was present at the opening ceremony together with Union Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye and Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, U Nyan Tun Aung, U Khin Maung Soe, U Maung Myint, U Kyaw Lwin, U Aye Myint and U Ye Htut.

The newly-opened power plant has the capacity to generate 230 megawatts of electricity, with Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe saying that the facility is intended to satisfy the country's growing electricity demand.

The country is experiencing a 15% increase in demand for electric power consumption each year on average.

In 2011, there were ten

gas-fueled power plants making up a combined generation of 270 megawatts.

The number of power plants has increased to 20 in 2016, with 1,210 megawatts in total.

After inspecting the control room at the power plant, the president and his entourage watched an entertaining documentary about the plant. —*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on the plaque of Gas & Biomass Power Plant in Mawlamyine. PHOTO: MNA



President U Thein Sein waves hands to local people as he arrives to open subpower station in Chaungson. PHOTO: MNA

President opens subpower station in Chaungson

>> from page 1

According to official statistics, there are 10,878 million households across the country, of which more than seven million households, 66% in general, still live without electricity.

The union minister called for efforts to generate electricity three times greater than at

present to ensure that the distribution of electricity covers the whole country.

According to the national electricity distribution programme, the country will need 4,531 megawatts in 2020-21,

8,121MW in 2025-26 and 14,542MW in 2030-31.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Deal close on fourth social security hospital construction

A HOSPITAL for patients with cancer and heart disease will be built in the new fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

The 500-bed hospital will be located on the compound of the medical storage facility in Ahlone township, Yangon

Region, Deputy Minister U Htin Aung said, adding that the construction will be undertaken in partnership with a pharmaceutical company in Taiwan.

Negotiations are still under way to sign a memorandum of understanding, with the deputy minister saying that the Nego-

tiations take time due to the astronomical figure of investment needed for construction.

On completion, the medical centre, the fourth social security hospital in the country, will provide free treatment to any worker who pays social security contributions. — *Thein Ko Lwin*

Knitting workers go on strike after increment cut

WORKERS have gone on strike at a knitting factory in Industrial Zone-5, Hlaingthaya township, Yangon Region, demanding back their skill-based increments.

More than 2,000 workers at Mingtex Myanmar have been deprived of their increments of K20,000, following the approval of a daily minimum wage of K3,600.

Individual workers get paid

an increment of K20,000, strike leader Ko Zin Ko said, adding that the protest would go on until their demands were met.

Their demands include the appointment of a local manager and rights to national holidays, casual leave, maternity leave, medical leave and paid leave.

According to a local police officer, a brawl broke out between the protesting workers

outside and those in the factory. Slightly more than 100 workers, who live in labour hostels, were reported to remain in the factory.

Daw Si Si May, manager at Human Resources of the factory, said that the owner was not in the country and that the factory would try to meet the demands within the legal framework. —*Thein Ko Lwin*

Tourist numbers to Mrauk U back up in February

AFTER a scarcity of visitors to the ancient Rakhine city of Mrauk U as a result of armed conflict between the ethnic Arakan Army (AA) and the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces), the beginning of February saw the numbers of tourists start to pick back up again.

"Only now has our hotel business started to return to normal. The situation over the last few months was not good at all. We didn't receive even a single guest when the fighting was going on. An ethnic media conference is currently being held here and the visitors who come here have come to understand that there is nothing to worry about. Our bungalows and hotels rooms are currently at maximum capacity," said Ma Than Htay, deputy manager of the Nan Myo Taw hotel.

The ancient city of Mrauk U attracts both foreign and local tourists who come to experience the pagodas and ancient heritage that the town has to offer. However, armed conflict which erupted in the region on December 27 of

last year heavily dented the local tourism industry, it is known from local hoteliers.

"We've been trying to come and visit the famous ancient cultural sites of Mrauk U for some time now. We got to witness a style of pagoda which is quite different from the majority of others found around Myanmar. We also saw a lot of damaged pagodas and stupas. It was a good trip but the price of a hotel room was extremely expensive. On top of that, it was also not so easy to get around," expressed U Aung Kyaw Moe, a Yangon tourist to Mrauk U.

Tourists that visit Mrauk U, which was once the seat of the royal Rakhine Kingdom for 355 years, mainly come to see the pagodas of 80,000 and 90,000 Buddhas; the Nan Yar Kone, Sandar Muni Elephant Statues and the Five Victory Pagodas, while it is known that there exist over twenty high standard hotels and guest houses within the town of Mrauk U which provide accommodation to guests.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Green gram plantations produce a thumping harvest

THONGWA Township in Yangon Region has seen a massive influx of green grams into the market this month, with growers get-

ting K41,000 (\$33.09) per viss (a viss is approx. 1.6 kilograms), locals say.

The region mainly grows two kinds of green

grams—namely Yayzin and Shwewah.

Of them, Yayzin usually gets a good price in the market.

Plantation owners have to pay K500 for workers to pluck green grams due to the scarcity of fruit pickers. Most of pickers are women from Ayeyawady and Bago regions as well as the central and upper Myanmar. Farmers from 65 wards and villages in Thongwa Township cultivated popular species of bean on 130,800 acres of farmlands, 130,430 of which are green gram plantations.—Ko Kyaw (Thonegwa)



Farmers harvesting at the green gram plantations. PHOTO: KO KYAW (THONEGWA)

Tea distributors from fire-affected Namhsan continue to operate

DESPITE a huge fire in the centre of Namhsan in the Pa-Laung Self-Administered Zone in northern Shan State, it has not affected the production and distribution of tea leaves across the region, local farmers say.

“We regularly operate tea cultivation and distribution on a commercial scale,” said a local tea

manufacturer. On 4 February, a fire broke out in the centre of Namhsan destroying nearly 285 houses and leaving about 300 families homeless.

People in the area mainly and traditionally operate agricultural businesses, especially the establishing of tea plantations.—Soe Win (Naung-hkio)

Crime News

12 wheel vehicle turns over in Hpa-an



Overturning 12 wheel vehicle seen at the scene of accident. PHOTO: TUN TUN HTWAY (HPA-AN)

A 12 wheel vehicle turned over beside Hpa-an-Thaton Highway near Myaing Kalay village, Hpa-an Township, Kayin State around 2pm on Tuesday.

The vehicle, driven by one Kyaw Gyi, 24, from Danabyu Township with Aung Myo Oo, 35, from Monywa Township on board turned over when he lost

control and plunged into a paddy field near Nyaung Pin Thar bend between mile posts 1/6 and 1/7. The collision damaged the vehicle as well as some goods carried on board. No one was reported to be injured. Hpa-an Township Police have filed charges against the driver.—Tun Tun Htway (Hpa-an)

Illegal logs seized in Sagaing

AUTHORITIES seized a shipment of illegal logs weighing 1.8 tons in Kalewa township, Sagaing on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, a combined investigation team comprising officers and staff from the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry searched a vehicle near Palu Zawa village, Kalewa township. They discovered eight Tanmalan logs stored on the vessel being driven by one Aung San Win, 23. The man is being charged under section 6(1) of

the public property protection law by the police.

Similarly, members of the police seized illegal logs weighing 1.7 tons from a car near Saryae village on Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the car heading for Mandalay being driven by one Nan Ya Aung, 26, and found illegal Tanmalan logs. Nan Ya Aung is being charged under section 6(1) of the public property protection law by the police.—Myanmar Police Force

Heroin seized in Myitkyina

AN anti-drug squad seized 336 grams of heroin at the Shari Zine-wa restaurant, Ward 6, Waimaw.

Police searched a motorbike being driven by one Yonepha with Aikkhan on board. The two were witnessed selling heroin to one Ma Khin Khin Thet who was kept under watch by the police.

The police have charged the suspects under the anti-Narcotic law.—Ko Ye

Drunkard burns roof, causes house fire

A HOUSE fire broke out in Myo Ma ward-4, Jo Phyu raod, Nyaunglebin town, Bago region on Thursday. According to an investigation, the fire began when one Than Lwin, 43, became drunk and rowdy, setting fire to a roof. The fire quickly got out of control and consumed his family home. The fire was put out by the local residents. Local police have filed charges against the man.—Nay Min (Nyaunglebin)

Three men arrested for robbery

POLICE have filed charges against three men on suspicion of robbery in Pathein on Wednesday.

According to an investigation, three men approached three first year students from Pathein University. While latter were talking near Myothit, Mya Kyun Thar the former threatened with a blade before taking

their mobile phones. Police arrested Min Htet Aung, Yan Ko Ko and Htet Myat Aung with five mobile phones, three knives and two motorbikes.

Further investigation led to a robbery of a couple in Kanpat Road that is suspected to have been committed by the suspects. Police are investigating the case.—Pathein—Hla Kyi



Min Htet Aung, Yan Ko Ko and Htet Myat Aung. PHOTO: PATHEIN—HLA KYI

Stimulants seized in Mongmit and Tamu Townships

AN anti-drug squad in Tamu discovered 360 tablets of stimulant, 0.01119 kilos of heroin,

0.001 kilos of opium, Myanmar notes K15000 at Pao Min Liang's temporarily hut near Kammagyi

village cemetery, Kham Pat Township on 15 February. Police arrested Pao, La bin, Letkolam, Htaungkosay and Larpae Lyanna.

Similarly, members of the police from Mongmit Police Forces searched a motorbike driven by Tun Tun Win (a) Ye Lay, 29, on the road near Daunggyi-Theni village, Mongmit Township while the police found 157 tablets of stimulant, 0.0002 kilos of heroin, Myanmar notes 0.574 million. Charges have been filed against Tun Tun Win, the driver of the motorbike. The police have filed charges against him under anti-Narcotic law.—Police IPRD



Pao Min Liang's, Letkolam, Htaungkosay, Larpae Lyanna and La bin. PHOTO: POLICE IPRD

LOCAL Business

Real estate in Mandalay goes cold, buyers eyeing political situation



Real estate market in Mandalay has come to a halt. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

THE trading of real estate in Mandalay has come to a halt of late as potential financial investors are holding off from purchasing real estate for want of monitoring the changing political climate.

“The land market has been cold ever since the elections. It’s because of [political] changes. Buyers are closely watching [the political sphere] as to how it will play out,” said U Htun Htun Nang, owner of Kabar Myay Aung real estate brokerage firm.

It is speculated that potential real estate buyers are closely

monitoring the political situation of the country as it is likely there will be changes to taxation, real estate and land policies.

“At the moment there is activity in the rental market but few actual sales of real estate being seen. As such, we expect a stable political landscape would be good for our business,” expressed Ko Myo Nyunt, a realtor from the downtown Mandalay township of Aung Mya Thazi.

