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COUNTRYMEN ABROAD

State Counsellor meets Myanmar citizens in Bangkok

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited Sampran Riverside in Nakhon Pathom province in Bangkok yesterday where she observed the botanical gardens as well as facilities dedicated to the production of bio-fertiliser and eco-friendly products. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also spoke words of encouragement to Myanmar farm workers employed at the site.

The state counsellor proceeded to Assumption University where she met with Myanmar faculty members and students, urging them to help their fellow citizens in need.

Helping fellow citizens, especially migrant workers, is a national concern, the state counsellor said, urging the students to cultivate volunteerism from a young age and remain committed to the cause. She pointed out the need to uphold a sense of national prestige, calling her fellow citizens diplomats in their own right and stressing that they should obey the laws of their host country.

At the Myanmar Embassy, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met 13 Myanmar labour rights groups to discuss the availability of legal protection, documents and minimum wages for Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand.

The state counsellor left Bangkok in the evening. On arrival back at the airport in Yangon, the state counsellor and her entourage were welcomed by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe and officials. —*Myanmar News Agency*



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi being welcomed by Myanmar workers during her visit to Nakhon Pathom province, Thailand. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio presents document to a farmer at the ceremony to return farmland to farmers in Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: MNA

More than 6,400 acres of confiscated land in Ayeyawady Region returned to farmers

MORE than 6,400 acres of confiscated land in Ayeyawady Region were returned to its rightful owners yesterday with Vice President U Henry Van Thio's calling on authorities in regions and states to speed up works in order to release remaining lands.

Speaking on the occasion in Pantanaw, Ayeyawady Region, yesterday, Vice President U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as the

chairman of the Central Review Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands, said the government is making systematic efforts to ensure transparency in order to hand over confiscated lands back to farmers.

However, in some land confiscation issues, farmers should wait a certain time as the work needs to be carried out in conformity with the existing rules and regulations of

the land law, he added.

The vice president also called on the sub-committees under the central body to take bold steps to solve the land issues within the legal framework.

During the ceremony, Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Mahn Jonny said land rights permits would be granted to the farmers in accordance with the 2012 Farmland Law. **See page 3 >>**

Course on combating wildlife and illegal timber trafficking ends



Officers posing for a group photo at the course completion ceremony. PHOTO: MPF

A CONCLUSION ceremony for the course on combating illegal trafficking in wildlife and timber, jointly organised by the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), was held at the Aureum Palace Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw on Friday with opening speeches delivered by Police Brigadier General Myint Htoo and Pro-

gramme Coordinator U Sai Kyaw Win of the UNODC.

Present at the ceremony were officials of the Myanmar Police Force and UNODC, trainers from the United States of America, Australia and trainees from the MPF and the Department of Forest.

The course was aimed at educating officers, who have been implementing the rule of law and

detection of such crimes with the use of technique, to recognise the methods and means of illegal trafficking in wildlife and timber, an international criminal enterprise.

In the course, trainee officers received instruction on rules and regulations in theory and practice and ways of better co-operating with neighbouring countries.—*Myanmar Police Force*

MYEA delegation attends Manufacturing Expo 2016 in Thailand

A 14-member delegation of Myanmar Young Entrepreneurs Association participated in the Manufacturing Expo 2016.

The expo was held in BITEC in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 24 June.

The delegation led by Joint Secretary U Pyae Sone Oo was seen off at Yangon International Airport by responsible persons of the association when they left Yangon on 22 June. —*MYEA*



MYEA delegation members posing for a group photo before departure for Bangkok. PHOTO: MYEA

Crime NEWS

Yaba confiscated in Myitkyina, Lashio and Thaton

A local police squad in Myitkyina township seized Yaba from a motorbike on Cynthia road, Tatkon township, Myitkyina town on 23 June. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched the motorbike driven by Than Htaik Oo and discovered 5612 Yaba tablets from the motorbike.

According to connected investigation, the police confiscated 5820 Yaba tablets from a house of Ma Than Than Aye and Thet Htoo Aung at Khymarthiri ward, Myitkyina town.

Similarly, the police discovered 3,968 Yaba tablets from Yin Yin Aye staying at Nan Thidar hotel at Thidar ward, Myitkyina.

On the same day, a local police squad from Lashio seized Yaba from a passenger near Oriental toll gate, Nawnghkio en-



Criminals seen together with drugs seized. PHOTO: MPF

trance gate. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched a passenger bus and discovered 5,850 Yaba tablets from a passenger on board called Ma Kyan. And, the police from Thaton township confiscated 17 Yaba tablets from a motorbike driven by Win Zaw on Kyaikhto

— Yangon motor road. The police also arrested drug dealer Htet Wai Yan at Kaw San Naing ward, Kyaikhto township. Police have filed charges against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Heroin and Yaba seized in Hsipaw

A local anti-drug squad in Hsipaw township discovered heroin powder from a house at Nam Lan village, Hsipaw township, Shan (North) on 23 June. Acting on a tip-

off, the police searched a house of Aik Kaw, 36, and discovered heroin powder weighing 1.52 grams from his house. The police also seized two bamboo pipes which

are used for abuse of drugs from Tun Sein, 34, who arrived to abuse drugs at the Aik Kaw's house. On the same day, the police searched a house of Daw Nan Shwe Chaw, 40, at Nam Lan village, Hsipaw township and seized 3,819 Yaba tablets hidden under the seat of an unlicensed motorbike. Similarly, the police discovered eight Yaba tablets from Sai Kyaw Oo, 39, at Nam Lan village. Also, the police found 83 Yaba tablets from Sai Kyaw Oo's house. Police have filed charges against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*District IPRD*



Criminals seen together with drugs seized. PHOTO: DISTRICT IPRD

Three injured as light truck hits parked bus on expressway

THREE people— one driver, one bus conductor and one passenger— were injured in a collision between an express bus and a light truck on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway yesterday.

The collision took place near mile posts 186/6 and 186/7 when the light truck, heading to Nay Pyi Taw from Yangon, crashed into the back of a Yazar Aung Express

Bus parked on the side of the road.

Express bus driver U Myo Naing, bus conductor Ko Than Soe and Wai Yan Soe from the light truck were injured in the incident. All three were taken to hospital, according to the Expressway Police.

Aung Zaw Htay, the light truck driver, has been charged with reckless driving. —*Than Oo (Laymyathnar)*

Wanted for attempted murder



Police Officers investigating at the scene of accident.

PHOTO: TIN WIN LAY (KYIMYINDINE)

A man is wanted by the police for attempted murder of an MP's mother-in-law in Sanchaung township, Yangon on 24 June.

According to the investigation, the man entered the house through the window to steal things. But the MP's mother-in-law Daw Khin Than Nwe was awake and saw him enter the house and, so he stabbed her with a sharp tool, said U Phay

Khin, husband of the victim.

I was sleeping downstairs and was awakened by my wife's screaming. When I went upstairs, I found my wife bleeding from knife wounds. The thief ran away when he saw me, he added. The police are still investigating the case and searching the suspect who managed to escape from the scene.—*Tin Win Lay (Kyimyindine)*

More than 6,400 acres of confiscated land in Ayeyawady Region returned to farmers

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During the ceremony, 252 farmers in Pantanaw township got back 3,166 acres and 72 farmers in Pyapon township received 3,268 acres which have been released by the Ministry of Industry.

Meanwhile, plans are underway to return more than 1,100 acres of land in Mandalay to farmers.

More than one month after taking office the new government expressed its commitment to the speedy resolution of farmland confiscation issues and for the quick handover of abandoned farmlands to their lawful owners.

At the first meeting of the central committee in May, the vice president urged officials to

set up task forces to deal with the return of seized land and with the economic impact land grabbing has had on farmers.

According to the vice president, private companies and government departments were granted permission to confiscate land, including farmland, under the pretext of urbanisation and industrialisation.

Land disputes resulted from lack of cooperation among land management bodies as well as from arguments between the government, landowners and investors over ownership and planning permissions.

The committees are staffed with ministerial officials, local parliamentarians, town elders and farmers.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MoFA holds Seminars on English for Specific Purposes

TWO Seminars on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) were conducted by the strategic studies and Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy, under the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Programme. The Seminar on English for Professional Communication was held in Nay Pyi Taw from 8th June to 17th June 2016 for junior officials and the Seminar on LMI Professional Communication Skills for Leaders was held in Yangon from 21st to 25th June 2016 for officials in mid-career level.

Altogether 21 junior officials participated at the Seminar on

English for Professional Communication and 16 officials in mid-level and above participated at the Seminar on the LMI Professional Communication Skills for Leader.

The Seminars were conducted by Ms. Kelly Vassar and Ms. Marie Katherine Sinder, English Language Fellows from the Lower Mekong Initiative Project of the U.S. State Department. The focus of the Seminars included preparing speeches and meeting reports, developing communicative skills in various professional situations such as regional and international meetings and conferences.—*GNLM*

UN Special Rapporteur meets authorities in Lashio



Ms Yanghee Lee holds a meeting with authorities in Lashio. PHOTO: MNA

UN Special Rapporteur to Myanmar Ms Yanghee Lee held talks with local authorities in Lashio yesterday over the government's priorities.

During the meeting, she also raised queries about measures for holding the 21st century Panglong Conference,

strong and weak points for a ceasefire in Shan State, cooperation with neighboring countries in fighting against trafficking in persons and drug trafficking and plans for building a dam over the Thanlwin River.—*Shan State Information and Public Relations Department*



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is welcomed by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein as she arrives back at Yangon International Airport on 25 June, 2016. PHOTO: MNA

Dr Pe Myint calls for composing of new songs reflecting democratic reform



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint holds a meeting with seasoned composers. PHOTO: MNA

INFORMATION Union Minister Dr Pe Myint met seasoned songwriters at the Myanmar Radio and Television centre in Yangon yesterday to request them to compose new songs that will reflect the

changing trends of the country's ongoing democratic reform.

The union minister said he wanted the people to feel the changes in the political landscape through artistic works.

"I find television a powerful platform for mass media in public relations," the union minister said, stressing that his ministry would provide coordination and cooperation.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pearl lots fetch 1.7 million Euros on second day of 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium

PEARL lots worth 1.7 Euros were sold at the 53th Myanmar Gems Emporium yesterday.

Foreign merchants from China, India, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and Australia as well as local merchants competed to buy the pearl lots through the tender system yesterday. The emporium kicked off in Nay Pyi Taw, with a 50,000 Euro deposit required of foreign merchants.

The duration of the emporium is possibly to be extended depending on the number of uncut jade lots and gem lots to be exhibited by sellers, according to the committee responsible for holding the emporium.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Traders appraise pearl lots at 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium. PHOTO: MNA

LOCAL Business

The Netherlands to assist Kayah State's eco-tourism development

THE Dutch government pledged to assist Myanmar to implement eco-tourism in Kayah State located in eastern part of Myanmar.

The state is bounded on the north by Shan State, on the east by Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province, and on the south and west by Kayah State.

