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STRENGTH OF THE PEOPLE

Myanmar to be made strong by using the strength of the people to push foreign policy

FOREIGN Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Friday stressed the importance of people-to-people engagement regarding the formulation of foreign policy, saying that the best relations between different countries can be fostered by the peoples of those countries.

At a meeting with diplomats both from at home and abroad in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday she said the government would adopt a people centered policy, emphasising the relations between the peoples of nations, creating friendly and cooperative relations between them.

Clarifying the country's foreign policy, she recalled that since the country regained independence in 1948 it has adopted an independent, non-aligned and active foreign policy direction, dealing closely and warmly with not only neighbouring countries but also the nations of the world.

She also pledged that Myanmar would actively participate in regional and international arena while working for its development.

Regarding the approach to issues in the world, Myanmar will be able to approach problems with sincerity, goodwill and genuine friendship despite not being a powerful country, she said.

She emphasised the strategic location of Myanmar in Southeast Asia and South Asia, as the country is geopolitically important despite being faced with many challenges.

The government is trying to build the country to be as strong as possible, taking into consideration the people of the union as a



Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi clarifies the foreign policy to diplomats. PHOTO: AUNG SHINE Oo

source of strength.

"Economic development and social development can come only if the people become actively involved in building up a nation," she said, "we, our government, cannot do it on our own without the participation of the people."

She also stressed the importance of diplomacy, saying that diplomats must ensure that people get to know one another in a friendly and cooperative way, adding that diplomacy is the ability to make differences to come together for the harmony of all.

Asked about the money laundering issue in Myanmar, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi replied that the government is combating money laundering in all aspects, pledging that the government would take further action to eliminate any and all money laundry in the

country.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's official meeting with foreign diplomats in her capacity as foreign minister is the first after the new National League for Democracy (NLD) government took office on 1 April.—GNLM

Meteorologist cautions against atmospheric instability threats nationwide



A girl collects hailstones in Sagaing. PHOTO: YEYINT MYAT' FACEBOOK

ATMOSPHERIC instability can trigger rain clouds in the late afternoon in most parts of the country from 21 to 24 April, according to a weather expert.

U Tun Lwin, former director general of the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, said that the formation of rain clouds will be accompanied by thunder, lightning,

heavy rain and strong wind in many regions and states.

Strong rain clouds will come with lightning strikes, hailstones and tornados, with the meteorologist warning of possible deaths and damage to property.

Heavy rain and strong wind struck Pyin Oo Lwin in Mandalay Region on 21 April, bringing down big trees on

houses. Local police estimated the cost of damage at K1.3 million (US\$1,100).

In Monywa the same day, a girl in her early twenties was struck by lightning and subsequently while she was talking on the phone, witnesses said, adding that a branch from a tree fell on a couple, killing the wife and injuring the husband.

Yesterday massive hail-

stones fell in Mandalay and Sagaing regions, reaching a record high unmatched in 50 years.

U Tun Lwin expected adverse meteorological conditions to continue until the end of May, cautioning that the thundery development would be associated with squall, gale, downburst and tornado.—Myanmar News Agency

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker meets Georgian, Spanish chargés d' affaires a.i.

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint received chargés d' affaires a.i. of two foreign embassies in Myanmar separately in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Speaker held separate talks with Chargé d' Affaires a.i. M. Levan Machavariani of the

Embassy of Georgia at 12.30 pm and Chargé d' Affaires a.i. Mr. Alberto Cerezo Sobrino of the Embassy of Spain at 1 pm at a hall of Pyithu Hluttaw Building.

Also present were officials of Pyithu Hluttaw Office.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Speaker U Win Myint welcomes Chargé d' Affaires a.i. Mr. Alberto Cerezo Sobrino of the Embassy of Spain. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar, Israel to strengthen media cooperation

Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint received a courtesy call from Israeli Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Daniel Zonshine at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Their discussion focused on

bilateral cooperation in media development of both countries.

At the call, Dr Pe Myint was accompanied by Permanent Secretary U Tint Swe and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint holds talks with Israeli Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Daniel Zonshine. PHOTO: MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets foreign ambassadors, chargé d' affaires a.i.



Mann Win Khaing Than receives Czech Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Jaroslav Dolecek. PHOTO: MNA

SPEAKER of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than received ambassadors and chargé d' affaires a.i. of foreign embassies in Myanmar separately yesterday.

The Speaker met Qatari Am-

bassador to Myanmar Mr. Hassan Bin Mohamed Rafei Al-Emadi, Spanish Chargé d' Affaires a.i. Mr. Alberto Cerezo Sobrino and Czech Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Jaroslav Dolecek at a hall of Amyotha Hluttaw Building in

Nay Pyi Taw.

Also present were Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung and officials of Amyotha Hluttaw Office.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Public toilets to be installed in Mandalay

THE Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC) is planning to install public toilets at busy locations in Mandalay as one of the present government's activities in its first 100-day period.

Despite the committee's intention to implement the plan earlier, the lack of places for the public toilets is hampering implementation of the plan, said U Tun Kyi, member of the MCDC.

Mobile toilets are available

to be set up at public areas including along the roadsides for public use, he added.

According to MCDC, public toilet facilities have been built at the foot of Mandalay Hill, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, Theikpan Road and Taungthaman Lake.

Although works are underway to install mobile toilets or to build public toilet infrastructure at some places around the moat, it is still hard to find land plots for the facilities, according to the

committee. We are focusing on the installment of mobile toilets along the road surrounding the moat for tourists and those who always take a walk along the ring road, said Vice-Mayor U Nyunt Maung. The committee has a plan to install four- or two-room public toilets depending on land acquisition, added the vice-mayor who He did not mention how many public toilets will be installed in busy locations around the city.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

District administration duties assigned to director-level service personnel

DIRECTOR-level service personnel have been appointed deputy commissioners for district administration in the time of the new government, according to a staff officer of the General Administration Department.

The deputy commissioner posts were assigned to deputy directors in the time of the previous government, said the staff officer, adding that they were appointed the heads of township

GADs now.

According to the Article 288 of the Constitution, administration of district and township level shall be assigned to the civil service personnel.

The previous government created supporting committees in districts and townships while promising that they were vesting the responsibility of the administration of districts or townships in civil service personnel in accord-

ance with the Constitution.

Supporting committees were not working successfully as no power was vested in the committees, it has been reported by the new government.

In the final monthly radio speech by the former President he called for amendments to the Constitution to ensure public participation in the country's lower-level administration mechanism.—*Mang Ngai*

Mt.Popa wildfire engulfs MRTV relay station causing K4 million damage

A WILDFIRE on Mt.Popa engulfed a relay station belonging to Myanmar Radio and Television and causing K4 million in damages, according to a local fire station.

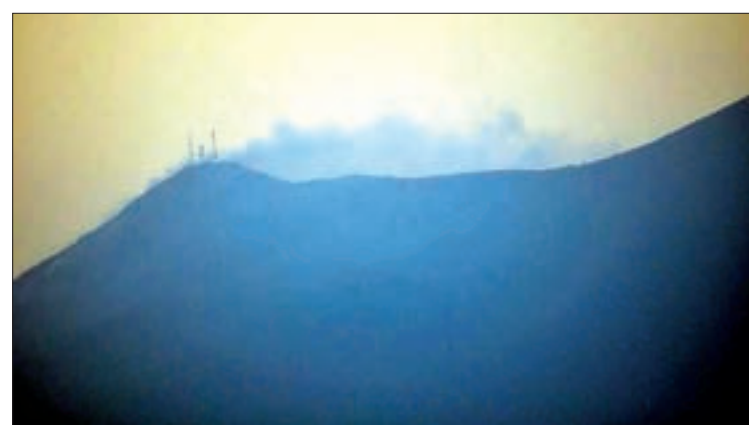
Local sources said that firefighters, Tatmadawmen, police officers, departmental personnel

and local people fought the wildfire for several hours, creating a fire line which was 15-foot wide to halt the advance of the blaze.

The wildfire broke out at the top of the mountain at an altitude of 4,981 feet above sea level about 4.30 pm on Wednesday and it was put out at around 10 am

the following day after sweeping over the mountain.

The local fire station said that the fire destroyed a building, solar panels, batteries, power generator and two sets of air-conditioners, causing a loss of around K4 million.—*Aung Thant Khaing*



Forest fire on Mt Popa. PHOTO: SUPPLIED



Farmers plant rice in an irrigated field in Sagaing. PHOTO: MYITMAKA NEWS AGENCY

100,000 acres of land put under cultivation of summer paddy

OVER 100,000 acres of land have been put under cultivation of summer paddy in Sagaing Region, according to the regional Department of Agriculture.

Farmers in the region are expected to plant a total of 372,774 acres of summer paddy this year, 136,852 acres of which have already been planted this April.

“We were late in planting our monsoon paddy last year because of flooding caused by torrential rains. This year, however, and the regional departments of agriculture, settlement and land

records, irrigation and industry joined forces on 19 February to irrigate and plant summer paddy due to its short lifespan,” said U Thein Win, the head of the Sagaing Region Department of Agriculture.

The principal districts of Sagaing Region where summer paddy is cultivated are Yinmabin, Monywa, Shwebo, Mawleik, Sagaing, Katha, Kalay, Hkamti and Tamu.

“Summer paddy is still being planted this month. Some farmers have finished planting.

We’ve had no issues with water supply for irrigation, though. The only reason we haven’t finished planting is because we were late in ploughing our fields,” said Ko Yan Lay, a Shwebo resident.

Among the paddy plantations Sagaing Region, 10,736 acres have been planted in Hkamti, 33 acres in Tamu, 3,326 acres in Kalay, 10,920 acres in Mawleik, 74,798 acres in Shwebo, 10,507 acres in Sagaing, 1,277 acres in Yinmabin and 251 acres in Monywa.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Heat stroke claims six lives in Mandalay

HEAT stroke has claimed the lives of six people in Mandalay Region between April 1-19, with forty people currently receiving medical treatment, according to the Mandalay General Hospital.

“Unlike previous years, this year has seen some very extreme temperatures. The current cases of heat stroke are being felt even more in rural regions. The public must take great care from now until the middle of June. The elderly especially need to take care during this period [of sweltering weather].” said Dr Win Naing,

head of the aforementioned Department of Health.

It is known that heat stroke awareness campaigns – in the form of dissemination of information through loud speakers and public lectures, together with the erecting of signboards and vinyl posters – are being carried out in the Mandalay Region townships of Myittha, Kyaukse, Thazi, Nyaung Oo and Meiktila which have been most affected by victims of heat stroke.

The temperature in the city of Mandalay on Wednesday reached a scorching 43 degree

centigrade, according to regional Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

The fatality rate of heat stroke victims within Mandalay Region during the summer months began to augment from 1995 when an average of seven heat stroke fatalities were recorded daily. Since May 2010, a total of 120 people have died from heat stroke across the country with as many as six-hundred people receiving medical treatment, according to Mandalay General Hospital.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar sailor dies on cargo ship in Viet Nam

A MYANMAR crew member on the Korean-flagged Loihope cargo ship was found dead yesterday, having apparently fallen into the ship’s cargo hold.

According to Viet Nam News the man was indentified as Thi Ha Tun.