In Mandalay especially, the majority of buyers and investors in the real estate market are Chinese, while real estate market

experts have stated the market could potentially see a variety of changes dependent upon the political changes made by the next government this year.

There is little demand for the purchasing of vacant plots of land within Mandalay at the present time, with an increasing interest of those wishing to purchase real estate in satellite towns located on the outskirts of the city, with real estate firms receiving many inquiries from potential investors about land and property opportunities in such locations.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

UMFCCI vows to take on trade sanctions

THE Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) will work for the reduction of American imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar to better the development of the trade and financial investment sectors of both countries.

Over thirty Myanmar and fifty American business entrepreneurs met for discussions on Wednesday for the joining of forces between the UMFCCI and the American Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar (AMCHAM) in order to expand trade and investment between the two countries.

“Myanmar entrepreneurs are keen to cooperate with their American counterparts [in business]. The same can be said of the

Americans. The American government imposed economic sanctions [on Myanmar] for a variety of reasons, but they have caused obstacles to conducting trade and investment. Only if we can overcome these barriers can economic entrepreneurs of both countries work together. As such, we will work for the lifting of these sanctions,” stated Dr. Maung Maung Lay, vice president of the UMFCCI.

The UMFCCI will travel to the United States capital of Washington in April for a meeting on bringing about development and growth to financial investment for both countries, after which the UMFCCI will host an economic forum within Myanmar in May.

“America will compile a list of economic sanctions imposed

on Myanmar. However, if they haven’t managed to make this list in May as we anticipate then we will strive to produce a lot of good results [from the economic forum],” said U Win Aung, president of the UMFCCI.

It is known that the UMFCCI discussed a lot with AMCHAM in regard to the financial sector for the lifting of sanctions upon Myanmar.

The American government imposed economic sanctions upon Myanmar during the time of the military government in response to its failures to meet international human rights obligations. A fair amount of sanctions were lifted during the term of office of president U Thein Sein, it is known.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Farmers turn to seasonal crops to fulfil market demand

TO meet the market demand, growers in Yesagyo have grown seasonal crops and flowers instead of growing their regular annual crop. “It costs at least K 200 per plant on market. The growers gain profit of K150 after investment and thus the growers are able to earn K 7,500,000 for 50,000 plants. Those who want to purchase the beautiful flora have to pay the higher price. Horticultural work is handed over by the old generation and the younger farmers have a strong enthusiasm for horticulture,” said Ko Maung Maung Nang, grower from field No 111 of Yesagyo.

“Previously, winter crops like

gram, nut, corn, sunflower and bean were grown. The degrading of arable land was attributed to the planting of the same crops every year. The yield and quality have become lower in those areas. It means that the growers ought to choose other crops for summer instead of growing rice for both seasons if he cultivated rice in the raining season,” he explained.

The changing of crops can prevent soil degradation and the growers need to choose the right crops or flowers based on the market demand, said an agricultural expert. The commercial growers can gain more profit this way, he added.— *Phay Htun Zaw (Yesagyo)*



Farmers turn to seasonal crops to fulfil market demand.

PHOTO: PHAY HTUN ZAW (YESAGYO)

Falling demand threatens survival of earth ware manufacturers

EARTH wares manufacturers in Dawei, Taninthayi Region are facing production difficulties as people move to using plastic wares rather than traditional earth wares, local manufacturers say.

Normally, earth ware makers sell their products not only in Dawei but Myeik, Kawthaung and Myanmar-Thailand border towns.

An earth wares business owner Daw Zin Mar said, “Currently the earth wares market is cool across in the region. It recovers only when the Tazaungdaing

Light festival, an annual traditional religious event, is held.

“Plastic products are cheaper and more attractive in design. This is the main reason that residents replace earth wares with plastic ones.”

There were 15 earth wares manufacturers in Dawei.

They have turned to other businesses within the past three years as earth wares are seeing less demand. At this time there are only five manufacturers remaining.— *Nay Myo Htut (Ye)*



An earth ware manufacturer seen in action. PHOTO: NAY MYO HTUT (YE)

North Korea artillery shots heard from South Korea island prompts alarm

SEOUL — North Korea fired several artillery rounds into the sea near a disputed maritime border with South Korea yesterday, causing alarm among residents on a nearby island in the South, but the shells did not fly across the border, the South's military said.

The two Koreas are in a tense political standoff after the North's nuclear test in January and a long-range rocket launch on February. South Korea and the United States say they were grave violations of UN Security Council resolutions.

The allies are expected to begin large-scale annual military drills in early March, which the North calls preparations for war and routinely vows retaliation over.

Saturday's firing, heard from the island of Baengnyeong, was probably aimed in a northwestern direction from the North's shore as part of an exercise, a South Korean defence ministry official said by telephone, asking not to be named.

The South's office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff later said there were several rounds of artillery fire, revising a comment by the ministry official that there had been a single shot, and there were no other un-



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends a photo session with the scientists, technicians, workers of earth observation satellite Kwangmongsong-4 in this undated file photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 19 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

sual movements by the North's military.

South Korea suspended the operation of a jointly run factory park in the North, closing what had been the last window of regular interaction born out of a summit

meeting in 2000, when leaders pledged to work for peace and reconciliation.

The area is near the scene of the sinking of a South Korean navy ship in 2010 that the South blames on the North, although Pyongyang

denies any role.

The island of Baengnyeong sits just a few kilometres (miles) from the disputed Northern Limit Line (NLL) border and less than 20 km (12 miles) at its closest point to the North's shore.—Reuters

Viet Nam in need of 39.5 bn USD of ODA, preferential loans for 2016-2020

HANOI — Viet Nam has a high demand for official development assistance (ODA) and preferential loans during 2016-2020 period at about 39.5 billion US dollars, according to a recent document signed by Vietnamese Prime Minister.

The latest direction for ODA attraction and use in 2016-2020 period issued Wednesday by Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said that most of the sum will be spent on transport, urban development, agriculture, rural development, environment, education, training, health care, science and technology, Viet Nam's state-run news agency VNA reported on Friday.

Meanwhile, disbursed ODA and preferential loans during the period is expected to reach 25-30 billion US dollars, up 14 per cent compared to that of the 2011-2015 period. The document outlines policies to ensure the effective mobilisation and use of ODA and preferential loans, helping achieve socio-economic development goals, reported VNA.—Xinhua

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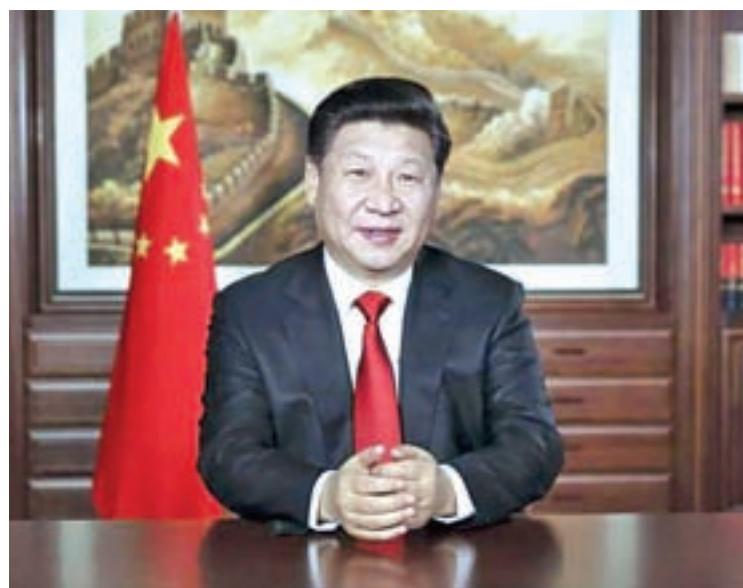
Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:
adv.gnlm@gmail.com

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

China's Xi urges state media to boost global influence



Chinese President Xi Jinping. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — Chinese state media must tell China's story to the world better and become internationally influential, President Xi Jinping said on Friday, during a visit to three of the country's main media outlets.

Chinese news outlets spanning television, radio and the Internet have been expanding across the globe with state encouragement, aiming, Chinese leaders have said, to combat the negative images of China they feel are spread by world media.

State news agency Xinhua

has opened dozens of news bureaus around the world; China Central Television (CCTV) has launched a 24-hour English-language channel in the United States, and the official *China Daily* newspaper publishes several regional editions across the globe.

Visiting the *People's Daily*, CCTV, and Xinhua, Xi said China must increase its ability to broadcast internationally, increase its voice on the global stage and "tell China's story well", state television said. China

must also create "flagship media with strong international influence" aimed at foreign audiences, Xi added.

State television broadcast images of Xi visiting CCTV's control room and making a video call to CCTV's Washington-based North America branch.

China's efforts to expand its global media footprint have been controversial.

Reuters has found that state-owned China Radio International (CRI) has little-known ownership stakes in a global network of private radio stations from Houston to Finland to Bangkok in partnerships with overseas Chinese.

The US Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Justice have said they are investigating a California firm whose US radio broadcasts are backed by CRI.

Xi also signalled that the ruling Communist Party would not be relaxing its tight grip on the media any time soon.

Media must follow the party line, uphold the "correct guidance of public opinion" and promote "positive propaganda as the main theme", the reports paraphrased Xi as saying.

Critical articles must be "accurate and have objective analysis", he added.—Reuters

Nepalese PM arrives in India for visit

NEW DELHI — Nepalese Prime Minister Sharma Oli arrived here Friday on a six-day visit to India, his first foreign visit after assuming office last October.

He is also the first Nepalese premier to pay a visit to India since former prime minister Baburam Bhattarai did in 2011. In 2014, late prime minister Sushil Koirala attended the swearing-in ceremony of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"During the visit, we expect discussions on all issues of mutual interest," Indian external affairs ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup said. "Bilateral cooperation, particularly in the key areas of energy, connectivity and people-to-people linkages will form the main focus of the visit," he said.

The Nepalese delegation includes Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Kamal Thapa, Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel, Home Minister Shakti Bahadur Basnet, Chief Advisor to the prime minister Bishnu Prasad Rimal and 13 MPs from various political parties, as well as representatives of Nepal's business community, according to local media reports.—Xinhua

Australia resumes talks with six countries to resettle asylum seekers

SYDNEY — Australia is in talks with Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, among six nations, to resettle asylum seekers detained in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific island nation of Nauru, *the Sydney Morning Herald* said yesterday.

The number of asylum seekers trying to reach Australia is small in comparison with those arriving in Europe, but border security is a hot-button political issue in Australia, which is scheduled to hold a national election later in the year.

Negotiations with the governments of the three Southeast Asian countries focus on potentially settling 1,459 detainees, many of whom arrived during previous administrations, the newspaper said.

Three other countries are also involved in preliminary stages of talks, it added, but did not identify them.

