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PEACE IN OUR TIME



Joint Monitoring Committee for ceasefire holding a meeting with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 27 April, 2016. PHOTO: MNA

Stakeholders coming together to hold talks on national peace conference

STAKEHOLDERS from the government, the Joint Monitoring Committee for ceasefire-JMC and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee-UPDJC will meet on 10 May to discuss the holding of the national peace conference, said Dr Shwe Khar, Secretary of JMC.

“Regardless of whether it is

called the Union Peace Conference or the 21st century Panglong Conference, the State Counsellor has reached an agreement that on 10 May there will be an event which will be attended by between 10 and 15 persons from the government side, JMC side and UPDJC side, to discuss holding the conference,

Dr Shwe Khar told the Myanmar News Agency.

“She focused on all-inclusiveness. Although it is important for the meeting to include people who are worthy of inclusion, it should not be that peace must not be sought without them. The State Counsellor said she’ll lead the pro-

cess,” said Dr Shwe Khar.

The peace process is not just concerned with the government. It is a national concern. The results of peace negotiations are to be carried forward from government to government, U Ko Ko Gyi told Myanmar News Agency.

As peace is a fundamental is-

sue in Myanmar, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will take charge of the peace process, appointing Dr Tin Myo Win as liaison officer for the peace process. Matters relating to the peace process are to be submitted to the State Counsellor through Dr Tin Myo Win, he added.

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Myanmar bans lucrative logging in bid to preserve forests

MYANMAR has banned lucrative logging operations as the newly-elected government of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi steps up a battle on deforestation, an environment official said on Thursday.

Myanmar’s rich forests are among its most valuable natural resources, but they have been plundered by logging that helped fund the former military regime that ran the country for

49 years, before reforms began in 2011.

In April 2014, Myanmar banned export of raw timber logs to slow deforestation and boost its own production. By 2010, forest cover had shrunk to 47 percent of land area from 58 percent in 1990, Forestry Ministry data show.

Despite the ban, illegal logging has thrived in northeast Myanmar, where valuable teak and

rosewood are smuggled over the border to neighbouring China, forest watchdog the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) has said.

“We have been reducing timber extraction, and now we have decided to stop logging completely,” said U Saw John Shwe Ba, the managing director of Myanmar Timber Enterprise under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Con-

servation.

“This measure will cover teak and other hardwoods all across the country,” he added.

Legal logging has also played a major role in ravaging the environment. State-owned Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE), overseen by Shwe Ba’s ministry, has a monopoly on the formal timber sector, but subcontracts work to numerous companies.

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Speaker calls for coordinated efforts in government's commitment to reconciliation, peace and development

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint called for coordinated efforts in the government's commitment to achieving national reconciliation, internal peace and national development in a meeting with regional representatives in Bago Region yesterday.

At the meeting, the speaker shared his experiences in parliament, stressing the importance of capacity enhancement, national

reconciliation, avoidance of corruption and cooperation between parliament and the executive branch.

"As we are people's representatives, we are accountable to them," he said, urging the representatives to learn the desires and needs of the voters and reflect their feelings in parliament.

U Win Myint also warned of the need to take care in their

line of duty and to understand the difference between interference and intervention. The main responsibility of the representatives is to treat the people as parents by helping solve their difficulties, the speaker said, calling for collective efforts to create a society free from corruption and make the country stand tall in the international community.

—Myanmar News Agency



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint talking to representatives in Bago. PHOTO: MNA



Myanmar gold prices rise in last week of April

THE rising value of gold on the world market during the last week of April has resulted in the price of a tical (0.576 ounces) of Myanmar gold rising by around K12,000, according to gold dealers.

The value of an ounce of gold on the world market during the third week of April stood at \$1,233 before rising to \$1,245 during the final week of the month. The price of Myanmar gold has similarly increased in value from K768,000 per tical during the third week of April to K780,000 in the fourth week.

"The appreciation in the value of gold on the world market has caused unstable prices. The price of Myanmar gold has also risen slightly. Gold trading has improved in the wake of the Thingyan period," said U Zaw Aung, owner of Taite gold shop.

An ounce of gold on the world market on 11 April, prior to the Thingyan holiday period, peaked in value at \$1,260 before depreciating to its lowest recent value of \$1,224 on 14 April.

"Gold prices have been consistently rising on the world market during the Thingyan period for the last three or four years. As the value of the dollar is always low during this period, the appreciation in the value of Myanmar gold is not so evident. The current

exchange rate is approximately K1,200 to US\$1, so the price of Myanmar gold is following an appreciation in value of gold on the world market," explained U Maw Maw, general manager of Aung Thamardi gold shop.

The value of Myanmar gold is dependent upon that of the US dollar and gold on the world market. While the value of the US dollar in April 2015, as set by the Myanmar Central Bank, was around K1,000, its value during April this year has hovered around K1,170 which has been a catalyst behind the rise in the value of Myanmar gold, gold

dealers said.

Myanmar gold reached its highest value this year in February, when a tical fetched K809,500, while its lowest value, in January, was just K732,000 for the same quantity.

According to current prices on the morning of 27 April, an ounce of gold on the world market was valued at \$1,245; a tical of Myanmar gold fetched K780,000, while a tical of 15-carat gold was priced at K730,000. The foreign exchange rate of the Myanmar kyat to the US dollar was K1,175 to the dollar.

—Myitmakha News Agency



Gold jewelry are on display at a shop in Yangon.

PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY



Venerable Chong Hua (Left) arrives Yangon International Airport.

PHOTO: HTAY AUNG

Chinese Buddhist delegation arrives to observe Buddhism in Myanmar

AT the invitation of Sayadaw Dr Kumara Bhivamsa, Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Venerable Chong Hua, Vice-Chairman of the Buddhism Association of Yunnan Province and the President of the Chongsheng Temple in Dali City, Yunnan Province, China, arrived Yangon yesterday to observe Buddhist culture in Myanmar. The delegation, led by Venerable Chong Hua, was welcomed at Yangon International Airport by Director of the Religious Affairs Department U Tun Nyunt and resident representative of Mingalar Magazine in Myanmar Meng Fei.

—GNLM

KBZ foundation provides cash and goods to weather affected peoples

KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation has invited farmers who have lost cattle due to recent severe weather to contact local foundation representatives in order to receive compassionate cash assistance.

The foundation granted cash assistance to four farmers in Myittha Township, which suffered catastrophic damage with about 4000 acres of land damaged due to recent erratic weather. The foundation paid the farmers approximately K1million for every cow lost.

Meanwhile, KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation has funded K50 million into the reconstruction of 350 homes and to repair the roofs of 1,224 homes destroyed by the El Niño-induced gale-force wind and

hail storms on 22 and 23 April.

The foundation has further donated 6,000 zinc coated roof sheets to Kyaukse Township, which was also hit by the severe weather. 4,000 zinc coated roof sheets have been donated to Singaing Township at a total value of K35 million. The donation was made by the Kyaukse Bank Branch of KBZ on Tuesday.

The foundation has asked farmers who have lost cattle to contact U Tin Tun, Ph 09 792 052 704 for upper Myanmar and U Soe Tin Maung Zaw, Ph 09 5000 170 for lower Myanmar. KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation has donated K89.5 million to people suffering from the disaster in April so far.—GNLM

Stakeholders coming together to hold talks on national...

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"According to the nature of the JMC, focus will be on military affairs. Their mission is to monitor the ceasefire to find out whether any troops are violating the positional rules i.e whether the troops remain to be in their respective, designated places," remarked U Ko Ko Gyi.

"Mutual trust is very important. Interaction among ourselves either at the lower level or at the higher level can lead to enhanced mutual understanding. Such con-

fidence building measures can strengthen mutual trust, which is essential for an agreement to last longer, JMC-U Vice Chairman-I Saw Issac Po told the Myanmar News Agency.

Dr Shwe Khar, Secretary of JMC-U confirmed that the Myanmar Peace Centre-MPC, which has provided technical assistance to the peace process, is wanting to continue to exist not just for peace but also to aid the national reconciliation process.—Myanmar News Agency

Mongolian Ambassador presents credentials to President U Htin Kyaw

H E Mr Tugsbilguun Tumurkhuleg, the newly accredited Ambassador of Mongolia to Myanmar, presented his credentials

to President U Htin Kyaw at Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Present on the occasion were Minister of State for Foreign

Affairs U Kyaw Tin and Director-General U Ko Ko Naing of the Protocol Department.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Htin Kyaw accepts credentials presented by H E Mr Tugsbilguun Tumurkhuleg, the newly accredited Ambassador of Mongolia to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Firefighters donate blood in honour of 70th Myanmar Fire Brigade Day

FIREFIGHTERS donated blood at the General Hospital in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Myanmar Fire Brigade Day, which falls on 5 May. Altogether 50 fighters of the capital city participated in the 11th annual blood donation.

Before the blood donation more than 300 members of the Fire Brigade Department under

the Ministry of Home Affairs carried out sanitation at Uppatasanti Pagoda, cleaning the floor of the pagoda and clearing the weeds within its precincts.

The main stated objectives of the Fire Brigade Department are to protect the lives and property of the people and state-owned investments from fire hazards and to carry out emergency relief and

rescue operations at the outbreak of disaster.

The first All Burma Voluntary Fire Service Association Conference was held in Yangon on 5 May 1946, with a speech delivered by national leader General Aung San. The day has since then been designated as Myanmar Fire Brigade Day.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar bans lucrative logging in bid . . .

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That body was targeted by United States sanctions until 2014, when the Treasury Department gave it an initial one-year waiver to work with the US-based International Wood Products Association, extended in July 2015 for two more years.

“Methods of over-harvesting include felling a greater

number of logs of a particular tree species and extracting logs smaller in diameter than recommended,” said the EIA, which is based in Britain.

“As such, the legal forest sector practices in Myanmar are a significant contributor to deforestation and forest degradation,” the watchdog added in its 2015 report.

Measures are needed to save the jobs of more than 17,000 employees in government departments working on timber production, Shwe Ba added, without saying what they might be.

“We can’t afford to let them be out of jobs overnight,” he said.—*Reuters / Timothy McLaughlin and Aung Hla Tun*

Activists rage against US expression of “Rohingya community”

ACTIVISTS staged a protest in front of the US Embassy in Yangon yesterday against the expression “the Rohingya community” used in an embassy statement concerning a recent boat accident in Sittwe township, Rakhine State.

The Myanmar Nationalist Network organised the demonstration with protesters marching and chanting all the way from Yangon University to the Embassy of the United States on University Avenue.

A demand for an immediate revocation of the embassy’s statement was made, MNN chair U Win Ko Ko Latt said, adding that they would not accept any addition of a race to the country’s existing, socially acceptable ‘national races’. The country is home to 135 ethnic groups.

The activists left an open let-

ter with the embassy’s security chief officer to be handed over to the US government.

The security chief officer pledged that he would send the letter to his government without fail and do his best to cancel the statement.