The state has opened a road which is part of the Southeast Asia trade corridor that has become a major door for foreign visitors who enter the country by bicycle to visit significant places. Kayah State is rich in natural beauty including rugged mountains, river streams, lakes and waterfalls. The government is implementing ecotourism in the area to attract more international visitors as well

as develop the country's hospitality industry.

Local entrepreneurs are allowed to operate small-scale hotel businesses in the state.

Myanmar will top the list of tourism development countries, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council's estimation about future prospects and sustainable development of 180 countries during the period between 2015 and 2025, based on tourism contribution to the GDP ratio, development rate, employment opportunities, investments and exports.

According to the ministry's master plan (2013-2020), tourist arrivals are estimated to hit 7.49 million by 2020.—200

Electric power to be generated from liquefied natural gas

MYANMAR'S Ministry of Electric Power and Energy (MEPP) is to work with the EU to develop a program that will see the country's electricity be generated by liquefied natural gas (LNG). Studies are expected to finish in December, according to U Htay Aung the deputy permanent secretary of the MEPE.

No site has been designated to house a power station for the plant, with the project needing access to a port or jetty.

Electric power from liquefied natural gas comes at a high cost due to transportation charges and technological related charges. Despite the higher costs the project needs to be tested in order to meet future electricity demands.

Yangon consumes 50% of the entire nation's generated capacity. Only 600 megawatts were used in 2010, but now consumption rates have increased to 1,000 megawatts.—200

Labutta crab industry still confined to domestic markets



PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

CRAB exports to China from Ayeyawady Region's Labutta Township are still suspended, reportedly being sold only within local markets.

It is reported that crab exports to China have been put on hold since as far back as the end of 2015.

"Despite the rain season being the peak season for crab catching, we don't have the capacity to store such a volume of crabs and have to sell them within domestic markets," said U Myo Hlaing, a crab wholesaler from Labutta Township.

The worsening situation for crab traders was exacerbated further in March of this year after a blaze ripped through some of the townships crab wholesalers.

"Crabs are plentiful during the raining season but there's only a local market to cater to. We mostly deliver crabs to hotels and seafood restaurants," said Ma Aye Win, owner of A.W Crab Wholesalers. An average crab wholesaler from Labutta Township sells around 10 baskets of a mixture of 18 and 25 kilogram baskets of crabs a day. These crabs are then transported to Yangon and further

afraid through the commercial capital to Naypyidaw, Bago and Mandalay, it is reported.

A basket of female crabs weighing over four viss (6.4 kilograms) currently fetches over K100,000 while a kilogram of other crabs species can go for between K2,000-9,000. Crab fisheries exist within Rakhine and Mon States, together with Tanintharyi and Ayeyawady Regions, while six companies are in control of production of crabs within Yangon Region and the Myeik Archipelago of Taninthayi Region.—Myitmakha News Agency

Myanmar plastics industry bound by lack of CMP licenses

THE Myanmar Plastic Industries Association (MPIA) has voiced it would benefit from the issuing of Cut-Make-Packaging (CMP) licenses in the manner as has been supplied for the country's garment factory industry.

Myanmar plastic enterprises are currently confined to distri-

bution solely within the domestic market. If domestically produced plastics were permitted to export to foreign markets via a CMP system, it would reportedly increase the amount of tax revenue for the state.

"Foreign investors who enter Myanmar primarily export their

domestically produced products back to their countries of origin in lieu of trading them within the country.

Local entrepreneurs should be issued with CMP licenses in a bid to open the doors to foreign markets," said U Thein Han, vice president of MPIA.

A handful of CMP licenses have reportedly been issued to some plastic entrepreneurs already.

It would be much more convenient for us involved in the plastics industry to work in accordance with a CMP system," said Dr Maung Maung Lay, a local plastic entrepreneur.

Myanmar annually exports around 3,000 tonnes of plastic to foreign countries, in particular Japan, Sweden and other European countries, it is reported.—Myitmakha News Agency

Freshwater fish stocks dramatically deplete with fishing of offspring

THE fishing of young fish during the annual breeding season has resulted in a dramatic depletion in fish stocks, according to the Nyaungdon Township Fisheries Federation (NTFF).

A no-fishing period of 90 days has been implemented between June and August, according to the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF).

"The rate of remaining freshwater fish stocks has sharply decreased. Over 15,000 kilograms of fish were usually caught during this time of year in the past, but this magnitude of fishing hauls as reduced right down to just over 1,500 kilograms, making it really difficult for freshwater fisherman to earn an income. It's also caused shortages to local employment opportunities," said U Win Aung, president of the NTFF.

As the restrictions on fishing of offspring has not been adhered to, the MFF should cooperate with local authorities and those concerned to enforce the restriction more thoroughly, it has been reported.

"Staff from our department are working together with locals to maintain fish offspring stocks during this breeding season," said U Tun Win Myint, officer of Yangon Region Department of Fisheries.

Administration of the Freshwater Fisheries Law has been handed over to regional and state government in order to increase fish stocks, while talks were also held in March this year at the MFF headquarters between entrepreneurs from the fishing industry and the government on the issue.—Myitmakha News Agency



PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY



A family member of a passenger onboard Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 which went missing in 2014 holds a banner during a gathering in front of the Malaysian Embassy on the second anniversary of the disappearance of MH370, in Beijing, China, on 8 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Debris in Tanzania to be examined for link to missing MH370

KUALA LUMPUR — A new piece of debris found in Tanzania will be examined for a possible link to the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, Malaysian state news agency Bernama cited the country's transport minister as saying on Saturday.

"This debris is quite large... only if it is confirmed to be that of Boeing 777 will we send an investigation team there to study whether it really belonged to MH370 or not," Malaysian transport minister Liow Tiong Lai was quoted as saying.

Liow said recent dis-

coveries of bags and other personal items found in Madagascar were not connected to MH370.

Flight MH370 disappeared in March 2014 with 239 passengers and crew on board shortly after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing.

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off the plane's transponder before diverting it thousands of miles off course over the Indian Ocean. A piece of the plane washed up on the French island of Reunion in July 2015.—Reuters

All parties encourage online campaigns to reach teens: Kyodo poll

TOKYO — Japan's major political parties are encouraging their candidates to use social media in their campaigns for the 10 July House of Councillors election to attract teenagers who have become allowed to vote for the first time in a national election, a Kyodo News survey showed on Saturday.

Candidates are being told to use such tools as Facebook or Twitter, according to the survey conducted earlier this month.

The upcoming election is the third national election since Japan lifted its ban on the use of the Internet as an election campaign tool and the first since a revised election law was implemented last Sunday to lower Japan's minimum voting age to 18 from 20.

In the survey, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party said it told its candidates they "must use" social media, while the other parties surveyed said they instructed theirs to use them as much as possible.

To enable teenage vot-

ers to know about their policies, each party is trying to utilize the Internet effectively, according to the survey.

The LDP, the main opposition Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party have set up special election campaign websites. The People's Life Party said it is including messages for young voters in its online videos.

The other parties surveyed are the LDP's coalition ally Komeito, the Japanese Communist Party, Initiatives from Osaka, the Party for Japanese Kokoro and the New Renaissance Party. The parties have been looking to young voters as the change in the voting age means approximately 2.4 million new voters aged 18 and 19 have joined the electorate in a reform to better reflect young people's opinions in politics.

A total of 106.6 million people were registered as voters as of Tuesday, according to the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry.—Kyodo News

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Hard for now to revise arms-renouncing article of constitution — Japan PM

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Friday it would be difficult for the time being to revise the armament-renouncing article of Japan's pacifist constitution, an issue drawing attention as the 10 July upper house election approaches.

Article 9 of the US-drafted constitution renounces war and, if read literally, bans the maintenance of armed forces, although Japan's military, called the Self-Defence Forces, has over 200,000 personnel and is equipped with high-tech weapons.

Revising the constitution is one of the key policy targets of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

"We are already making clear our view on the constitution, but it is parliament that needs to originate a proposal regarding what part of the constitution should be changed," Abe told a TV debate programme.

"In that sense, no agreement whatsoever has been reached, and I believe it is difficult under the current circumstances to revise article 9."

The draft of the LDP's proposed revision, unveiled in 2012, still renounces war but stipulates the maintenance of national defence forces and says Japan must be able to exercise the right of self de-

fence — easing the constitutional constraint on military activities.

A poll by the Asahi Shimbun daily showed last month that 68 per cent of Japanese wanted to keep Article 9 unchanged.

A formal amendment of the constitution requires approval by two-thirds of both houses of parliament as well as a majority in a referendum.

Newspaper surveys said on Friday Abe's ruling bloc along with like-minded allies could get a two-third majority in the upper house as a result of the July election, in which half of the chamber's 242 seats will be up for grabs.



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrives at his official residence for attending a meeting of relevant cabinet ministers to discuss Britain's exit from the European Union, in Tokyo, Japan, on 24 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PHOTO: REUTERS

Abe's bloc, which comprises the LDP and junior coalition partner Komeito party, already has a two-thirds majority in the lower house.—Reuters

Laos has first batch of aviation maintenance technicians graduated

VIENTIANE — Laos has its first batch of aviation maintenance technicians graduated, Lao state-run online newspaper *Vientiane Times* reported on Saturday.

According to the report, representatives of Lao Department of Civil Aviation and Lao Air Traffic Management has witnessed the country's first aviation maintenance technicians graduation

ceremony at the Construction Investment and Technology (CIT) Technical Center based in capital Vientiane on Tuesday.

The centre was established in 2015 and began training in September. Its courses are the first part of a four-year training programme for aviation maintenance technicians.

After graduation, the technicians will continue their training at airports in Vientiane and five other provinces. In order to provide a strong foundation for their maintenance work, the courses studied at the Technical Centre included technical subjects, such as electronics, mathematics, information technology and

software, as well specific courses related to the aviation industry. Most of the courses are taught in English. Once stationed at the airports in the provinces, the technicians will continue to train on-the-job for three years. The number of trainees will increase to 30 for the 2016-2017 academic year, starting in September, 2016.—Xinhua

India's new deal for textile workers could add to risks, campaigners say

CHENNAI (India) — A government initiative to create millions of jobs and increase exports in the textile and garment industries could put vulnerable workers at greater risk, activists said, calling for better enforcement of existing labour laws.

A package to generate 10 million jobs and boost exports by \$30 billion over three years was unveiled on Wednesday but the measures, including cutting overtime, have raised concerns about workers' rights.

India is one of the world's largest textile and garment manufacturers, supplying many leading international brands.

The \$40-billion-a-year industry employs around 45 million workers.

Workers' rights campaigners say the industry is built on the back of cheap contract labour.

"Creating more jobs will only mean even less regulation on the floor, with managements happily taking in new workers and firing old ones," said Jayaram K.R., a member of the Garment and Textile Workers' Union (GATWU), based in Bengaluru.

"There are numerous labour

laws that already exist and most of them are not being implemented in factories."