A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declined to confirm or deny the report.

However, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop cautioned that it was “early days” for the talks, as pressing local issues would influence the discussions.

“Some of them have domestic issues, like elections,” Bishop said in a statement. The Philippines goes to the polls on 9 May to choose a new presi-

dent and vice president, among other officials.

Australia’s tough immigration policies provide that anyone intercepted while trying to reach the country by boat is sent for processing to camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island. They are never eligible to be resettled in Australia.

Past Australian efforts to resettle asylum seekers elsewhere ran into hurdles.

Last October, Philippine President Benigno Aquino said

the country had “no capacity” to permanently relocate asylum seekers, adding that his government was “challenged to meet the needs of its own people right now”.

Australia had offered \$150 million (£104.1 million) spread over five years in exchange for permanent relocation of some refugees.

A deal struck with Cambodia was halted after only four asylum seekers were resettled.

In 2011, the Australian high court ruled invalid a deal

with Malaysia, as it was not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees.

Australia has also received criticism from the United Nations and rights groups for its hardline policy.

Since 2012, people on boats trying to reach Australia have been turned back or taken to camps in Nauru, where there have been reports of assaults and systemic child abuse, or Papua New Guinea, where Canberra has set up processing centres.—*Reuters*



Activists hold placards and chant slogans as they protest outside the offices of the Australian Immigration Department in Sydney, Australia, on 4 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

US assistant secretary of state to tour Asia on space security

WASHINGTON — A US assistant secretary of state will visit India, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan and South Korea from next week through early March for discussions on space security, strategic stability and arms control, the State Department said on Friday.

US Assistant Secretary for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Frank Rose plans to hold meetings with officials

of governments and space institutes in the various countries and deliver speeches.

In India, he will meet officials of a space institute, the External Affairs and Defence ministries and parliament, attend the US-India space security dialogue and deliver a keynote speech at a conference from Monday to Wednesday.

In Indonesia, he will exchange views on arms control

with Foreign Ministry officials and discuss space security at an institute Friday.

He will hold meetings with officials of foreign and defence ministries in Singapore on 29 February.

From 1 March in Japan, Rose will hold meetings on arms control, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification framework and space security with

ministries concerned.

On 2 March he will attend the US-Japan space security dialogue, and give a speech at a symposium the following day.

From 4 March he will hold meetings in South Korea with officials of defence and foreign ministries and the presidential office, as well as US forces. He will also attend a US-South Korea space policy dialogue.—*Kyodo News*

One killed, 21 injured in violent protest in northern Indian state

NEW DELHI — A protester was killed and 21 others were injured on Friday in India’s northern state of Haryana after police fired on agitating protesters demanding reservation in government jobs and education.

The protester was killed in Rothak district of Haryana, about 78 km north of India’s capital city New Delhi.

According to officials, the protesters belonging to backward Jat community attacked houses of officials including a local minister and set ablaze several vehicles including police jeep.

Reports said the protesters tried to torch minister’s house.

“The protests turn violent, following which we had to open fire that resulted in death of a youth,” an official said.

Reports said 21 people were injured in police action.

Hundreds of protesters shouting pro-reservation slogans imposed a blockade at several places in the state including the main highway disrupting the vehicular traffic.

They also blocked the railways, following which authorities had to cancel both short and long distance trains.

Haryana’s police chief told media that army has been called in to control the situation in the state.

Authorities suspended mobile internet services in Rohtak and warned against gathering of more than four people at a place.

Local officials said the measures were taken “to maintain law and order” in affected areas.

The state’s Chief Minister on Friday convened a meeting on the issue and urged the protesters to end their agitation.

“We hope the agitators will end their agitation today as all leaders had requested them to do so,” Khattar told media after the meeting. “A committee formed to study the whole issue will submit its report by 31

March.”

The protests in Haryana were going on for last six days and demonstrators reportedly went berserk following failure of talks with the local government.

Last month a similar group in southern state of Andhra Pradesh resorted to arson and torched a police station and several vehicles.

In India quotas for lower castes and economically weaker sections are guaranteed constitutionally.

Analysts say quotas push people in India to an advantage in government jobs and education.—*Xinhua*

Abe keen to have electoral reform bill passed in current Diet session

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed eagerness yesterday to have electoral reform legislation enacted during the current parliament session to cut the number of seats in the House of Representatives.

“I’d like to push for cutting the number of seats by 10 in the ongoing Diet session to carry out my responsibility (over the electoral reform),” Abe said on a radio programme, referring to the envisioned passage of a revised Public Offices Election Law.

A panel-compiled reform plan calls for slashing the number of seats in the lower house by 10 to 465. A smaller number of lower house members as well as rezoning of electoral districts are part of the envisaged reform aimed at addressing vote weight disparities among single-seat electoral districts.

The proposed reform is intended to keep such disparities between the most and least populated single-seat constituencies below twofold — a threshold that when exceeded is seen by the Supreme Court as problematic from a constitutional point of view.

Japan’s electoral system of a combination of single-seat constituencies and proportional representation blocks for general elections was introduced in 1994.

Abe also reiterated his stance to amend part of the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution, referring to the second paragraph of the article that says, “Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.”

“The Self-Defence Forces should be recognised and stipulated (in the supreme law),” he said.

The first paragraph of the article forbids the use of force as means of settling international disputes. The Constitution is interpreted to only allow the minimum force necessary for self-defence.

Amending the Constitution has been a “long-cherished wish of the Liberal Democratic Party since its founding 60 years ago,” said Abe, who heads the LDP, vowing “not to give up and to continue to take on this challenge.”

As for the possibility of holding a so-called “double election,” in which the lower house will be dissolved for a general election to be held simultaneously with a House of Councillors election this summer, Abe once again apparently ruled it out.

“I’m absolutely not considering it,” he said. — *Kyodo News*

Dear readers,

The GNLM would like to apologise to our readers for the mistaken re-printing of a page on 19 February. The re-print was due to a technical error and steps have been taken to ensure that such misprints do not occur again.— Ed

OPINION

Everybody need be involved in the change process

Khin Maung Aye

It is no use crying over spilled milk because what has been done cannot be undone. Bearing this in mind, we had better not talk about the bitter experiences of the past. What counts is what we ought to do now to effectuate a change in many aspects in order that we can lead a life of better quality in future.

In this function, it is worth pondering over where we should start from in the process of

change. As all the bad habits are developed by our dirty mindset, priority should be given to changing of mental attitude. But this is easier said than done. According to Lord Buddha, what makes us most difficult is to admonish ourselves. It really takes time to mend our behaviour and manners. This being so, we cannot expect an abrupt change. As people tend to resist change, there has emerged a new discipline of Change Management as a branch of Management Science.

As there are a multitude of aspects that need change, it is difficult for the authorities to decide as to which areas should be given precedence – is it the rule of law? or is it the amendment of 2008 Constitution? or is it the economic system? or is it the national development etc? In fact, all these things are hard to implement simultaneously. It is, therefore, advisable that change should be effectuated one after one.

In this juncture, it is worth remembering that

popular support plays an important role in national development process. However, support alone is not helpful – people should actively participate in the nation-building activities. They cannot be said to be dutiful just by voting for a popular leader. Therefore, the entire mass of people are urged to be enthusiastically involved in national development tasks.

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.

Recollection of the tragic days in Rangoon under the Japanese occupation

U Win Sein

(Continued from yesterday)

Once an unusual high-handed manner Japanese soldier, acting high and mighty in the middle of the wooden jetty bridge in Bogalay Township, while doing occasional body search on the passersby crossing the bridge. Suddenly I saw the Japanese soldier giving a big slap to one middle age monk's face for not putting away a not lighted cheroot on his lips, this had making the monk staggering for a few steps forward and fell down in the middle of the bridge, a few minutes later, recovering from his dismay from the impact of the beating and then walked away with blood dripping from the corner of his mouth slowly and abruptly with no body to intervene this inhuman act on a holy man.

There was another incident of mine happening in Rangoon Town, When I was about the age of 10, wishing eagerly to become a competent cyclist just like the other kids in the street with their bicycles riding around every day. So I had borrowed my uncle's old rickety bicycle for the practice of riding about two weeks. I was feeling freely to be able to ride a distance of 100 yards without falling at all. One night with no prior warning and as in Japanese occupation time, with no street light, from a distance of 50 yards away, a Japanese military officer on a bicycle, dashing left and right, most probably after drinking from the Chinese restaurant Kun Lock, was drunk and on his way back to his barrack on Anawrathar Road. On the spur of the moment, his bicycle was coming head on with full speed toward me, unable to shunt him in time to another direction, dashing

head on collision on each other, both of us fell down on the ground. A moment later the Japanese officer stoop up and had drawn out his Samurai long sword making a chopping sign meaning to chopping off my head, I just picked up my bicycle. Astride on it, quickly started cracking on the pedals with full speed, even without the nerve to look back at the officer, but heard him shouting loudly with foul Japanese words. This encounter had given me a frightful experience.

Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku perhaps Japanese greatest strategist and the officer who would contrive the surprise air attack on U S naval force of Pearl Harbor. He had worked as a Naval Attache for the Japanese Embassy in Washington D C from 1926 to 1927, had been promoted from Vice-Minister of the Japanese Navy to Commander –in – Chief of Japan's Combined Fleet in August 1941 But once the Government of Prime Minister Tojo Hideki decided on war with the United States, Yamamoto reluctantly agreed that only a surprise attack aimed at crippling the U S Naval Force in Pearl Harbor had any hope of victory. He also predicted that if war with America lasted more than one year Japan will lose at last. This high ranking officer had a far-sighted view of war related affair and a superb military strategic techniques could hardly curb the war oriented prime minister Tojo Hideki.

In August 1943, a new combined commander responsible for South –East Asia under Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was chosen for the recapture of Rangoon. The training, equipment, health and the morale of the allied troops was very much improving and the extensive use of aircraft to transport and sup-

ply troops. Lieutenant General Willian Slim was to command the Fourteenth Army. The major effort was intended to be by American trained Chinese troops of Northern Combat Area Command [NCAC] under General Joseph Stilwell. General Orde Wingate with expanded Chindit Forces was to assist Stilwell by disrupting lines of supply to the Northern front, a long range penetration unit infiltrated through the Japanese front lines with the main aim to cut out North-South railways, damaging communication of the Japanese in Northern Burma. In 5th February 1944, three brigades were flown into landing zone behind Japanese line by the Royal Air Force and USAAF established defensive stronghold around Indaw. On 17th May, control of the Chindit passed from Slim to Stilwell. A force of two Chinese regiments and the Kachin Guerrilla under Merrill's Marauders captured the Airfield Myitkyina..