According to Police Lt-Col Kyaw Htut of the western district police force, the protesters would face legal action for violation of the assembly law.

“They were allowed to hold a protest rally at Bo Sein Hman Ground in Bahan township, Yangon,” he said.

The US embassy expressed its condolences to the families of the victims involved in a boat accident near Thaechaung in Sittwe on 19 April, addressing the group, sometimes called ‘Bengalis’ as ‘the Rohingya community’.—*Ko Moe*

Law Revoking the Emergency Provisions Act enacted

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw signed the Law Revoking the Emergency Provisions Act yesterday.

The new law enacted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has revoked the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act.—*GNLM*

U Ko Ko Lwin appointed as MD of MPI

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw has appointed U Ko Ko Lwin, Deputy Director-General of the Department for Industrial Cooperation, as Managing Director of Myanma Pharmaceutical Indus-

try on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

The gazette signed by the president was announced by the President’s Office yesterday.—*GNLM*

Yanbye blackouts found to be due to slingshots by cattle boys

BLACKOUTS in Yanbye, Rakhine State, on 16 April were due to damaged switches and conductors in 13 lamp posts in Kyaukphyu district, according to a probe into the cause.

Local cattle boys were reportedly using their slingshots to break 22 electric devices on lamp posts,

with officials saying that electricity was restored on 18 April.

Local authorities took measures to educate the public that such acts would leave the persons responsible at risk of being arrested for causing damage to public property.—*Myanmar News Agency*



A worker seen repairing ceramic devices on lamp posts damaged by cow boys. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Bike lovers promote cycling practice across Myanmar



Bike lovers being seen before starting a journey. PHOTO: KHIN YADANA

"WE have a big plan to raise public awareness on cycling by conducting several educative programmes in the future," said a member of Bicycle Network Myanmar, a local team established by bike lovers.

Since its establishment in July 2014 the team has made philanthropic activities and donations especially toward aiding natural disaster victims. Currently the team has over 2,000 members.

The team recently took a bike tour to Taninthayi mountain ranges, educating locals on the benefits of cycling and traffic rules during the tour, said its member Ko Tarte. "We plan to meet local Hluttaw representatives to discuss matters related to create specific roads for bicycle raiders, planning to distribute pamphlets designed to educate drivers about traffic rules."

He went on to say that the

team will start a public awareness campaign focussed on rules related to cyclists in Hlaingthaya and Shwepyitha townships in Yangon.

As part of its effort to promote cycling for everyone, the team has expanded its network in some parts of the country by linking bike lovers in Mandalay, Dawei, Thanbyuzayat, Thanlyin, Twantay, Daydaye, Phapon, Meiktila and Taunggyi.—*Khin Yadana*

Four men charged with motorcycle theft

POLICE have filed charges against four men on suspicion of theft as they failed to prove that motorcycles found in their possession belonged to them.

Police officers stopped and interrogated Pho Zaw Nyein and Kyaw Win Soe in Pyinnyarday

road, Bawdigone ward, Taikkyi town on Tuesday.

The two admitted to stealing the motorcycle in question which was parked on Yangon-Pyay road together with Min Paing Win alias Pain Gyi and Zaw Shan alias Zaw Than. They admitted to having sold the mo-

torcycle to Myo Min Win alias Ko Myo for K160,000.

Further investigation led to the discovery of the theft of eleven motorcycles, all cases have been attributed to the suspects. Charges have been filed against them by local police.—*Tun Hlaing (Myaing)*



The confiscated motorcycles being seen. PHOTO: TUN HLAING (MYAING)

Traffic accident occurs in Kalewa

A SIX-wheel vehicle was involved in an accident on Kalewa-Kalay road in Kalewa town, Sagaing region on Monday, leaving three men injured.

The vehicle, heading for Kalay, was being driven by one Yan Naing Lin, 19, with Nyi Nyi Tun and Yan Lin as passengers. The vehicle overturned

near milepost 0/6. The three men sustained minor injuries in the accident. The driver has been charged by the police.—*That Han (IPRD)*

Illegal teak doors seized on train

73 illegal teak doors with a street value of K156,600 were confiscated from a train at Mawlu railway station, Inn Daw township, Sagaing region on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off the local forestry authorities searched a train and discovered 0.9 tonnes of illegal teak doors on the train. Police identified that Naing Lin

from Mawlu village was the owner of the illicit doors. The police have filed charges action against Naing Li.—*Lu Aung (Katha)*

Mangrove to grow in Pyin Dayae forest reserve

THE Forestry Department is planning to grow mangrove to protect the natural environment against disasters near the sea in the Pyin Dayae forest reserve in Ayeyawady region.

The land space, which is close to the sea, requires protection from plants other than mangrove encroaching on its bound-

ries. We will also prohibit the cutting down of trees for wood, said an officer from the Forestry Department.

The Forestry Department is implementing the project together with the WIF (Worldview International Foundation). Mangroves will be cultivated on 500 acre land within the reserve.—200

Crime NEWS

Yaba seized in Myawady



Ma Aye Kham. PHOTO: THE MIRROR

A LOCAL anti-drug squad seized yaba from the Bawathit shop near Than Bridge, Friendship road, on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched a Bawathit shop belonging to one Soe Win and discovered 1932 yaba pills. One Min Khine was found together with the shop owner.

On the same day, the police

discovered 400 yaba pills in one Ma Aye Lin's house in Kauing Lan ward, Nam Lan village, Hsipaw township. Similarly, the police searched the home of Ma Aye Kham and seized heroin weighing 50 grams in ward 5, Lashio town on 24 April.

Police have filed charges against all suspects under the anti-Narcotic Law.—*The mirror*

22-wheel truck overturns in Penwagon



A 22-wheel truck seen overturned in Penwagon.

PHOTO: PHYO KO LIN (NYAUNG WINE)

A DRIVER and another man were injured when a truck carrying sugar bags overturned between mileposts 122/1-2, on the Yangon-Mandalay highway on Tuesday.

The truck, en route to Penwagon from Kyaukdaga, was being driven by Aung Kyaw Kyaw, 19, with Pho Zaw, 38, the conductor on board when it

overturned after the driver lost control.

The accident injured both the driver and the conductor. The accident left the truck badly damaged and 50 sugar bags out of 700 were lost. Charges have been filed against the driver by local police.—*Phyo Ko Lin (Nyaung Wine)*

LOCAL Business

Rice prices on the rise

THE price of rice locally has bounced back after a month's slump because of the decreased demand from China, according to insider rice experts.

Rice dealers had, up until recently, not been able to export large quantities of rice to China because of strict rules and regulations monitoring the market at Chinese-Myanmar trade checkpoints starting from last month. An enormous quantity of rice was stranded at Muse market. As a result, the local price of rice began to decline.

"The price has risen a bit

because of the increased demand from China after the Myanmar New Year Holidays". The price of both low quality and high quality rice has risen by K1,000. The price of low quality rice has risen from K18,500 to K19,500 per bag while the price of high quality rice from K42,000 to K43,000 per bag, according to market insiders.

Export dealers did not fare well, it was reported, with the price of local rice as it was, the problem being exasperated by Myanmar currency appreciation.

The export price of Myan-

mar rice has declined little by little at the World Rice Market because of the high cost of local production, the low quality of rice compared to that of other countries and the high prevailing price.

The Muse rice export market to China was opened on 21 April and over 20,000 bags are exported to China daily.

The price ranges from Y145 to Y153 (Chinese Yuan) per bag depending on the rice variety at the Muse Border area. The price is dependent on demand from China.—*ML/Union Daily*



A farmer seen working on a rice field near Thilawa economic zone outside Yangon. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pea growers not suffering from low yield

PEA growers are not suffering from a low yield this year attributed to the impact of El Niño weather events because the price of peas has risen as export market has increased lately, mostly due to demand from India, according to experts in the pea growing field.

The price of peas on the export market began its rise around 21 April following the Thingyan holidays with a price of K1.6 million paid for mung bean and K1.4 million paid for pigeon pea, per tonne, respectively. The current export price is over K1.7 million for mung bean and K1.6 million for pigeon pea per tonne

and K110,000 for 60 visses (a viss is approximately 1.6 kilograms) of green gram, according to the statistics of pea exporters.

Despite a low yield in Myanmar, Indian merchants have offered a higher price to fulfill the needs of the pea consuming public of India although the Indian government has made efforts to reduce the price.

"The pea growers have promoted their cultivation this year because the pea export price was higher last year but the yield dropped because of unfavourable weather. The growers have not suffered from the loss despite the low yield. In fact, they've seen

higher prices", said a pea merchant.

The volume of pea export has decreased year by year: 1.4 million tonnes was moved in 2013-2014 followed by 1.3 million tonnes in 2014-2015 and 1.1 million tonnes in 2015-2016. Mung bean, pigeon pea and green gram are the most popularly exported beans. 80 per cent of the total volume of peas is exported to India, it has been learned.

The temperature in Magwe, Mandalay and Sagaing regions has reached a record high this year due to the impact of El Niño, aided by other irregular weather patterns.—*ML/Union Daily*

New policy aims to promote trade sector for public interests

THE Ministry of Commerce will soon announce the lists of goods which do not need to obtain any export/import license or permission from the ministry to be imported and sold, its spokesperson said.

Currently, there are over 9,000 different kinds of export/import items. Over 5,000 kinds of them can be traded without a license.

Some goods of the licensed group are included in the upcoming announcement after the ministry concluded negotiations with the relevant departments. It is expected that the plan will be announced at the end of this month.

The new lists include some

commodities that are seeing high demand from the country which do not impact natural resources or the environment, some auto parts and other mechanical accessories.

The ministry is now establishing the new policies outlining the rules of sending valued-added wood-based products, gems and jewelries and some mineral products to foreign countries as quality export products.

The major purpose of the statement is to benefit the public by revoking some rules for both exporters and importers who trade goods the country needs, a member of trade department said.—*200*

Soilbuild wins tender for New Housing Project on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road

THE Soilbuild Construction Group based in Singapore won the tender to construct a new housing project on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road in Bahan Township according to Singapore media.

The apartments and condominiums will be included in the real estate project, according to the Soilbuild Company. The housing estate, when constructed, will need to meet stringent international standards, this being the given reason for construction firms being invited to submit tenders for the

building contract. Among the companies that submitted tenders Soilbuild Company won the contract to carry out the construction.

Soilbuild Company is a part of the Singapore Stock Exchange and has background experience in construction number some 40 years, it has been learned.

The project is slated to begin during the second half of this year with the construction expected to complete the project during the last four months of 2018, according to the company.—*PPN/Union Daily*

Japanese groups to invest in wood-based industry in Myanmar

JAPANESE companies will establish two factories in Myanmar in the month of June to produce high-quality finished wood products and export them to European countries, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission.

The Japanese firms also plan to produce household electrical and electronic equipment with the aim of distributing the household appliances across Myanmar as well

as other Asian countries.