The Đà Nẵng-based Maritime Co-ordination and Rescue Centre No. 2 (MRCC2) said they received a message from the ship’s agent at around 12.20pm on Wednesday notifying them that the victim had fallen and lost

consciousness on the Loihope ship, located 130 nautical miles off the Đà Nẵng coast.

A rescue ship from the centre was dispatched, transporting two doctors from the city’s medical emergency centre. The rescue ship located the cargo ship two hours after leaving the centre’s port.

Doctors discovered upon arrival that the victim had died two hours before.

The rescue ship took the corpse to the city’s General Hospital.—*GNLM*

Renovation of King Udumbara memorial grounds in Mandalay slated for completion in six months

RENOVATION works on the Udumbara memorial ground at Linzin hillock in Amarapura Township, Mandalay is slated for completion within six months according to archaeologist U Win Maung (Tampawady).

Renovations kicked off yesterday on the memorial ground where the tomb of King Udumbara of Thailand is believed to have been built more than 230 years ago.

The works resumed on one-acre land following the approval of the Mandalay City Development Committee that had banned the works started in 2013 to restore the

resting-place of the Thai monarch as a memorial ground on four-acre land with the use of the fund from Thailand.

We can return to renovate the site as Sitagu Sayadaw requested the former President and the previous Mandalay Region government to grant permission to resume the renovation works as a token of improving Thailand-Myanmar relations, said the archaeologist.

He added that renovation works include 15 structures including a stupa built by King Udumbara and tombs of the King and his relatives.—*Aung Thant Khaing*



King Udumbara memorial ground is seen in Amarapura. PHOTO: ATK

ADB Japan to lend aid to Chin State communities

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$10 million grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction to rebuild cyclone-damaged community infrastructure and restore livelihoods in villages in Chin state—the poorest and most remote part of Myanmar.

The project will upgrade rural roads in seven target townships in the north of Chin State, using a “build-back-better” approach to withstand future dis-

asters and cope with climate change. Power systems will be repaired in 25 villages, water supply infrastructure upgraded in 44 villages, and inundated farmland reclaimed. The capacity building component of the project will focus on upgrading disaster risk management systems at the district, township and village levels, and help state and local government officials, civil society organisations and communities to identify risks and pri-

oritise risk reduction measures.

“The devastating floods and landslides in June and July 2015 left a trail of destruction across Chin state where many communities remain isolated because of widespread road damage and long-term power and water supply interruptions,” said Winfried Wicklein, director of ADB’s country office in Myanmar. “This Japan-supported assistance will work with affected communities to restore damaged assets cru-

cial to their livelihoods, as well as strengthen their disaster resilience for the future.”

Local labor will be used, where feasible, to carry out the repair and restoration work, boosting local incomes and providing a cash infusion to participating villages. The project design reflects lessons learned from recent disasters in Myanmar and other countries in the region; it is deliberately simple and flexible to better respond to on-the-ground

needs and to ensure greater efficiency in management, procurement and implementation, it is reported. The project will run for about 3 years, with an estimated completion date of April 2019.

More than 130 people died and around 1.6 million were displaced from their homes as a result of the floods and landslides triggered by Cyclone Komen in June and July 2015, causing estimated damage and losses of around \$1.5 billion.—*GNLM*

LOCAL Business

High selling demand stabilises FMI shares at K32,000

AN increase in the selling of FMI shares on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) has resulted in the price per share to stabilise at K32,000, according to the YSX.

The price of FMI shares on the YSX began to appreciate in value prior to the Thingyan period, with the trading of shares stabilizing in the wake of the holiday period.

“The price per share has been stable until now due to higher customer demand for the selling of shares than for the purchasing of them. With the reopening today [April 21] of the YSX, a total of just 5,047 shares are being traded,” state U Thet Htun Oo, executive senior manager of the Yangon Stock

Exchange Administration Department.

The trading of FMI shares commenced on 25 March with an initial price per share of K26,000. But, the flurry of trading of the shares caused their value to fluctuate, with a share fetching K41,000 on March 30, before depreciating to K30,000 the following day. The reopening of the YSX on April 21 has seen shares prices stabilize at K32,000 each.

Shares of the six listed companies on YSX will be sold through the third party securities companies of KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities, Myanmar Securities Exchange Center, AYA Trust Securities, CB Se-

curities and KTZRH Securities.

The YSX officially opened for trading on 9 December 2015 and is jointly owned by the Myanmar Economic Bank, who has a fifty-one per cent stake in the exchange, and the Japanese Stock Exchange Committee and Japan Daiwa Company, who share ownership of the remaining forty-nine percent.

The six listed companies which have been permitted to sell stocks on the YSX are FMI, Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings, Myanmar Citizens Bank, First Private Bank Limited, Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation and the Great Hor Kham Public Company.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



A boy reads a newspaper in front of the Yangon Stock Exchange center in Yangon. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rubber prices appreciate with harvest shortfalls

THE decline in harvest outputs of rubber latex in Myanmar this April has had a knock-on effect, appreciating the price of the commodity, according to those involved in the rubber industry.

A pound of Ribbed Smooth Sheet (RSS3) rubber during March fetched approximately K650, rising in the month of April to K700 for the same quantity, due to the decline in the quantity of rubber that could be harvested because of high temperatures.

“The amount of latex that can be tapped has declined in the wake of South East Asia being confronted by the El Nino weather front. Latex can’t be harvested from rubber trees when they become hot. It means the price of rubber has appreciated as there hasn’t be no depre-

ciation in demand from buyers,” said U Khaing Myint, general secretary of the Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA).

The tapping of latex from rubber trees ceases during the autumnal months of January and February, while the quantity of tapped latex in the months that follow is habitually reduced. The extreme heat wave which has swept the region, however, has only exacerbated this shortfall.

“The weather in Mon State is still normal for this time of year, yet the amount of tapped latex is significantly reduced. Some rubber plantation owners have stopped tapping their rubber trees altogether. This kind of abandonment of rubber crops is widespread,” said Naing Chan Yit, chair of the Mon State Rub-

ber Entrepreneurs Association.

The amount of tapped latex in Mon State this April is just a third of the quantity which was tapped in August 2015. On top of this, the industry is also currently suffering for a scarcity of skilled rubber workers.

The acreage of rubber plantations across the country in the 2015-16 fiscal comprised of 1.6 million acres, with neighbouring China as the main purchaser. The previous years have seen a gradual decline in the amount of rubber exported to foreign countries, from over 90,000 tonnes in the 2009-10 fiscal year, down to 78,000 tonnes during 2013-14, while the MRPPA is hoping to increase those figures this year aiming for over 80,000 tonnes of rubber exports.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Merchants in Magwe see record tomato profits

FRUIT and vegetable brokers in Yenangyaung Township of Magwe Region are reportedly seeing handsome profits as a result of tomato sales this season, according to experts in the local market.

Local merchants mainly trade in tomatoes produced in Inle, Shan State, as there are no tomato growers in the township due to the effects of El Niño this season.

During a normal season regional tomato growers from Yenangyaung and Pwintphyu townships attract a high number of

local consumers, beating out Inle produce.

A consumer shared her appraisal of the situation, “The size of a typical Inle tomato on the market is very small. I think it is unable to reach its mature size because of the effects of El Niño.”

“The selling price for tomatoes in the market was K400 per viss (approximately 1.6 kilograms) at the end of March. The price has nearly tripled in recent days,” one local broker said.—*SS/Union Daily*

Malaysian manufacturers to invest in Thilawa SEZ

MALAYSIA-based Kian Joo Group, the largest packaging Company in the ASEAN region, plans to invest around US\$23 million to establish two plants in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone on the outskirts of the country’s commercial hub Yangon, it has been learned.

The Kian Joo Group is the first can maker in the region, producing a large volume of different forms of packing items including metal/steel/aluminum/tin cans, boxes, PET bottles, container, can end, and contract packing of milk powder and other drink products.

The new plants will mainly produce different forms of cartons and cans, said Mr Ooi Teik Huat, chief financial officer of the group.

He continued to say that Myanmar’s economic growth is getting stronger and stronger, which may help manufacturers meet more ambitious development goals.

Industrial production in the zone is projected to increase in the near future mostly due to foreign manufacturers, this is the main reason for the company stepping up its expansion into the country, he added.

The 396-hectare Zone-A of the Thilawa SEZ, which is located 25 kilometers southeast of Yangon, is being implemented in two phases. Initiated in late November 2013, the first phase comprising 211 hectares was put into operation in September.—*PPN/Union Daily*

Price of RSS-3 rubber increases in local market

THE price of RSS-3 rubber has increased to K680 from K550 per pound in the domestic market as the export sector is receiving more demand for the product this month, rubber producers say.

There are two types of Sheet Rubber in the international market, namely the Ribbed Smoked Sheets (RSS) and the Air Dried Sheets (ADS). Between them, RSS is the most popular. The different grades of RSS rubber are RSS IX, RSS 1, RSS 2, RSS 3, RSS 4 and RSS 5.

Local growers may be able to sell rubber for over US\$1,500 per tonne and export prices are mainly relying on the local market and the price of the dollar, a grower said.

Over the 2014-2015 financial year nearly one tonne of rubber were exported to partner countries, with a price ranging from \$1300 to \$1400 per tonne.

Currently, rubber growers are facing challenges in breaking into the global market. For lack of available technology, the majority of rubber plantations in the country is of a poor quality.

Total rubber acreage in Myanmar has now reached approximately 1.43 million acres.

China is the largest buyer of Myanmar rubber. Products are also exported to Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam and South Korea.—*MLT/Union Daily*

South Korea train derails killing engineer, injuring eight

SEOUL — A South Korean passenger train derailed near the southern city of Yeosu on Friday, killing an engineer and injuring eight others, the railway operator said.

The locomotive and four of the train's seven passenger cars derailed on a section of track undergoing maintenance as it approached Yulchon station, about 350 km (200 miles)

south of Seoul, the national railway operator Korail said in a statement.

The train was likely speeding as it entered a curved section, Yonhap news agency said, quoting railway officials on the scene.

An official at the Transport ministry's Railway Police declined to comment on the cause of the accident which took place around

3:40am (1840 GMT), citing an ongoing investigation.

There were 27 people on board the overnight train that departed Seoul late on Thursday, including 22 passengers and three cabin crew members, Korail said.

The train's second engineer was hurt seriously and remains hospitalised, while seven passengers suffered minor injuries. —Reuters



Employees of Korea Railroad Corp (KORAIL) examine the derailed Mugunghwa train in Yeosu, South Korea, on 22 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sri Lanka seeks WHO status as malaria free nation

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka has steadily reduced the number of malaria cases and has applied for World Health

Organisation (WHO) certification on malaria-free status, the government information department said in a statement here on Friday.

Dr. Kapila Jayaratne, National Programme Manager of Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Surveillance of the Family

Health Bureau, said that Sri Lanka had reduced malaria cases from over 400,000 in 1991 to zero cases by November 2012, sustaining this achievement to date in spite of the nearly three decades of conflict between government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels.

He added that Sri Lanka would be celebrating the fourth consecutive year of no malaria but

there are high risk groups which pose a threat to the island nation.

These include Sri Lankan businessmen and traders who travel frequently to India and other neighbouring countries, Sri Lankans engaged in the gem business in African countries like Madagascar and Mozambique and Sri Lankan military personnel returning from peace-keeping missions in

the African region.