Though the allied forces had advanced successfully into central Burma, it was vital to capture the Port of Rangoon before the monsoon, the climate of the region is depended on seasonal monsoon rain which allowed effective campaigning for 6 months only. A national uprising within Burma and the defection of the entire Burma National Army to the allied side, together with the allied forces advancing toward Rangoon, the Japanese forces now faced open rebellion behind their lines. The original conception of a plan to retake Burma envisaged to making an amphibious assault on Rangoon will before the Fourteenth Army reached the Capital in order to ease supply problem was postponed. General Slim feared that the Japanese would defend Rangoon to the last man through the

monsoon which would put the Fourteenth Army in a disastrous supply situation. In such stand-off tactics by the Japanese would surely mounted to heavy fighting from both sides. Big casualty will be resulted at the end with loss of lives and properties and other vital infrastructure of Rangoon Town

On May 1944, a Gurkha parachute battalion was dropped near the mouth of Rangoon River and cleared the Japanese rear-guard. The 26th Indian Infantry Division landed by ship the next day. When they arrived they discovered that General Kimura had ordered Rangoon to be evacuated on 22nd April. After the Japanese withdrawal, Rangoon had experienced an orgy of looting and lawlessness. That day was not easy for me to forget. Because I was sent by my Father to give 500 kyat [Japanese occupation period notes] to my uncle at 22nd street. After given the money to my uncle, I was on my way back, when on reaching Sule Pagoda Road at the Central Bank of Burma, I saw some looters with their both hands full of notes came out from the Bank, then another looter came out, his hands were also full of notes, but was being chased by an Indian soldier with a rifle shouting for the looter to stop; as the looter had ran past me, and with the soldier near me, suddenly he kneeled down beside me and aimed his rifle at the looter and had fired one shot at him, a tremendous deafening sound that making my ears heard a ring noise for a long time. The looter was hit and could even ran a distance of about 10 feet, then fell down trembling and shaking his whole body with blood oozing out from a wide opened wound in front of his chest, the bullet piercing in from his back and came out from a wide opened

wound. The Indian soldier might not have received the order to evacuate [some Indian army Division had sided with the Japanese Imperial Army].

Another sorrowful sight that I had witnessed was after the liberation of Rangoon, on the day that the Rangoon Jail was to be opened and let out about 600 prisoners of war, they were British; Australians; Americans and Chinese. When the big wooden prison doors were opened for the prisoners to meet the welcoming party of the allied forces, I was among the city folks standing, awaiting for the prisoners of war to come out. About 9 in the morning, then we heard the singing of army songs by the prisoners, from the wide open doors of Rangoon Jail, all were marching out as if they were in an army marching parade, but they were not in steady steps, because all of them were weak physically, their steps were staggering, all of them without shirts, showing their thin bodies of bones only, their lower parts were hardly covered up by their torn and old short pants, some of them not being able to fully cover up their buttocks, because their short pants were torn, this had been the way of life in prison all the time. Some older soldiers were stoop marching with head bending down but they kept up their soldiery spirit marching on and on. This pitiful sight of fellow human beings going through this terrible suffering in prison had made my heart aching for their misfortune.

Let's hope there will be no more wars in future

Conflicts either big or small shall be resolved on a

Round table by the countries concerned

With sincerity, honesty and compassion--

Mawtinson pagoda festival in Pathein to start on 23rd February



MAWTINSON PAGODA. PHOTO:IPRD

THE Mawtinson pagoda festival, one of the most famous pagoda festivals in Myanmar, will be held for a month from the full moon of Tabo - dwel to the full moon of Ta-baung, according to a member of the committee

working on the festival.

Vessels from the Yangon-Mawtin jetty and Phoneygi Street jetty are slated to transport pilgrims during the festival.

Roads have already been built at milepost 95/6 to provide

access to the hill by car. Two hotels with 50 rooms each are already open for business there. Pilgrims can enjoy the beauty of the beach, MwayTaung Yaychoeseik and rest well, he added. — *Township (IPRD)*

Myanmar lab prepared to test for Zika virus

THE National Health Laboratory (NHL) has announced that it meets the standards required for the testing of the Zika virus.

A BSL-2 level is required of laboratories for the testing of the Zika virus, while equipment for the testing will arrive in the third week of February from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other healthcare organisations, according to the health department.

“The Zika virus is unlike other transmittable diseases such as Ebola or SARS. Myanmar is ready to test people for the Zika virus,” said NHL director Professor Htay Htay Tin.

The Zika virus can be contracted by humans through bites from the aedes aegypti mosquito, a carrier of dengue fever. Those who contract the Zika virus are expected to immediately feel feverish; develop red patches and spots on the skin and red swelling of the face; feel cramps and aching joints; and experience nausea and headaches over a period between two days and one week. “Since the Zika virus is not yet treatable, protection [against contracting the virus] is the main priority. In terms of what we require in cooperation from the general public, they need to carry out activities

to reduce contact with mosquitoes and to seek treatment at the nearest medical facility should one experience symptoms of the virus,” explained H.E. Dr. Thein Thein Htay, the Deputy Minister for Health. The Zika virus does usually exhibit severe symptoms; its symptoms are similar to those of the more common influenza virus.

Medical experts are currently attempting to show proof of the connection between the effects of the virus on pregnant mothers and birth defects in children, such as microcephaly, where a child is born with an abnormally small head.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Cargo vessel sinks in Hpa-An

A CARGO vessel, 25 feet long and 10 feet wide, being maneuvered by one U Aye Lwin, 35, with three crew members sank

at an old jetty at Hpa-An town, Kayin State on Tuesday. The accident was caused by over loading of the boat. According to an

investigation, the vessel was carrying sand from the river. No one was injured in the sinking.—*Tun Tun Htway (Hpa-An)*



A sunken cargo vessel seen at the site of the incidence. PHOTO: TUN TUN HTWAY (HPA-AN)

Survey to boost market access for Mon State farmers

A SURVEY on the future aspirations and agricultural investments of villagers in Mon State will commence in the last week of February with the aim of developing the agricultural sector, according to the Centre for Economic and Social Development.

The survey will be conducted by the centre in fifty villages spanning ten townships in Mon State, in which over 1,600 households will be included.

“Development of the agricultural sector can lead to the development of other sectors, having a so-called multiplier effect, which is extremely important. As such, if we are able to carry out evidence-based policy changes and amendments for the development of the agricultural sector, then we need to be in a position whereby we can conduct wide and comprehensive research. It is here that our organisation will continue to carry out agricultural research to the best of our ability,” explained Ko Chan Htoo, a researcher at the Centre for Economic and Social Development

The survey will be conducted between the last week of February

and the end of March in cooperation with the International Food Policy Research Institute at Michigan State University.

“Farmers within the agricultural sector are not in a position to access domestic and foreign markets. The government should implement projects that inform farmers of what crops to plant and at what time of year. Since officials at the Ministry of Commerce lack the capacity to provide market-related information, they need to establish a call centre,” said Dr Soe Htun, vice chairperson of the Myanmar Rice Federation.

Further surveys will be carried out in order to assess the needs of farmers within Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, which will be financially supported by USAID and the LIFT Trust Fund.

The Centre for Economic and Social Development previously conducted a pilot project on fresh water fish farming enterprises in Ayeyarwady, Yangon and Bago regions, while a survey was collected last year on livelihoods and household expenses in rural communities in Mon State.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

The report, Ministry steps up conservation efforts for golden deer (GNLM, Feb 19) is welcome delight for wildlife enthusiasts around the globe. The golden deer sub-species across South and SE Asia are endangered due to negative impacts of the local anthropogenic pressures; Myanmar is also similarly impacted. All the sub-species of this deer species have been seriously impacted due to rapid habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, loss of premier grazing areas and indiscriminate poaching as is evidenced in all developing and under developed nations. The vulnerability of this species has reached such an alarming proportion that several sub-species are expected to be extinct within a decade unless appropriate conservative measures are adopted. However, one important aspect of the conservation efforts that we tend to forget is the socio-economic empowerment of the populations living around the golden deer habitats. Unless these marginal communities are economically empowered all steps of achieving credible conservation efforts will be useless. Without the active participation of remote rural villagers, fringe forest dwellers and marginal peasants the attempts of conserving golden deer runs the risk of not being completely successful. One of the approaches could be involving the local inhabitants by employing them as forest guards, porters, laborers and trackers by the local Forest Department.

Involvement of the local inhabitants with some financial return and few rounds of sensitization and educational awareness regarding the protection of the species can earn rich dividends for the long term conservation of golden deer. The anthropogenic parameter must not be left out of the conservation equation for long term success of the golden deer conservation program. Furthermore, sharing of data, animal behavior, breeding pairs for enhancing genetic viability among countries with similar species could also boost the conservation efforts as the local population of golden deer has become quite thin over the past few decades and will need some genetic vigor to boost population dynamics of this majestic species.

Thanking you
Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu

Cameron hails EU deal to give Britain 'special status', battle looms



British Prime Minister David Cameron (2nd R) attends a meeting with European Union leaders during a EU summit addressing the talks about the so-called Brexit and the migrants crisis, in Brussels, Belgium, on 9 February, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS — David Cameron hailed a landmark deal on Friday he said gave Britain “special status” in the European Union and pledged to campaign heart and soul to stay in the EU at a deeply uncertain referendum expected in June.

At a summit that ran into overtime, EU leaders agreed unanimously on a package of measures aimed at keeping Britain in the 28-nation bloc to avoid a potentially disastrous divorce.

Their legally binding decision granted Britain an explicit exemption from the founding goal of “ever closer union”, offered concessions on the welfare rights of migrant workers and safeguards for the City of London financial centre.

The British prime minister said he had achieved all his main negotiating aims and would recommend the agreement to his cabinet yesterday, firing the starting gun on a fierce referendum campaign on Britain’s future membership of the bloc.

“I believe we are stronger, safer and better off inside a reformed European Union,” he told a news conference. “And that is why I will be campaigning with all my heart and soul to persuade the British people to re-

main in the reformed European union that we have secured today.”

The eurosceptic “Vote Leave” campaign was quick to dismiss what it called “Cameron’s hollow deal” as bad for Britain. Cameron acknowledged that one of his closest political allies, Justice Secretary Michael Gove, would campaign to leave the EU, saying he was disappointed but not surprised. He suggested other Conservatives may also join the “out” camp.

He would not officially confirm the expected polling date of 23 June but said he would make an announcement soon.

After two days of intense wrangling in Brussels, EU leaders determined to try to keep Britain in the union resolved outstanding disputes over migrant workers’ welfare rights and relations between London and the euro zone.

“So now the deal is done and it’s up to the British people to decide,” said European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker — the man Cameron tried furiously to block for the top EU executive job, but who played a key role in crafting the deal.