The "labour-friendly" measures approved by the Indian cabinet include capping overtime for workers at 8 hours a week in line with International Labour Organisation (ILO) norms in order to create more jobs.

The government also plans to subsidise employers' social welfare contributions for workers. It said most new jobs would go to women, who already make up 70 per cent of the workforce in the industry, "helping in social transformation through women's empowerment".

But Gopinath Parakuni, general secretary of Cividep India, which campaigns for workers' rights, said the new measures would not help workers, and urged tighter regulation to stop workplace abuses.

"When there are increasing cases of human rights violations being reported from the sector, better regulation is required. Instead, the government is dangling a carrot to the industry by offering subsidies to make more profits," he said.

Campaigners say the seasonal nature of work in India's tex-

tile industry, the advent of fast fashion and increasing global competition have created exploitative labour conditions.

"The industry is moving towards 'piece rate', where a worker is paid depending on how many pieces of garment she completes in a day," Parakuni told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"Pressure on the worker has increased and in the name of labour flexibility, managements have been given an upper hand to hire and fire at will."

A government presentation on the reform package highlighted that in recent years Bangladesh and Viet Nam have overtaken India in garment exports.

"This is what they want to fix and workers' welfare is not the focus," Jayaram said. "Managements are happy hiring migrant contract workers because it means no additional benefits have to be given. Even minimum wages are sometimes a fight."

A long-standing demand of activists, not been addressed in the new programme, is to allow workers freedom of association and give them a voice in wage and pension negotiations.

—Reuters



Employees work inside a garment factory in Mumbai, India, on 1 June. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cambodia expects nearly one m Chinese tourists in 2016: tourism minister

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia is expected to attract nearly 1 million Chinese tourists this year and up to 2 millions in 2020, tourism minister Thong Khon said on Saturday.

The Southeast Asian country received 700,000 Chinese tourists in 2015, up 24 per cent year-on-year, and in the first four months of 2016, the kingdom welcomed 275,000 Chinese tourists, up 13.6 per cent if compared to the same period last year.

"Based on the figures, Cambodia could attract nearly 1 million Chinese tourists in 2016," the minister said during the opening ceremony of a Cambodia-China tourism forum here.

He said that earlier this year, the country has launched a white paper targeting 2 million Chinese tourists by 2020.

The white paper lists steps to be taken by tourism authorities to facilitate visits by Chinese tourists, such as providing Chinese signage and documents for visa processing, encouraging local use of the Chinese yuan currency, encouraging the use of Chinese language and ensuring that food and accommodation facilities are suited to Chinese tastes.

"China is rich and Chinese people have spent a lot of money for overseas travel," Thong Khon said. "This is a good opportunity for us to attract more Chinese tourists."

Meanwhile, the minister said that the China-proposed "One Belt One Road" initiative would importantly contribute to developing economies and tourism for countries along the route.

China is the second largest source of tourists to Cambodia after Viet Nam.

Cambodian tourism ministry undersecretary of state So Visothy attributed the steady growth of Chinese tourists to Cambodia to close relations between the two countries, Cambodia's attractive tourism sites

and many direct flight connections.

Yu Ningning, vice president of China International Travel Service Group (CITS), said Cambodia has become one of the most popular Southeast Asia travelling destinations for Chinese travelers following Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

"CITS Group will help advertise and promote Cambodian tourism resources and products to Chinese tourists," she said at the forum, in which some 300 representatives of tour and travel companies from both countries took part.

"The forum will help promote a continuous tourism development between China and Cambodia," she added.

Speaking at the forum, Tan Qingsheng, political counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia, said that the "One Belt One Road" initiative would definitely contribute to the development of tourism industry in Cambodia.

"Tourism development necessarily needs physical infrastructure, including roads and bridges and energy," he said, adding that China has fully supported Cambodia in these fields.

Besides, he said China has assisted Cambodia in renovating some temples in the complex of the Angkor Archeological Park in northwestern Siem Reap province.

Tan said that China would continue encouraging more tourists and investors to Cambodia for the benefits of the two countries and peoples.

Cambodia is famous for two cultural sites in the UNESCO's World Heritage List. One is the 12th century Angkor Archeological Park and the other is the 11th century Preah Vihear Temple.

The country also has many interesting eco-tourism sites, including a 450-km pristine coastline stretching across four provinces in the country's southwestern region. —Xinhua

Abu Sayyaf releases Filipino woman, Norwegian man likely still held

MANILA — A Filipino woman, who was among four people abducted last autumn by the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf militant group, was released early Friday, according to the Philippine military.

While two of the hostages — both Canadian men — have been beheaded in the past three months, a Norwegian man is believed to remain captive but his

condition was not immediately known. The group had earlier threatened to behead him if ransom was not paid.

The military said Marites Flor, fiancée of one of the killed Canadians, was set free and taken into protective custody in Sulu province, one of the Abu Sayyaf's hotbeds.

Jesus Dureza, adviser on the peace process to Philippine

President-elect Rodrigo Duterte, flew her to Mindanao Island's Davao City to meet with the incoming leader who is set to be sworn in as president next week.

Duterte met Flor after speaking at an event for the change of police leadership in Davao, where he is outgoing mayor.

"Their kidnapping must stop," Duterte said of the Mindanao-based bandits. "Avoid be-

ing a member of that Abu Sayyaf because there will be a reckoning one of these days," he said without elaborating.

Estimated currently to be at least 300 in strength, the Abu Sayyaf has been carrying out kidnappings for ransom, bombings and other terrorist activities for more than a decade.

The group kidnapped the four people — Flor, Norwegian

Kjartan Sekkingstad and Canadians John Ridsdel and Robert Hall — from a posh resort on Samal Island in Davao del Norte last September.

Ridsdel was killed in April after the Philippine and Canadian governments refused to pay ransom money, and Hall met the same fate in June after a deadline for ransom payment expired. —Kyodo News

Clinton regains double-digit lead over Trump — Reuters/Ipsos poll

NEW YORK — Democratic presidential contender Hillary Clinton regained a double-digit lead over Republican rival Donald Trump this week, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Friday.

The 20-24 June poll showed that 46.6 per cent of likely American voters supported Clinton while 33.3 per cent supported Trump. Another 20.1 per cent said they would support neither candidate.

Trump had enjoyed a brief boost in support following the 12 June mass shooting in Orlando, Florida, as he doubled down on his pledge to ban Muslims from entering the country, cutting Clinton's lead to nine points.

But Trump's rise in popularity appeared to be only temporary, unlike his lasting surge among the Republican field last year after the attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino, California.

Clinton's 13.3 percentage point lead is about the same as she had before the Orlando attack.

Trump's slip this week came as he struggled to show that he can keep up with a Clinton campaign apparatus that has dwarfed his in size and funding.

Campaign finance disclosures released earlier this week showed Trump started June with a war chest of just \$1.3 million, a fraction of Clinton's \$42 million. Trump sought to ease concerns among his allies by saying



Democratic US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton gives the thumbs up to the crowd after speaking at a campaign rally in Columbus, Ohio, US, on 21 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

that he could tap his "unlimited" personal wealth if needed, and also by bolstering efforts to raise money through fundraising events and online donations.

Meanwhile, Republican leaders including House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker continued to express reservations about their new standard bearer, who has angered some in the party with his fiery rhetoric.

Ryan and Walker both said over the past week that they felt Republicans should follow their "conscience" when deciding to support the party's likely nom-

inee, instead of urging party members to support him.

The poll only captured some of the voter reaction to Britain's decision in Thursday's referendum to exit the European Union, a move that some pundits say suggests Trump's insurgent candidacy has tapped into a broad and powerful anti-globalization wave sweeping Western countries.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online and included interviews with 1,201 likely voters in all 50 states. It has a credibility interval, a measure of accuracy, of 3.3 percentage points.—*Reuters*

Britain pressured for quick EU split as Brexit impact begins

LONDON — Britain was under pressure on Saturday to set out a quick timetable for a divorce from the European Union after the country's historic vote to leave the bloc sent shockwaves around the world.

Global stock markets plunged on Friday, and sterling saw its biggest one day drop in history after Britons voted by 52-48 per cent to exit the EU, which it joined more than 40 years ago.

Ratings agency Moody's downgraded its outlook for Britain, saying its creditworthiness was now at greater risk as the country would face substantial challenges to successfully negotiating its exit from the bloc.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said he wanted to begin negotiating Britain's departure immediately.

"Britons decided yesterday that they want to leave the European Union, so it doesn't make any sense to wait until October to try to negotiate the terms of their

departure," Juncker told Germany's ARD television station.

Prime Minister David Cameron announced on Friday he would resign after leading the failed campaign to stay in the bloc, and said someone else should take the lead in negotiating the unprecedented and complicated exit.

He suggested his replacement would be in place by October. That person could be his Conservative Party rival Boris Johnson, the former London mayor who became the most recognisable face of the Leave camp and who is now favourite to succeed him.

Britain's decision to leave the EU is the biggest blow since World War Two to the European project of forging greater unity.

The United Kingdom itself could also now break apart, with the nationalist leader of Scotland, where nearly two-thirds of voters wanted to stay in the EU, saying a new referendum on independ-

ence from the rest of Britain was "highly likely".

Scottish government ministers were meeting on Saturday to decide their next move.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will meet French, German and Italian leaders in Berlin on Monday to discuss future steps, and the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, will meet on Saturday morning.

US President Barack Obama on Friday tried to limit the fallout from Britain's vote to leave the European Union which threatens to harm the US economic recovery and distract US allies from global security issues.

Obama vowed that Washington would still maintain both its "special relationship" with London and close ties to Brussels, but stood by his warning that Britain would move to the back of the queue when it came to trade deals.—*Reuters*

UN Secretary-General's Message on The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

26 June 2016

Today is the first International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking since the adoption last year of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 3 calls on countries to strengthen the prevention and treatment of narcotic drug abuse, end AIDS and combat hepatitis. Goal 16 is designed to help to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and institutions that can address illicit drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism.

The Sustainable Development Goals also informed the deliberations of the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem in April. They support the founding principle of the International Drug Control Conventions, which is to ensure the health and well-being of humankind. This requires a balance between interrupting drug supply and preventing and treating the harmful impact of drugs on people's health.

Addressing the world drug problem demands a considered and unified response by Governments. The illicit trade in drugs fosters transnational organized crime networks, systemic corruption and widespread violence. It is also a major public health menace. Millions of people are directly affected, especially the poor, vulnerable women and children, and those living in fragile communities.

The challenges posed by the world drug problem require a global response that is simultaneously effective, compassionate and humane. At the April Special Session on the World Drug Problem, tangible progress was made in promoting alternatives to incarceration, fortifying human rights commitments, strengthening the focus on illicit financial proceeds, and tackling corruption. On this International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, I call on countries and communities to continue to improve the lives of everyone blighted by drug abuse by integrating security and public safety with a heightened focus on health, human rights, and sustainable development.—*UNIC/Yangon*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Obama says US special relationship with Britain will endure

PALO ALTO, (Calif) — US President Barack Obama said on Friday that he had spoken with British Prime Minister David Cameron about Britain's decision to leave the European Union and that he was confident the United Kingdom was committed to an orderly transition.