Certification of malaria elimination is the official recognition of malaria free status granted by WHO.

The final decision on granting certification is made by the WHO Director-General. Countries are expected to continue reporting on an annual basis to WHO on the maintenance of the malaria-free status.—Xinhua

Taiwan court upholds death sentence for metro attacker

TAIPEI — A Taiwan court on Friday upheld the death sentence for Cheng Chieh, who was convicted of murder and multiple attempts to kill in a subway knife attack in 2014.

Taiwan's supreme court rejected Cheng's second appeal. The defendant had no psychological or mental problems when he committed the crime, said

the court. Cheng, a 21-year-old college student at that time, stabbed passengers at random on a moving subway train in Taipei, killing four and injuring 22 others in the span of four minutes on 21 May, 2014. He was arrested at the scene.

He had been sentenced to death in the previous two trials in March and October last year.—Xinhua

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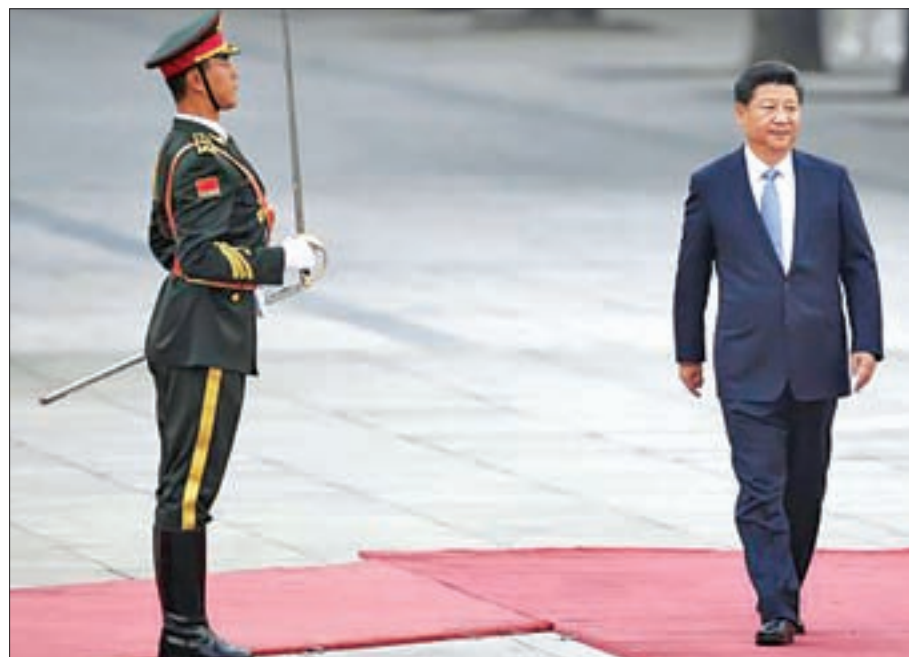
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China's Xi takes up new military title as part of reforms process



China's President Xi Jinping attends a welcoming ceremony outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, on 14 October 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping has been appointed commander-in-chief of a new joint command headquarters for China's military, state media said, part of an on-going reform programme to modernise the world's largest armed forces.

Xi already oversees the People's Liberation

Army in his role as head of the powerful Central Military Commission, and has now been appointed commander-in-chief of the commission's Joint Command Headquarters, state media said this week.

Xi announced the setting up of the new headquarters in November, a move previously flagged by

the military which is meant to help coordination between different parts of the defence system.

China has been moving rapidly to upgrade its military hardware, but operational integration of complex and disparate systems across a regionalised command structure is a major challenge. In the past, re-

gional level military commanders have enjoyed latitude over their forces and branches of the military have remained highly independent, making it difficult to exercise the centralised control necessary to use new weapons systems effectively in concert. Xi told officers at the headquarters they must have a clear sense of crisis and focus their skills, state media said.

"We will take special measures to train professionals for joint operations ... and speed up the development and deployment of advanced technologies," Xi, dressed in camouflaged military uniform, said.

The headquarters needs also to streamline operational procedures and share experiences with regional joint commands, Xi added. Xi's push to reform the military coincides with China becoming more assertive in its territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, and as its navy invests in submarines and aircraft carriers and its air force develops stealth fighters.—Reuters

Landless quake victims missing out as Nepal rebuilds: Oxfam

LONDON — A year after the deadly earthquake in Nepal, thousands of people, especially women, are being deprived of funds to rebuild because they do not own land or cannot prove they owned the land where they lived, Oxfam said on Friday.

Nepal's government requires proof of ownership, but many victims have lost documents and others did not formally own the land where they lived, said a report by the international anti-poverty organisation.

The government this month began distributing grants of 200,000 Nepali rupees (\$1,900) to families that can prove they owned land before the earthquake, which struck on 25 April 2015.

The quake killed some 9,000 people, injured more than 22,000 others and damaged or destroyed more than 900,000 houses.

"Families who are landless and who were living on unregistered land are very much uncertain about the future and support that the government had promised," said Prabin Man Singh, research

and policy coordinator for Oxfam, who co-authored the report.

"Those families are the poorest and the most vulnerable among the victims."

Some 3 million people are living in temporary shelters with tarpaulin roofs ahead of Nepal's monsoon season, according to Save the Children, CARE International and other agencies.

Land tenure is largely undocumented in Nepal, and data is limited and contradictory, the Oxfam report said.

It cited one pre-quake government report that said as many as 480,000 families, or 9 per cent of the population, did not have access to land, and another report that said a third of Nepal's farmers did not own the land they cultivated.

The United Nations has said a quarter of Nepalese households — about 1.3 million — did not have any land or enough land to support families.

But Oxfam said that in post-earthquake surveys, more than 90 per cent of people claimed to own their own land before the



A man smokes a cigarette while sitting on top of the debris of houses damaged during the earthquake last year in Bhaktapur, Nepal, on 29 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

disaster.

As reconstruction plans are instituted, Oxfam said women are often excluded because they "are less likely to inherit land, have land registered in their name or

obtain documentation to prove their entitlement."

Under Nepal's constitution adopted last September, women have equal rights to own land. But inheritance laws have kept the

ownership numbers low.

Donors pledged \$4.1 billion for reconstruction after the earthquake, but aid groups have criticised the slow pace of government reconstruction efforts.—Reuters

In China's shadow, Southeast Asia looks to replace ageing fighter jets



Norway's Air Force F-16 fighters (R) and Italy's Air Force Eurofighter Typhoon fighters patrol over the Baltics during a NATO air policing mission from Zokniai air base near Siauliai, Lithuania, on 20 May 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

SINGAPORE / KUALA LUMPUR — With an eye on China's more muscular stance in the South China Sea, Southeast Asian governments are stepping

up efforts to replace ageing fighter aircraft fleets, paving the way for multi-billion dollar deals in a boon for warplane makers.

Despite tight budgets across

the region, sales executives say they are busier than ever after a five-year lull — and both industry and government sources say the next months could see sever-

al multi-billion dollar deals from Malaysia to Viet Nam.

A trade conference held in Kuala Lumpur this week thronged with would-be buyers and salesmen from Russian, French, British, Chinese, Pakistani and American firms. Held every other year, attendees reported it was busier than ever.

A prime drawcard was one of the region's biggest prizes: Malaysia, which is set to finally replace its Russian 1990s-era MiG-29 fighters after several years of delays.

Industry sources say Kuala Lumpur could buy up to 18 jets, a deal potentially worth more than \$2.5 billion (1.7 billion pounds).

Options include the Saab Gripen, the Eurofighter Typhoon, Russian Sukhoi Su-30, and the Sino-Pakistani JF-17. France is optimistic about winning an order for Dassault-built Rafales but other bidders are also hopeful.

"We are hoping to make Malaysia the ninth country to buy the Typhoon," said John Brosnan, who heads the Asian business for

BAE Systems, one of the partners in the Eurofighter consortium.

Malaysia's defence ministry did not respond to requests for comment on the talks.

Viet Nam, eyeing options beyond traditional supplier Russia, is among those next on the buyers list. It has had preliminary talks with Saab and France's Dassault to purchase at least 12 fighter jets, industry sources and a separate source familiar with the government talks said.

"They seem to be keen on moving away from Russia, but it has been dormant so far," said Kaj Rosender, regional director for Gripen exports at Saab. "It looks like the next call will be on Viet Nam."

Industry sources say Viet Nam is also in talks with Moscow over several Su-35s. Officials at Rosoboronexport, Russia's arms export agency, declined to comment on any negotiations.

Vietnamese officials rarely comment on procurement matters, and did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.—Reuters

South Korea rejects DPRK's call for face-to-face contact between 'defectors' and families

SEOUL — South Korea on Friday rejected the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s call for a face-to-face contact in Seoul between 13 DPRK workers who South Korea claimed voluntarily had defected to Seoul and their family members from the DPRK.

South Korea's unification ministry said in a brief statement that the "group defection" of DPRK people having worked in an

overseas restaurant was carried out in a totally accordance with their free will.

The statement said that Seoul cannot accept the demand for face-to-face contact with family members, carried by the DPRK's KCNA news agency in the name of the chief of the central committee of the DPRK Red Cross Society. It was a response to the DPRK's announcement that Pyongyang had

decided to send family members of the 13 DPRK "defectors," who had worked at a restaurant overseas, to Seoul for face-to-face meeting via the truce village of Panmunjom.

According to the KCNA reports, the families remaining in the north requested to meet face-to-face with their daughters who had been abducted by South Korean intelligence officials to Seoul.—Xinhua

Indonesia defends use of death penalty for drug trafficking

JAKARTA — Indonesia on Friday defended its use of the death penalty for drug traffickers, just days after its representative was jeered at a UN narcotics conference, citing a steep rise in demand and consumption in Southeast Asia's most populous country.

Indonesia has faced widespread international criticism for its use of capital punishment, most recently for the high-pro-

file executions of foreign drug traffickers, despite repeated pleas for mercy from governments and international activists.

"Indonesia and like-minded countries ... face diverse challenges in handling drugs and the death penalty is one of the options based on sovereignty of the law in each country," the foreign ministry said in a statement.—Reuters

Record day one signatures expected for Paris climate deal — UN

UNITED NATIONS — A Paris deal to slow climate change is set to be signed by more than 165 countries at the United Nations on Friday, the most states to endorse an international agreement on day one, a record backers hope will inspire swift implementation.

Many states still need a parliamentary vote to formally approve the agreement. It will only enter into force when ratified by at least 55 nations representing 55 per cent of man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon “wants to use the event to generate momentum around implementation and early entry into force of the Paris agreement,” said Selwin Hart, director of Ban’s climate change support team.

Some experts predict the 55 per cent thresholds can be reached this year. The United Nations said 13 countries, mostly small island

developing states, are due to deposit instruments of ratification on Friday.

The United Nations expects some 60 heads of state and government at the signing ceremony. French President Francois Hollande and Hollywood actor and environmental activist Leonardo di Caprio are expected to attend.

The previous first-day record for signatures was set in 1982 when 119 states signed the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

“It’s happening much faster than anyone anticipated or expected,” Hart said. “Independent analysis suggests that at least one of the top four emitters must ratify the agreement” for it to surpass the 55 per cent of emissions threshold.

China and the United States, the world’s top emitters accounting together for 38 per cent of emissions, are due to sign, along with Russia and India, who round

out the top four.