German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, one of Britain’s strongest allies in Europe, said: “We believe that with this we have given David Cameron a package with which he can campaign in Britain for Britain to stay in the European Union.”

The agreement delivered victory to Cameron on several of the key demands on which he chose to fight for what he called “a new settlement” with Europe.

He won a commitment to change the bloc’s governing treaties in future to recognise that Britain was not bound to any political union and would have safeguards against financial regulation being imposed on the City of London by the euro zone.

Facing an uphill political battle at home, Cameron was concerned to show Britons that he had won concessions that he believes can reduce an influx of EU migrant workers and keep Britain out of any future political integration.

In hours of wrangling with central and east European countries that provide many of Britain’s low-paid immigrant workers, he secured the right to curb in-work benefits for up to four years and scale back child benefit for workers whose children remain abroad. —Reuters

Pressure grows on Hillary Clinton to release Goldman Sachs speeches

NEW YORK — Hillary Clinton continued to resist calls to release her transcripts of paid speeches she gave to Goldman Sachs and other banks, saying she would hold onto them until Bernie Sanders and other rivals for the US presidency released theirs.

Sanders, her populist rival for the Democratic presidential nomination who has surged in polls with his furious rebukes of Wall Street and its role in the 2008 recession, said on Friday he had none to release because he does not give paid speeches to

banks. Clinton’s reluctance to reveal what she privately told banks and other organisations has become an increasingly heated issue ahead of the election this November as she fights suggestions by Sanders and others from their party’s more liberal wing that she is too cozy with the US financial industry.

“I am happy to release anything I have whenever everybody else does the same, because everybody in this race, including Senator Sanders, has given speeches to private groups,” she

said on Thursday night in a televised ‘town hall’ event with voters in Nevada. Nevada is the third state to vote for the Democratic Party’s nominee in caucuses to be held yesterday.

Clinton has earned more than \$20 million for 92 paid speeches since leaving her job as US secretary of state in 2013, according to records disclosed by her campaign, including \$675,000 for three closed-door speeches to New York-based investment bank Goldman Sachs. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kurdish militant group TAK claims responsibility for Ankara bombing

ISTANBUL — A Kurdish militant group once linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) claimed responsibility on Friday for the bombing in the Turkish capital Ankara that killed 28 people this week, according to a statement on its website.

The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) said the bombing was in response to the policies of President Tayyip Erdogan and said it would continue its attacks. It said the bomber was a 26-year old Turkish national born in the eastern city of Van.

The group most recently claimed responsibility for a mortar attack at Istanbul’s second airport in December that left an aircraft cleaner dead. TAK has in the past said its relationship with PKK militants has been severed. Both groups are regarded as terrorist organisations by Ankara and the United States. —Reuters

Morocco arrests 10 suspected IS militants, including Frenchman

SALE, (Morocco) — Moroccan authorities said on Friday they had arrested 10 suspected militants linked to the Islamic State, including a French citizen, and seized weapons and bomb-making materials in raids on their hideouts.

The cell is the latest in a series of radical groups Morocco says it has uncovered. Thursday’s raids took place at locations the group used in the southern city of Essaouira and the central cities of Meknes and Sidi Kacem, authorities said. At the offices of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ), reporters were shown weapons, ammunition, tasers, swords and bomb materials seized from hideouts. BCIJ is the judicial wing of Morocco’s domestic intelligence service.

“This new cell is too dangerous ... I don’t call it a cell but an armed brigade,” bureau head Abdelhak al-Khayyam told reporters.

Al-Khayyam said the group had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and set up a hideout near the desert city of Tan-Tan in an arid area riddled with caves. The suspects include a French citizen, who converted to Islam and lived in Morocco for at least a year, and a 16-year-old Moroccan. —Reuters

Three Turkish soldiers killed as building collapses in southeast Turkey

ANKARA — Three Turkish soldiers were killed and four others were lightly injured after a building collapsed in the southeast, where security forces have been clashing with Kurdish militants for months.

The building toppled in the Sur district of Diyarbakir Province, where a curfew has been in place for almost three months and more than 200 militants and security personnel have been killed, according to the Turkish army.

The military did not give a reason for the collapse. —Reuters

Russia hopes Ukrainian truck ban will end on Saturday

MOSCOW — The Russian transport ministry hopes that a Ukrainian ban on Russian trucks will end on Saturday and has made an offer to resolve a dispute over the issue, local agencies quoted the ministry as saying on Friday.

On Sunday, the Russian transport ministry barred Ukrainian trucks in response to Ukrainian activists blocking some Russian trucks from entering Ukraine.

Diplomatic and trade ties between Russia and Ukraine have sharply deteriorated over Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and a pro-Russian separatist conflict. —Reuters

Serbia has not closed border with Macedonia

BELGRADE — Serbia did not close the border with Macedonia, the interior ministry told Tanjug.

Head of the ministry’s press office Biljana Popovic Ivkovic told Tanjug that Serbia had started implementing Thursday’s deal of police chiefs from the region, which provides for the introduction of joint registration of refugees at the Greece-Macedonia border and their organised transport to Austria.

“As of today, all signatories to the protocol will be profiling migrants on the Greece-Macedonia border, which implies tighter border controls to prevent illegal migration,” Popovic Ivkovic said.

Under the protocol, the authorities should identify migrants and take their biometric data to make sure they come from countries in which their life has been in jeopardy, such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. —Tanjug

Afghan troops pull out of strategic Helmand District

LASHKAR GAH — Afghan forces have pulled out of bases in Musa Qala, a strategic district of the southern province of Helmand, after months of heavy fighting with Taliban insurgents, officials said yesterday.

Helmand, a traditional heartland of the Taliban and one of the world's biggest centres of opium production, has been threatened for months and the United States recently sent hundreds of soldiers to the province to bolster its defence.

The commander of the Afghan army's 215th corps, Mohammad Moeen Faqir, said troops had been ordered to pull back from Roshan Tower, their main base in Musa Qala, as well as other checkpoints to reinforce Gereshk, straddling the main Highway One which links Kabul with the south and west.

"Their presence in the area did not mean anything," he said. "We will use them in battle with enemies in other parts of Helmand Province."

Fierce fighting has raged in Musa Qala and other parts of Helmand for months and the Taliban overran the district in August last year before they were driven back by Afghan forces backed by US airstrikes.

Musa Qala itself is a dry and sparsely inhabited district that British and American troops fought hard to control between 2006 and 2008 but its loss could bring further losses elsewhere, including Sangin where government forces have been clinging on.

"Now that the government has withdrawn its forces from this district, we will see Kajaki, Gereshk and Sangin collapsing very soon," said deputy provincial council member Abdul Majid Akhundzada.

The Taliban said in a statement it had captured armoured personnel carriers, bulldozers and other equipment abandoned in Roshan Tower and nine other checkpoints. The withdrawal prompted speculation among local officials that the government had reached



An Afghan National Army (ANA) vehicle is seen parked at an outpost in Helmand province, Afghanistan on 25 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

an arrangement with the Taliban but Abdul Jabar Qahraman, presidential envoy for security affairs in Helmand, denied any such pact.

"There wasn't any deal," he said. "We learnt that there was no need to continue the fight in that area."

No comment was immediately available from the ministry of defence in Kabul.

The outgoing commander of international forces, Gen. John

Campbell, recently sent hundreds of American troops to Helmand, where they assist and train Afghan forces but do not fight.

A spokesman for NATO's Resolute Support mission in Kabul said its aim remained to train, advise and assist and referred questions on Afghan troop movements to the defence ministry.

US officials estimate the Taliban dominates or threatens almost a third of the country and has full

control over at least four districts. Although it briefly took the northern city of Kunduz last year, it does not control any provincial capitals.

Although Helmand has been one of the provinces most at risk, the Taliban have been pushing forward across the country, putting severe strain on government troops, fighting alone since international forces ended most combat operations in 2014.—Reuters

Russia pushes UN Security Council on Syria sovereignty

UNITED NATIONS — Russia asked the United Nations Security Council on Friday to call for Syria's sovereignty to be respected, for cross-border shelling and incursions to be halted and for "attempts or plans for foreign ground intervention" to be abandoned.

Russia circulated a short draft resolution to the 15-member council over concerns about an escalation in hostilities after Turkey this week said it and other countries could commit ground troops to Syria.

The Security Council met on Friday afternoon to discuss the draft, but veto-powers the United States, France and Britain all said it had no future.

"Rather than trying to distract the world with the resolution they just laid down, it would be really great if Russia implemented the resolution that's already



Democratic Forces of Syria fighters ride a pick-up truck near al-Shadadi town, Hasaka countryside Syria, on 18 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

agreed to," US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, told reporters after the meeting.

She was referring to a resolution unanimously agreed by the Security Council in December

that endorsed an international road map for a Syria peace process.

The Russian draft, seen by Reuters, would have the council express "its grave alarm at the reports of military buildup and

preparatory activities aimed at launching foreign ground intervention into the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic."

It also demands that states "refrain from provocative rhetoric and inflammatory statements inciting further violence and interference into internal affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told Reuters this week that his country, Saudi Arabia and some European powers wanted ground troops in Syria, though no serious plan had been debated.

Russian air strikes have helped to bring the Syrian army to within 25 km (15 miles) of Turkey's borders, while Kurdish militia fighters, regarded by Ankara as hostile insurgents, have also gained ground, heightening the sense of urgency.

Turkey has been shelling

positions of the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia in response to what it says is hostile fire coming across the border into Turkey.

Russia's relations with Turkey hit a low in November when Turkish warplanes downed a Russian bomber near the Syrian-Turkish border, a move described by Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "dastardly stab in the back."

Syria's civil war was sparked by a Syrian government crackdown on a pro-democracy movement in early 2011. Islamic State militants have used the chaos to seize territory in Syria and Iraq, and some 4.3 million Syrians have fled the country. The UN says at least 250,000 people have been killed. A US-led coalition has been bombing Islamic State targets since September 2014. Russia began air strikes in Syria in September 2015.—Reuters

US-backed fighters capture Islamic State-held town in northeast Syria

BEIRUT — A US-backed alliance of Syrian fighters including the Kurdish YPG militia captured an Islamic State-held town in Syria's northeast on Friday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said.

The capture of al-Shadadi in Hasaka province came three days

after the beginning of an offensive against Islamic State in the area by the Syria Democratic Forces backed by US-led air strikes, and would help isolate Raqqa, the jihadists' de-facto capital in Syria.