The two groups of companies have been applying for permission to operate their production businesses in the country over the last few years. Currently, the investors are looking for suitable areas in selected regions to establish those factories, with plan to mainly distribute their finished wood products within European's wood-based furniture market. —*200*



A wood parquet factory in Yangon being seen. PHOTO: REUTERS

Australian PM Turnbull pins election hopes on budget

SYDNEY — Facing a protracted two-month election campaign and rapidly declining popularity, Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is under pressure to set an economic course that will go the distance with voters.

Due on Tuesday, the government's annual budget will be the centrepiece of an election that Turnbull has all but promised to hold on 2 July.

The government is running neck and neck with Labour Party, latest opinion polls showed, putting Turnbull in a tough position as he seeks his first mandate since wresting the top job from the hugely unpopular Tony Abbott in a leadership coup last year.

"This budget will not be about a fistful of dollars, it will be about prudence, fairness and responsibility to our future generations," he said, probably aimed at tempering expectations for vote-buying sweeteners.

The government is keen to drive home the

message that it alone can be trusted to manage an economy hampered by a once-in-a-century mining downturn and balance public finances after years of deficits.

Figures last month showed economic growth picked up momentum in the fourth quarter, providing a political boost to the coalition government.

A rally in prices for some of Australia's top exports, such as iron ore, promises to boost the government's tax take which could prevent another embarrassing miss on the deficit.

Treasurer Scott Morrison should report the red ink matched forecasts at around A\$37 billion (\$28.2 billion) this financial year and allow him to offer the aspirational goal of small fiscal surpluses from 2021-22 onwards.

"We will continue to reduce the deficit and we will do that by not spending more than we save on outlays," Morrison said.

Yet spending restraint does not seem to extend to defence. —Reuters

China won't allow chaos or war on Korean peninsula: Xi Jinping

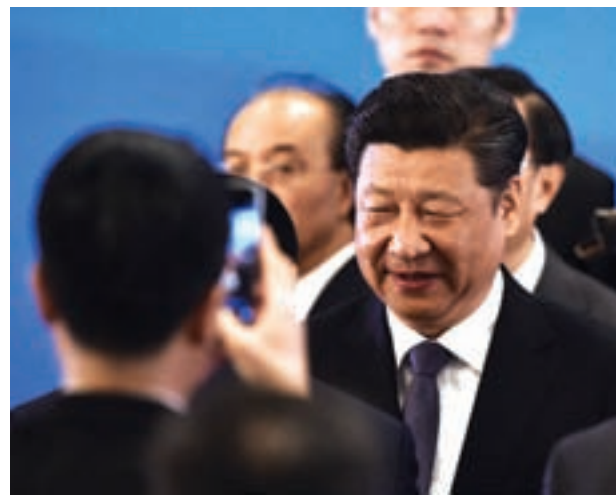
BEIJING — China will not allow chaos and war to break out on the Korean peninsula, which would be to no one's advantage, Chinese President Xi Jinping told a group of Asian foreign ministers on Thursday.

North Korea's drive to develop a nuclear weapons capability, in defiance of UN resolutions, has angered China and raised tension in the region.

"As a close neighbour of the peninsula, we will absolutely not permit war or chaos on the peninsula. This situation would not benefit anyone," Xi said in a speech to a Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia.

North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test in January and followed that with tests of various missiles that could deliver such a weapon.

The isolated state is expected to conduct an-



China's President Xi Jinping is photographed by a smartphone at the opening ceremony of the fifth regular foreign ministers' meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, on 28 April.

PHOTO: REUTERS

other nuclear test before a rare congress of its ruling party, beginning on 6 May, at which young leader Kim Jong Un is expected to try to cement his leadership.

China is North Korea's sole major ally but it disapproves of its development of nuclear weapons and backed harsh new UN sanctions imposed last month.

China has long called for the Korean peninsula to be free of nuclear weapons.

Nearly 30,000 US troops are based in South Korea and the two Koreas are still technically at war after the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a treaty. Xi also told the meeting China would safeguard peace and stability in the

South China Sea, while at the same time maintaining its sovereignty and rights there. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, believed to rich in oil and gas deposits. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also claim parts of the waters, through which about \$5 trillion in trade is shipped every year.

China has rattled nerves with its military and construction activities on tiny islands in the disputed waters, including building runways, though it says most of its activity is for civilian purposes. Chinese officials say the United States is pushing militarization and endangering stability with "freedom of navigation" operations by its military ships and aircraft in the South and East China seas.

The United States says it conducts such patrols across the world in an effort to demonstrate that the international community does not accept restrictions set up by some countries in international waters. —Reuters

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North Korea fires missile, launch appears to have failed

SEOUL— North Korea on Thursday fired a missile, presumed to be an intermediate-range ballistic Musudan, but the launch appeared to have failed, according to a South Korean military official.

The launch was made at around 6:50 am from an area near the city of Wonsan, on North Korea's east coast, but the missile appeared to have crashed within a few seconds of being fired, the official said.

On 15 April, North Korea fired another missile, also presumed to be a Musudan, from its east coast, but this too appeared to have failed, having also disappeared seconds after being launched.

If proved to be a Musudan, the two tests would be the first known launches of that type of missile.

The first of the two launches was carried out on the birthday of North Korea's late founder



File photo of North Korean soldiers as they salute in a military vehicle carrying a missile during a parade to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the signing of a truce in the 1950-1953 Korean War, at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang. PHOTO: REUTERS

Kim Il Sung, the grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un, and came amid calls from the international community, including North Korea's most important ally China, for Pyongyang not to carry out any more provocative acts in violation of United Nations resolutions.

North Korea is banned

from conducting launches using ballistic missile technology under multiple UN Security Council resolutions.

The latest sanctions on North Korea were imposed in the wake of the country's fourth test of a nuclear device in January, and its launch of a long-range rocket using banned

ballistic missile technology in February.

The Musudan missile has an estimated range of between 2,500 and 4,000 kilometres, which would enable it to reach not only any target in South Korea or Japan, but also potentially US military facilities on the Pacific island of Guam. —Kyodo News

Australia data shows gun controls a huge success 20 years after mass shooting

SYDNEY — Australia on Thursday marked the 20th anniversary of a mass shooting which led to strict gun controls that have in turn led to a huge decline in gun murders, undermining claims in the United States that such curbs are not the answer.

The chances of being murdered by a gun in Australia plunged to 0.15 per 100,000 people in 2014 from 0.54 per 100,000 people in 1996, a decline of 72 per cent, a Reuters analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed.

In 1996, Australia had 311 murders, of which 98 were with guns. In 2014, with the population up from about 18 million to 23 million, Australia had 238 murders, of which 35 were with guns.

It was the 28 April, 1996, shooting deaths by a lone gunman of 35 people in and around a cafe at a historic former prison colony in Tasmania that prompt-

ed the government to buy back or confiscate a million firearms and make it harder to buy new ones.

The country has had no mass shootings since.

The figures directly contradict assertions of most leading US presidential candidates who have either questioned the need to toughen gun laws or directly denounced Australia's laws as dangerous.

In a January 2015 tweet, Republican front runner Donald Trump wrote "Fact — the tighter the gun laws, the more violence. The criminals will always have guns". A year later, Republican hopeful Ted Cruz blamed Australia's gun laws on a rise in sexual assault.

Democrat front runner Hillary Clinton has meanwhile ruled out an Australian-style gun buyback, while Democrat hopeful Bernie Sanders has rejected the need for tougher gun controls despite a gun murder



File photo shows guns that have just had their barrels crushed in Sydney are stacked after they were handed over on the last day of the Australian gun buy-back scheme. PHOTO: REUTERS

rate of 3.4 per 100,000. The US National Rifle Association has attacked the Australian laws as "not the definition of common-sense".

Philip Alpers, an associate professor of University of Sydney's School of Public Health, who studies gun ownership and

violence, said Australia's laws had had "demonstrable success".

"We have the most comprehensive suite of gun laws (in the world) and it would be a great shame to start whittling those down," he said.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull marked the

anniversary by saying US gun violence showed why Australia would keep its laws intact. The rate of US gun deaths shows "what happens when you have very little if any restrictions on the purchase of weapons like that", he told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.—Reuters

Philippines wants coordinated patrols to protect ships from rebels



Philippines' Foreign Secretary Jose Rene Almendras. PHOTO: REUTERS

MANILA — The Philippines has been discussing coordinated naval patrols on its southern maritime borders with Indonesia and Malaysia to protect shipping after attacks and kidnappings by Islamist militants, its foreign minister said on Thursday.

Indonesia is trying to free about 14 of its citizens seized from tugboats by Abu Sayyaf rebels from the southern Philippines and has called for joint patrols. Four Malaysians seamen are also being held.

The Islamist rebels, who are raking in tens of millions of dollars

in ransom, decapitated a Canadian on Monday and are still holding 23 hostages. Citizens of the Netherlands, Japan, Norway and the Philippines are among them.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Jose Rene Almendras said his country was only proposing separate but coordinated patrols to identify safe corridors where ships can travel.

Indonesia last week called for joint maritime patrols with the Philippines and Malaysia. Joint patrols would involve ships from the three navies patrolling together and crossing into each other's territori-

al waters. Officials from the three sides are due to meet in Jakarta on 5 May to discuss cooperation.

"The issue is safety and security," Almendras told Reuters after signing an infrastructure loan agreement with South Korea. "It's called coordinated patrols, we'll do our patrols and they will have their own patrols in their own territorial waters so there will be no more threats to the movement of ships, including the kidnapping of sailors."

Two Indonesian coal ports have blocked ships from leaving to the Philippines and Malaysia's eastern Sabah state due to security concerns.

The growing frequency of maritime attacks has affected coal trade between the Southeast Asian neighbours Indonesia, the world's largest thermal coal exporter, and the Philippines, which, relies on Jakarta for 70 per cent of its coal imports.

Abu Sayyaf, known for kidnappings, beheadings, bombings and extortion, is one of the most brutal militant groups in Muslim south of the largely Christian Philippines.

Outgoing President Benigno Aquino has promised to devote his remaining days in office to crushing the militants. Fourteen rebels have been killed in bombing of the stronghold of Jolo island since Tuesday, a military spokesman said.—Reuters

Nepal to mobilise over 1,300 engineers to rebuild houses damaged by quake

KATHMANDU — Nepal is set to mobilise over 1,300 engineers in the worst-hit districts this week as part of the post-quake reconstruction campaign, Prime Minister Sharma Oli said on Wednesday.

"We are entering into reconstruction but the nation cannot be rebuilt until people and leaders are fully determined. I am hopeful that the engineers will work with honesty to rebuild the quake-resistant houses," he told a two-day orientation for engineers.

The prime minister further said a large number of volunteers will be called in the 14 affected districts to assist the engineers in reconstruction.

"I would like to request all the political parties to mobilise their party cadres and volunteers for one month so that reconstruction drive will be intensified," he said.