Many developing nations are pushing to ensure the climate deal comes into force this year, partly to lock in the United States if a Republican opponent of the pact is elected president in November.

Even if the pact is fully implemented, promised greenhouse gas cuts are insufficient to limit warming to an agreed maximum, the United Nations says.

The first three months of 2016 have broken temperature records and 2015 was the warmest year since records began in the 19th century, with heat waves, droughts and rising sea levels.

Warm waters have done widespread damage to corals in Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, and sea ice in the Arctic hit a record winter low last month.

“The magnitude of the changes has been a surprise even for veteran climate scientists,” said Petteri Taalas, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organisation.

Jake Schmidt of the Natural Resources Defence Council said the high turnout on Friday “increases the chances that it (the agreement) will enter into force this year.”

President Barack Obama says he does not need Senate approval to ratify the agreement. Once the accord enters into force, a little-noted Article 28 says any nation wanting to withdraw must wait four years, the length of a US presidential term.

“There is a clear cry globally for climate action,” a senior US State Department official said.—*Reuters*



The crew of the US Coast Guard Cutter Healy, in the midst of their ICESCAPE mission, retrieves supplies in the Arctic Ocean on 12 July 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

US split deepens over Putin’s intentions in Syria civil war

WASHINGTON — Russia’s latest military moves in Syria have sharpened divisions within the US administration over whether Russian President Vladimir Putin genuinely backs a UN-led initiative to end the civil war or is using the negotiations to mask renewed military support for Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Russia has repositioned artillery near the disputed city of Aleppo, several US officials told Reuters. Despite withdrawing some fixed-wing aircraft in March, Russia has also bolstered its forces in Syria with advanced helicopter gunships, and renewed airstrikes against moderate opposition groups, said US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Russian reassertion of military backing has prompted some US officials to warn that a

failure to respond would be seen by Moscow as a fresh sign of American timidity. That, they say, could encourage Russia to escalate challenges to US and allied militaries through more provocative Russian air and naval manoeuvres.

They also contend that a US failure to respond would further damage Washington’s relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states seeking to oust Assad, and with Turkey, which has been firing artillery at Islamic State targets in Syria.

The answer, they argue, is stepped-up US support for moderate Syrian rebel factions with more anti-tank missiles and grenade launchers sent through third countries.

However, other officials, including National Security Advisor Susan Rice, have vetoed any

significant escalation of US involvement in Syria, the officials said.

“Rice is the fly in the ointment,” said a person familiar with the internal debate.

Obama himself has long been reluctant to deepen US involvement in the war, saying last October that Washington would not get drawn into a “proxy war” with Moscow. His administration has focused more on pressing the fight against the militant Islamic State group, which controls a swathe of northeastern Syria.

The White House declined comment about any internal debate on Syria or Putin’s intentions.

The United States and other Western nations have struggled to read Putin’s intentions ever since Russian forces launched a surprise deployment in support of Assad last September.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Journalists will not share Panama Papers with US Justice Department

WASHINGTON — The media group that coordinated the Panama Papers investigation into offshore companies said on Thursday it would not participate in a criminal probe by the US Department of Justice.

Preet Bharara, the US Attorney for Manhattan, wrote to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists seeking additional information from the group to aid his investigation into tax avoidance claims, the *Guardian* reported on Tuesday.

The group on Thursday told prosecutors in Bharara’s office that it would not release unpublished data to them. “ICIJ, and its parent organisation the Center for Public Integrity, are media organisations shielded by the First Amendment and other legal protections from becoming an arm of law enforcement,” said Gerard Ryle, director of the consortium, in a press release on the group’s website.—*Reuters*

Germany arrests two teenagers suspected of bombing Sikh temple

BERLIN — Three people were injured in a bomb attack at a Sikh temple in western Germany, police said on Thursday, adding that two 16-year-olds arrested after the attack appeared to have Islamist backgrounds.

“We must act on the assumption that it was a terrorist attack, religiously tainted terrorism of the Islamist scene,” said Frank Richter, police chief in the city of Essen, where the attack took place last weekend. One of the suspects handed himself in after police released footage showing two young men carrying backpacks in which investigators believe they hid explosives used in the attack.

The second suspect was arrested in a police raid.

Both teenagers were born and raised in Germany, German media reported. One of the three people injured was in a serious but not life-threatening condition, police said.—*Reuters*

Solar plane resumes global tour after 9-month suspension

NEW YORK — A solar-powered plane circumnavigating the globe departed from Hawaii Thursday morning for the US West Coast, resuming its globe-trotting tour after a hiatus of more than nine months.

Solar Impulse 2, carrying Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard, left Kalaeloa airport outside Honolulu and is expected to arrive in Moffett airfield in Mountain View, California, following a 62-hour flight.

The around-the-world trip is being undertaken without a drop of fuel. The aircraft, operated by two alternating pilots, started its journey from the United Arab Emirates’ capital Abu Dhabi in March last year.—*Kyodo News*

Iran denounces US court ruling on blocked assets

TEHRAN — Iran’s foreign minister denounced the recent US Supreme Court ruling which allows the families of American victims of terrorist attacks to recover damages from Iran’s frozen assets in the US banks, the website of state IRIB reported on Friday.

On Thursday, the United States Supreme Court ruled the transfer of nearly two billion US dollars to the American victims of terrorist attacks, including the 1983 truck bombing of a Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon.

Investigators of the court concluded that Iran was responsible for that attack, which Iran has denied.

“The US government knows well that we do not recognise this ruling,” Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif was quoted as saying. “Every measure against Iran’s assets should be compensated and they should return Iran’s (frozen) assets later,” Zarif said.—*Xinhua*

18 dead in landslides in northeast India

NEW DELHI — At least 18 people died in India’s northeastern Arunachal Pradesh state due to massive landslides triggered by heavy rain, TV reports said on Friday.

The landslides occurred on Thursday evening in the state’s Tawang district.

According to district officials, as many as 15 bodies have been recovered and two or three more are still trapped under debris.

Rescuers are working to clear the debris and recover the bodies, but are being hampered due to the continuing heavy rain.—*Kyodo News*

OPINION

Comprehensive youth policy is critical to national development

Kyaw Thura

The involvement of youth in nation building has been the centre of serious discussions aimed at national development. Apart from the current and future workforce of the country, the recognition of their role as the leaders of tomorrow and the partners of today has gained widespread acceptance. It is, therefore, safe to say that young people are crucial agents of change and progress

in an inclusive democracy.

On the one hand, it is undeniable that the involvement of young people in gangs and crimes is not small, but on the other it is possible to excuse their wrongful behaviour as youthful exuberance, considering their substantial contribution, devotion and commitment to the future development of the country. Simply put, youth is a phase of life in which revolutionary and creative thoughts spring to mind. It is, therefore, necessary to channel their enthusiasms into the constructive use by encouraging them through motivation and education to realise their full potential in turning the country into a better, safer place.

At the third Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum in Nay Pyi Taw last February, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) urged the previous government to develop a national youth policy to ensure the sustainable development of the country. According to the UN agency, Myanmar is one of 31 countries worldwide that still has no national youth policy.

Statistics show that young people account for an estimated 30% of the population. No doubt, they will fulfill their role as decision makers in next ten to fifteen years. It is absolutely vital for the government and the parliament to soon adopt a comprehensive youth policy on engaging the young generation in enhancing social cohesion, economic growth and political stability in a democratic way.

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Signing on to a more secure and stable world

THE signing of the Paris Agreement in New York on Friday will be a historic event and an important step towards implementing the world's first global climate deal.

A record number of countries is expected to attend: the whole world is committed to turning the promises we made in Paris into concrete action. The Paris spirit is alive and well – and moving forward.

In the past years we had listened to so many gloomy predictions that a universal agreement would be impossible to achieve. Indeed, there were strong reasons for being sceptic. But our faith in diplomacy and multilateral cooperation has paid off. And we must say out loud that Europe has played a crucial role in creating consensus around a 195 countries-strong deal.

tries-strong deal.

In the run up to the Paris climate conference, our Union mobilised its network of 3,000 EU delegations and Member State embassies across the globe. This dialogue with our partner countries, the general public, the business community and civil society organisations has helped us build a global coalition to fight climate change. This is European diplomacy at its very best: working together for the good of Europe and the whole world.

During the conference, Europe was a strong voice for ambition. Our climate diplomacy set up a network of alliances with the group of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. We engaged with both big players and smaller developing countries to aim for the highest level of ambi-

tion. This now famous High Ambition Coalition was the game changer in Paris.

And our work goes on. Paris was just the beginning. Building on the successful alliances we made in the run up to and during Paris will be crucial: we will need each other's help to keep on track towards a global clean energy transition. That is the only way to limit global warming to well below 2°C and limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.

Global temperatures have

all 28 EU foreign ministers have agreed on that. Addressing the direct and indirect security effects of climate change will be an important part of the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy to be presented to the European Council next June.

It is a complex threat, but we already have many of the tools we need to address climate fragility and limit risks to peace. Our partners in the G7 are also working hard to identify concrete areas for action. And yet our

development, health, environment, and also peace.

Our priority now is to go for an early ratification and entry into force of the Paris Agreement. This would send an important signal to the world: European governments are serious about climate change, and we will put into practice what was agreed on paper.

For the same reason, we cannot lose any time in bringing into play the climate action plans we prepared in advance of Paris. We will support our partners across the world as they prepare for implementation, and we will keep engaging with non-State actors such as businesses, cities and many others. Everyone has to play their part in the collective global effort ahead.

It is time to get down to the hard work of delivering on the Paris' promises. We will need the same ambition and shared sense of direction which brought about the deal. Our Union will keep leading the way — as it has always done — towards a greener and safer planet.

**European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Federica Mogherini.**

"The impact of climate change continues to threaten lives and destabilise entire regions."

reached record levels. The impact of climate change continues to threaten lives and destabilise entire regions. Collective action worldwide is more vital than ever.

Desertification and drought foster mass movements of people, spread epidemics and create conflicts for the control of resources. Climate change is already a foreign policy issue: it affects our security right now, not in a distant future.

Tackling this global threat must continue to be at the heart of the European external action —

strategies on climate change, development, humanitarian aid and peace building issues need to be more strongly integrated. All our policies must keep an eye on climate change issues, as suggested by the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

When time is short and financial resources are limited, we cannot afford duplications and inconsistencies. National climate adaptation programmes could identify and promote the co-benefits and synergies with other areas, such as economic and social



Myanmar to take part in international invitational junior Taekwondo tournament

MYANMAR athletes will participate in an international invitational junior Taekwondo tournament to be held in May, said U Kyaw Than Oo, the coach of Myanmar Taekwondo Federation.

He added; "With the aim

of getting experience during the contest as well as preparation to compete in the 2017 Southeast Asian Games in Malaysia, the federation decided to send local athletes to the international event."

Currently six junior athletes have been trained under the directive of federation to bag prizes in the contest.

Athletes from Asia and Southeast Asia will also take part in the contest.—200

Myanmar mountaineers arrive at Mt Everest camp I

THREE Myanmar climbers are currently trying to reach the peak of Mount Everest, the earth's highest mountain, located in the Mahalangur mountain range in Nepal and Tibet. The climbers have now arrived at camp I yesterday.