There was no immediate comment from the Syria Democratic Forces. The Britain-based Ob-

servatory's director Rami Abdulrahman said al-Shadadi's capture was a "psychological blow" to the Islamic State group. He said it still controlled dozens of villages in the area, but that the SDF had taken many more villages and farmland in the past few days. On Thursday the SDF announced it had

launched an operation earlier in the week to seize al-Shadadi from Islamic State. The US-backed alliance, formed in October, includes the powerful YPG, which has proved the most effective partner against Islamic State on the ground in Syria for a Washington-led air campaign against the group there

and in neighbouring Iraq.

The SDF, which also includes Arab fighting groups such as Jaysh al-Thuwwar, captured areas of Hasaka from Islamic State late last year. The YPG took swathes of territory from the group last year. Most of Hasaka province is under Kurdish control.—Reuters

Republican White House hopefuls Rubio, Bush battle it out in South Carolina



US Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio greets supporters as he arrives for a campaign event in Columbia, South Carolina, on 19 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

CHARLESTON — Republican presidential candidates Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush are locked in a bare-knuckled fight for third place in a South Carolina primary vote yesterday, afraid that anything less could blunt their White House hopes.

With front-runner Donald Trump fighting to hold off US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and win his second straight early nominating contest, Rubio and Bush are battling to become the main anti-Trump alternative from among establishment Republicans seeking the party's nomination for the 8 November election.

An NBC News-Wall Street Journal/Marist poll released on Friday showed Trump in the lead

with support from 28 per cent of likely Republican primary voters, followed by Cruz at 23 per cent. Rubio led Bush narrowly, 15 per cent to 13 per cent.

The Bush-Rubio competition is layered with home-state drama: Bush, 63, is the elder statesman of Florida politics having served as governor. Rubio, 44, is the upstart understudy, a first-term US senator who served in Florida's legislature.

Rubio supporters were offended by the millions of dollars in attack ads spent by Bush's Super PAC, Right to Rise, believing that the money would have been better spent attacking Trump rather than trying to undermine a like-minded Republican.

"People are going to do

whatever they think they need to do to win. But it's notable they spent far more money attacking Marco than they have the front-runner Donald Trump," said Rubio spokesman Alex Conant. The Bush team dismissed the complaints.

"I don't think there's anything personal about it from Jeb's side," said Jim Dyke, Bush's campaign chief in South Carolina. "Jeb for good reason feels like he's much more qualified to be president of the United States. That's what this is all about."

Bush has a key backer in South Carolina's Republican US senator, Lindsey Graham, but Rubio upped the ante by winning the support of popular Governor Nikki Haley.

Her endorsement gave Rubio momentum at just the right time and the two have campaigned together around the state.

Rubio is treading carefully around whether Bush should exit the race if he performs poorly in South Carolina, saying Bush has worked hard and "has a right to be in this race as long as he wants to be."

"I mean, he's spent \$50 million attacking me. If there are differences in policy we'll talk about it. What I've said about Governor Bush is he doesn't have any foreign policy experience, which is true. But I don't view that as an attack. I view that as a fact," Rubio told reporters on Wednesday.

Bush has bristled at the charge, telling supporters he has visited 89 countries and seen his brother and father develop foreign policy as US presidents.

His team has made much of Rubio's having missed many hearings and votes as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"It's hard for me to be lectured to by a gifted young guy who thinks going to committee hearings means you know something about the world," Bush said. Rubio forces had wanted to knock Bush out of the race in New Hampshire, the last nominating contest held on 9 February, but a bad Rubio debate performance and a strong campaign trail performance by Bush thwarted those hopes with Bush edging his rival for a fourth-place finish.—Reuters

UN's climate chief to quit, praises Paris agreement



Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — The UN's climate chief said on Friday she will step down in July, at the end of a six-year term, and praised governments for reaching a 195-nation deal in Paris in December to shift the world economy from fossil fuels to cleaner energies.

Christiana Figueres, a 59-year-old Costa Rican, said she would not accept any extension of her term as head of the Bonn-based UN Climate Change Secretariat after what she called the historic Paris Agreement.

"We now move into a phase of urgent implementation," she wrote in a letter to governments, which agreed a goal in Paris to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2100 by shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy such as wind or solar power.

"The journey that lies ahead will require continued determination, ingenuity and, above all, our collective sense of humanity and purpose," she wrote in the letter, dated 12 February and made public on Friday.

Figueres, a former Costa Rican climate negotiator, took over the UN job at a low point in 2010 after a summit in Copenhagen the year before collapsed in acrimony between rich and poor.

She patiently worked to build trust among governments with radically different interests, ranging from the United States and China to small island states worried by rising seas or OPEC nations fearing a loss of export revenues.

Nicholas Stern, of the London School of Economics who wrote a 2007 study about the economics of climate change, said Figueres had an "outstanding ability to see where we need to go as a world and to bring people together".

Her successor is likely to come from a developed nation — Figueres succeeded Yvo de Boer, of the Netherlands. Separately, Hela Cheikhrouhou, head of the UN's Green Climate Fund set up to channel money to developing nations to help them cope with climate change, also said on Friday she would stand down in September after a three-year term.—Reuters

Vatican to Trump: It's not 'personal,' it's religion

MYRTLE BEACH, (South Carolina) — The Vatican on Friday tried to tamp down a firestorm ignited by Pope Francis' comments assailing Donald Trump's views on US immigration as "not Christian", assuring the Republican presidential front-runner that it was not a personal attack or attempt to influence the US campaign.

Francis told reporters during a conversation on his flight home from Mexico on Thursday, "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian."

Trump has said if elected president, he would build a wall along the US-Mexican border to keep immigrants from illegally entering the United States.

Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi told Vatican Radio the pope's comments, in response to a reporter's question on Trump, were an affirmation of his longstanding belief that migrants should be helped and

not shut out. He said the pope believed people "should build bridges, not walls".

"In no way was this a personal attack, nor an indication of how to vote," Lombardi said.

Trump, who leads Republican candidates in opinion polls, lashed out on Thursday, dismissing the pope's remarks as "disgraceful" for questioning his faith.

"If and when the Vatican is attacked by ISIS (Islamic State), which as everyone knows is ISIS' ultimate trophy, I can promise you that the pope would have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been president," Trump said.

Later, during a television appearance, he rowed back, calling Francis "a wonderful guy."

The extraordinary exchange between the billionaire real estate developer and leader of the world's 1.25 billion Roman Catholics, which occurred days before Saturday's Republican nominating contest in South Car-

olina, was headline news around the world.

On Friday, New York's Daily News gave it the front page. Against a backdrop of an image of Trump, a headline blared: Anti Christ! The New York Post ran a front page photo of Trump and the pope wearing boxing gloves with the headline: Trump & pope: Bible belters.

It was unclear what, if any, effect the tussle might have on the vote in South Carolina, a conservative state that is home to many evangelical Protestant Christians.

Patrick Hornbeck, chairman of the department of theology at Fordham University in New York, said on Thursday that Francis' words were not surprising given the poverty he had just seen in Mexico.

"There is very little common ground between Pope Francis and Donald Trump," Hornbeck said. He predicted the pope's words on electoral politics would have little effect on any

US Catholics who liked Trump as a candidate. At a CNN town hall in Columbia, South Carolina, on Thursday night, Trump said he had "a lot of respect" for Francis but that the pope had been influenced by hearing only Mexico's side of the border issue. The pope's statement also had been exaggerated by the media, he said.

"I think he said something much softer than it was originally reported by the media," Trump said.

Earlier on Thursday, Thomas Groome, director of the Boston College Center on the Church in the 21st Century, said Francis' comments were entirely in keeping with his focus on mercy.

"The pope is commissioned to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's his job," Groome said. "So when he was asked a direct question, he gave Trump the benefit of the doubt, he said we have to be sure he said this, but if he said this, it is not Christian."—Reuters

Zimbabwe's main hydro power dam running out of water after drought

KARIBA — Zimbabwe's main hydro power dam could stop producing electricity in six months if water levels keep falling after the nation's worst drought in more than two decades, an official said on Friday.

Zimbabwe and neighbouring Zambia both rely heavily on the Kariba dam for electricity, and falling dam levels at the plant raises the threat of deeper power cuts in the two countries which are already faced with frequent power shortages.

Kenneth Maswera, Kariba Power Station's general manager told reporters that dam levels were at 12 percent of capacity, a level last recorded in 1992 during a severe drought.

"We've not received any significant inflows, basically the level is going to continue going down if we

don't get any flows into the lake," said Maswera in Kariba town, 390 km (242 miles) northwest of the capital Harare.

Without any new inflows, the dam would only generate power for the next 165 days, Maswera said.

Supplies from Kariba, which has an installed generating capacity of 750 megawatts (MW), were at 285 MW now, he said.

Zimbabwe is importing 300 MW of electricity from South Africa's power utility Eskom [ESKJ.UL] and another 40 MW from Mozambique, which has eased the power cuts, officials say.

The drought has left 3 million people in need of food aid in Zimbabwe, and farmers in Zimbabwe have lost cattle and crops to drought but fear the worst is yet to come.—Reuters



An official of the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) inspects water levels on the Kariba dam in Kariba, Zimbabwe, on 19 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

State of natural disaster declared in Fiji over tropical cyclone Winston

SUVA — Fiji declared a state of natural disaster yesterday as severe tropical cyclone Winston hit the South Pacific island country, the government-owned Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) said.

The declaration is effective for a period of 30 days starting from Saturday, said Meleti Bainimarama, permanent secretary for rural and maritime development

and national disaster management. "As your national disaster and controller who will be responsible for this operations and together with the Disaster Management Committee (DISMAC) machinery and resources of the government, we will do our best to maintain and uphold your interest and the interest of Fiji," Bainimarama said, according to the FBC.

Meanwhile, a nation-

wide curfew was imposed from 6 pm local time until further notice. Although no immediate casualties or damage were reported, local police kept monitoring the situation closely. Power supplies to parts of Fiji including the capital of Suva had been cut as Winston, now a category 5 tropical cyclone — the highest possible level — swept through the Pacific island country.—Xinhua

Three Palestinians killed in flaring day of Mideast violence: medics



Palestinian protesters wave with national flags in front of Israeli soldiers during clashes at a demonstration marking the 11th anniversary of their campaign against the controversial Israeli barrier, in the West Bank village of Bilin near Ramallah, on 19 February. PHOTO: XINHUA

RAMALLAH/GAZA — Three Palestinians were killed and nine wounded on Friday in a flaring day of violent confrontations with Israelis, the Palestinian Health Ministry and Israeli Radio reported.

The radio said a third Palestinian was killed by Israeli soldiers' gunfire when dozens of young men threw stones at the soldiers near the village of Beit Fajar, close to Bethlehem in the West Bank. The Palestinian

Health Ministry said two more Palestinians were also shot and wounded during the clashes. In Gaza, a health ministry spokesman said seven Palestinians were injured during clashes with Israeli soldiers stationed on the border between northern Gaza Strip and Israel.