The National Reconstruction Authority is in support of the Ministry of Urban Development at a time when it has recently started distribution of housing grant to the quake victims. The authority is releasing 50,000 rupees (470 US dollars) as the first installment of a 200,000-rupee (1,880-US dollar) aid per household to build houses.

Beside the 1,346 engi-

neers, the ministry is mobilising 560 sub-engineers and 575 assistant engineers to rebuild quake-resistant infrastructure.

"It is not an easy task to rebuild over a half million houses at the same time. So, we will start from the people who are still living under tents," Sushil Gyawali, CEO of the National Reconstruction Authority, said.

The government has trained the engineers to reconstruct the damaged houses, with priority given to the poor and marginalised people.

"I am excited to be a part of government's reconstruction drive. I will share my technical knowledge with the locals in selecting models and building quake-resistant houses," Nitisha Parajuli, a 24-year-old civil engineer, told Xinhua.

More than a half million houses were damaged by the devastating 7.9-magnitude earthquake last year. The international community has pledged 4.1 billion US dollars in financial aid. The engineers and architects, who are selected on the basis of merit and interview, will remain in their designated areas for two years. They will begin the task in the affected districts from the end of this week.—Xinhua

Opinion

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Internet access is important to modern social life

Kyaw Thura

THE internet has played a crucial role in connecting students to the information and skills they need in modern education. Studies have found that people even at grass-roots level can benefit directly from an easy access to the internet in their health, education, business and job hunting.

Some 15 years before, public computer and internet access venues had been considered to be the only source of the internet for many people in our country to stay in touch with their loved ones while away from home until mobile phones and computers with internet access became available.

In this age of information and technology, community access to computer and internet technology is of crucial importance in modern social life. The internet provides relatively fast access to an ocean of useful information for people engaged in research projects. In addition, students can get in touch with their teachers and

professors for some help with their assignments and theses.

Thanks to internet access, we are now in a position to take up a branch of study online according to our needs and at our convenience. It saves time and energy to such an extent that we are never too busy to learn new things on the internet.

Women and Peace Process

Dr. Khine Khine Win

WOMEN don't start wars, but they do suffer heavily from the consequences. According to Amnesty International, conflict isn't just about death it is a breeding ground for mass human rights violations, including torture, disappearances and imprisonment without charge. Both men and women suffer negatively from violent conflict. Here it is noteworthy that women and men experience conflict differently and therefore, understand peace differently.

No doubt, women and children are disproportionately affected by armed conflict. Actually, men are the majority of armed combatants and public decision makers, but women also play supportive roles in communities affected by conflict. While conflict weighs heavily on all, women and girls suffer disproportionately

ate negative impacts economically and socially. This includes increases in women's and girls' work burdens with the loss or injury of male relatives, lost of productive assets (e.g. land) livelihoods and incomes and other basic needs. Women live in constant fear and insecurity given the lack of physical safety, the perpetration of sexual and other forms of abuse and need improved access to effective legal, medical and psycho-social services including better access to justice.

Why women should be involved in peace process? At the international level, we now have consensus that women should be included in all peace talks. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (adopted in October 2000) acknowledges the disproportionate impact of violent conflict on women and recognizes the critical role women should and can play in the

processes of peace building and conflict prevention, including peace talks, conflict mediation, and all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction. Women can bring their unique experience to bear on all aspects of peace process, such as providing early warning and intelligence about impending conflict, defusing and mediation disputes, building trust, taking on village headship roles and protecting their communities as men often have to flee the avoid arrest or death, addressing sexual violence and gender-based violence and women's long term development.

What I believe is that inclusion of women and their priorities in all aspect of peace process will enhance the effectiveness of the peace process and women's concern will well address in long term development, ensuring sustainable peace. Including women and their priorities in peace process

is a woman's right, leads to more inclusive and sustainable peace and development and optimizes investment in the same. However, women's formal participation in peace process is still limited and it remains one of the most unfulfilled aspect of the women, peace and security agenda.

The role of women in democratic processes is further emphasized in the 2011 General Assembly resolution on Women's Political Participation (A/RES/66/130), which reaffirms "that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy". UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Women's participation in peace efforts is a matter of gender equality and universal human rights – and crucial to achieving sustainable peace, economic re-

covery, social cohesion and political legitimacy.

Women's involvement in peace negotiations is not just an issue for women, but also for men. The point is to improve life for all people. Toward that end, men have to see the direct benefit of engaging women in peace talks, something male leaders are critical in helping to explain. Indeed, strengthening exchange of information between women's groups and delegations has been a powerful strategy to encourage the negotiating parties to raise gender issue and increase the chance for the peace agreement to advance gender equality and protect women's right.

While women make up half of the world's population, they continue to be largely absent from peace negotiations. So it is the time to call the full participation of women who play a pivotal role in the security and peace building in this new century.

SMEs Knowledge Awareness Workshop held in Mandalay

THE SMEs Knowledge Awareness Workshop, organised by the Mandalay Computer Entrepreneurs Association, PUM Netherlands Senior Experts and the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection (DISI) under the Union Ministry of Industry, was held in the hall of MICT Park in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, on 26 April.

At the ceremony, the U Myo Htut Swe of DISI explained measures to provide techniques for small and medium businesses and textile industries to obtain loans.

U Thein Htut, the managing director of Yadanabon Cyber Corporation and vice chairman of the Myanmar Computer Professionals Association

elaborated on delivery techniques, regional development and human resources.

An agricultural expert from PUM Netherlands Senior Experts discussed the thriving coffee cultivation in Pyin Oo Lwin, which exports coffee that meets international standards to ASEAN countries and to the EU. He also discussed the cultivation of mango trees around Mandalay and packaging techniques.

Daw Eai Shwe Zin, the director of the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, elaborated on the policies to promote SME development and investment.

She then responded to questions from attendees.—*Thiha Ko Ko*



An expert speaks at the SMEs Knowledge Awareness Workshop in Mandalay.
PHOTO: THIHA KO KO



Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife meet service personnel of Pyinpongyi Station. PHOTO: MYAWADY

C-in-C of Defence Services meets service personnel at Pyinpongyi, Indaing stations

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met with service personnel at Pyinpongyi Station and Indaing Station separately yesterday, calling for all personnel to make greater efforts in bolstering defense of the nation to guard and rebuild dutifully.

At the meeting at Pyinpongyi Station, the Senior General clarified the capacity building, education and social welfare for the members and families of

the Tatmadaw.

He also stressed the need not only to guard against dangers in order to provide security to the people but also to volunteer for rescue and rehabilitation when disasters hit the country.

He presented Buddha statues and books to service personnel during the tour of inspection while his wife presented cash to maternal and child welfare associations of the stations.

—Myawady

Myanmar's Mr Clean says he takes 'red tape road' to profit

SCAFFOLDING around the 139-year old Myanma Railways Headquarters, a red-brick colonial relic at the centre of a half billion dollar property development in central Yangon, hasn't seen much action since the project was announced four years ago.

Serge Pun, the 63-year-old project developer and one of Myanmar's richest men, says his Landmark development - which includes office, residential and hotel space - has been strangled by red tape and costly delays all because of his adherence to clean business.

It's a frustrating contrast to the luxury and high-end property boom in other parts of the Myanmar's commercial capital.

"It has been a very long and arduous red tape road," Pun said in an interview.

"Good governance always has a price to pay and the price we are paying is a delay."

Companies and international agencies have long identified corruption and a lack of transparency as major obstacles to doing business in Myanmar.

Pun's grievances underscore the challenges the newly-elected National League for Democracy (NLD) faces as it seeks global investment for urgent development needs.

And despite his own clean cre-

dentials, Myanmar's complicated business environment means Pun has at times dealt with internationally blacklisted entities with key market positions.

Landmark, a 10 acre development, was first announced in 2012 and is one of the country's most high-profile international investments.

Despite prominent backers — including the International Finance Corporation, a branch of the World Bank that finances private ventures; Asia Development Bank and Mitsubishi Corporation - the project hasn't yet broken ground.

The latest deadline for lease extensions from the Ministry of Rail Transport, which owns the land, was missed at the end of March.

A senior ministry official said refurbishment of the old building is in progress but needed to be carried

out "without affecting the heritage values."

The official didn't comment on the status of the lease extensions or explain why it had yet to be granted.

It remains a crucial issue for the project.

"The lease extensions have a significant impact on the project's financial viability both from a debt and equity perspective," said Vikram Kumar, IFC's Myanmar manager. For investors keen to break into the frontier market, Pun serves as a go-to partner to help navigate local complexities, notably international sanctions still in place on many Myanmar nationals and businesses.

Pun built his conglomerate, Yoma Strategic Holdings, from scratch and his business empire includes real estate, banking, aviation and cars.

Over three decades, he has become one of Asia's richest men while cultivating a reputation as "Mr Clean" in a country long known as anything but. Neither he nor his companies have been subject to international sanctions.

Companies from American fast-food chain KFC to Indonesian healthcare operator Lippo Group have partnered with him.

However, the business reality in Myanmar means some otherwise straightforward business ventures run through blacklisted companies. One of KFC's Myanmar outlets, for example, is at the new Yangon airport terminal, which was built and run by a businessman called Steven Law, who is on the US sanctions list.

Pun said that the deal doesn't violate sanctions because it was done through Yoma, not KFC, and that it complies with Yoma's

code of conduct. US-based Yum! Brands, which owns KFC, did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

US Treasury said it doesn't comment on the "existence or possibility of sanctions violations."

The NLD is yet to release a plan addressing remaining sanctions, but recently slapped curbs on the value of gifts officials can accept, a small step to fulfilling its pledge to eliminate graft.

For now, US sanctions still create headaches, often indirectly tying up Myanmar-related bank transfers, even if they don't involve blacklisted entities. "When you actually try to do business, everybody doesn't understand whether you are a jade miner or not - they just say it is too troublesome to transact your fund remittance," Pun said. —Reuters / Aung Hla Tun and Timothy McLaughlin



Serge Pun, head of First Myanmar Investment (FMI), talks to reporters at Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in Yangon, Myanmar on 25 March, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



The old Myanma Railways Headquarters building is seen in Yangon on 27 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Austria plans fence to stop migrants at major border crossing with Italy



A sign reading "Brenner — Brennero" is pictured at Brenner on the Italian-Austrian border, Austria, on 12 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

VIENNA — Austria outlined plans on Wednesday to erect a fence at a border crossing with Italy that is a vital link between northern and southern Europe, escalating a stand-off between the two states over how to handle a migration crisis.

Migrants are crossing the Mediterranean from Africa to Italy in growing numbers and Austria has said Rome must stop them travelling onwards towards northern Europe or it will have to introduce border controls at the Brenner Pass in the Alps.

But with Austrian preparations for controls already under way, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said Austria's move was "shamelessly against European rules, as well as being against history, against logic and against the future".

Austrian police in the Alpine province of Tyrol, which borders on northern Italy, presented plans for the installation of facilities at Brenner to inspect vehicles and process migrants, in the event formal controls are introduced.