"While the UK's relationship with the EU will change, one thing that will not change is special relationship that exists between our two nations," Obama said in a speech at a global entrepreneurs conference at Stanford University. "That will endure. The EU will remain one of our indispensable partners."—*Reuters*

Iran says ties with Britain remain consistent despite Brexit

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry announced that the relations between the Islamic republic and Britain will not change after the latter voted to leave the European Union (EU), semi-official Mehr news agency reported Saturday.

Iran fully respects the votes of British people on leaving the EU and deems it consistent with the will of the majority of Britain's people in determining their own foreign relations, said Iran's Foreign Ministry statement.

"Iran has always sought expansion of relations with the European countries based on mutual respect and non-interference in one another's internal affairs, and Britain's exit from the EU will not cause any changes in Iran's policy regarding this country," it said.—*Xinhua*

Vucic: Serbia to continue on European path

BELGRADE — Serbia will continue on its European path and preserve financial and political stability, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic said Friday following the UK's decision to leave the EU.

"We respect the decision of the citizens of the UK— prosperity and stability remain crucial for us because the Serbian citizens want a better future for themselves and their children," Vucic told an extraordinary press conference.

"I guarantee to the citizens of Serbia that there will be no major upsets to financial and economic stability such as the ones we see in many countries," Vucic said.

This can be guaranteed thanks to the prudent policy we have been pursuing, rather than choosing easy solutions such as the ones that came from the southern Mediterranean, Vucic said.—*Tanjung*

Opinion

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We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Time to distinguish the ordinary from the extraordinary

Kyaw Thura

EVERYONE dreams of leading a better and more successful life in order to satisfy their insatiable thirst for constant improvement and betterment. This phenomenon is natural and as a result should not be interpreted as greed. A life driven by inspiration is sure to be fulfilling in the end because there is no such thing as something for nothing.

As is known to all, Rome was not built in a day. This reminds us that it takes time, hard work and patience to make dreams come true as flawlessly as possible. Everyone attributes hard work to success. There are situations in which hard work alone cannot help. Under such circumstances, patience seems to be a forgotten word. In connection with the impor-

tance of patience, Robert H. Schuller eloquently put that 'tough times never last, but tough people do.'

In fact, patience is the quality of living in a difficult situation in hand and waiting for something better to happen, even if it takes months or years, as long as it lives up to our expectations. One must remain patient to achieve better things in life,

so goes a Myanmar saying.

Lack of patience can affect our decisions and actions. We all want to keep ourselves aloof from inconveniences. Now is the time to have the sense to practice passivity against negativity and distinguish the ordinary from the extraordinary. After all, unpleasant situations are regarded as stepping stones to success.

Security and Human Rights

Dr. Khine Khine Win

WE will not enjoy security without development; we will not enjoy development without security; and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. I totally agree with Kofi Annan, former UN Security General when he said we will not enjoy security and development without respect for human rights. Respect for human rights plays a crucial role in enjoyment of security and development.

Let's see the view from security perspective. There are seven areas in human security according to UNDP's human development report. They are Economic security, Food security, Health security, Environment security, Personal security, Community security and Political security. All areas are important, no doubt. However, I myself strongly be-

lieve that among them political security is the most important to achieve the rest of security. Myanmar is one of the member states of Association of South-east Asian Nations, ASEAN. In ASEAN political-security is an important pillar and it plays a critical role because peace and security are vital to development, cooperation, and other activities. ASEAN vision 2020 states "ASEAN have created a community of Southeast Asian Nations at peace with one another and at peace with the world, rapidly achieving prosperity for our peoples and steadily improving their lives".

From human rights perspective, article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR states that, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". In this regard, security of a person is a basic entitlement guaranteed by UDHR. Although every person deserves

the natural right to life, liberty and personal security, it is not uncommon for a lot of people to suffer from human rights violation due to political reasons. Liberty and personal security are interrelated to political security.

Let me take an excerpt from High Commissioner Message at Human Rights Day 2015, "fifty years on, many people are still unaware of the existence of the International Bill of Human Rights and many countries around the world still have much to do to build political institutions, judicial systems, and economies that allow ordinary people to live with dignity". As a human being, to live with dignity is very basic principle of human rights.

From both security and human rights perspective, political security is concerned with whether people live in a society that honors their basic human rights. Violations are most frequent during periods of political unrest.

And also human rights violations are often among the first warning signs of looming conflicts. It is a fact that instability and security directly affect human rights because they have negative impact on right to life, freedom and physical safety. Instabilities undermine social and economic development and negatively affect the comprehensive application of human rights. In turn, human rights violations are the root causes of every form of insecurity and instability. In the context of security and stability, we need to bring protection of human rights to the forefront. In this regard, human rights issues should be prominent, not incidental. This highlights that stability, security and respecting human rights are intertwined. We cannot defend one at the expense of the other.

Toward security, development and human rights, governments have to respect universal

value of democracy and human rights in practice for there to be stable system of security.

Only when there is political stability, can economic development be realized and only when there is socio economic development can stability be witnessed as politics and economic are interrelated. In Myanmar, the country's democracy is still in its infancy. As Nation's future totally depends on peace, prevalence of peace in the country is crucial. However, responsibility of working for peace lies not only with our leaders, but also with each of us individually. We have all duties to build peace, maintain peace and respect human rights.

To conclude, let me quote the words by 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, "Peace and freedom cannot be ensured as long as fundamental human rights are violated. Similarly, there cannot be peace and stability as long as there is oppression and suppression."

Educative Talks on prevention of Human Trafficking held in Magwe , Taninthayi Regions, Kayah and Shan States

THE anti-human trafficking police force under the Myanmar Police Force is carrying out the task of raising public awareness through activities aimed at preventing trafficking and taking severe legal action against traffickers under the 100-day plan being implemented between 1 May and 8 August.

The anti-human trafficking police forces organised educative talks on the prevention of human trafficking at basic education schools, training schools and universities in Seikphyu, Yenang-

yaung and Pakokku townships of Magwe Region, Loikaw of Kayah State, Launglon township of Taninthayi Region, Dotphoneyan of Kachin State and Kengtung and Tachilek townships of Shan State on Wednesday.

Issues raised in the talks ranged from how to recognise the signs that someone may be a victim of human trafficking and the ever changing and adaptive methods and means of human trafficking (entrapment, transportation and sale).

An official from the anti-hu-

man trafficking police force explained the differences between human trafficking and human smuggling, methods of recruitment used by human traffickers, the history of human trafficking, the process of human trafficking, human trafficking laws and the punishment for those convicted of human trafficking related crimes. The police force gave out education pamphlets to 1,824 teachers and students, 66 trainees, 85 workers and 60 others who attended the ceremony.—Ye Zarni



An anti-human trafficking awareness session in progress.

PHOTO: YE ZARNI

Commander-in-Chief attends tree-planting ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing observing the trees being planted. PHOTO: MNA

GROWING trees provides cool shade and protects the environment and protects against natural disaster, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said at a tree-planting ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army) launched the

ceremony near the Yezin dam in Zeyarthiri township, with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing planting a starflower tree and his wife a Gantgaw tree.

At the event the deputy commander-in-chief of defence services, union ministers, senior military officers and their wives also planted trees on designated

places.

The Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army) planted a total of 5,000 teak trees at the ceremony.

Other military commands launched tree-planting ceremonies the same day, planting a variety of trees totalling 408,497. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Education & Career Fair 2016 attracts youths



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Myin Thein. PHOTO: SOE SOE NAING (MIRROR)

THE 2nd Myanmar Education & Career Fair 2016, which kicked off on Friday at the Tatmadaw Hall on U Wisara Road in Yangon, has offered job opportunities and options of studying at vocational schools.

The fair was formally opened by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Myin Thein, Yangon Region Planning and Finance Minister U Myint Thuang and dignitaries.

Experts from education and employment sectors are giving talks from 24 to 26 June.—*Soe Soe Naing (Mirror)*

MAA joins hands with BFM to benefit children with autism

THE Myanmar Autism Association is teaming up with KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation (BFM) to promote autism awareness and care.

The MAA and BFM jointly conducted educative talks on autism in Yangon yesterday to raise public awareness and understanding of children with autism.

At the event, Prof Dr Nyan Win Kyaw and Dr Tin Ma Phyu of the MAA explained the condition of autism, which is a neuro-developmental disorder characterised by impaired social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior.

"This is a first for the Myanmar Autism Association to join hands with a philanthropic organisation. We will carry out activities

in hand with the BFM to benefit children with autism," said a representative of the MMA at the event.

One out of every 68 new born babies worldwide is affected by Autism. According to the Myanmar Autism Association (Mandalay), some 67 million

people are living with autism across the world. The characteristics associated with autism appear during childhood.

According to statistics, boys are four times more likely than girls to have autism. World Autism Day is held globally every year on 2 April.—*Thura Lwin*



Group photo session at an awareness course on autism jointly conducted by MAA and BFM. PHOTO: THURA LWIN

Light aircraft accident occurs in Dawei

A LIGHT aircraft accident took place at the local airport in Dawei, Tanintharyi Region, yesterday afternoon, with no passengers or aircrew on either planes reported injured.

Flight ART-72-600 from Mann Yadanarpon Airlines was reportedly facing the runway and readying for take off. The accident occurred when flight

EMBRAER-190 from Myanmar National Airlines entered the runway to park after landing at the airport, resulting in a collision.

Both planes sustained minor damage to their wings with aviation officials saying that Myanmar National Airlines provided replacement flights for its passengers.—*Myanmar News Agency*

The Union Attorney General visits Yangon Rule of Law Centre and reaffirms cooperation



The Union Attorney General visits Yangon Rule of Law Centre. PHOTO: YRLC

THE Union Attorney General H.E. U Tun Tun Oo visited the Yangon Rule of Law Centre on Friday 24 June where he met with staff and graduates from the rule of law courses and observed an ongoing 'training of trainers' course.

Yangon Rule of Law Centre is one of four Centres established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the International Development Law Organization (IDLO). The other three Centres are in Mandalay, Myitkyina (Kachin State) and Taunggyi (Shan State). The Centres provide an opportunity to legal professionals, community leaders and civil society organizations to gain knowledge, skills, values and general awareness of the law through a targeted curriculum and outreach forums.

H.E. U Tun Tun Oo said, "Strong cooperation among government, judiciary, lawyers and civil society is essential to strengthen the rule of law in Myanmar."

He reassured those present that the Union Attorney General's Office will increase its participation and support to the Rule of

Law Centres to make sure that the work of the Centers is successful and beneficial to the people of Myanmar. Earlier this month, H.E. U Tun Tun Oo also visited the Mandalay Centre.