Last month the climbers Nyi Nyi Aung, Win Ko Ko and Pyae Phyoe Aung, selected by members of the Technical Climbing Club of Myanmar, initiated the journey to conquer the world's tallest peak at 8,848 meters above sea level.

The team started climbing at the end of March and arrived at base camp on 11 April. The mountaineers reached the 5,800 metre base from their camp on 17 April. They arrived at camp I on Thursday, planning to return to base camp today.

This is their first attempt to reach the top of Mt Everest.

Since 2011, the Technical Climbing Club of Myanmar, one of five active Myanmar climbing organisations, has been established to empower and organise local climbers.

The first recorded efforts



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY TECHNICAL CLIMBING CLUB

to reach Everest's summit were undertaken by British mountaineers.

There are two main climb-

ing routes, one approaching the summit from the southeast in Nepal and the other from the north in Tibet. There will have

been 5,104 ascents to the summit by about 3,142 individuals by the end of the 2010 climbing season.—200

Low-cost housing to emerge in Dagon Seikkan Tsp by 2018

A LOW-cost housing project, which will create 15,000 flats, will be developed in Dagon Seikkan Township, one of Yangon's suburban areas by 2018, it has been learned. The project area will be located on 183-acres of land at the corner of Myananda Street and Shweli Street in the township. Headed by Capital Development Co, Say Paing Construction and the Bagan Business Group will implement the project, which is estimated to be completed within six years.

Yangon Region Government invited tenders for the project last April. Twelve construction companies including major constructors such as Shwe Taung Co, Htoo Construction Co, IGE Group and the Young Entrepreneurs Group participated in the tender process.

The project has been scheduled to line up with the Yangon City Development Committee's plan to distribute tap water to the area.—200

Crime NEWS

Yaba and ice seized in Heho



Suspects seen together with narcotics seized. PHOTO: KO YE

A COMBINED investigation team made up of officers and staff from the Taunggyi police force searched a vehicle being driven by one Ye Min Tun with Tin Nwe Win, Hlaing Swe Oo and Phyoe Wunna Kyaw on board and found 58,000 Yaba pills near milepost 98, Taunggyi- Heho road, on Thursday.

Similarly, police searched the home of one Tun Myat and found raw opium weighing approximately 130 gram and 1682 yaba pills in ward 1, Namhkam town on Wednesday. The police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Ko Ye

Raw opium and Yaba seized in Nawngkhio

A COMBINED investigation team comprising officers and staff from Lashio police force seized 280 yaba pills and raw opium weighing 0.4 grams from a motorbike being driven by Zaw Win Tun with Maung Maung on board near mileposts 80/4, Pyihtaungsu road, Muse- Mandalay road, Nawngkhio entrance gate on Thursday.

On the same day police discovered 230 yaba pills from Tun Zaw Lin on Zaya thuka road, Thingangyun township.

The police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Myanmar Police Force



Suspects being seen. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

Dyna vehicle crashes into train in Thayet

A TRAIN collided with a Dyna vehicle near Ywar Tan Chae village, Thayet town on Wednesday, leaving two injured.

The Dyna vehicle, heading for Thayet from Min Tyi village, were carrying illegal onion. The driver was identified as one Zaw Min Tun, 29, with one Ma Hla Hla Aye, 23, on board. The pair

crashed into a train being driven by U Kyaw Tint when the former crossed the railway tracks between mileposts 276/6 and 276/7.

The accident seriously injured Daw Hla Hla Aye while the driver sustained minor injuries. The driver Zaw Min Tun has been charged by police.—Poukkalay (Thayet)



Police search six young attackers following attempted murder

A FARMER informed local police of an incident following his son suffering serious injury after on assault by six young attackers in front of Shwe Ku pagoda, Pakokku town on Tuesday.

On 16 April, six young attackers on five motorbikes approached Zaw Lin Tun while he was together with his friend on their way home with a motorbike. The victim's motorbike

fell when the attackers crashed into him while he was riding.

The six young attackers assaulted Zaw Lin Tun, cutting him with a blade which they had brought with them before fleeing the scene. The six young suspects were searched by the police for alleged attempt to murder Zaw Lin Tun. Police are still investigating the case.—Kyaw Zayya

UN-sponsored Yemen peace talks begin in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY — Talks aimed at ending Yemen's war opened in Kuwait on Thursday, with Kuwait's top diplomat appealing to both sides to "turn war into peace" after more than a year of conflict which has killed more than 6,200 people and caused a humanitarian crisis.

Yemen's foreign minister warned against high expectations from the UN-sponsored talks, which brought together the Houthi group and its General People's Congress party allies with the Saudi-backed government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The talks, originally scheduled to start on Monday, were delayed over accusations by the Houthi group of truce violations and disagreements over the agenda for the negotiations.

Kuwait's foreign minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah, in an opening speech at Bayan Palace, urged Yemenis to "turn war into peace and backwardness into development".

The talks are based on UN Security Council resolution 2216 which calls for the Houthis to withdraw from areas they seized since 2014 and hand heavy weapons back to the government, UN special envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said.

"The choice today is one of two options: a safe homeland that ensures security for all of its citizens... or remnants of a land whose sons die everyday," Ould



Supporters of the separatist Southern Movement demonstrate to demand the secession of south Yemen, in the southern port city of Aden on 18 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cheikh Ahmed said in an opening speech.

The talks are expected to focus on creating a more inclusive government and restoring state authority over the country, which is now divided between the Houthis and Hadi's administration.

The war has caused a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula. Apart from the more than 6,200 killed, the United Na-

tions says some 35,000 people have been wounded and more than 2.5 million people displaced.

The fighting has also allowed the militant Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State to consolidate their presence in the country next door to the world's top oil exporter.

The United States and the Saudi-led coalition welcomed the start of the talks.

"We urge the parties to fully

engage in good faith in order to end the military conflict immediately and to return to a peaceful political process," State Department spokesman John Kirby said in Washington.

The Saudi-led coalition spokesman, Brigadier-General Ahmed Asseri, speaking to Dubai-based al-Arabia Television, said: "Everybody knows that the way out in the end is political, and the issue will not end through mil-

itary means, and the coalition has no desire to ... prolong the situation."

Ould Cheikh Ahmed outlined five points which he said were derived from UN Security Council resolution 2216 as the basis for the talks, officially dubbed as "consultations".

These included withdrawal from cities seized by the Houthis since the crisis began in 2014, forming a more inclusive government and handing over heavy weapons to the new government.

The chief Houthi negotiator, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, registered his delegation's objections to what he said were continuing air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition and to the five-point agenda outlined by Ould Cheikh Ahmed, saying they were not clear enough.

The crisis began in September 2014 when the Iran-allied Houthis seized the capital Sanaa. A Saudi-led Arab alliance intervened last year, launching a campaign of mostly air strikes against the Houthis in support of Hadi's forces.

The Houthi group and the GPC had accused the Saudi-led coalition and Hadi supporters of failing to honour a truce that began on 10 April, and refused to send their negotiators to Kuwait until the truce was consolidated.

They agreed to join the talks following intervention by the UN Security Council permanent members and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.—Reuters

Guantanamo shrinking but Obama goal of closing prison still elusive

GUANTANAMO BAY US NAVAL BASE — Observed from behind a one-way mirror and heavy chain-link fence, a handful of bearded detainees in baggy t-shirts mill around inside a communal cellblock at the Guantanamo Bay military prison, vastly outnumbered by US troops guarding them.

This is the shrinking world



A 'restraint chair' and other equipment of the type used in force-feeding detainees is seen during a media tour of the Guantanamo Bay military prison at Guantanamo Bay US Naval Base, on 19 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

of America's notorious offshore prison, a scene that underscores how US President Barack Obama is running out of time — and options — to meet his pledge to close the compound before he leaves office in January.

Obama has whittled down the number of prisoners to 80, the lowest since shortly after his predecessor George W. Bush opened the facility to hold terrorism suspects rounded up overseas following the 11 September 2001, attacks.

But the president faces political and legal obstacles that may prove insurmountable in his final push to empty the detention centre at the US naval station in Cuba, according to some US officials in Washington.

Still, there were growing signs during a carefully scripted media tour this week that operations are beginning to wind down at the prison, where many cells now stand empty.

As inmate numbers dwindle — the latest departures being nine Yemenis sent to Saudi Arabia last weekend — participation also has ebbed in what was once a widespread hunger strike.

Fewer than five inmates are being force-fed, the chief medical officer told reporters as he displayed a "restraint chair" of the type where prisoners are strapped down and nasal tubes inserted twice daily.

But the 1,100-strong force of military personnel assigned to secure Guantanamo's far-flung lockups, ranging from communal compounds for well-behaved prisoners to solitary confinement for those considered most dangerous, has remained largely unchanged. That works out to about 14 guards for each current inmate.

Work inside the razor wire is labour-intensive. Squads of guards in protective visors swarmed through an eerily darkened corridor one lunch time, preparing to deliver meals in Camp Six, home to the most cooperative prisoners.

Unaware of being watched and recorded through the sound-proof glass, detainees went about their routines. One waved over a guard and complained about not having enough pens for his artwork, while another sat at a steel table doing paperwork.—Reuters

Russian forces in Syria fired on Israeli military aircraft

JERUSALEM — Russian forces in Syria have fired at least twice on Israeli military aircraft, prompting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seek improved operational coordination with Moscow, Israel's top-selling newspaper said on Friday.

The unsourced report in Yedioth Ahronoth gave no dates or locations for the incidents nor any indication Israeli planes were hit. Russia mounted its military intervention in Syria in September to shore Damascus up amid a now 5-year-old rebellion.

Separately, Israel's Channel 10 TV said a Russian warplane approached an Israeli warplane off the Mediterranean coast of Syria last week but that there was no contact between them.

An Israeli military spokesman declined comment. Netanyahu's office and the Russian embassy in Israel did not immediately respond.

Israel, which has repeatedly bombed Syria to foil suspected

arms handovers to Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas, was quick to set up an operational hotline with Moscow designed to avoid accidentally trading fire with Russian interventionary forces.

Visiting Moscow on Thursday, Netanyahu told Russian President Vladimir Putin in televised remarks: "I came here with one main goal — to strengthen the security coordination between us so as to avoid mishaps, misunderstandings and unnecessary confrontations."

In an apparent allusion to Syria, Putin said: "I think there are understandable reasons for these intensive contacts (with Israel), given the complicated situation in the region." According to Yedioth, the reported Russian fire on Israeli planes was first raised with Putin by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, who visited Moscow on 15 March. At the time, Putin responded that he was unaware of the incidents, Yedioth said.—Reuters

Huge long-necked dinosaurs had big, precocious babies

WASHINGTON — The babies of a huge, long-necked dinosaur called Rapetosaurus that lived on the island of Madagascar did not just sit in a nest and look cute. They were born ready for action.

Scientists on Thursday announced the discovery of fossils of a baby Rapetosaurus the size of a big dog that apparently starved to death during a drought several weeks after hatching from its soccer-ball-sized egg.

Unlike many animal babies, particularly humans, the hatching Rapetosaurus had adult proportions, meaning it likely did not need significant parental support and was actively foraging for plants rather than waiting for momma to feed it.

Such babies are known as “precocial,” as opposed to “altricial” offspring that have different body dimensions from adults, cannot get around by themselves and require considerable parental support for food and protection, Macalester College paleontologist Kristi Curry Rogers said.