Building work on some of the facilities at Brenner began

two weeks ago but their scale was not immediately known.

"A security fence of 370 metres (1,220 feet) is planned," a Tyrol police spokesman said, adding that the fence was part of a system aimed at channelling migrants in the deep valley that the Brenner Pass runs through.

Whether the fence is built, however, will depend on the outcome of talks in Rome on Thursday between Austrian Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka and his Italian counterpart, the spokesman said.

Austria has taken an increasingly hard line on how to deal with the hundreds of thousands of asylum-seeking migrants, many of them fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and elsewhere, who have poured into Europe over the past year.

After throwing open its borders to the arrivals with Germany in September, Vienna has since said it cannot cope with the numbers, and it coordinated border restrictions that shut down the main Balkans migrant route from Greece to northern Europe.

Italy and Austria are part of the European Union's Schengen

open-border zone, but free movement has been jeopardised by the reimposition of controls at some key crossings by countries affected by the migrant influx.

Austria's governing coalition of Social Democrats and the conservative People's Party is also under political pressure as the anti-immigration Freedom Party's candidate secured a record share of the vote in Sunday's presidential election.

The Austrian parliament on Wednesday passed tough new asylum measures — including one under which migrants could be turned away at the border within an hour — that could be activated if lawmakers determined a threat to public order.

The Brenner Pass is the busiest route through the Alps for heavy goods vehicles and any controls there will slow traffic on an important corridor to Germany, Italy's top trading partner.

"The construction work will be completed with or without a fence by the end of May," the Tyrol police spokesman said, adding that border controls could be introduced before or after then.—Reuters

Iran nuclear deal fight threatens Senate spending bill

WASHINGTON — A battle over implementation of the Iran nuclear deal erupted on the US Senate floor on Wednesday as Democrats maneuvered to block a Republican amendment stopping the Obama administration from buying heavy water from Tehran's nuclear programme.

By a vote of 50-46, Democrats and four Republicans banded together to stop a fiscal 2017 energy spending bill, in order to keep Republican Senator Tom Cotton from offering his amendment to the measure.

The legislation had needed 60 'yes' votes to move ahead.

President Barack Obama's administration had warned Congress that it strongly opposed any move to prevent the planned purchase of \$8.6 million worth of heavy water, which is non-radioactive and used in nuclear reactors and for making nuclear weapons.

Under last year's nuclear deal between Iran, the United States and five other world powers, Tehran is responsible for reducing its stock of the substance, which it can sell, dilute or dispose of, under certain conditions.

The dust-up put a crimp in Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell's plans to spend the next several weeks advancing bipartisan appropriations bills to keep the federal government functioning beyond 30 September, the end of the fiscal year.

Before the vote, Senator Chuck Schumer, the No. 2 Senate Democrat, told reporters that if Democrats allowed the bill to proceed, potentially clearing the way for a vote on the Cotton amendment, Republicans would be emboldened "again and again and again" to attach to spending bills "poison pill" amendments the White House opposes.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ecuador asks IMF for loan after quake — IMF official

WASHINGTON — The International Monetary Fund has received a request for a credit line from Ecuador following a deadly earthquake earlier this month, an IMF official said on Wednesday.

Alejandro Werner, director of the Western Hemisphere department, said the fund would be discussing Ecuador's request for a loan from its Rapid Financing Instrument. He did not provide any specifics on the amount of aid.

Last week, Ecuador's president said the country would temporarily increase some taxes and sell assets, and said it may issue global bonds to fund a multi-billion-dollar reconstruction gafter the devastating 7.8 magnitude quake, which killed over 650 people.—Reuters

Cylinder blast kills seven during marriage party in India

NEW DELHI — At least seven people were killed and 15 others injured Wednesday after a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder exploded while preparing food during a marriage party in north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, police said.

The blast took place at Rafipur Tera Khurd village of Bara Banki district, 33 km east of Lucknow city, the capital of Uttar Pradesh.

"Two women and five children were killed, and fifteen others injured in a LPG cylinder blast here," a police official posted in Bara Banki said. "The fatal incident happened when a gas cylinder caught fire and blasted while food was being prepared for a feast in a marriage ceremony."

According to officials, the injured were immediately rushed to hospital in Lucknow, where condition of two was declared to be critical.—Xinhua

New bombardments, shellings kill at least 34 in Aleppo — Syrian Observatory

BEIRUT — At least 20 people were killed by fresh air strikes on rebel-held areas of Aleppo on Thursday including three children, and the death toll was expected to rise due to the number of serious injuries, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Meanwhile shellfire by insurgents on government-held parts of the northern Syrian city killed at least 14 people including two children, the British-based monitoring group said.—Reuters

EU-Turkey deal only way to solve migration crisis — EU's Timmermans

ANKARA — The agreement between the European Union and Turkey over stemming the flow of migrants across the eastern Mediterranean is the only possible solution, EU Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans said on Thursday.

The EU-Turkey agreement to send back thousands of migrants from the Greek islands to Turkey has been fiercely criticised by United Nations refugee and human rights agencies as immoral and a violation of international humanitarian law. "The agreement with Turkey in my view is the only way forward to solve that problem," Timmermans said. "Those who criticise the agreement have never ever given me an alternative we could work with."

Timmermans added the prerequisites for visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens coming to the European Union would not be eased.—Reuters

Lebanese army kills Islamic State leader at Syrian border — security source

BEIRUT — Lebanese forces killed an Islamic State leader on Thursday in an army operation in the mountainous border region with Syria, Lebanon's National News Agency and a security source said.

The man was named as Nayif al-Shaalaan, and identified as Islamic State's leader in the area by the security source. State media said he also went by the name Abu Fawz.

The operation took place in the area of Aarsal in north Lebanon.

Fighting between Islamic State and al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front militants often spills over Lebanon's mountainous northern border with Syria, where conflict has been raging for five years. Fighters briefly overran Aarsal in 2014 before withdrawing to the hills after clashes with the army, which stages regular operations against Islamic State and Nusra Front in north Lebanon and along the border.—Reuters

UN envoy urges Obama, Putin to save Syria truce, peace process

GENEVA — The United Nations mediator on Thursday called on the leaders of the United States and the Russian Federation to salvage the “barely alive” two-month-old ceasefire in Syria and revitalize the damaged peace process.

UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura voiced deep concern at the truce unraveling in Aleppo and at least three other hotspots, although he saw some narrowing of positions between the government and opposition visions of political transition.

“Hence my appeal for a US-Russian urgent initiative at the highest level, because the legacy of both President Obama and President Putin is linked to the success of what has been a unique initiative which started very well. It needs to end very well,” de Mistura told a news conference.

The United States and Russia must convene a ministerial meeting of major and regional powers who compose the Inter-



UN mediator Staffan de Mistura attends a news conference after the conclusion of a round of meetings during the Syria Peace talks at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 28 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

national Syria Support Group (ISSG), he said.

“There is no reason that both of them which have been putting so much political capital in that success story and have a common interest in not seeing Syria ending up in an-

other cycle of war should not be able to revitalize what they have created and which is still alive but barely.”

The main opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) pulled out of the formal talks a week ago, in protest of intensi-

fied fighting and slow aid deliveries.

“How can you have substantial talks when you have only news about bombing and shelling? It’s something that even I find it difficult, can you imagine the Syrians?” de Mistura said, adding he aimed to resume talks in May, though he gave no date.

Bashar Ja’afari, who led the government delegation, said on Tuesday the round had been “useful and constructive.”

But he gave no sign of ceding to the HNC’s central demand for a political transition without President Bashar al-Assad.

De Mistura, asked whether Assad’s future was discussed, replied: “We didn’t get into names of people... but actually how to change the current governance.

And I must say that the concept of a new government and a political transition with a new constitution is quite a lot

already in terms of preparing of what could be the next steps.”

He issued a document saying the two sides remain far apart in their vision of a political transition, but shared some “commonalities,” including the view “that the transitional governance could include members of the present government and the opposition, independents and others.”

De Mistura said this round of talks had been “overshadowed by a substantial and indeed worrisome of cessation of hostilities.”

“The perception is that it could collapse any time,” he said.

In the past 48 hours there had been an average of 1 Syrian civilian killed every 25 minutes and one wounded every 13 minutes, he said.

The latest victims included “the last pediatric doctor” in rebel-held eastern Aleppo, killed in an air strike on a hospital on Wednesday, he said.—*Reuters*

Israeli forces kill Palestinian woman and brother, armed with knives: police



A Palestinian woman argues with an Israeli border policeman near the scene where a Palestinian woman and a man, who the Israeli military said tried to stab security forces, were shot dead by Israeli police near Qalandia checkpoint near the West Bank city of Ramallah, on 27 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

JERUSALEM — Israeli police shot dead a Palestinian woman and her teenage brother on Wednesday, saying they were armed with knives and tried to carry out an attack at a checkpoint in the occupied West Bank.

Police said the woman, holding a knife, and a man walked rapidly towards police and other Israeli security guards in a vehicles-only lane at the Qalandia checkpoint outside Jerusalem.

“Police called on them several times to stop. When they kept advancing...the officers neutralised the terrorists,” a police statement said.

Palestinian authorities identified the two dead as Maram Abu Ismail, 23, and her 16-year-old brother, Ibrahim Taha, and said they had been en route to Jerusalem for a medical appointment.

The siblings entered the vehicles-only lane by accident and

their killing was a “brutal daylight crime” by Israel, the Palestinian Information Ministry said in a statement.

Israel police, who have been on high alert during the current Jewish Passover holiday week, issued a photograph of three knives on the ground which they said the two had been carrying.

Alaa Soboh, a Palestinian bus driver who said he witnessed the incident, told Reuters the pair

appeared to be unfamiliar with crossing procedures and were swiftly challenged at the checkpoint.

“As soon as the two crossed, (Israeli forces) started screaming ‘Go back, go back’, and then they began shooting. The first one they shot was the girl ... the boy tried to go backward, when they fired seven bullets at him,” Soboh said.

In the last half year, Palestinian attacks have killed 28 Israelis and two visiting US citizens. Israeli forces have killed at least 193 Palestinians, 130 of whom Israel says were assailants. Many others were shot dead in clashes and protests.

Factors behind the bloodshed that began in October include Palestinian bitterness over stalled statehood negotiations and the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, stepped up Jewish access to a disputed Jerusalem shrine, and Islamist-led calls for Israel’s destruction.

The pace of what had been near-daily Palestinian stabbing, shootings and car-ramming attacks has slowed, although a suicide bombing on a Jerusalem bus that wounded 15 people on 18 April has fueled Israeli security concerns.

Israel attributes the fall-off in incidents partly to tighter co-operation with Palestinian security forces in the West Bank and more stringent monitoring of social media to identify potential assailants.—*Reuters*

Egyptian migrants killed in clash with Libyan smugglers — official

BANI WALID (Libya) — At least nine Egyptian migrants and three people smugglers were killed in a money dispute in the town of Bani Walid, a local official said on Wednesday.