Established under the auspices of the Union Parliament of Myanmar and guidance from the State Counsellor H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Rule of Law Centres are an integral part of UNDP's support to democratic governance in Myanmar. They have grown into vital community hubs where government and people come together to exchange insights and discuss necessary measures regarding issues of mutual concern such as drug trafficking, the impact of drug use on communities and prevention strategies, labor laws, squatters' rights and land-related issues, violence against women and children, and the new legal aid law. The Rule of Law Centres project is implemented by UNDP, through IDLO with financial support from the governments of Finland, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.—*GNLM*

20-member armed group returns to legal fold

3 armed group led by Naing Lwe alias Naing Hla Thuang returned to the legal fold yesterday, according to the Ministry of Defence.

The group was welcomed by Commander of the South-East Command Brig-Gen Myo Win and Mon State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Win Naing

Oo in Yay. During the ceremony the 20-member group led by Naing Lwe handed over 12 firearms, 10 grenades, six improvised mines and 1,099 rounds of ammunition to the command.

The Mon State Government and the command are assisting the group to re-settle.—*Myawady*

Hezbollah to send more fighters to Syria's Aleppo

BEIRUT — The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement said on Friday it will send more fighters to Syria's Aleppo area, a battleground where it has suffered heavy losses fighting alongside Syrian government forces against insurgent groups.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said thousands of Hezbollah's Sunni militant foes had recently entered Syria via the Turkish border with the aim of taking over Aleppo and its surrounding countryside.

"We are facing a new wave... of projects of war against Syria which are being waged in northern Syria, particularly in the Aleppo region," Nasrallah said in a speech broadcast live on the group's Al Manar TV.

"The defence of Aleppo is the defence of the rest of Syria, it is the defence of Damascus, it is also the defence of Lebanon, and of Iraq," he said.

"We will increase our presence in Aleppo," he said. "Retreat is not permissible."

Shi'ite, Iranian-backed Hezbollah has long supported President Bashar al-Assad against mostly Sunni insurgents.

Aleppo has been a focus of intensified fighting in the months since peace talks in Geneva broke down and a ceasefire



Supporters of Lebanon's Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah react as he addresses them from a screen during a ceremony marking the 40th day after Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine (picture on banner) was killed in an attack in Syria, in Beirut's southern suburbs, Lebanon on 24 June, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

deal brokered by Washington and Moscow unravelled. Russia intervened in the five-year-old conflict in September with an air campaign to support Assad.

"It was necessary for us to be in Aleppo ... and we will stay in Aleppo," Nasrallah said.

Aleppo city is split between government and rebel control. Russian and Syrian warplanes have pounded a road leading from the rebel-held areas north towards the Turkish border. That major rebel supply line from Turkey to Aleppo city was effective-

ly cut by government advances earlier this year.

A pro-Damascus source recently told Reuters government forces and their allies are trying to encircle rebels in the Aleppo area. Assad, for whom the recapture of Aleppo would be a strate-

gic prize, has vowed to take back "every inch" of Syria from what he calls terrorists.

Russia's intervention has helped government forces and their allies advance against insurgents, and separately against Islamic State, in some areas.

But some of those battles have been costly, including around Aleppo.

Islamist insurgents including the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front in May inflicted heavy losses on a coalition of foreign Shi'ite fighters including Iranians and Hezbollah members south of Aleppo.

Nasrallah said that 26 Hezbollah fighters had been killed in June alone, a rare acknowledgment of the toll their involvement is taking. Several of its senior military commanders have died in the Syrian conflict, alongside hundreds of fighters.

Nasrallah also denied Hezbollah was in imminent fiscal trouble as a result of a US law targeting the group's finances. The law, passed in December, threatens to bar from the American financial market any bank that knowingly engages with Hezbollah. It has ignited a standoff between Hezbollah, a dominant political force in Lebanon, and the Lebanese central bank.—Reuters

Libyan forces clash with militants in Sirte, 14 dead

TRIPOLI — Libyan forces fighting Islamic State in its stronghold of Sirte said on Friday that four of their troops and 10 militants were killed in heavy clashes around the port area as militants tried to flee the city under siege.

Brigades from the nearby city of Misrata, allied with the country's UN-backed government of national unity, launched a campaign to retake Sirte last month. They rapidly recaptured ground west of the coastal city, but their advance slowed as they closed in on its centre.

Islamic State militants, who

exploited Libya's security chaos to seize Sirte last year, have been fighting hard to defend territory they still control in the residential centre. "Brigades of Bonyan Marsous intercepted a group of Islamic State militants on Friday attempting to escape from the coastal side of the city," said Rida Issa, a spokesman with the government's operations room.

"The clashes were massive and have resulted in four troops killed and 24 wounded. After the clashes ended, our forces found about 10 bodies of militants."

Since the fall of Muammar

Gaddafi in 2011, Libya has had no official national army, but brigades of former rebels who once fought together against him have steadily turned against one another and allied with rival political forces on the ground.

Misrata city forces, among the most powerful military brigades, are aligned with the UN-backed unity government that arrived in Tripoli in March. It is seeking to replace two other rival governments that were set up in Tripoli and the east in 2014, and to unite Libya's many political and armed factions.—Reuters



Soldiers from a force aligned with Libya's new unity government walk along a road during an advance on the eastern and southern outskirts of the Islamic State stronghold of Sirte on 9 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

UN can't verify incendiary bombs in Syria, concerned by reports

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations is concerned by the Syrian opposition's accusations that incendiary weapons have been used in Syria but said on Friday it is unable to verify the reports.

The Syrian opposition High Negotiations Committee called on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday to launch an investigation into its accusations that Russia has used air-delivered incendiary weapons and cluster bombs in Syria.

The Russian mission to the United Nations was not immediately available to comment on the accusations.

"We are concerned about the reports of the use of incendiary weapons in Aleppo, Syria," UN spokesman Farhan Haq said. "We are not in a position to ver-

fy these reports."

"We expect that all parties and states involved in the conflict will refrain from their use in this way," he said.

Russia deployed warplanes to Syria last year to support President Bashar al-Assad against rebels seeking to end his rule. A crackdown by Assad on pro-democracy protesters five years ago sparked a civil war, and Islamic State militants have used the chaos to seize territory in Syria and Iraq.

Incendiary weapons use substances that are designed to set fire to objects or burn people, and cluster munitions are containers that explode in the air to distribute smaller bombs over a large area. Both are banned under the Convention on Conventional Weapons.—Reuters

Drone strikes kill 42 IS militants in East Afghanistan

KABUL — Up to 42 militants loyal to Islamic State (IS) outfit were killed as unmanned planes targeted IS hideouts in the eastern Nangarhar Province on Saturday, a local television channel Tolo reported.

The strikes, according to the media outlet were conduct-

ed against IS fighters in Kot and Achin districts during which 32 more militants sustained injuries.

Kot and Achin districts have been regarded as the bastion of IS militants in Afghanistan.

The hardliner group, however, has not commented.—Xinhua

A look into China's latest space centre

WENCHANG, (Hainan), — On the northeast coast of China's biggest tropical island, the country's fourth satellite launch centre is preparing for lift off. If the small city of Wenchang was previously known to the world at all, it was for coconuts and a signature chicken dish. It is from here that, all being well, China's new generation Long March-7 carrier rocket will begin its first mission in the next few days.

The launch is scheduled for between Saturday and Wednesday. All of the city's hotel rooms — enough for 80,000 people — are booked out and there are eight viewing areas for space fans to observe the spectacle.

It took five years to build the center which was completed in November 2014 and covers an area of 20 square km, featuring two launch pads and a science theme park catering to young space science enthusiasts. The operational part of the site is divided into three areas: transfer, test, and launch. Coconut groves, wetlands and ponds are scattered here and there.

The 53-metre, 597-tonne rocket was moved to the launch pad on Wednesday morning from its assembly and testing building.

The two launch pads, around 600 metres from the beach, have 92 metre and 86 metre gantries, one for the new Long March-7 and the other for the heavy-lift Long March-5 with its payload capacity of 25 tonnes to low Earth orbit, or 14 tonnes to geostationary transfer orbit.

Over 80 control and test rooms provide all-around technical support. Under each launch pad is a diversion ditch, which allows the huge amount of heat generated during the launch to dissipate.

Apart from the launch pads, the most outstanding structures in the centre are the assembly and testing buildings. Standing 3.5 km from the sea, the two have one thing in common: immensity.

The taller one, 99 metres high,



The "Yuanwang 21" transport ship carrying the Long March-7 carrier rocket arrives at Qinglan Harbor in Wenchang, south China's Hainan Province, on 14 May 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

accommodates the heavy-lift Long March-5. It has 14 floors above ground and one underground. Its steel door, 81 metres high, is Asia's largest. The home of the medium-lift Long March-7, is slightly smaller but still impressive.

China's fourth launch site, Wenchang will be used to dispatch satellites, large space stations and deep-space probes. It is designed to handle up to 10-12 launches a year. The planned space station and all attendant cargo and service launches will be handled by Wenchang.

China's three other launch bases — Jiuquan, Xichang and Taiyuan — are located in sparsely-populated inland areas. Wenchang was specially selected for its low latitude: only 19 degrees north of the equator.

The lower the latitude, the larger the centrifugal force and consequently the lower the launch cost. As long ago as 2007, Chinese Academy of Engineering carrier rocket expert Long Lehao declared that, "Hainan is close to the equator, so much energy could be saved if a satellite base was built there."

Satellites launched from low

latitudes are expected to have a longer service life as a result of the fuel saved by a shorter maneuver from transit to geosynchronous orbit. That extra fuel can later be used to regulate and sustain orbit.

Wenchang's latitudinal advantages will allow the payload to be increased by more than 300 kg, 7.4 per cent more than from any of the other three centers. That translates into a saving of 6 million US dollars each launch. The current world price for rocket payload is about 20,000 US dollars per kg.

Another benefit of the coastal center is that rockets will pass over open sea for up to 1,000 km, which avoids the danger of burning wreckage falling on residential areas.

Moreover, coastal Wenchang can receive deliveries of modules of large spacecraft by sea, while the other launch centers are all landlocked in remote plateau and mountainous regions that can only be reached by rail.

The rocket now waiting on the launch pad was taken to Wenchang on 16 May from north China's port city of Tianjin. The 1,670-nauti-

cal-mile trip took eight days.

The tropical weather, however, is a source of concern. Not every day is a sunny one in low-altitude coastal areas, with typhoons and thunderstorms constant threats. Wenchang's designers have used new technology to protect the launch ground against the ravages of wind and rain.

Unlike the steel structure of the launch pad at the Jiuquan centre, the structure in Wenchang is made of both steel and reinforced concrete. Since 2009 when construction began, the center has withstood eight typhoons, including Rammasun in 2014, the strongest in 41 years.

Wenchang sees more than 100 days of thunderstorms each year. To deal with this threat, four 105-metre steel lightning conductors surround each launch pad, effective against 98.6 per cent of thunderstorm, much higher than the 90 per cent in other domestic launch centres.