Friday has been in a flaring day of violence that saw another two Palestinian tolls. Earlier a Palestinian man was shot dead after allegedly trying to run over Israeli soldiers in Silwad, a Palestinian village northeast of Ramallah in the West Bank. Before that, two Israeli policemen were injured in a stabbing attack at the Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. The assailant, identified as a 20-year-old resident of an east Jerusalem Arab neighbourhood, was killed at the scene.—Xinhua

Chicago buffeted as strong winds prompt highrise evacuations

CHICAGO — Gusts of up to 70 mph (113 kph) in the Windy City on Friday caused the closure of the second-tallest US building's observation deck, power outages, flight cancellations and highrise evacuations.

The Willis Tower Skydeck, a popular tourist attraction at the 1,451-foot-tall (442-m-tall) Willis Tower, said it closed due to the weather.

The Chicago Fire Department said it was evacuating tenants from three downtown highrises due to blowing debris such as broken glass from nearby build-

ings caused by the high winds.

The third-largest US city's aviation department reported delays at O'Hare International Airport of up to 50 minutes and 160 canceled flights. The National Weather Service issued a high wind advisory for the area in effect until 6 pm CST. The agency reported fallen trees and power lines, road accidents and the collapse of a building under construction.

On city streets, pedestrians struggled to stay upright and retrieve lost hats and papers.

Flying debris stopped

service on one branch of the Chicago "L" rapid transit rail and caused major delays on another, according to the Chicago Transit Authority web site. A suburban commuter train line was delayed when a large box containing salt used to clear ice from the platform fell onto the tracks, said Metra spokeswoman Meg Reile. About 92,000 customers were without power in Northern Illinois on Friday afternoon, while another 91,700 who had lost power had service restored, said ComEd spokesman Alejandro Bodipo-Memba.—Reuters

Welthungerhilfe Myanmar

Call for Consultancy Applications

Reference: Mid-Term Evaluation- MMR 1089



Welthungerhilfe is currently seeking an independent midterm evaluation of its BMZ funded project "Capacity development of networks for food security and social safety nets at the community level in Htan Tabin Township". Specifically, the project focuses on building the capacities of local CBOs for food and nutrition security through:

- A Village Development Committee (VDC) Federation and its member VDCs, which provide village led development, micro-finance for pro-poor small business development and social safety nets.
- Savings groups, organized in three Self-Help Group Federations which provide savings and loan services to members
- Farmers groups, which jointly store harvest and rent machinery for members.

The main Objectives of the MidTerm Evaluation are to assess the project on:

1. Progress towards project planned activities and outcomes.
2. Stability and sustainability of the current structure of CBOs and federations of CBOs.
3. Role and effectiveness of the CBOs in improving the food and nutrition security of its members.

Expected Outputs

-Evaluation report, at the latest four weeks after the field mission, 30-40 pages maximum, plus annexes. (in English)

-A summary of findings and recommendations for presentation to CBOs using a visualization and wording which facilitates the understanding, 5-10 pages (in Myanmar)

Timeframe- Total 17 days in end of April/ beginning of May 2016 (negotiable)

For detailed terms of reference, please contact: Bryan.Berenguer@welthungerhilfe.de

'Commune' director in Berlin wants Danes to share with refugees



Director Thomas Vinterberg arrives for a news conference to promote the movie 'The Commune' at the 66th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, on 17 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BERLIN — Danish director Thomas Vinterberg says he hopes his film "Kollektivet" (The Commune) will help his countrymen recognise the importance of sharing — especially with refugees — despite curbs enacted in Denmark.

Vinterberg, who grew up in a commune, said it disturbs him when Denmark puts ads in newspapers in the Middle East warning would-be refugees that benefits had been cut for new arrivals.

Last month, the Danish par-

liament passed measures aimed at deterring refugees from seeking asylum, including confiscating valuables to pay for their stay, despite protests from international human rights organisations.

The so-called "jewellery bill" was the latest attempt by Denmark's minority center-right government to curb immigration to a country that took in a record 20,000 refugees last year.

Vinterberg, who had his breakthrough with his 1998 film

"Festen" (The Celebration), said the commune had taught him the value of sharing — and he felt most Danes would support this despite the benefit curbs.

"What I find very important to stress here is that behind that there's a population of pretty good-hearted people who I just think are confused and fearful about what's going on," he told Reuters on Thursday.

"And I'm hopeful — I don't think that this film will change anything — but hopefully the values of generosity and sharing can re-awaken at some point."

Danish actress Trine Dyrholm, who plays a woman who talks her husband into turning their home into a commune, said it was more important than ever to talk about togetherness.

"Right now in Denmark it's really complicated. I think we are too afraid of everything actually and we have a huge Dansk Folkeparti (right-wing Danish Peoples' Party) and I think that's very dangerous if they get too much power."

"The Commune" is among 19 films competing for the Berlin festival's top Golden Bear prize awarded on Saturday.—*Reuters*

Berlin film shows women emotionally trapped in post-communist provincial Poland

BERLIN — Director Tomasz Wasilewski says he was inspired to make a film about the emotional desperation of women trapped in provincial 1990s Poland after the fall of communism because he remembers that time through female eyes.

The 35-year-old director's "Zjednoczone Stany Milosci" (United States of Love), showing in the main competition at the Berlin International Film Festival, depicts several women who live fairly routine lives in the concrete cinderblock housing typical of the era, but dream of romance.

One of the women is married but has fallen in love with a handsome priest, another loves a recently widowed doctor and a third has fallen in love with the young female aerobics teacher who lives across the hall.

Wasilewski said on Friday after a press screening that while the politics of that time were turbulent and exciting, people's personal lives and society were changing in different ways.

"I remember some portraits of people and sensations and emotions from that time, and I experienced actually that time through the eyes of women, the whole transformation and all the changes that happened in Poland," Wasilewski said.

That was in part because



Director Tomasz Wasilewski attends a news conference to promote the movie 'Zjednoczone stany milosci' ('United States of Love') at the 66th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, on 19 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

like many Polish men, his father went abroad to work when the Iron Curtain came down, leaving the young boy with his mother and older sister. "So the whole period of transformation I saw through their eyes," he said.

The parts of the main women characters are played by Polish theater actresses, which helps in a movie that is divided into vignettes — each of which could be seen as a short stage play.

Julia Kijowska plays Agata, whose love for the young priest is so all-consuming that she spies on him in a shower and

tells her husband after making love that his hands are sweaty and he shouldn't touch her.

Kijowska said she saw her character as emblematic of people who under communism had been unable to express themselves — emotionally as well as politically.

"This is quite a strange story, being in love with a priest, but this wasn't our main goal," she said. "I think we more focused to find a presence on screen for that character, for the lady who (for a) long time nobody touched because they didn't let them touch.—*Reuters*

Taylor Swift's next single titled 'New Romantics'

LOS ANGELES — Singer Taylor Swift is releasing "New Romantics" as her seventh single from her Grammy-winning album 1989.

"I'm very happy to say the next single from 1989 will be 'New Romantics'," the pop singer tweeted. "New Romantics" was a bonus track on the deluxe edition of 1989.

The song is thematically similar to Swift's hit "Shake It Off", with triumphant lyrics like, "Cause, baby, I could build a castle/ Out of all the bricks they threw at me" and "We are too busy dancing/ To get knocked off our feet."

This has been a big month for Swift, 26, who won three Grammy Awards in the album of the year, pop vocal album, and music video categories.—*PTI*



PHOTO: REUTERS

Dave Grohl to perform at Oscars

LOS ANGELES — Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl is to give a special performance at the 2016 Academy Awards.

The rock icon joins an extensive list of stars from music and movies who will appear at the Oscars ceremony in Los Angeles on 28 February, reported *Rolling Stone* magazine.

The full list of stars presenting awards or performing includes actors Russell Crowe, Sacha Baron Cohen, Ryan Gosling, Charlize Theron, Eddie Redmayne, and Reese Witherspoon, and the musicians who will take to the stage at the city's Dolby Theatre include Lady Gaga, The

Weeknd, Quincy Jones, and John Legend.

Grohl, 47, who made his directorial debut in 2013 with the documentary "Sound City", has been billed as giving a "special performance".

"We're thrilled to be joined by a movie icon, a filmmaking dynamo, a larger than life action hero, a master of satire and two world renowned music power-hitters," Oscar producers David Hill and Reginald Hudlin said.

"This year's show reflects a commitment to showcase cinematic contributions from a variety of genres and this latest list of presenters reflects just that.—*PTI*

Film on Fukushima nuclear disaster wins Berlin film festival award

BERLIN — A film set in northeastern Japan's Fukushima Prefecture in the wake of the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant disaster was awarded the Heiner Carow Prize at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival Friday.

"Fukushima, mon Amour," which stars Japanese actress Kaori Momoi, won the prize awarded to German-produced films in the festival's diverse "Panorama" category.

German director Doris Doerrie shot the film in the city of Minamisoma last spring.

It tells the story of the connection between Momoi's character, a displaced resident living in temporary housing, and a young German woman who sympathizes with Fukushima's plight after the disaster.

The award is named after renowned German director Heiner Carow.—*Kyodo News*

Thousands marry in mass ceremony in South Korea

GAPYEONG, (South Korea) — About 3,000 couples from 62 countries tied the knot in South Korea yesterday, in a mass wedding ceremony conducted by the Unification Church founded by the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon.

A further 12,000 couples worldwide participated in the ceremony via the Internet, said Ryu Kye-ung-seuk, president of the South Korean headquarters of the church. Moon, who died in 2012 at the age of 92, had presided over mass weddings since the early 1960s.

His widow, Hak Ja Han Moon, officiated at Saturday's ceremony, which was witnessed by about 22,000 church followers and guests gathered at the church's CheongShim Peace World Centre in Gapyeong, about 75 km (50 miles) north-east of Seoul. The couples included 1,000 who were



Newlywed couples attend a mass wedding ceremony of the Unification Church at Cheongshim Peace World Centre in Gapyeong, South Korea, on 20 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

newly wed and about 2,000 who were already married and seeking to re-dedicate their marriages and families to God as they had married before joining the church.

"We've been engaged for over one year now, mostly been separated, so of course it's extremely good to be together again," said Hyojoo Song, from Britain, who married his Japanese wife on Saturday. "And yes, we're happy to be married and also share that experience with many other people."

Moon was a lightning rod for controversy and was once jailed in the United States for tax evasion. He also declared in 1992 that he and his wife were messiahs.