The official said a group of Egyptians had killed the Libyan smugglers and tried to drive the bodies away, but they were stopped at a checkpoint when blood was noticed on their car.

A fourth smuggler then went to the police station where the Egyptians were being held, and opened fire on them, he said.

The United Nations mission to Libya said the deaths had occurred in a series of incidents on Tuesday and Wednesday. It said as many as 13 Egyptians had been killed, and called for an investigation. Hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants and internally displaced people are currently in Libya, according to the United Nations. Some foreign migrants have settled in the North African country to work, while others are seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea for Europe.

Powerful smuggling networks linked to Libya’s numerous armed groups generally control migration flows, and migrants are frequently subjected to abuses.—*Reuters*

Why do we live so badly, aboriginal youth ask Canada's Trudeau

OTTAWA — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who is used to adoring welcomes and requests for selfies, on Wednesday had a tougher public encounter when aboriginal students pressed him on their poor living conditions.

Trudeau's Liberal Party came to power last November promising to rebuild ties with Canada's 1.4 million aboriginals, or First Nations, many of whom are mired in poverty and crime and suffer from bad health.

"Why do you allow the first people of this land to endure and live in Third World conditions?" asked one female student, referring to "the acts of genocide" aboriginals had been subjected to for centuries at the hands of settlers.

The question prompted loud applause at the high school for indigenous students in Saskatoon, in the western province of Saskatchewan. The 20-minute question-and-answer session was shown in a live webcast.

Trudeau, who sounded more defensive than he has been in other Q&A sessions across Canada, responded that the federal government could not fix the problem alone and needed to work with First Nations.

"Quite frankly ... this is a stain and a scar upon, not just our sense of who we are and our morality as Canadians, but on the kind of country we need to be building," he said.

Increased militancy and unhappiness among the aboriginal population has prompted protests against a



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, Canada, on 26 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

number of pipeline projects that would cross First Nations territory.

Some of the students expressed impatience, pressing Trudeau on what improvements they would see this year.

"Why are the promises you made when you got elected prime minister taking so long?" one student asked.

Trudeau replied that the government was like a big ocean liner and turning

it around would take some time.

In a federal budget this March, Ottawa said it would spend an extra C\$8.37 billion (4.56 billion pounds) over five years to help tackle the worst of the

problems facing aboriginals.

Earlier this month a cabinet minister said Ottawa was working on a plan to help address a wave of suicides in remote indigenous communities.—Reuters

Sibling rivalry threatens Fujimori's bid ahead of Peru vote

LIMA (Peru) — A spat between presidential contender Keiko Fujimori and her younger brother over the future leadership of the political movement they inherited from their ex-president father could cost her key votes in Peru's tight 5 June run-off election.

Keiko Fujimori threatened to throw Kenji Fujimori out of her political party after he stoked fears that the family harbours dynastic intentions by saying he will run for president in the next elections in 2021 if she loses this year.

Keiko Fujimori had vowed that no one with the Fujimori surname would seek the presidency in 2021 before her brother declared on Twitter: "the decision is mine."

"I've spoken with him... for us this chapter is closed" Keiko Fujimori, a 40-year-old former congresswoman, said Wednesday.

Critics said the dispute has laid bare a rift at the heart of their centre-right party, Fuerza Popular, as patriarch Alberto Fujimori languishes in prison for corruption and human rights abuses committed during his 1990-2000 government.

"Fujimori and her brother are fighting about who will get the piñata in 2021!" Fujimori's rival Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, a centrist econo-



Peruvian presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori (C) of the Fuerza Popular (Popular Force) party greets supporters during a campaign rally in San Juan de Lurigancho district of Lima, on 25 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

mist, told reporters. "Peru is not a piñata."

Kenji Fujimori, a 35-year-old lawmaker, has defended Alberto Fujimori more stridently than his sister and is widely seen as leading his father's hardline loyalists. Keiko Fujimori has striven to distance herself from her father's authoritarian rule and seized on her brother's defiance to shore up her democratic credentials.

"Fuerza Popular rejects any attempt to alter the processes of internal party elections with a self-proclaimed candidacy 5 years before an election," Fujimori said.

But the damage may have already been done, especially among middle-ground voters wary of the family's dominance, said

Alfredo Torres, the director of pollster Ipsos in Peru.

"I think Keiko reacted very well, she put Kenji in his place...but the balance is negative," said Torres. "It's going to be harder for her to win over undecided voters."

Fujimori and Kuczynski have been virtually tied in recent opinion polls. She was seen winning 39 per cent of votes to Kuczynski's 43 per cent in an Ipsos survey published Sunday, with 18 per cent of uncommitted voters still up for grabs. Keiko Fujimori is popular in rural districts where her father is celebrated for building schools and cracking down on guerrillas, but she faces stiff opposition from those who consider him a corrupt dictator.—Reuters

Paris attacks suspect Abdeslam extradited to France, under formal investigation

PARIS — Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam was placed under formal investigation on terrorism and murder charges in France on Wednesday after his extradition from Belgium, and he promised to talk to judges during his next hearing, his French lawyer said.

A Belgium-born Frenchman, Abdeslam is believed by investigators to be the sole survivor among a group of Islamist militants who killed 130 people in a spate of shootings and suicide bombings in Paris on 13 November.

"The investigation will determine to what degree he was involved in the acts ... for which he has been put under investiga-

tion," lawyer Frank Berton said after an initial hour-long hearing.

"He stayed silent today but said he would talk at a later stage," Berton said, adding that the next hearing was set for 20 May.

Abdeslam did not speak on Wednesday because he was tired after a "quite rough" extradition, Berton said.

Abdeslam was placed under investigation on charges of belonging to a terrorist organisation, murder, kidnapping and holding weapons and explosives, the public prosecutor said in a statement. The kidnap charges relate to the hours-long attack on the Bataclan concert hall in which 90 people were

killed. Abdeslam, 26, was Europe's most wanted fugitive until his capture in Brussels on 18 March after a four-month manhunt.

He was taken by helicopter to Paris under armed guard and then driven to the capital's main law courts.

French Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said Abdeslam would be held in solitary confinement in a high-security prison in the Paris region, with his cell under CCTV surveillance.

Four days after Abdeslam's capture, other Islamist militants blew themselves up at Brussels international airport and on a metro train, killing 32 people.—Reuters

THE Bank for Investment and Development of Viet Nam JSC (BIDV) Rep office in Myanmar is planning to implement new Core Banking System (CBS) for Myanmar branch in 2016. We would like to call for a tender for the Hardware for our new CBS. ICT vendors who interested in this opportunity need to contact with us to receive the tender document as the following information:

Time to provide the document: from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM, May 02nd, 2016 (Monday).

Latest date to receive proposal: 17:00 PM on May 06th, 2016 (Friday).

Location: #36 Garden Street, Bahan Ts, Yangon, Myanmar.

Contact person: Mr Le Duy Chinh - 095456689



Republican US presidential candidate Ted Cruz holds a campaign rally to announce Carly Fiorina as his running mate in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States on 27 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Republican Cruz, hoping to revive struggling campaign, taps Fiorina as No 2

INDIANAPOLIS — US Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz, in a last-ditch bid to slow front-runner Donald Trump's momentum, named former business executive Carly Fiorina on Wednesday as his vice presidential running mate should he win the nomination.

After crushing losses to Trump in five nominating contests in the Northeast on Tuesday, Cruz praised Fiorina, a former presidential rival, as a principled fighter for conservative values who would be a valuable ally on the campaign trail.

"Carly is a vice presidential nominee who I think is superbly skilled, superbly gifted at helping unite this party," the US senator from

Texas told a rally in Indianapolis, the capital of Indiana.

The Midwestern state is the next battleground for selecting the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates for the 8 November presidential election and is shaping up to be Cruz's best — and perhaps last — chance to block Trump's march to the nomination. Cruz acknowledged it was unusual to choose a running mate so early in the race. Traditionally, the winners of the Republican and Democratic nominating races announce their running mates in the period between clinching the nomination and summer's national conventions.

"I think all would acknowledge this race, if anything, it is unusual," said

Cruz, 45, adding he wanted to give voters a clear choice and offer a rebuttal to media suggestions the Republican race was over.

At a nearby rally in Indianapolis afterward, Trump was scornful of Cruz's move, calling his rival "desperate." In the Democratic race, Hillary Clinton, 68, won four of Tuesday's five contests, building a virtually insurmountable lead over rival Bernie Sanders, a 74-year-old US senator from Vermont, who vowed to keep fighting until the July convention.

In tapping Fiorina as his No. 2, Cruz was apparently trying to recover from Trump's landslide primary wins on Tuesday in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware,

Connecticut and Rhode Island. The victories made the uphill climb towards the nomination even steeper for Cruz.

"I've had tough fights all my life," Fiorina said after Cruz introduced her. "Tough fights don't worry me a bit."

Fiorina, 61, dropped her own White House bid in February after a seventh-place finish in New Hampshire. She endorsed Cruz a month later and has been a sharp critic of Clinton. Fiorina and Cruz both said they had grown close since her endorsement, and she sang a few verses of a song she said she sings to Cruz's two daughters on their campaign bus. —Reuters

UN blacklists India-flagged ship carrying eastern Libya oil

UNITED NATIONS — Libyan oil.

The United Nations Security Council Libya sanctions committee blacklisted on Wednesday an Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil shipped by the rival eastern Libya government, said diplomats, which would prevent it from entering any ports.

Libyan UN Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi wrote to the 15-member sanctions committee on Monday asking for the Distya Ameya tanker to be blacklisted, according to a letter seen by Reuters. The ship left Marsa el-Hariga port late on Monday.

Diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the sanctions committee chair had informed them that there were no objections to the Dabbashi's request before a 3pm (1900 GMT) Wednesday deadline so the ship was added to the sanctions list.

The eastern Libya government has set up its own National Oil Company (NOC) to act parallel to the Tripoli-based NOC, which is recognised globally as the legitimate seller of

The Distya Ameya tanker is carrying 650,000 barrels of oil on behalf of Libya's eastern NOC. The ship appeared to be south east of Malta when it last reported its position through the publicly available AIS tracking system on Wednesday afternoon.

The ship is carrying oil ordered by a company called DSA Consultancy FZC, registered in the United Arab Emirates, according to Libyan authorities.

DSA Consultancy said on Wednesday it believed the shipment was legitimate. It said it had "a signed and agreed contract from the NOC dated 13th October 2015 to lift oil", and that the "ultimate beneficiary" was the Central Bank of Libya.