“The main conclusion was that this is the first evidence for a truly precocial dinosaur: one that matured rapidly and without pa-



An artist's illustration showing the size comparisons of a newborn dinosaur called Rapetosaurus (2nd from L) that lived on the island of Madagascar to some large-bodied mammalian newborns such as a baby black rhino, African elephant, hippo and dog. PHOTO: REUTERS

rental care,” Adelphi University paleontologist Michael D’Emic added.

Rapetosaurus lived about 67 million years ago, not long before the demise of the dinosaurs, and was the largest creature in Madag-

ascar at the time.

The baby, known from a partial skeleton including limb bones, pelvic bones, fingers, toes and several vertebrae, was probably around 4 feet (1.2 metres) long from head to tail and

weighed between 50 and 90 pounds (23-40 kg) when it died.

An adult Rapetosaurus was probably around 40 feet (12 metres) long, a little more than a school bus, and weighed around 16 tons, roughly 2-1/2 times as

much as an elephant, Curry Rogers said. It was a medium-sized member of a dinosaur group called titanosaurs, which included the largest land animals ever on Earth.

Titanosaurs were part of a larger assemblage of dinosaurs called sauropods, known for their long necks, long tails and voracious appetite for plants.

D’Emic said the researchers looked at the microstructure of the baby’s bones to see preserved cavities that once held cells, blood vessels and nerves. The density and organisation of those indicated a rapidly growing individual, and there was even evidence for bone repair, suggesting an active lifestyle and fast metabolism, D’Emic added.

Examples of precocial animals today include most lizards, snakes and reptiles, certain birds and some large mammals including wildebeest.

“Precocial young can avoid predation on their own, and there is a much smaller chance of the entire brood succumbing to predation at once,” Curry Rogers said.

The research was published in the journal *Science*.—Reuters

Countries on verge of beating malaria face new threat: study

NEW YORK — Nations on the verge of eliminating malaria risk falling short of their goal, just as it lies within reach, due to funding being shifted elsewhere, researchers said on Thursday.

Global aid has moved to areas where malaria remains widespread, while internal domestic funding gets diverted to fighting other diseases perceived as more urgent, said researchers from the University of California, San Francisco, in a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal.

Once a leading cause of death and illness, malaria has been wiped out in half the world’s countries, experts say.

Nations on the verge of elim-

inating the disease include China, Mexico, Turkey and South Africa, the study said.

Overall, such countries where eliminating malaria is within reach are expected to face a one-third drop in international funding, the research said.

The biggest financier in the fight is the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which receives funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates organisation also provided grant money for the University of California study.

Nations that recently eliminated the mosquito-borne illness include Armenia, Morocco, Turkmenistan and the United

Arab Emirates.

Malaria can prove troublesome because quasi-eradication can be followed by resurgence, Richard Feachem, the paper’s senior author, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview.

More than 60 resurgences of malaria have occurred since about 1930, failures he attributed to emboldened politicians and governments willing to cut budgets for fighting the disease.

“It becomes out of sight, out of mind,” he said. Looking at 35 countries with current low malaria transmission, the study found signs of diminishing political and financial commitment.—Reuters



Drug-resistant malaria parasites have spread to border regions of Southeast Asia, seriously threatening global efforts to control and eliminate the mosquito-borne disease, researchers said on Wednesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

3D imaging technique used to map deadly lung disease

LONDON — In a first, scientists have used advanced 3D X-ray imaging technology to view tissues affected by an aggressive form of lung disease in detail similar to an optical microscope.

Originally designed for the analysis of engineering parts, such as jet turbine blades, a powerful scanning equipment at the University of Southampton in the UK has been used to image Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF) lung tissue samples.

IPF is usually diagnosed via a hospital CT scan or by using a microscope to view a lung biopsy sample. However researchers have now successfully applied Microfocus CT to image biopsy samples.

This allowed them to view each lung sample with a level of detail similar to an optical microscope but now in 3D.

It had been thought that active scarring in IPF progressed like a large ‘wave’ from the outside to the inside of the lung. Instead, the study found that there are large numbers of individual sites of active disease scarring.

The research team, from the National Institute for Health Research Southampton Respiratory Biomedical Research Unit, believes this finding will help to ensure doctors develop targeted therapies focussing on these areas. The condition, one of a group of disorders known collectively as interstitial lung diseases, causes inflammation and scarring of

the lung tissue.

This makes it increasingly difficult to breathe, and it leaves sufferers with a life expectancy of only three to five years.

“Whilst accurate diagnosis of IPF is essential to start the correct treatment, in certain cases this can be extremely challenging to do using the tools currently available,” said Mark Jones, from the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton. “This technology advance is very exciting as for the first time it gives us the chance to view lung biopsy samples in 3D,” said Jones.

“We think that the new information gained from seeing the lung in 3D has the potential to transform how diseases such as IPF are diagnosed,” he said.

“It will also help to increase our understanding of how these scarring lung diseases develop which we hope will ultimately mean better targeted treatments are developed for every patient,” Jones said.

Microfocus CT can scan inside objects in great detail — rotating 360 degrees whilst taking thousands of 2D images, which are then used to build detailed 3D images. The team is now studying how this technique can help doctors improve the way we diagnose such diseases more accurately, to ensure every patient will receive the correct treatment.

The study was published in the journal *JCI Insight*.—PTI

EU aims for joint European coast guard by summer

LUXEMBOURG City — EU governments agreed on Thursday to speed the formation of a common European border and coastguard that could be in service by this summer to control migrants arriving from the Middle East and Africa.

Interior ministers from the 28 member states gave a mandate to their Dutch chairman at a meeting in Luxembourg to open talks with the European Parliament as soon as possible.

The Dutch minister, Klaas Dijkhoff, said the force, based on the EU's Frontex agency with more powers and more resources, should be operational this summer. European Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said he hoped the European Border and Coast Guard would be working by mid-June.

EU officials said full establishment would take longer but that elements of the plan could go into effect in a couple of months.

The rush to set up a force, to be drawn mostly from seconded national personnel and designed to



Migrants disembark from a merchant ship in the Sicilian harbour of Augusta, Italy, on 21 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

intervene rapidly where the EU's external border may be overwhelmed, comes after nearly 1.3 million people sought asylum in the EU last year, with almost 1 million coming to Greece and most of the rest to Italy.

Ministers noted a sharp drop in those reaching Greek

islands since a deal last month under which Turkey will take back anyone makes the crossing. But a day after a report of up to 500 people drowned on one vessel, they warned of a possible renewed surge on the longer and more dangerous route from Africa to Italy. "If we

sit back, the situation will occur like we have seen in Greece," Dijkhoff told reporters, adding his voice to calls on Rome to ensure it is ready to handle those arriving.

He also called on governments to make good on pledges to take in more Syr-

ian refugees from Turkey as they agreed: "If we don't deliver ... the migration flows will increase again," he said.

Italian Interior Minister Angelino Alfano said a Turkey-style deal with a new government the EU hopes can stabilise Libya could help. Officials said a discus-

sion on long-term reform of the asylum system to spread responsibility for arrivals beyond the Mediterranean frontline revealed continued deep divisions.

Some countries, especially in the ex-communist east, have ruled out taking in significant numbers of refugees, angering notably Germany which took in 1 million people last year.

Addressing concerns about security following the Islamic State attacks on Paris and Brussels, ministers agreed to push on with plans to link a confusing array of national and EU databases on travellers and suspects with a view to having all such data available to authorities and easily searchable.

Highlighting the gaps in existing intelligence, the EU's counterterrorism coordinator gave ministers figures indicating that more than 2,000 of some 5,300 European Islamists logged by various intelligence services as fighting in Syria or Iraq had had their details entered by EU states into a shared EU system.—Reuters



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• Project Manager — Illegal Wildlife Trade

The Project Manager will lead on the implementation of projects that tackle wildlife crime, particularly the trade in tigers and their parts, as well as other iconic threatened species in Myanmar. This Position will be based in Yangon.

Candidates should email:

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or send a CV and cover letter in English to

WWF-Myanmar, 15C, Than Taman Street, Dagon Township, Yangon, stating the position applied for.

Closing Date: 29 April 2016, 5:00 PM

For more details: <http://wwf.org.mm>. Applications should be attached as **Document_ Yourfullname**.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV YANTRA BHUM VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANTRA BHUM VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.4.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER
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Lawmakers chain themselves to Venezuela election board in protest

CARACAS — Opposition legislators demanding paperwork needed to help activate a recall referendum against President Nicolas Maduro chained themselves on Thursday to a stairway of Venezuela's election board.

The incident, led by members of the Justice First party, underlined the deep political tensions in Venezuela where the opposition is seeking to unseat socialist Maduro via popular pressure, a referendum or a constitutional amendment.

Government-leaning institutions are blocking them at every turn, with the National Election Council dragging its feet on the referendum and the Supreme Court striking down measures passed by the opposition-controlled parliament.

Videos circulating on social media showed officials, including a military officer using a bolt-cutter, trying to remove about six politicians from the election board's office in downtown Caracas. "We are lawmakers! ... Tibisay Lucena, give us the documents!" the pro-

testers shouted, referring to the president of the election board, a reviled figure in opposition circles.

They were seeking paperwork for the first step towards collecting the nearly 4 million signatures needed to trigger the referendum. Venezuela's constitution allows elected officials to be recalled through a referendum once they have served half their term in office.

Maduro, 53, was elected in 2013 to six years in office.

Should he leave office this year, there would be a new presidential election. But if he departs in the last two years of his term, Vice President Aristobulo Isturiz, a Socialist Party stalwart, would take over.

Maduro narrowly won the presidency after the death of his mentor, Hugo Chavez, from cancer, but his popularity has plummeted amid a recession, triple-digit inflation and chronic shortages. He says the opposition, backed by big business and the United States, is seeking a coup against him.—Reuters

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Canadian PM Trudeau slips from political ring to boxing ring

NEW YORK — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau showed off his sparring skills outside the political ring on Thursday, lacing up a pair of boxing gloves for a workout during a trip to New York.

Returning to the spotlight that accompanied his White House visit and “bromance” with US President Barack Obama last month, Trudeau donned a red sleeveless top that revealed his large native Haida raven tattoo to spar at Gleason’s in Brooklyn, a gym made famous by the likes of Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson and “the Ragging Bull” Jake LaMotta.

With a mix of gym faithful and media members looking on, the 44-year-old Trudeau, who was accused during last year’s election campaign of being a political lightweight, spent most of his hour-long workout sparring with professional boxer and former WBA super welterweight champion Yuri Foreman.

“It was great to train him. He is very likable and he has the potential to impact people in his country and around the world very positively,” Foreman said afterward. “And he’s got a heavy punch!”

Trudeau’s Liberal government has rolled out a mandate of economic investment, refugee assistance and open government, and has enjoyed a prolonged honeymoon in the public eye, avoiding major mistakes and maintaining popularity with voters and international media alike.

He was in New York a day early in advance of signing the Paris climate-change agreement on Friday.

