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GETTING A LOOK IN

Discussions underway for NSCN-K to join Panglong Conference

THE National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) met the Preparatory Committee for the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in Yangon yesterday to discuss its participation in the peace process.

At the invitation of the preparatory committee, the NSCN-K came to the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon yesterday morning. Preparatory Committee Chairman Dr Tin Myo Win quoted State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as instructing that the peace process should focus on equality and inclusive participation of all ethnic groups.

NSCN-K Leader U An Kant expressed his support for the new government's commitment to the peace initiative for the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference, promising their cooperation in regional development and peace. The ethnic group entered a regional-level ceasefire agreement with the government in April 2012.

U An Kant told the media after the meeting that his group would not participate in political dialogue but would work together with the government for regional development.

"We will come to the peace conference as an observer, and we warmly welcome their invitation to the peace talks," he said, adding that his group has not decided whether to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement.

Speaking to the media, U



National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) holds a meeting with the Preparatory Committee for the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in Yangon. PHOTO: PHO HTAUNG

Hla Maung Shwe, Secretary of the Preparatory Committee, said that the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang is an independent ethnic group which forms no alliance with any ethnic

armed group.

"They have built trust with the army. Not a single engagement has ever broken out between the army and them for 16 years," he added.

According to official reports, there have been no clashes between the ethnic group and the army since 2000.

The NSCN-K attended as an observer the peace talks between

the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team and the Union Peacemaking Work Committee in spite of not having signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt*



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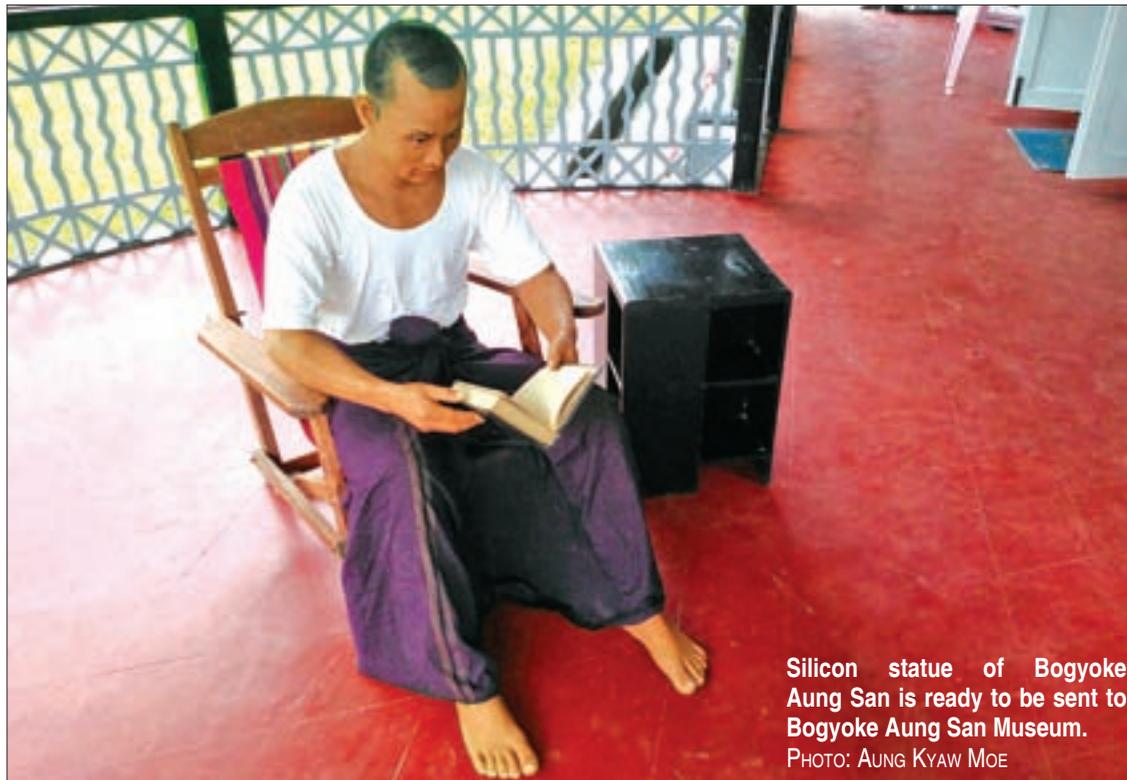


Beyond



Together





Silicon statue of Bogyoke Aung San is ready to be sent to Bogyoke Aung San Museum.
PHOTO: AUNG KYAW MOE

Silicon statue of Bogyoke Aung San to be displayed at Bogyoke Aung San Museum on Martyrs' Day

A SILICON statue of Bogyoke Aung San will be put on display to the public at the Bogyoke Aung San Museum on Martyrs' Day which falls on 19 July, according to the Ministry of Culture.

The life size statue of Bogyoke being seated in an armchair and reading a book was created by artist Aung Kyaw Tun who also created a statue of Bogyoke Aung San for the museum of Bogyoke Aung San's home in Natmauk

in central Myanmar to mark the 100th birthday of General Aung San last year.

"It is very graceful to see the statue of Bogyoke. I hope this statue will attract a higher number of visitors this year to see Bogyoke Aung San sitting and reading at his home," said Aung Kyaw Tun.