A special anti-corrosion dope is used on metal surfaces to protect against Wenchang's moist, salty environment.—Xinhua

Space telescope images confirm 'dark vortex' on Neptune

SAN FRANCISCO — Images obtained by the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) have confirmed the presence of a "dark vortex" in the atmosphere of Neptune, a rare type of feature that can persist for years on the eighth and farthest known planet from the Sun in the Solar System. The vortex, the first to be observed on Neptune in the 21st century, was first seen in September 2015 by the HST, a space-based telescope launched into low Earth orbit in 1990 and operated by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

"Dark vortices coast through the atmosphere like huge, lens-shaped gaseous mountains," research astronomer Mike Wong, who led the team that analyzed the HST data, was quoted as saying by a news release from University of California, Berkeley, on Thursday. He first announced the discovery in an astronomical telegram dated 17 May.

On Neptune, dark vortices are associated with bright patches of high-altitude clouds created when air is diverted upward and the gases freeze out. They are high-pressure systems more similar to mid-Atlantic eddies on Earth or the high-pressure regions that periodically bring dry, warm weather to the US West Coast, rather than to cyclones like typhoons or hurricanes. Together with "companion clouds," dark vortices were first discovered in 1989 in high-resolution images of Neptune from Voyager 2, a space probe launched by NASA in 1977 to study the outer planets.—Xinhua

Flint children's blood lead levels rose in water crisis: US officials

DETROIT — Federal health officials on Friday confirmed that the blood lead levels of children in Flint, Michigan, rose after the city switched to the Flint River as the source of its drinking water, exposing residents to dangerously high contamination.

Flint, with a population of about 100,000, was under control of a state-appointed emergency manager in 2014 when it switched its water source to the river from Detroit's municipal system to save money. The city switched back in October.

The river water was more corrosive than the Detroit sys-

tem's and caused more lead to leach from aging pipes.

Lead can be toxic, and children are especially vulnerable. The crisis has prompted lawsuits by parents who say their children have shown dangerously high levels of lead in their blood.

US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention officials said on Friday that they found that the percentage of young children with elevated blood lead levels was significantly higher when the water source was the Flint River.

"This crisis was entirely preventable, and a startling reminder of the critical need to eliminate

all sources of lead from our children's environment," Patrick Breysse, director of the agency's National Centre for Environmental Health, said in a statement.

When the water source was switched back to the Detroit system, the agency said, the percentage of children under 6 years old with elevated blood lead returned to levels seen before the switch.

The agency urged residents to use filters on their faucets to get water for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth. It said regular tap water could be used for bathing and showering because lead is not absorbed into the skin, but



A sign is seen next to a water dispenser at North Western High School in Flint, Michigan, on 4 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

young children should not be allowed to drink bath water.

The US Environmental Protection Agency said on Thursday that properly filtered water in

Flint was safe to drink. City officials, however, said bottled water was still needed since not every home can use the filters.—Reuters

Pope says 'never again' to tragedies like Armenian genocide

YEREVAN — A somber Pope Francis, "with pain in my heart," paid tribute on Saturday to the 1.5 million Armenians massacred in 1915, an event which he has labeled a genocide, risking Turkey's ire.

Francis, on the second day of his trip to Armenia, made an early morning stop at the Tzitzernakaberd, the "Genocide Memorial and Museum," a towering granite needle flanked by an eternal flame on a hillside overlooking the Armenian capital.

There, visibly moved, he took part in a prayer service along with President Serzh Sargsyan and leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

"Here I pray, with pain in my heart, so that never again will there be tragedies like this, so that humanity does not forget and knows how to overcome evil with good," he wrote in the guest book in Italian.

On Friday night in a speech to the president, the government and diplomats, Francis departed from his prepared text to use the word "genocide," a description

that infuriated Turkey when he said it a year ago.

As of Saturday morning there was no official reaction from Turkey, which last year re-

called its ambassador to the Vatican after the pope used the 'genocide' term. The envoy was kept away for 10 months.

Turkey accepts many Chris-

tian Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were killed in clashes with Ottoman forces during World War I, but contests the figures and denies the killings were

systematically orchestrated and constitute a genocide. It also says many Muslim Turks perished at that time.

"There is no reason not to use this word in this case," Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi told reporters on Friday night. "The reality is clear and we never denied what the reality is."

At the Saturday morning ceremony, Francis chatted with descendants of Armenian orphans who were sheltered at the papal summer residence south of Rome at the start of the 20th century.

"May God grant the beloved Armenian people and the entire world peace and consolation. May God protect the memory of the Armenian people. Memory should not be diluted or forgotten. Memory is a source of peace and the future," he wrote in the guest book.

After the memorial service the pope flew to say a Mass in the provincial city of Gyumri, near the border with Turkey and within sight of Mount Ararat, where the Bible says Noah's Ark landed after the Great Flood.—Reuters



Pope Francis signs a visitors' book during a commemoration ceremony for Armenians killed by Ottoman Turks, at the Tzitzernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan, Armenia, on 25 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venezuela dialogue could open way for international help — US diplomat

WASHINGTON — Dialogue between the Venezuelan government and opposition could provide a platform from which they could request help from the international community, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Tom Shannon said on Friday.

Shannon held talks with Venezuelan officials, including President Nicolas Maduro and opposition figures, in Caracas this week amid a punishing economic crisis in the South American nation. A date had not been set for another round of talks, he said.

During the visit, Shannon also met with former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. He, along with former presidents Martin Torrijos of Panama and Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, are trying to facilitate talks between the government and the opposition.

Given the diametrically opposed views of each side in Venezuela, internationally mediated talks outside Caracas could help address their differences, Shannon said.

"The hope (is) that this can be used not only to address political differences but also to create a platform from which both the government and the opposition can ask for help from the international community to address some of the very significant crises that Venezuela faces now," Shannon told reporters.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro attends a meeting with US diplomat Thomas Shannon at Miraflores Palace, next to Venezuela's Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez, in Caracas, Venezuela, on 22 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"It is up to the two parties to determine whether or not the facilitators are the right ones. Our view is that they are at this point," he added.

Shannon did not specify what type of help Venezuela could ask for.

His three-day visit comes amid increasing concern among Venezuela's neighbours about the situation in the South American OPEC nation.

Once among Latin America's most prosperous nations, Venezuela has plunged into unrest and a harsh economic slowdown. Long lines for food and medicines have led to protests and opposition calls for a recall referendum to remove Maduro.

Despite protests from Ven-

ezuela's Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez, a majority of member states from the 34-nation Organisation of American States (OAS) on Thursday backed a move by OAS chief, Luis Almagro, to "invoke" the organisation's democratic charter on Venezuela.

While the move could eventually lead to Venezuela's suspension, there is currently little appetite within the regional bloc to suspend Venezuela, with all member states favouring dialogue as a first step.

Shannon said Venezuela felt "uncomfortable" with the OAS process, adding: "They don't like being called out."

"My hope is that we will have a follow up date in the very near future," he added.—Reuters

Two killed, 100 homes destroyed by fast-moving California wildfire

LAKE ISABELLA, (Calif) — A massive California wildfire that has already killed two people and destroyed 100 structures was burning out of control on Friday evening as officials said it was possible more victims could be found in the rubble.

The so-called Erskine Fire, which broke out on Thursday afternoon in the foothills of Kern County about 42 miles (68 km) northeast of Bakersfield, had mushroomed on Friday to char more than 30,000 acres (12,140 hectares), making it one of the worst in an already intense California fire season.

The blaze has also sent three firefighters to the hospital for smoke inhalation and forced hundreds of residents to flee their homes ahead of the flames. California Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency for Kern County.

"This has been a massive amount of evacuations, people going door to door asking people to leave their homes because it's very dangerous out there," Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood told reporters at a Friday evening press conference.

Youngblood said two people had been confirmed killed in the inferno and that more fatalities could be discovered once authorities were able to search burned out neighbourhoods.

"We're gonna go back over the rubble with cadaver dogs," he said. "We don't know if there are other victims who were unable to escape this fire."

Fire officials said they had five percent containment of the Erskine Fire as of Friday night, which was being driven by high temperatures and bone-dry vegetation from a five-year California drought.—Reuters



A firefighter sprays a smoldering home as the Erskine Fire burns near Weldon, California, US, on 24 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



A cultural mediator from Italian NGO EMERGENCY carries a migrant baby on board of the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) rescue ship Topaz Responder around 20 nautical miles off the coast of Libya, on 23 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

More than 2,000 migrants rescued at sea — Italy coast guard

ROME — Ship crews pulled more than 2,000 migrants from overcrowded boats in the Mediterranean on Friday, Italy's coastguard said, as people smugglers stepped up operations during two consecutive days of good weather.

More than 7,100 people have now been plucked from international waters since Thursday, many of them on the dangerous journey from Libya. Europe's worst immigration crisis since World War Two is in its third year, and there has been little sign

of any let up of the flow of people coming from North African to Italy since last year.

Ships belonging to Doctors without Borders, Migrant Offshore Aid Station, Italy's navy, the EU's border agency Frontex, and the bloc's anti-people-smuggling mission Sophia, all helped take the migrants off nine boats on Friday.

About 60,000 boat migrants have been brought to Italy so far this year, according to the Interior Ministry.—Reuters

New Scotland independence referendum 'highly likely'

EDINBURGH — A second Scottish independence referendum is "highly likely", First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Friday, raising the prospect that the United Kingdom could tear itself apart after voting to leave the European Union.

Scotland, a nation of five million people, voted decisively to stay in the EU by 62 to 38 per cent in a referendum on Thursday, putting it at odds with the United Kingdom as a whole, which voted 52-48 in favour of an exit from the EU, or Brexit. "As things stand, Scotland faces the prospect of being taken out of the EU against her will. I regard that as democratically unacceptable," Sturgeon told a

news conference in Edinburgh. "I think an independence referendum is now highly likely."

A vote for independence would end the 300-year-old union between Scotland and England, its far bigger southern neighbour, dealing a body blow to the United Kingdom at a time when it is likely to still be dealing with the complex fallout from Brexit.

It would also transform the political landscape in the rump of the United Kingdom by making it much harder for Labour, the main opposition to the ruling Conservatives, to win power in London, as the party has relied on Scottish votes in the past.—Reuters

Catalonia government head says Brexit shows split from Spain possible

MADRID — Britain's decision to leave the European Union strengthens the case for Catalonia to be allowed to seek independence from Spain, the head of the region's government said on Friday.

Joining other leaders of nationalist movements in Europe in welcoming the result of Thursday's Brexit referendum, Carles Puigdemont said Britain's ability to leave the EU without the approval of its member states suggested Catalonia could claim independence without Madrid's consent.

"It demonstrates that it is perfectly possible to take a decision about sovereign-

ty as all other countries do," Puigdemont said in a statement.

Sworn in as leader in January, Puigdemont has mapped out an 18-month transition towards independence that would see Catalan authorities approve a constitution and begin building the institutions needed for an independent state, such as an army and a central bank.