Diplomats said the sanctions committee had also written to the governments of India and the United Arab Emirates to remind them of the Libya sanctions and seek further clarification and relevant information on the shipment. —Reuters

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES-Individual Consultants)

**The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Agricultural Development Support Project (ADSP)
Credit No. : 5624 MM**

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is in the process of receiving funds from the World Bank toward the cost of the ADSP Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The Project Management Unit now invites expressions of interest from qualified candidates for the below positions. Interested consultants must provide their updated curriculum vitae, indicating personal and technical skills, qualifications and experience in similar assignments. In submitting their expressions of interest, consultants are kindly requested to indicate the positions they apply and the reference numbers stated below.

1. National Finance Officer (Ref # SC-23)
2. National Procurement Officer (Ref # SC-25)
3. National Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (Ref # SC-21)
4. National Environmental Safeguards Specialist (Ref # SC-19)
5. National Social Safeguards Specialist (Ref # SC-20)

The Services are expected to be carried out over a period of 12 months with the possibility of extension depending on the performance, starting in May 2016. The location of work will be the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants under International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) Loans and International Development Association (IDA) Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers dated July 2014 ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. A Consultant will be selected in accordance with procedures set out in the Consultant Guidelines.

Further information and a copy of the detailed Terms of Reference (TORs) can be obtained at the address below during working days from 10:00 to 15:00 hours.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail, or by Fax) not later than May 16, 2016.

Attn: U Tint Lwin, Director of Procurement
Department: Department of Irrigation and Management of Water Utilization,
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
Address: Building No. 15, MOALI, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
Phone: +95-67-410019, Fax: +95-67-410102
Email: tlwin4.irr@gmail.com; hatint2009@gmail.com

Venezuela economic crisis means fewer meals, more starch

CARACAS — Venezuela's soaring prices and chronic shortages have left 65-year-old homemaker Alida Gonzalez struggling to put meals on the table.

She and her four family members in the Caracas slum of Petare now routinely skip one meal per day and increasingly rely on starches to make up for proteins that are too expensive or simply unavailable.

"With the money we used to spend on breakfast, lunch and dinner, we can now buy only breakfast, and not a very good one," said Gonzalez in her home, which on a recent day contained just half a kilo of chicken (about a pound), four plantains, some cooking

oil, a small packet of rice, and a mango. The family did not know when they would be able to buy more.

Recession and a dysfunctional state-run economy are forcing many in the South American OPEC country of 30 million to reduce consumption and eat less-balanced meals.

In a recent survey by researchers from three major universities often critical of the government, 87 per cent of the respondents said their income was insufficient to purchase food.

The study of nearly 1,500 families found rising percentages of carbohydrates in diets, and found that 12 per cent of those interviewed do not eat three

meals a day.

Government supporters have long pointed proudly to the improvement in eating under late socialist leader Hugo Chavez, who used oil income to subsidize food for the poor during his 14-year rule and won United Nations plaudits for it. But President Nicolas Maduro, Chavez's successor, has faced a collapse in the price of oil, which provides almost all foreign income. He further has blamed an opposition-led "economic war," though critics deride that as an excuse. Either way, Venezuelans are tired and cross.

A minimum wage is now only around 20 per cent of the cost of feeding a family of five, according to one

monitoring group. Lines snake around state supermarkets from before dawn.

"You have to get into these never ending lines — all day, five in the morning until three in the afternoon — to see if you get a couple of little bags of flour or some butter," said taxi driver Jhonny Mendez, 58.

"It makes a person want to cry," Natalia Guerra, 45, lives in a small home in Petare with eight relatives, only one of whom has a significant salary.

She remembers buying milk for her own kids but now cannot find any for her grandchildren. "We're a big family, and it's constantly getting harder for us to eat," she said. —Reuters

Lady Gaga teams up with Elton John for clothing line

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Lady Gaga and music legend Elton John have teamed up for clothing line Love Bravery.

The pop icons have collaborated on a range of limited edition clothes and accessories with American chain Macy's, with 25 per cent of each purchase supporting the charities championed by the celebrities, the Born This Way Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation, reported *People* magazine.

With input from Gaga's sister Natali Germanotta and designer Brandon Maxwell, the line reflects both artists' style and music, and features bold colours, prints and edgy looks.

"It's an honour to team up with Sir Elton John to create this line with Macy's," Gaga, 30, said.

"We need to make the world a kinder and braver place where men and women everywhere are empowered to live with compassion."

The clothing range includes sleeveless T-shirts, crop tops, sweatshirts, tops with metallic lettering, and scarves printed with piano key graphics.

There's also a collection of fun accessories such as, beanies, keychains, enamel pins, patches, clutches shaped as sunglasses and hearts as well as Neoprene backpacks printed with the word "love".

About the line, John, 69, said that he liked the concept of fusing who you are on the inside with what your wear on the outside. "Love Bravery is about the compassion on the inside to understand someone's fears, and the bravery on the outside to stand up for them, and for yourself: to accept others for who they are and to be who you want to be. So I'm thrilled we are collaborating on this project and delighted Macy's understood our dream to connect with people this way," he said.—PTI

PHOTO: REUTERS



Actor Robert Downey Jr. arrives at the European premiere of "Captain America, Civil War" at a shopping centre in east London. PHOTO: REUTERS

Robert Downey Jr. heaps praise on new Spider-Man Tom Holland

LONDON — Hollywood actor Robert Downey Jr. heaped praise on rising British star Tom Holland at the European premiere of "Captain America: Civil War" in London on Tuesday.

The "Iron Man" star said he was impressed by the 19-year-old actor who takes on the role of Spider-Man in the film.

"This Tom Holland guy is something else...thank you for lending us your national treasure," he said.

The new movie sees Marvel's usually friendly super heroes split. Chris Evans' Captain America fights for superheroes to govern themselves and goes head

to head with his former ally, Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man, who wants the heroes to be governed by the United Nations.

Featuring a wide range of characters, including Jeremy Renner's Hawkeye and Anthony Mackie's Falcon, the movie has been largely well received by the critics so far.

Holland said he had a "great time" working with the cast, and that he was excited to attend the London premiere, which took place in the large Westfield shopping mall — where he said he used to buy jeans. "Captain America: Civil War" hits cinemas from this week.—Reuters

Disney Resort operator scraps 'Alice in Wonderland' attraction plan

TOKYO — Oriental Land Co., operator of the Tokyo Disney Resort, has scrapped a plan to develop a new area featuring "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" to avoid construction-caused congestion, a company official said on Thursday.

The area was originally planned to open sometime after next April. The decision to scrap the plan was made after the number of visitors to the Disneyland and Tokyo DisneySea topped 30 million in the year to March, exceeding that threshold for the third straight year and causing the theme parks to become overcrowded.

Japan's biggest theme park operator said it will open a new area featuring the Disney film "Beauty and the Beast" in the spring of 2020 at Tokyo Disneyland. Previously the company had only said it will open that attraction sometime after April 2017. The operator will invest about 32 billion yen (\$287.6 million) to build the new area,

according to a statement released Wednesday.

The company will also set up a facility featuring the hit Disney movie "Frozen" in the Tokyo DisneySea sometime after April 2021, the official said.

Oriental Land said it will invest around 50 billion yen annually through fiscal 2020 to make the parks more attractive.

With the number of foreign visitors to Japan hitting a record high above 20 million in fiscal 2015, such visitors to the Tokyo Disney Resort reached 1.81 million in the business year, accounting for 6.0 per cent of the total, up from 720,000, or 2.6 per cent of the total, in fiscal 2012.

In the year to March, the operator added Thai and Indonesian language sections to its official website, in addition to existing English, Chinese and Korean services, with the aim of attracting more guests from those Southeast Asian countries.—Kyodo News

Drew Barrymore positive about the future

LOS ANGELES — Actress Drew Barrymore says she has traded in her "loosey-goosey" attitude in favour of a more focused outlook on life.

The "Blended" star, who announced her split from husband Will Kopelman earlier this month, insists she has changed her attitude, reported *People* magazine. When asked what makes her happy, she said: "Just strength. Now that I'm a mom, and I know that it harkens back to the girls, aside from that, it really is girl power. It is strength, clarity, conviction, health and focus."

"It's funny, because there are times in my life that I am so loosey-goosey, so hedonistic, and it is so just 'hippy-dippy,' but right now I feel this great backbone is, 'One foot in front of the other,' which is sort of my attitude right now. That is anything but loosey-goosey — that if you don't stay in a straight line, you are going to get into trouble.—PTI



Drew Barrymore. PHOTO: REUTERS

London’s Big Ben clock chimes to be silenced for urgent repairs



A general view of the Big Ben in central London, Britain on 27 April 2016. London’s famous Big Ben is to be given a 43-million-US-dollar facelift, the British Parliament announced Tuesday. A three-year programme of work will begin early in 2017. It will mean the clock being switched off and the bell silenced for a period of time while the work is carried out. PHOTO: XINHUA

LONDON — The famous chimes of Big Ben will fall silent next year as the 160-year-old parliamentary clock tower undergoes essential repairs as part of a 29 million-pound (\$42 million) project.

The tower will be partially covered in scaffolding for three years, although engineers plan to keep at least one of the four clock faces always visible.

The bells will fall silent for several months, chiming only for important events, a House of Commons statement said.

The last significant repair work on Big Ben was in 1983-85 and both the clock and its 96-metre (315 ft) tower urgently need attention. Work is expected to start early in 2017.

The project also aims to re-store the clock face surrounds to their original colours as designed in 1856 by architects Charles Barry and Augustus Welby Pugin.

“Parliament’s team of conservation architects is currently analysing the original paint used to decorate the surrounding areas to each clock dial,” the statement said.

“Once a clear picture of the early colour schemes has been built up, the stonework will be repainted to reflect, as far as possible, Pugin’s original design.”

The current black and gold surrounds were painted during the 1980s refurbishment. Big Ben was last silenced in 2013 as a sign of respect during the funeral of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.—Reuters

Around 50 cats, dogs die in fire at Sapporo pet shop

SAPPORO — Between 40 and 50 cats and dogs died in a fire at a pet shop in Sapporo, Hokkaido, on Thursday morning, police said.

Of the between 50 and 60 cats and dogs believed to have been kept at Pet Shop Beverly, only nine survived, according to the police. No one was in the shop at the time. The two-story wooden building that housed the shop, which also served as a pet hotel, was damaged in the fire.

The police are investigating the cause of the blaze.—Kyodo News

In Damascus, young Syrians try to revive their lives

DAMASCUS — By a military checkpoint in Damascus’s Old City, just a mile from the battered frontline between government and rebel-held territory, young Syrians sit on a garden wall smoking, drinking beer or soft drinks, and talking about anything but the war.

It is a week night, but the Damascenes are keen to head out to a strip of new bars that have opened in the last few months — some to socialise and others to work in the venues.

The revival of activity in this once-vibrant quarter is part of efforts to project an air of normality in the Syrian capital, even as the five-year-old war that has killed more than 250,000 people and created 5 million refugees continues to rage nearby.