On a visit to the White House last month, Trudeau sparked a storm on social media and myriad memes and jokes about the shared admiration between Trudeau and Obama. —Reuters

Trump has been playing a part, will become more presidential

HOLLYWOOD, (Fla) WASHINGTON — Top advisers to Donald Trump assured Republican Party leaders on Thursday that the New York billionaire would adopt a more presidential demeanor soon, to temper the image projected during his campaign so far. Trump’s representatives, including newly recruited senior advisers Paul Manafort and Rick Wiley, met privately with leaders of the Republican National Committee at an oceanside resort hotel where the party is holding a three-day meeting.

“The part that he’s been playing is now evolving into the part that you’ve been expecting. The negatives will come down, the image is going to change,” Trump senior adviser Paul Manafort assured the party leaders, according to an audiotape of the session heard by Reuters. Trump has been “projecting an image” to energize voters, Manafort said, adding that he will soon concentrate on “crooked Hillary,” the nickname that Trump has given to Democratic favourite Hillary Clinton.

“You’ll see a different guy,” said Manafort.

But in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Trump suggested he was not ready to

change from the style that has brought him close to the Republican presidential nomination.

“I just don’t know if I want to do it yet,” he said.

In recent weeks, Trump has railed against the party for developing what he said was a “rigged” system in which Cruz was able to amass delegates in Colorado without Republicans actually voting.

Chatting over shrimp, crab legs and an open bar, Trump’s advisers expressed confidence that their candidate would win the Republican presidential nomination without the party having to resort to a contested convention in Cleveland in July, according to three attendees.

Trump, 69, needs 1,237 delegates to win the nomination outright for the 8 November election. Rivals Ted Cruz, 45, and John Kasich, 63, are trying to stop him from getting a majority of delegates, so they can force a contested convention in which one of them could emerge as the nominee.

Cruz told a conservative talk radio host, Mark Levin, that Manafort’s comments show that Trump’s campaign style “is just an act.”

Party leaders told re-



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks to supporters during a campaign event in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, US, on 21 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

porters after the session that Trump’s envoys said Trump, as the Republican nominee, would be able to expand the party’s electoral map to include several states Republicans have not won in a general election in a generation.

One attendee, South Carolina Republican Party Chairman Matt Moore, said the Trump team told the group it expected Trump to adopt a “more presidential demeanor” over the next few weeks. Moore said he was taking a wait-and-see attitude on whether Trump would change. “The proof is in the pudding,” he said.

Manafort told reporters after the meeting that “we talked about how

we’re going to expand the map.”

As for how to change the negative image some voters had of Trump, Manafort said: “We just have to present him in a way that shows all sides of Donald Trump.”

Former presidential candidate Ben Carson, the retired neurosurgeon who has endorsed Trump, also addressed the group. Talking to reporters as he walked into the meeting, Carson said his message was that Republicans should “stop fighting among ourselves” and unite behind Trump.

“I don’t think anyone can win if the Republican Party and the conservatives don’t consolidate,” he said.

Trump, who has alarmed some establishment Republicans with his comments on immigration, Muslims and trade, has begun to moderate his message in recent days.

Trump’s campaign has hired staff versed in the ways of Washington and has begun holding regular meetings on Capitol Hill with current and potential supporters.

Trump clashed again on Thursday with Cruz, a US senator from Texas, this time over a North Carolina law passed last month requiring transgender people to use government and school bathrooms that correspond with the sex on their birth certificates.

During an appearance at an NBC “Today” show town hall, Trump sided with critics of the law, passed by a Republican-controlled legislature, saying it was unnecessary and that North Carolina was “paying a big price” because of negative business reaction.

His comments drew immediate criticism from Cruz, a staunch social and fiscal conservative who supports the law and said Trump had caved to political correctness as he seeks to broaden his appeal. —Reuters

Egyptian police detained Italian student before his murder

CAIRO — An Italian student who was tortured and murdered in Egypt had been detained by police and then transferred to a compound run by Homeland Security the day he vanished, intelligence and police sources say.

The claims contradict

the official Egyptian account that security services had not arrested him. Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old post-graduate student, disappeared on 25 January, friends say.

His body was found on 3 February, dumped on the side of a road outside Cairo.

It showed signs of torture, according to forensic and prosecution officials in Egypt. Egyptian officials have strongly denied any involvement in Regeni’s death. Soon after his body was found, police suggested he was the victim of a car accident. —Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRIC POWER AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (5 / 2016)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-001(16-17)	Spares for Well Surveying Tool (1) Item	US\$
(2)	IFB-002(16-17)	Mud Chemicals (7) Items	US\$
(3)	IFB-003(16-17)	4" ERW Steel Line Pipe (16,100) MTR	US\$
(4)	IFB-004(16-17)	10" ERW Steel Line Pipe (37,030) MTR	US\$
(5)	IFB-005(16-17)	20" LSAW Steel Line Pipe (11,270) MTR	US\$

Tender Closing Date & Time - 19-5-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 21ST April, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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PHOTO: REUTERS

Selena Gomez to turn her life story into TV series

LOS ANGELES — Singer-actress Selena Gomez is working on an autobiographical series for Lifetime.

The Disney alum is set to team up with “House of Cards” actor Kevin Spacey to produce the TV show based on her real life as a young Hollywood star. It will follow her and friends navigating life

and career in Los Angeles, reported Ace Showbiz.

It’s not the only TV project Gomez is developing at the moment. The former “Wizards of Waverly Place” actress, who is set to kick off her world tour soon, is also producing a drama about a Latin teen living in a poverty-stricken

neighbourhood. On top of that, she is involved in the production of Netflix’s new miniseries titled “13 Reasons Why”. It’s based on Jay Asher’s 2007 novel of the same title about a high schooler who commits suicide and reveals the 13 reasons why she took her own life on a series of tapes.—PTI

‘Purple Rain’ superstar Prince, 57, dies at US studio complex

NEW YORK — Prince, the innovative pop superstar whose songwriting and eccentric stage presence electrified fans around the world with hits including “Purple Rain” and “When Doves Cry,” died on Thursday in Minnesota. He was 57.

His influential, genre-defying music blended jazz, funk, R&B, disco and rock, winning seven Grammy Awards and an Oscar.

Prince was found unresponsive in an elevator at his Paisley

Park Studios compound, which included his home, in the Minneapolis suburb of Chanhassen, according to the Carver County Sheriff’s Office.

In a transcript of a 911 call made from the complex and released by the sheriff’s office, an unidentified male initially reported that someone was dead at the home, later identifying that victim as Prince.

The sheriff’s office said it was investigating the circumstances. The local medical exam-

iner’s office said in a tweet that an autopsy had been scheduled for Friday.

Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger hailed his fellow singer and musician as “revolutionary” and one of the most unique and exciting artists of the last 30 years. Prince was an original lyricist and a “startling” guitar player, he added.

“His talent was limitless,” Jagger wrote on Twitter.

President Barack Obama called Prince “one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time,” and said few had influenced “the sound and trajectory of popular music more distinctly.”

Distraught devotees gathered outside the Paisley Park compound in mourning.

“His music made the hair on your arms stand up,” said one, Kristina Dudziak, 44. “It felt like he was making love to his guitar. ... It’s a sad day,” she added, starting to sob.

Sheila E., a singer and percussionist who worked closely with Prince in the 1980s, wrote on Twitter: “My heart is broken. There are no words. I love you!”

The performer’s death was the most notable passing of a music giant since rock star David Bowie died of cancer at 69 on 10 January.—Reuters



US musician Prince performs on stage at Yas Arena in Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

Snoopy Museum seeks to entice comic fans old and new in Japan

TOKYO — A Snoopy Museum dedicated to the artwork of Charles M. Schulz, the creator of the Peanuts comic strip, is opening its doors in Japan.

Based in Tokyo, the temporary museum is the first official satellite of the California-based Charles M. Schulz Museum outside the United States and kicks off with a “My Favourite Peanuts” exhibition.

On display are items including original cartoons and large scale works by Schulz, whose Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus and Snoopy characters have won over legions of fans around the world, including Japan.

“Japan as a culture has an appreciation for comics and that probably helped some,” Paige Braddock, creative director at Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates, said.

“As a cartoonist and fan myself, I love coming to Japan and seeing the wide array of other comic characters here but I also think there’s a sort of a calligraphy component to Schulz’s

work, his pen work that maybe appealed to Japanese fans early on.”

Schulz’s comic strip made its debut in 1950 and ran until 13 February, 2000, a day after the cartoonist died at the age of 77.

It has featured in more than 2,600 newspapers worldwide.

While Snoopy is popular in Japan, the beagle competes with other cartoon characters such as Hello Kitty and manga heroes.

“I think a little bit of our challenge is introducing fans to Snoopy who maybe don’t know Snoopy,” Braddock said.

“But once they discover Snoopy, there are universal truths in the comic that I think appeal to every generation ... because the comic is not just about humour it’s about relationships, it’s about failures, it’s about joy, it really runs the whole range of human emotion and story telling.”

The Snoopy Museum Tokyo opens to the public on Saturday and will close its doors in September 2018.—Reuters



People stand near a Snoopy sculpture created by a Mexican artist and on display during the “Snoopy visits Guadalajara” event at a gallery in Guadalajara in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iggy Azalea investigates her ancestry

LONDON — Rapper Iggy Azalea has discovered that her ancestry is a mix of Scandinavian and Asian.

The 25-year-old “Pretty Girls” hitmaker took to Twitter to reveal she had received the results from her DNA analysis, reported Femalefirst.

She wrote: “I got my DNA analysis back and they told me I like salty snacks more than sweets. It’s actually true. They also told me my ancestry is a mix of Scandinavian, Asian and awesomeadrian (sic).—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

NYC mayor signs bill cracking down on Elmos, Batman in Times Square



A tourist (2nd L) poses with two people dressed as Hulk and Iron Man, as another dressed as Woody from Toy Story takes their photo in Times Square, in New York, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Costumed characters, painted women and anyone else working for tips in New York's Times Square will soon have to stay in special zones after New York Mayor Bill de Blasio on Thursday signed a bill to bring more order to the bustling tourist attraction.

The law gives the city's Department of Transportation the authority to designate a handful of areas, each likely to be about 50-feet by 10-feet, where the legion of Elmos, Batman and other mascots can solicit tips for posing for photographs. Other areas of the Times Square pedestrian plaza will be off limits to them.

Following a month for public

comment and a 23 May hearing, the changes are expected to be implemented in early June, said Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg in an interview. The bill, a year in the making, comes in response to reports of violence and aggressive behaviour by some characters in Times Square. City officials feared the presence of topless women wearing body paint would detract from the family-friendly atmosphere of Times Square, once infamous for its X-rated shops.

In 2015, more than 300 costumed characters, topless women and ticket vendors worked in Times Square, according to police. Since January, at least 16 of

the workers have been charged with crimes, including aggressive soliciting. On 7 April, the New York City Council passed the legislation with overwhelming support. A Spider-Man character was among those watching from the council chamber's balcony.

Other characters and ticket sellers who depend on tips from tourists have opposed the measure as a restriction on their livelihoods.

"This has opened up an opportunity for a lot of people to support their families," Abdelamine Elkhezzani, who dresses as Spider-Man, told council members at a 30 March hearing. —Reuters

Indian temple awarded for lending deity jewellery in Singapore

SINGAPORE — An Indian temple trust was among nine patrons awarded in Singapore for lending its exquisite century-old deity jewellery on loan for 10 years to Indian Heritage Centre and helping provide "greater insight" into Indian culture.