The region's secession campaign gained momentum in 2014 from an independence referendum in Scotland, where voters eventually opted to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Puigdemont sent a



People hold Catalan separatist flags known as 'Esteladas' during a gathering to mark the Catalonia day 'Diada' in central Barcelona, Spain, in September 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

message of support to Scotland, whose first minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Friday a second Scottish independence referendum was "highly likely."

In Thursday's plebiscite, a majority of Scots voted to stay in the EU.

Spain's acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said Brexit demonstrated the risks of referendums

and the divisions they gave rise to.

Rajoy, who faces a national election on Sunday, repeated he would never allow an independence referendum in a Spanish region. He has steadfastly opposed Catalan independence and refused to allow a referendum there in 2014, arguing it would contravene the constitution.—Reuters

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

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Lindsay Lohan fumes over #Brexit, Elizabeth Hurley sleeps soundly

NEW YORK — Lindsay Lohan went viral on social media in the early hours of Friday. Only this time, it wasn't about her transgressions.

The actress, who is as well known for her legal troubles and stints in rehab as she is for her roles in Disney's "Freaky Friday" and "Parent Trap," weighed in on the global financial panic over Brexit in dozens of tweets posted through early Friday morning.

"good luck with the pound.. will take you about 15 years to get it back up #REMAIN instead," Lohan (@LindsayLohan) tweeted to 9.3 million followers as sterling began to plummet and markets came to terms with the fact that British voters had decided they wanted their country to leave the European Union.

Reuters counted at least 31

tweets in two hours before the former child star, who has taken up residence in London for a West End production of "Speed the Plow", deleted her anti-Brexit rants Friday morning.

Lohan wasn't the only celebrity to flaunt economic insights on social media. Jose Canseco (@JoseCanseco), the retired All-Star baseball player who tweeted loudly against Brexit in the days leading up to the vote, posited on the currency's fall.

"Pound is sinking faster then [sic] the Spanish Armada. Hug for u Great Britain," Canseco tweeted as sterling fell as much as 12 per cent off its Thursday night high.

As the sun rose in the United Kingdom and the BBC declared



Actress Lindsay Lohan.
PHOTO: REUTERS

that Brexit would win the day, some of the country's top talent expressed all manner of devastation.

"I truly believe this is one of the most devastating things

to happen during my lifetime. I felt a fear I've never felt this morning," tweeted singer Ellie Goulding (@elliiegoulding).

Harry Potter creator J.K. Rowling (@jk_rowling) tweeted: "I don't think I've ever wanted magic more."

Model and actress Elizabeth Hurley, however, appeared to sleep soundly Friday morning. A photo posted to her Twitter account @ElizabethHurley about an hour after the BBC declared a Brexit shows her asleep next to her dog with the caption "Sweet dreams," the hashtag #Brexit and emojis of a champagne bottle and Union flag.

Ahead of the vote, Hurley had urged Britons to vote "Leave" by posting a photo of herself on social media wearing

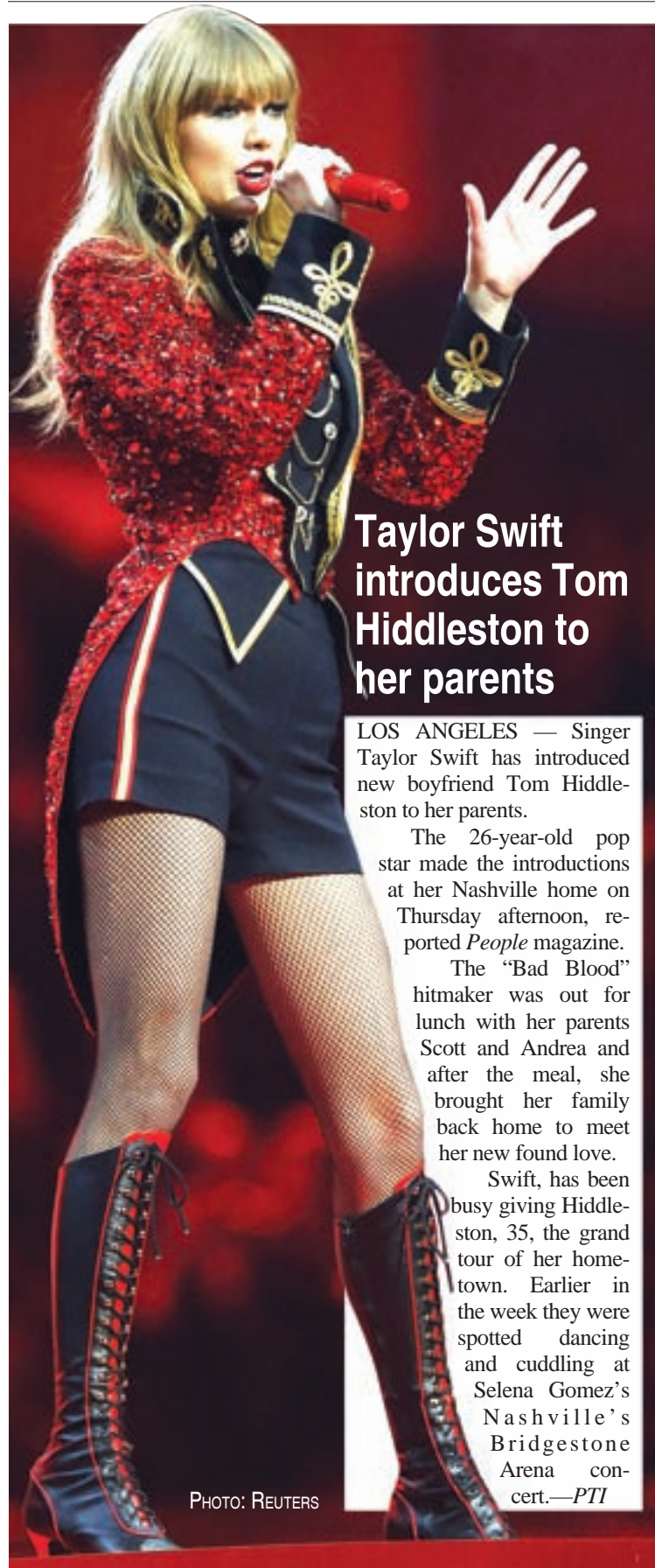
only a Union flag.

The momentous decision for Britain revved up internet searches and social media usage.

According to Google Trends, the search term "what happens if we leave the EU" surged by 250 percent at around midnight British time, nearly two hours after the polls had closed.

On Twitter, more than 3.5 million tweets from around 9pm ET Thursday to 5am ET on Friday had the hashtag #Brexit. The sentiment on those tweets was evenly split, according to Amobee Brand Intelligence, a marketing technology company.

During the Prime Minister David Cameron's resignation speech on Friday morning, Twitter usage in the UK was double its normal levels, with about 13,000 tweets per minute.—Reuters



Taylor Swift introduces Tom Hiddleston to her parents

LOS ANGELES — Singer Taylor Swift has introduced new boyfriend Tom Hiddleston to her parents.

The 26-year-old pop star made the introductions at her Nashville home on Thursday afternoon, reported *People* magazine.

The "Bad Blood" hitmaker was out for lunch with her parents Scott and Andrea and after the meal, she brought her family back home to meet her new found love.

Swift, has been busy giving Hiddleston, 35, the grand tour of her hometown. Earlier in the week they were spotted dancing and cuddling at Selena Gomez's Nashville's Bridgestone Arena concert.—PTI

PHOTO: REUTERS

Liam Hemsworth defends his 2012 engagement to Miley Cyrus

LOS ANGELES — Actor Liam Hemsworth says proposing to Miley Cyrus in 2012 was a well thought of decision.

The "Independence Day: Resurgence" actor was just 22 when he popped up the question to 19-year-old Miley back in 2012, reported E! online.

"I don't think that was impulsive. That was a well thought-out idea," Hemsworth said when asked if his 2012 proposal was an "impetuous" act.

Liam split from Miley in 2013 before they rekindled their romance earlier this year.

Though neither of them have confirmed or denied anything about their current status, Cyrus posted a photo earlier this week wearing a tshirt with "Hemsworth" printed across the back.—PTI



Actor Liam Hemsworth & Miley Cyrus. PHOTO: REUTERS

Chicago loses 'Star Wars' museum to California

CHICAGO — Filmmaker George Lucas is pulling his "Star Wars" museum project out of Chicago in favour of a California location after he ran into legal challenges from an open-spaces group in Chicago, he said on Friday.

Lucas blasted the parks group that had sued to stop the building of the museum on the Lake Michigan shore in an area that is currently a parking lot for a sports arena.

"No one benefits from continuing their seemingly unending litigation to protect a parking lot," he said in a statement from the museum.

The statement said the museum's leaders confirmed it would now be located in California but did not specify in which city.

Friends of the Parks, the



Director George Lucas.
PHOTO: REUTERS

group that filed suit last year to stop the museum project, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The group argued the museum would be an eyesore on the waterfront and that it violated public use policy governing development on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel

had pushed for the project, saying it would bring jobs, investment and tourism to Chicago. He lamented Lucas' decision, which came after he and other political leaders had tried to negotiate with the parks group.

"Chicago's loss will be another city's gain," Rahm said in a statement. He said the city was losing a \$1.5 billion gift.

The proposed museum would feature exhibitions of Lucas' collection of paintings, illustrations and digital art from the blockbuster "Star Wars" movie franchise he started in 1977.

The Chicago location was announced in 2014 and approved by Chicago's City Council, the park district, planning commission and state officials.—Reuters

Experts urge more soil pollution prevention, monitoring

BEIJING — Chinese environmental protection experts called for more efforts to prevent and monitor soil pollution ahead of the 26th National Land Day that falls on Saturday this year.

Wang Xiahui, director of the soil environment protection centre under the Ministry of Environmental Protection, said prevention is the strategy as treating soil contaminated with heavy metals and organic pollutants could be very costly.

The authorities should roll out tough restrictions on pollutants emitted by factories and mines and those who cause severe soil pollution should be shut down and fined, Wang said.

Wang also called for related government departments to beef up monitoring over soil pollution.

The environmental monitoring agencies in many cities and counties, however, are short of equipment and personnel and many new soil pollutants are not even on the radar, he said.

More accurate monitoring is needed to locate contaminated land and determine the severity and pollutant types, said Wang.

He also said the government should evaluate the related risks on farm produce, health and the ecosystem and thus determine risk control measures.

He also called for more coordinated efforts to curb air, water and soil pollution, warning that they could affect each other.

The soil treatment market in China is rather large, but experts are cautious over the market prospects in the short term.—*Xinhua*

Frankfurt sets out to woo bankers after Brexit

FRANKFURT — “You cry twice when you get sent to Frankfurt — once when you arrive and once when you leave.”

That is the rallying cry of Germany’s financial capital as it tries to shake off its image as one of Europe’s most boring cities and woo bankers to move there following Britain’s decision to quit the European Union.