To the east and southwest, opposition-held Ghouta remains under blockade and bombardment by government forces. In Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, to the south, residents have recently faced starvation as rival jihadist groups al Qaeda and Islamic State battle for control. Shells were hitting Damascus’s city center late last year, including near Bab Sharqi gate. Now, people smoke water pipes outside Pub Sharqi — a play on words that reads the same in Arabic — or watch football at

noisier bar “80’s” next door.

“This is something you certainly wouldn’t see two years ago, and it’s picked up even more recently,” said Nicolas Rahal, a 23-year-old graphic designer, speaking over loud music in a bar.

The number of people going out has grown as venues have opened one after the other and employed more people, Rahal said. “I can now go to this pub or that nightclub. Places opened and people came.”

The war is still felt inside the capital. Soldiers carrying assault rifles sweep vehicles for bombs at army roadblocks, causing traffic jams throughout the city, while distant artillery fire can sometimes be heard. Young people in the city are apprehensive about the future. They have lost loved ones to violence and displacement, rampant inflation is making life impossibly expensive, and some young men are anxious to avoid army enlistment.

But encouraged by improved security after Russia’s intervention strengthened the government’s position and a partial truce in February brought some calm, these Damascus residents want to enjoy life where possible.—Reuters



Bartenders work at 80s Bar in Damascus, Syria, on 11 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

MRTV

News Channel
in Brief

(29- 4-2016, Friday)

6:00 am

- Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:35 am

- People’s Talks

8:35 am

- Current Affairs

9:35 am

- Weekly Entertainment News

10:35 am

- MRTV’s Youth Programme

11:35 am

- Science and Technology Programme

12:35 pm

- TV Drama Series

1:20 pm

- TV Drama Series

2:35 pm

- Traditional Boxing

3:35 pm

- Documentary (Part-2)

4:35 pm

- Football Magazine (Yadanarbon United)

5:15 pm

- Catch Asia News

6:35 pm

- The Farmer

7:15 pm

- TV Drama Series

8:00 pm

- News / International News/ Weather Report

9:00 pm

- News
- TV Drama Series
- Amazing World
- Oral History

Note / Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

MRTV

Entertainment Channel

(29- 4-2016, Friday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- Music Programme

6:30 pm

- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

6:50 pm

- Music Programme

7:10 pm

- International Drama Series

7:50 pm

- International Drama Series

8:40 pm

- Cartoon Programme “Scooby Doo Goes Hollywood” (Part-I)

9:00 pm

- Music Programme

9:10 pm

- English Premier League (Review-III)

9:30 pm

- Let’s perform a buffalo dance

9:40 pm

- International Movie Songs

9:50 pm

- Htan Taw Drums (Part-I) “Dobat”

10:00 pm

- Music Programme

10:20 pm

- Myanmar Movie

Midnight

- Close Down.

From 29-4-2016 (Friday) 6:00 Pm
To 30-4-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 Pm

mitv

Myanmar International

(29-4-2016 07:00am ~ 30-4-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03 Am

News

07:26 Am

Discovering Tribes- Pre Kayaw: Their Life and Customs (Part- I)

07:52 Am

Tea Leaves

08:03 Am

News

08:26 Am

MOYINGYI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

08:44 Am

A Tourist Destination of Shan State

09:03 Am

News

09:26 Am

Nay Pyi Taw Zoological Garden “Safari World”

09:37 Am

Sons of the lake

10:03 Am

News

10:26 Am

Interview with Chief Minister for Sagaing Region

10:37 Am

Myanmar’s Export: Mango

10:47 Am

Shop Shop Shop - Bogyoke Market

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

Prime Time

07:03 Pm

News

07:26 Pm

Wonderful Indonesia

07:53 Pm

A Star for Great Achievement

08:03 Pm

News

08:26 Pm

Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part-1)

08:51 Pm

Myanmar Masterclass: Still Life (Glass)

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

Saul stunner gives Atletico advantage over Bayern

MADRID — A breathtaking individual goal from Saul Niguez put Atletico Madrid in the box seat in their Champions League semi-final against Bayern Munich with a 1-0 victory in a tense first leg on Wednesday.

The midfielder magically weaved his way through the Bayern defence and produced a low finish that went in off the post to put the home side in front after 11 minutes.

Diego Simeone's superbly-drilled outfit then snuffed out Bayern's threat and even came close to doubling their lead late on when Fernando Torres's shot struck the post.

"It was a great game, everyone believed in their work. We put in a huge effort," said Simeone, whose Atletico side have frequently been a scourge of more-fancied opponents with their disciplined rearguard frustrating Barcelona in the last round. While Bayern's David Alaba also hit the woodwork with a thumping drive, the result left Pep Guardiola's side facing a huge task in next week's return leg in Munich to avoid a third successive semi-final exit.

"I'm not happy with how we played," said Guardiola, who is leaving Bayern in the close-season to join Manchester City.

"We started badly. The goal was a consequence of our slow play. We didn't win even one battle."

Atletico made an intense start in the first competitive meeting between the two sides since Bayern beat the Spaniards 4-0 in the 1974 European Cup final replay.

Saul drove them in front



Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski in action during UEFA Champions League Semi Final First Leg at Vicente Calderon Stadium, on 27 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

with a sensational run from the right, snaking inside and beating three players before fending off two more and bending the ball in off the far post with a flick of his left boot. Bayern nearly equalised moments later when Arturo Vidal's looping header beat Atletico keeper Jan Oblak, but Jose Gimenez rose to head the ball off the line.

Simeone's side might have added another before the break when Antoine Griezmann bore down on goal before the French-

man's near-post shot was kicked away by Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer.

Bayern were more incisive in the second half. Alaba smashed the underside of the crossbar from 30 metres, and then Javi Martinez escaped his marker at a corner but could only glance the ball into the hands of Oblak. Atletico soon regained control, leaving Bayern to try their luck from distance. Douglas Costa blasted over from 30 metres, and Vidal tried to surprise Oblak

from range, but the Slovenian got across in time to parry.

Atletico almost doubled their lead with their only real chance of the second half.

Torres stormed into the box, took on a defender and tried to hook the ball into the far corner, hitting the post before Koke's effort on the rebound was caught by Neuer.

The winners of the tie will face either Real Madrid or Manchester City in the final on 28 May.—Reuters

South Korea seeks Zika protection in Rio, Brits go patriotic

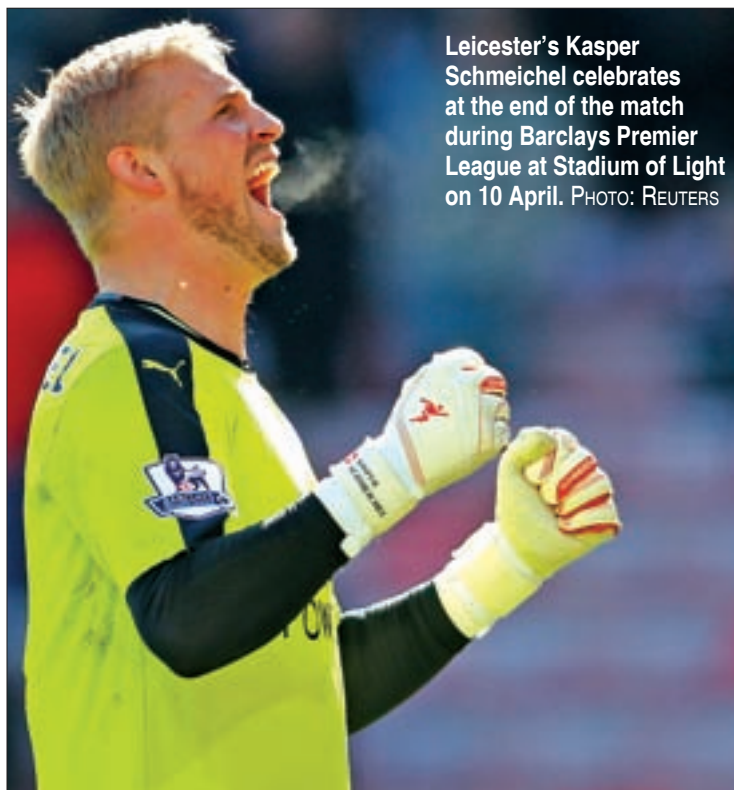
SEOUL — South Korean athletes will make their Rio Olympics entrance covered up in long sleeves and trousers, uniforms its designers say were made to protect them from Zika-carrying mosquitoes. With 100 days to go until the Games start in Rio de Janeiro, South Korea's Olympic Committee unveiled on Wednesday the uniforms its athletes will be dressed in when they arrive in Brazil and take part in ceremonies.

An outbreak of the mosquito-borne Zika virus, linked to numerous cases of the microcephaly birth defect in Brazil, has spread in Latin America and the Caribbean, causing panic and leading some athletes to consider whether to attend the Games.

Olympic medallists including taekwondo competitor Lee Dae-hoon strutted down a short catwalk in blue jackets and white trousers as well as white and blue and white and brown zip-up track-suits, designed by fashion brand Bean Pole.

"We designed the uniform with long sleeves, long pants and socks so that it protects the entire skin down to the ankles," Kim Soo-jung, a designer at Bean Pole, said.—Reuters

Leicester's Schmeichel aims to triumph on father's stage



Leicester's Kasper Schmeichel celebrates at the end of the match during Barclays Premier League at Stadium of Light on 10 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — If Leicester City win the Premier League by beating Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday, goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel will have stepped out from his father's huge shadow on a richly symbolic stage.

Peter Schmeichel enjoyed stellar success as keeper for United where he was integral to five titles during the 1990s, and as a result his son Kasper has spent much of his career being defined by his family name.

But there will be no need for comparisons should Leicester snare the first title in their 132-year history, and Old Trafford can expect the Schmeichels to party like it was 1999, the year Peter won the last of his United titles.

"The issue is that I am 29, I am married, I have two kids, but people still see me as someone's

son," Kasper said with respect to his upbringing in an interview with the Mail on Sunday.

"People are surprised when I say I am 29. They're like, 'Really?' One day, maybe when I am 40 and hopefully still playing, then I might be considered a mature enough person."

Schmeichel is an indispensable and unsung star of Leicester's season, one of only two players, alongside centre-half Wes Morgan, to play every minute of their league campaign.

Schmeichel, who is Denmark's keeper just as his father was, is clear that the secret of Leicester's rise has been teamwork.

"It's a lot of players coming together at the right time, not just football-wise but personally as well," he said. "We are similar age groups, a lot of us have played here together for three or

four years."

That makes Leicester the exception on a Premier League carousel from which players and managers jump on and off with dizzying speed. Unlike their opponents United, Leicester know who their best team is and how to get the best out of them.

On Sunday, a packed Old Trafford is again likely to witness the sort of attacking fluidity Alex Ferguson's teams once trademarked. But this time it will be the visitors, with five of the top 10 quickest players in the league, forcing the pace.

A Leicester victory would be welcomed by Arsenal, seeking to pip United to fourth place and Champions League qualification. On Saturday the Gunners entertain Norwich city, who are aiming to avoid a return to the Championship after just one season.—Reuters