The jewellery which includes a necklace made of rubies, emeralds, diamonds and a

gem-studded crown was loaned by Saigon Chettiars Temple Trust and came from Then-dayuthapani Temple which was established 200 years ago in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

"The Saigon Chettiars Temple Trust has strengthened the IHC's storyline with its loan of beautiful deity jewellery, which gives us greater insight into the

many perspectives of Indian culture," said Singapore's Minister of Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, who gave away distinguished supporter of heritage award to the trust.

The jewellery is on loan for 10 years, said Ashwin Muthiah, who represented the trust at the award ceremony held yesterday. —PTI

Eleven Aymara indigenous women scale Bolivia's mountains

ILLIMANI (Bolivia) — For years, Lydia Huayllas, 48, has worked as a cook at base camps and mountain-climbing refuges on the steep, glacial slopes of Huayna Potosi, a 19,974-foot (6,088-metre) Andean peak outside of La Paz, Bolivia.

But two years ago, she and 10 other Aymara indigenous women, ages 42 to 50, who also worked as porters and cooks for mountaineers, put on crampons — spikes fixed to a boot for climbing — under their wide traditional skirts and started to do their own climbing.

These women have now scaled five peaks — Acotango, Parinacota, Pomarapi and Huayna Potosi as well as Illimani, the highest of all — in Bolivia's Cordillera Real range. All are higher than 19,500 feet (6,000 metres) above sea level.

"What do you do up there, how does it feel?" Huayllas said she asked her husband, mountain guide Eulalio Gonzales, two years ago. That was when he proposed that she climb the peak to find out for herself.

Pictures taken by a Reuters photographer of the Aymara women training on a glacier on Huayna Potosi can be found in a Wider Image photo essay.

Last weekend, the women climbed the imposing Illimani, which has a 5-mile (8 km) long

series of four peaks. It is the highest mountain in the Cordillera Real with its peak at 21,122 feet (6,438 metres).

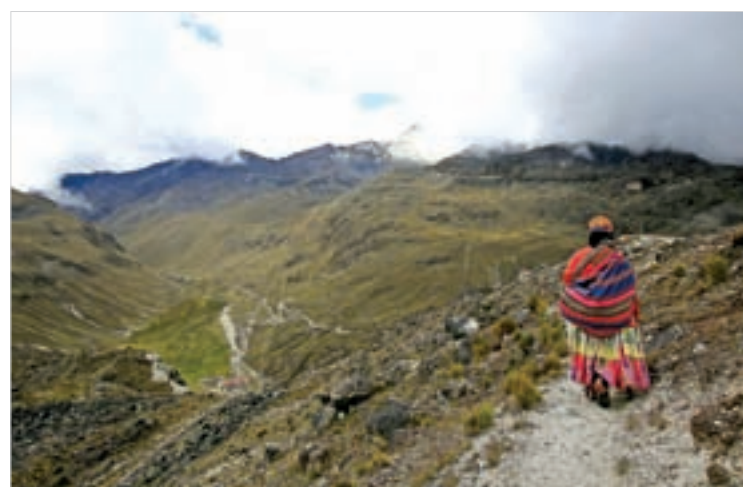
It looms above the Bolivian highlands, the country's largest city La Paz and Lake Titicaca to the west, and the valleys of the Amazon to the east. Eight of the 11 managed to reach the summit, braving a snowstorm and heavy winds.

The women climb in their traditional "cholita" garb, but trade in their bowler hats for helmets, and use modern equipment including ropes, harnesses, crampons and boots.

One advantage the women have to outsiders who come to the Andes to climb is that highland Bolivians are already well acclimated to the thin air at high altitudes.

The short-term goal for the group is to climb eight mountains higher than 19,700 feet (6,000 metres).

"The first experience was the Huayna Potosi. I cried with emotion. And I'm strong, I'm going to continue and get to the top of eight mountains," said Dora Magueño, 50. The group's ultimate dream is to plant a Bolivian flag on the summit of Aconcagua, the highest mountain outside of Asia at 22,841 feet (6,961 metres), located in the Argentine Andes near the border with Chile. —Reuters



An Aymara indigenous woman walks on the Huayna Potosi mountain, Bolivia on 6 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Entertainment Channel

(23- 4-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- Music Programme

6:40 pm

- A Street Vendor
- "Spreading Knowledge"

7:20 pm

- Cassette Recording
- Music Programme

8:30 pm

- Music Programme

8:50 pm

- International Movie Songs
- **9:00 pm**

9:20 pm

- Myanmar Traditional Instruments (MYANMA OBOE)

9:30 pm

- Music Programme
- Myanmar Movie

* 08:30 pm Live: "AFC BOURNE MOUTH Vs CHELSEA"

From 23-4-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 Pm
To 24-4-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 Pm



Myanmar International

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Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:27	Am	Great Shwedagon - The Historic Bells
07:39	Am	Life of Sea Urchin Diver
07:50	Am	Philatelic Pleasure
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Myanmar Traditional Festival
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar Game Changer (Episode - III)
09:52	Am	Kindhearted Pet Lovers
10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	The Caves

10:43	Am	Gardener: King Orange Plantation
10:56	Am	[Doctor][Painter]

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:27	Pm	Snow Flakes...Scenic Confluence...To Kachin State
07:48	Pm	Today Myanmar: EL NIÑO PHENOMENON & FIRE PREVENTION
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	U Kyaw Thu: From Artist to Philanthropist (Part-I)
08:46	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: Artist Win Pe Myint

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

Everton sweat over fitness of key trio ahead of FA Cup semis

LONDON — Influential Everton trio Phil Jagielka, John Stones and Gareth Barry are all doubtful for Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Manchester United at Wembley, while right-back Seamus Coleman will definitely miss the clash, manager Roberto Martinez said.

Barry and Stones picked up their injury problems in Wednesday's 4-0 Premier League drubbing at the hands of Merseyside rivals Liverpool, while captain Jagielka has not featured since he hurt his hamstring on 9 April.

"Seamus Coleman will be missing. Late fitness test for Gareth Barry. John Stones is positive. Rest of the squad fine," Martinez told reporters on Friday.

"Knowing Phil he is desperate to play but we are not going to say no and we are going to [look at] his feelings rather than the injury." With defender Ramiro Funes Mori suspended for the semi-final, having picked up a red card against Liverpool, Martinez is currently left with only left-back Leighton Baines as senior defender.

Everton need to avoid putting too much pressure on themselves and remain focussed, Stones has said amid calls for Martinez to step down.

With Everton failing to win any of their last six games, however, Martinez has lost the trust of supporters. He hopes to win them back by ending the club's 20-year wait for a trophy with victory in the FA Cup.—Reuters

Rio Games countdown starts with Olympia torch lighting



Greek actress Katerina Lehou, playing the role of High Priestess, passes the Olympic flame to the first torch bearer, Greek gymnast Eleftherios Petrounias as they attend the Olympic flame lighting ceremony for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games inside the ancient Olympic Stadium on the site of ancient Olympia, Greece, on 21 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

ANCIENT OLYMPIA — The official countdown to this year's Rio de Janeiro Olympics began with the lighting of the torch at the site of the ancient Games on Thursday and organisers hoping to shift attention away from Brazil's political and financial turmoil.

On a glorious spring day with the sun burning hot above the ancient stadium in Olympia, an actress playing a high priestess lit the torch from the rays of the sun at the temple of Hera, using a parabolic mirror.

Greek gymnastics world champion Lefteris Petrounias started the domestic relay after

receiving the flame, handing the torch over to Brazilian double Olympic volleyball champion Giovane Gavio.

A refugee will also carry the torch during the Greek leg of the relay in a symbolic move to highlight the plight of refugees before Brazilian organisers receive it in a handover at the Panathenian stadium on 27 April in Athens, site of the first modern Olympics in 1896.

Brazil will start its relay on 3 May in the capital Brasilia with the first of 12,000 runners, carrying it through 300 cities and towns in the 26 Brazilian states and end-

ing in Rio on the day of the opening ceremony on 5 August.

Preparations, however, for the first Games in South America, have been plagued by problems and a shortage of cash for organisers as the country is experiencing its worst recession in decades.

"(The torch lighting) brings a message that can and will unite our dear Brazil," Rio Games chief Carlos Nuzman said in his speech.

Brazil President Dilma Rousseff, who cancelled her trip to ancient Olympia, is facing impeachment and federal prosecutors are investigating Olympic projects for corruption.

Asked if organisers were concerned about a possible change of government, Nuzman told Reuters: I'm not a politician and I don't know. We know what we need to do, and we'll do (it)."

The crisis has paralyzed the country's ability to revive its economy from recession in the midst of a huge corruption scandal involving state-run oil firm Petrobras.

"Despite the difficulties that Brazil is facing today, the flame is a timeless reminder that we are all part of the same humanity," International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach said in his speech. "We are now in the operation phase and we see the great progress the organising committee has made in the last year. 98 per cent of all infrastructure is ready," Bach told reporters later.

"You see us very confident in general and on a day like this you see us more confident and more emotional about these Games for Brazil."

Brazil's interim sports minister, Ricardo Gonçalves, echoed Bach's confidence, telling Reuters authorities were very happy because Brazil is ready.

"The Olympic Park, the venues are ready. Everything was done, so no impact," he said.

Thursday's ceremony marked the 80-year anniversary since the relay, which did not exist in the ancient Greek Olympics, was introduced by the Nazi organisers of the 1936 Berlin Games.

"Brazil will start telling the world a different story from the one we usually see in the news lately," 2016 Olympics Ceremonies producer Marco Balich told —Reuters.

Sanchez double lifts Arsenal into third place



Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez scores their second goal with a free kick against West Bromwich Albion during Barclays Premier League at Emirates Stadium on 21 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Arsenal's resurgent Alexis Sanchez scored twice to help ease their top-four jitters in a 2-0 victory over West Bromwich Albion in the Premier League at a less than full Emirates Stadium on Thursday.

Consecutive draws had all but ended Arsenal's chances of overhauling Premier League leaders Leicester City and they began the night only a point above fifth-placed Manchester United in the battle to secure Champions League football.

However, Sanchez struck twice before halftime and Arsenal were untroubled by a poor West Brom side as they registered their 500th victory in the Premier League.

They moved above Man-

chester City into third place with 63 points and, with two of their last four games at home to struggling Norwich City and relegated Aston Villa, Arsene Wenger's side are well set to finish in the top four.

With many season-ticket holders electing to miss the game in frustration at another botched title challenge, the atmosphere was flat inside a stadium with lots of empty red seats.

Sanchez did lift the mood, though, as he took his goal tally to five in the last four league games after a lean spell.

"Overall we should have scored more goals," a glum Wenger, who has again faced criticism from fans, said.

"Certainly the early goal

helped to focus us more on our game. It looks like (Sanchez) is back to his best, he's sharper, more confident and in the first half he was exceptional."

Sanchez turned sharply to shoot low past West Brom keeper Ben Foster after six minutes and struck again with a free kick shortly before halftime to put the hosts in control.

Gareth McAuley did send a header against the crossbar in the first half for the visitors but Arsenal were untroubled and should have won by a bigger margin.

Arsenal's French Olivier Giroud fired straight at Ben Foster and Mesut Ozil was also denied by the keeper, but Arsenal were often guilty of over-elaborating in the final third.—Reuters