Critics over the years have called the organisation a cult, questioning its finances and how it indoctrinates followers, who are sometimes derogatorily known as "Moonies." —Reuters

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(21-2-2016, Sunday)

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|-----------------|--|--|--|
| 6:00 am | • Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw | 3:45 pm | • Ooredoo MNL-1 2016 (LIVE) (Zwekapin United FC & Yadanarbon FC) |
| 7:35 am | • Business News | 6:20 pm | • Documentary |
| 8:35 am | • Meet The Successful | 6:35 pm | • Documentary (Women in myanmar Society) |
| 9:35 am | • Weekly Entertainment | 8:00 pm | • News / International News / Weather Report |
| 11:15 am | • Documentary | 9:00 pm | • News |
| 11:35 am | • Documentary | • Tasty Trip | |
| 11:40 am | • Amazing World | • Sing & Enjoy (MRTV 70 th Anniversary) | |
| 12:35 pm | • Myanmar Movies | | |
| 3:35 pm | • Business News | | |

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Aston Martin made for Bond 'Spectre' film sells for \$3.5 million

LONDON — An Aston Martin DB10 car designed for the latest James Bond film "Spectre" has sold for some \$3.5 million at auction, far exceeding its reserve price.

The Aston Martin, a make long linked to the 007 agent, was one of 10 made for the movie that saw Daniel Craig reprise the famous role for the fourth time. Most were modified for filming, with two, including the one sold, kept as show cars.

Bidding for the "Spectre Silver" DB10, on offer as part of the "James Bond Spectre: The Auction" sale, lasted just under five minutes, according to auction house Christie's.

With a reserve price of 1,000,000 to 1,500,000

pounds, it was sold for 2,434,500 pounds (\$3.48 million).

Other "Spectre" memorabilia up for grabs at Thursday's auction included a "Day of the Dead" costume worn by Craig in the film's opening scene, which sold for 98,500 pounds.

Singer Sam Smith's signed "Writing's On the Wall" music sheet and vinyl single — the movie's chart-topping theme tune — sold for 9,375 pounds.

In total, 10 lots were sold on Thursday, raising around 2.8 million pounds, with proceeds going to charity. An online auction for another 14 lots remains open for bidding until 23 February.

"Spectre", the 24th



An employee poses as an Aston Martin DB10, one of the series of DB10s designed and engineered by Aston Martin for the James Bond film "Spectre", is polished during a media preview of "Spectre — the Auction", at Christie's auction house in London, on 15 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

James Bond film in 53 years, has grossed some \$879 million at the box office worldwide since its release in late October. —Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(21-2-2016 07:00am ~ 22-2-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

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| 07:03 Am | News |
| 07:26 Am | Mahar Thakya Atula Man Aung — Nga Htat Kyee |
| 07:42 Am | Culture Show: Theatrical Art |
| 07:50 Am | Licuala Palm Leaf |
| 08:03 Am | News |
| 08:26 Am | Travelogue "To the coastal region" (Myeik - Kawthoung) (Part-1) |
| 08:51 Am | Beach Food Delivery |
| 09:03 Am | News |
| 09:26 Am | Yathe Taung Township In A Nut-Shell |
| 09:50 Am | Egg Shell |
| 10:03 Am | News |

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| 10:26 Am | Insight Myanmar: Women's Participation in the Peace Process |
| 10:52 Am | Thin Byu Mat |

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

Prime Time

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 07:03 Pm | News |
| 07:26 Pm | A Tour in Korea (Part- 5) |
| 07:43 Pm | Kyaikhteeyoe: Bamboo Guns |
| 07:50 Pm | Today Myanmar: Low Cost Rental Housing Project |
| 08:03 Pm | News |
| 08:26 Pm | Writer, Philanthropist: Daw Than Myint Aung (Part-2) |
| 08:47 Pm | Myanmar Masterclass: Artist Pann Kyi |

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm~ 03:00 Am)-Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(21-2-2016, Sunday)

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 6:00 pm | • Wut Hmone Music Troupe | 8:10 pm | • Dramatic Arts |
| 6:15 pm | • Myanmar Video | 9:10 pm | • Sing & Enjoy |
| 7:40 pm | • Game For Children | 10:00 pm | • Myanmar Movie |
| 8:00 pm | • Musical Programme | Midnight | • Close Down |

From 21.2.2016 (Sunday) 06:00 Pm
To 22.2.2016 (Monday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

United States, Canada book Rio Olympic berths



USA forward Alex Morgan (13) dribbles against Trinidad & Tobago defender Arin King (5) in the first half during the semifinals of the 2016 CONCACAF women's Olympic soccer tournament at BBVA Compass Stadium Stadium in Houston, TX, USA, on 19 February. PHOTO: REUTERS

HOUSTON — Striker Alex Morgan scored a hat-trick as the United States booked a place in the Rio Olympic women's soccer tournament with a 5-0 demolition of Trinidad and Tobago in a semi-final at the CONCACAF qualifying tournament in Houston on Friday.

Canada, boosted by two goals from Christine Sinclair, also earned a ticket to Rio with a 3-1 win over Costa Rica in the other semi-final.

The US and Canada will meet in Sunday's final, but the mission has already been accomplished by both teams, with Olympic qualifying the top priority.

The US have dominated Olympic women's soccer, winning four of the five gold medals

since the event was added to the programme in 1996. Their only loss came in the final against Norway in 2000.

The Americans were barely tested on Friday by a completely outclassed Trinidad and Tobago team grappling with a porous defence.

In the early game, Sinclair was the star of the show for Canada, opening the scoring in the 18th minute before adding a stunning second in the 52nd minute.

Costa Rica pulled one back from the penalty spot, before 16-year-old Deanne Rose put the game out of reach of the Costa Ricans with a late goal to put Canada, bronze medallists at the 2012 London Games, into the final.—Reuters

Farah wants ban for countries that break doping rules

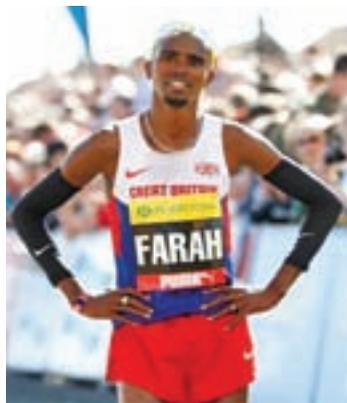
LONDON — Athletics must make "an example" of countries that do not follow doping rules, said Britain's double world and Olympic champion Mo Farah on Friday.

Sebastian Coe, head of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), has said the governing body will suspend nations that damage the sport's reputation.

The IAAF could ban Kenya's track and field team from this year's Rio Olympics if the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) finds the country non-compliant.

Kenya, which topped the medals table at the 2015 world championships, has had more than 40 athletes banned for doping in the past three years, putting it in the crosshairs of the drive to eliminate systematic cheating and corruption.

The African country missed last week's WADA deadline to implement new regulations and



Great Britain's Mo Farah. PHOTO: REUTERS

its sports minister said on Friday the nation wanted two more months to show it had cleaned up its act, hoping to avoid the risk of an Olympic ban.

Farah, who competes with their distance runners, was asked at a news conference if the absence of Kenya would devalue the Games.

"If we didn't have Kenya

then it makes it easier for me which is great," he replied. "But at the same time you don't want to wish (that) on any athlete who has not done anything wrong."

"As a country they just have to follow the rules and if they can't follow the rules then tough on them...we have to set an example."

The Somalia-born Farah, due to run over 3,000 metres at the Glasgow Indoor Grand Prix on Saturday, won the 5,000-10,000 double at the 2012 London Olympics and at the 2013 and 2015 world championships.

He also said he would not allow the threat of the Zika virus, which is widespread in Brazil and linked to birth defects, to stop him enjoying the Olympics with his family.

At London 2012 his wife Tania and step-daughter Rihanna joined him on the track to celebrate his 10,000 triumph.—Reuters

Wie wishes women's major staged in Asia

SINGAPORE — American golfer Michelle Wie said she would like to see one of the five women's major championships staged in Asia.

The region's heavy interest in the women's game, buoyed by the number of local players at the top of the world rankings, is reflected with seven events on the LPGA schedule in Asia, including the HSBC Women's Champions in Singapore from 3-6 March.

But the 26-year-old Korean-American said she would like Asia to get in on the major scene, which was boosted to five in 2013 when the French-based Evian Championship joined the British Open and three American hosted elite championships.

"I think the HSBC tournament is always a really strong field. The players always love to come to Singapore," she told local-based reporters in a call on Saturday when asked if the tournament featuring all of the top 10 merited major billing.

"I think whether or not it should be a major tournament is really not in our hands. The LPGA takes in to consideration a lot of guidelines regarding that."

"It would be nice to see Asia have a major championship. Some things need to happen for that, you never know... it would be really nice to see."

Wie won a breakthrough major at the 2014 US Open but said she has struggled for fitness since and now sits 33rd in the world rankings.

She said she had spent the off-season working to improve her health and was targeting



Michelle Wie reacts on the ninth hole during the final round of the US Women's Open at Lancaster Country Club, Lancaster, PA, USA. PHOTO: REUTERS

a drive back up the rankings and spot on the US team for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August.

"I'm really excited about 2016. 2015 was tough with injuries so my number one goal is to stay healthy and have a season where everything is great and I feel healthy and injury free," said the former teen prodigy who turned professional at 15 to much fanfare.

"I took a big chunk of the off-season off to try and get my body right and my swing to where it doesn't really hurt me."

"My number two goal is to win majors and make big teams. Those are the goals I have." —Reuters

Errani, Strycova reach Dubai women's tennis final

DUBAI — Italian elite player Sara Errani and Barbora Strycova from Ukraine won Friday their semifinals of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2016 against Elina Svitolina and Caroline Garcia, respectively.

Errani ended the winning streak of the 21-year-old Svitolina from Ukraine, scoring in 6-4, 6-4.

Errani, 28, who ranks 22nd in the WTA, told Xinhua after the quarterfinals that she does not think too much of the game

or the set, "but I always fight for the next point and fight for every ball."

France's Garcia, ranked 15th, and Strycova, ranked 48th, delivered a breathtaking semifinal on the center court of the not very crowded Dubai Duty Free Tennis stadium at the Aviation Club which the Ukrainian decided for herself by scoring 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Strycova, dressed completely in yellow, said after the match: "In the last games I threw all my energy on the court.

I made three good services and it is amazing to be in the final. I had nothing to lose."

"I will give my best and I try to enjoy it. I still have energy left in my legs," she said.

Strycova, aged 29 and 10 centimetres smaller than her 1.74 meter tall French opponent, fell to the ground in the third set at 1-1 for a net fight, but managed to keep her spirit and playing speed high throughout the match. The final will take place on Saturday at 7pm local time.—Xinhua