Though it is decried as a soulless city, with few cultural offerings and lacking appealing architecture, Frankfurt’s official marketing office did not wait long before kicking off an image campaign following the referendum result.

Aiming to court banks and financial institutions considering relocating staff from London, Frankfurt Main Finance set up a direct hotline for interested firms and has scheduled road shows in London and other British cities.

“We want to send the mes-

sage loud and clear: “Welcome to Frankfurt. How can we help you?”” said the head of Frankfurt Main Finance, Hubertus Vaeth.

“The welcome banner is hung and Frankfurt’s doors are wide open.”

Britain’s relationship with the EU following the leave vote is unclear but EU officials have said UK-based banks and financial firms would lose automatic access to sell services across Europe if Britain does not apply vital EU principles.

Frankfurt, the birthplace of German poet Goethe, has only about 710,000 residents. Despite its glimmering skyscrapers, it appears like a sleepy village compared to the British capital, with travel times to its international airport from the city center only 15 minutes.

The city’s marketing office expects 10,000 bankers to relocate from London over the next

five years, a roughly 2-per cent share of all financial workers in the British capital.

Frankfurt ranked seventh in global consultancy Mercer’s 2016 quality of living report, well above London at place 39.

Others agree that Frankfurt could turn out to be an attractive continental European alternative, mainly due to its established financial infrastructure and its role as headquarters of the European Central Bank.

But with at least two years of talks ahead to negotiate British exit terms, experts have dampened hopes for any quick influx.

“The next two years will be marked by a lot of changes and uncertainties and banks will wait for things to settle down before making any major moves,” said Jan Pieter Krahn, professor of finance at Frankfurt’s Goethe University.—*Reuters*

‘Walkers on water’ overwhelm Italian lake installation

SULZANO, (Italy) — A yellow fabric walkway floating on Lake Iseo in northern Italy has attracted twice as many visitors as expected and has been forced to close at night for essential repairs and cleaning.

Last Saturday, Bulgarian-born artist Christo opened “The Floating Piers”, a 3 km (two mile)-long walkway from Sulzano on the mainland to the Monte Isola and San Paolo islands, usually accessible only by boat.

Authorities in the area 100 km (60 miles) northeast of Milan had expected around 40,000 visitors a day and to keep the walkway open around the clock. But after 97,000 came on Wednesday



People walk on the installation ‘The Floating Piers’ by Bulgarian-born artist Christo Vladimirov Yavachev, known as Christo, on the Lake Iseo, northern Italy, on 24 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

alone, they decided to close it between midnight and 0400 GMT.

Made of some 220,000 high-density polyethylene cubes

covered with shimmering yellow fabric, the piers have suffered more wear and tear than expected.

The linked cubes are an-

chored to the bed of the lake, forming a 16 metre-wide, 35 centimetre-high surface designed to move gently with the waves.

Admission is free. Volunteers are on hand in case anyone falls into the water. The installation closes on 3 July.—*Reuters*



Entertainment Channel

(26- 6-2016, Sunday)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 06 : 00 pm | to Philanthropist (Part-2) |
| • Weather Report | 09 : 10 pm |
| • Cartoon Programme “Song of the Sea” (Part-2) | • Music Programme |
| 06 : 50 pm | 09 : 30 pm |
| • International Movie Songs | • Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-2) |
| 07 : 10 pm | 09 : 50 pm |
| • Myanmar Video | • Myanmar Movie |
| 08 : 40 pm | Midnight |
| • MRTV Entertainment Music | • Close Down. |
| 08 : 50 pm | |
| • U Kyaw Thu: From Artist | |

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Today Fresh

- | | | |
|-------|----|---|
| 07:03 | Am | News |
| 07:25 | Am | Myanmar Handicrafts |
| 07:55 | Am | Myanmar Traditional Art Bronze Casting |
| 08:03 | Am | News |
| 08:26 | Am | Shwe Maw Daw : The Glory of Bago City |
| 08:53 | Am | H.E.L.P (1) Build the High Platform |
| 09:03 | Am | News |
| 09:26 | Am | The Most Prominent Resort And Residence—Ngapali |
| 09:51 | Am | Talented Musicians |
| 10:03 | Am | News |
| 10:25 | Am | A Lucky Boy |

- | | | |
|-------|----|-------------------|
| 10:41 | Am | Gemstone Sculptor |
| 10:53 | Am | My Life & My Art |

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

Prime Time

- | | | |
|-------|----|---|
| 07:03 | Pm | News |
| 07:26 | Pm | Dawei-Tavoy, Travel To The Southern Part of Myanmar |
| 07:44 | Pm | Made in Myanmar “Mixxo” |
| 07:50 | Pm | Today Myanmar: Squatter Issue in Yangon |
| 08:03 | Pm | News |
| 08:26 | Pm | U Kyaw Thu: From Artist to Philanthropist (Part-II) |
| 08:44 | Pm | Myanmar Masterclass “Min Wae Aung” |

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

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

Messi primed to end Argentina drought in Copa final

HOUSTON — Chile face Argentina in Sunday's Copa America final for the right to call themselves South America's dominant team but perhaps an even bigger question for football fans the world over regards whether Lionel Messi can finally win a major international title.

The Barcelona forward has won every trophy possible with the Spanish club but he has lost three finals with Argentina, including in 2014 World Cup Final in 2014 and the Copa America last year.

Sunday's game against Chile in New Jersey gives Messi a chance to end both his personal hoodoo and that of Argentina, who have not won a major title since lifting the Copa America in Ecuador in 1993.

"Getting to three finals in a row is impressive," said Messi, whose first decider was a 3-0 loss to Brazil in the 2007 Copa America. "I hope we can win the Cup that we so desire."

Argentina lost to Chile on penalties in the final last year and Messi said the squad were better prepared this time around.

"You learn all the time," said Messi, who turned 29 on Friday.

"We have been working together for another year, we are stronger as a group and we've really grown in a lot of ways."

The five-times world player



Argentina midfielder Lionel Messi (10) kicks the ball as United States defender DeAndre Yedlin (2) defends during the second half in the semifinals of the 2016 Copa America Centenario soccer tournament at NRG Stadium, Houston, TX, USA, on 21 June. PHOTO: REUTERS

of the year has been outstanding at the Centenary Copa America, even though he played the first three games as a substitute after injuring his back in a warm-up game. His sublime free kick in the 4-0 win over the United

States took him on to 55 goals and above Gabriel Batistuta as Argentina's all-time leading goalscorer.

Messi called the performance against the US "perfect" and he will not have forgotten

that Argentina beat Chile 2-1 in their opening match on 6 June.

However, the Chileans have improved since, beating Bolivia and Panama before hammering Mexico 7-0 in what was undoubtedly the performance of the

tournament.

Coach Juan Antonio Pizzi, who replaced Jorge Sampaoli in January, is now settled in the job and he has Chile playing the same high-paced pressing and super-fast counter attacks that make them such an exciting team to watch.

"This team has created an identity," the Argentine-born Pizzi said after the semi-final.

"It's a group of winners, I can see that just talking with them. That's not because they win games because we don't win every time but in their heads they are convinced they are going to win. That mentality allows them to grow stronger and gives them the confidence to keep going."

Chile will have the dynamic Arturo Vidal back after suspension and Pizzi hopes central midfielder Marcelo Diaz will recover from the muscle injury that kept him out the 2-0 win over Colombia in the semi-final.

They are on a high and confident that they will do the double over their neighbours.

But they will not have their home fans behind them this time and there is one other detail. The last time Messi played at the MetLife stadium was also in June and also against a South American side.

Argentina beat Brazil 4-3 in a friendly in 2012. Messi scored a hat-trick.—Reuters

All England grass a tonic for Tomic

SYDNEY — Australia's Bernard Tomic thinks he is playing some of the best grasscourt tennis of his career and is in a good place off the court as he heads into the Wimbledon championships main draw for the seventh time.

The 23-year-old's campaign at the All England Club ended in the third round last year and was followed by a very public and bitter row with Tennis Australia over what he said was their lack of backing for him.

Since then, there have been rows over his suitability to be part of Australia's Olympic team, which he defused by withdrawing his name from consideration, and the now traditional woes of his claycourt season.

After a second-round departure at the French Open that surprised few given his dislike of the Roland Garros surface, however, Tomic has rediscovered his form on grass at 's-Hertogenbosch and Queen's Club.

"I'd say probably it's the best it's been leading into Wimbledon," the 19th seed told Australia's Fox Sports TV.

"I managed to play two grass-court tournaments, played really well, making the quarters in the

Netherlands and the semis at Queen's.

"I feel like I'm playing some of my best tennis on grass and now we're here at the famous Wimbledon tournament and I'm ready to go." Tomic made his grand slam breakthrough when he reached the Wimbledon quarter-finals as a qualifier in 2011 and it remains his favourite of the sport's four majors.

"It was a huge moment for my career that turned everything around and I always look back on that leading into any grasscourt tournament," he said.

"I take back that memory and I'm always in a position to play my best tennis on grass. On grass, I always seem to be intense and on my feet and I always seem to play really well.

Lapses of concentration and intensity have been a problem for Tomic throughout a career that promised so much when he won two junior grand slam titles.

Allegations of giving up, or tanking, have dogged him in recent years and reached fever pitch when he faced match point at the Madrid Open in May with his racket upside down.—Reuters



Australia's Bernard Tomic. PHOTO: REUTERS

Henry handball gives Irish extra motivation v France

PARIS — Thierry Henry's handball sent such shockwaves that barely anyone remembers it was actually William Gallas who scored the infamous goal France that ruined Ireland's chances of a World Cup appearance more than six years ago.

On Sunday, Les Bleus face the Irish in Lyon in a Euro 2016 last-16 clash in which the host nation will start as heavy favourites.

In the stands, there is little doubt the Irish fans, who are enjoying growing popularity in France thanks to their good-natured presence in the streets across the country, will outsize the local supporters.

Qualification for a quarter-final against Iceland or England, however, will be decided on the field, where the Irish will take extra motivation from the drama at the Stade de France in 2009.

"It is absolutely (extra motivation), but we've got all the motivation in the world here regardless of that, we've got a side that are prepared and actually love playing for their country and

that's very, very important. It's a driving force," Ireland manager Martin O'Neill told reporters.

His assistant Roy Keane believes the team have the qualities to trouble the French, who have been remarkably quiet on the Henry incident.

"It's massive game against France who will be red-hot favourites," he said, adding that Ireland's goal was to create another bit of history.

Keane hopes Ireland will make the most of their set pieces.

"I'd like to think every time we get the ball in the box their fans will be nervous wrecks," he said.

France, who have yet to play a full match at their best in the tournament, have only conceded one goal in three matches, a penalty, but the back four have not been really tested.

Coach Didier Deschamps is likely to field the team who beat Romania in the tournament's curtain-raiser, with striker Olivier Giroud supported by Antoine Griezmann and Dimitri Payet — himself a lethal weapon on set pieces.—Reuters