The Ministry of Culture spent K1.5 million ton creating the statue. The artist created it free of charge.—*Thi Thi Min*

Volleyball matches held between armed forces of Myanmar, Lao DPR

THE armed forces of Myanmar and Laos played friendly volleyball matches and Sepak Takraw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In the volley ball match the Myanmar Tatmadaw team beat Laos, with 25-27, 25-17, 25-9, 25-16. In the Sepak Takraw match the Myanmar Tatmadaw team defeated the Laos team, with 21-18, and 21-19.

Among the spectators were Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Comander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win and union ministers, the Laotian ambassador and senior military officers from Laos.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Myanmar beat Laos in a friendly volleyball match. PHOTO: MNA

Framework amendments to be made to Board of Trustees of Shwedagon Pagoda

A MEETING for selection of new members of the Board of Trustees of Shwedagon Pagoda reportedly saw talks held over changes to rules and regulations of the board which were originally drawn up in 1990, according to the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs.

"We discussed changes to some members of the board in a bid to make the board more democratic. We need to make a submission to the Office of the Attorney General to amend some of the 1990 trustee rules and regulations," said U Aung San Win, official from the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs.

The meeting for forming of a new board of trustees, which was held on 25 June, also

marked the first time it was ever attended by the Union Minister for Religious and Cultural Affairs, together with members of Yangon regional government.

"From among the 15 member strong trustee board, those over seventy years old will retire from their board duties. They will be replaced by six new members who shall be experts from their concerned fields, such as engineering," added U Aung San Win.

U Tun Aung Ngwe, member of the Board's Office, said the incumbent pagoda trustees are reportedly serving their duties as much as their capacity will allow, with the selection process of new members to be carried out according to instruction.

"The Minister for Religious

and Cultural Affairs attended [the meeting] and agreed to the appointing of six new members.

A submission for amendments to the trustee rules and regulations will be made and will require confirmation from the Office of the Attorney General. Amendments haven't been drawn up as yet, so I'm not aware of what they will be," he said.

Over 400 public suggestions posted to the Minister of Religious and Cultural Affairs' Facebook page will be included in discussion over amendments to the organisational framework of the Board of Trustees of Shwedagon Pagoda, together with changes deemed necessary for the Shwedagon Pagoda itself.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

MTE to retire its elephants from logging

ELEPHANTS belonging to the Myanma Timber Enterprise (MTE), which falls under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MNREC), will reportedly be retired from their logging activities starting from this 2016-17 fiscal year for utilization in other businesses.

The retirement of the elephants reportedly comes as part of efforts to curb the deforestation of Myanmar's wilderness.

"One day, our forests will cease to be logged. In anticipation of this event, we aim to utilise our elephants for other purposes, such as within the tourism sector - at Ahlaungdaw Kathapa National park, for example," said U Myo Min, director of the MNREC.

Elephants of the MTE aged over 18-years-old, with work within Ayeyawady Region's Sin Mon forest, can reportedly carry approximately 2,000 tons

of logs a year.

"During the elephants' downtime from their logging activities, they're looked after by our mahouts who give them baths and take them for walks. The elephants are also regularly checked by veterinarians. Care is taken to ensure they don't fight amongst themselves, become wounded and are administered medical treatments without delays," said, U Myo Min Aung, elephant doctor from Sin Mon forest.

But numbers of elephants from Bago and Ayeyawady Regions are reportedly depleting as hunters target the animals for their ivory and skin, which is exported to China for a high price.

Plans between MTE and Four Paws International are reportedly in the making for the establishment of a centre in Bago Region for retired elephants.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Men ride elephants owned by Myanma Timber Enterprise.
PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Experts predict lower peanut yields in Yinmabin Township

THIS year's peanut production within Sagaing Region's Yinmabin Township could see reduced yields this year as plantations are cultivated on raised ground, combined with a lower usage of organic composts, according to agricultural experts from Monywa. "Good soil is important for peanut plantations. For example, if we plant peanuts in good soil, we only need to add fertiliser. This year, however, peanut crops have been planted on higher ground, which features red soil. It requires the adding of composts to enhance soil quality to produce a more replete crop," said U Kyaw Moe Hlaing, an agricultural expert from Monywa.

The soil must reportedly be ploughed before planting, while

the utilization of natural fertiliser of animal manure can enhance yields. "We've only utilised organic composts and cow manure as the rains are prevalent over these months. One can tell, just by looking at the sprouting peanut crops, that's this year's yield won't be as prosperous as those previous. That said, the generous usage of organic compost by farmers could actually result in a higher crop outage," said U Kan Nyunt, a farmer from Shae Pyay village of Yinmabin Township.

Yinmabin Township reportedly boasts over 900 acres of peanut crop plantations, while peanuts are usually planted during the beginning of May and harvest two months later in July. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Second hand tractors and ploughshares to be sold for around K200,000

THE Agricultural Mechanisation Department under the ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Irrigation has been selling second hand tractors and ploughshares to Myanmar farmers for between K200,000 and K490,000 beginning from Friday, it has been learned from an official of the ministry. Farmers have the option to either pay by instalment or make an outright purchase.

Farmers who wish to buy tractors must have a letter of recommendation certifying that they are buying the tractor for genuine farm work. With the correct paperwork farmers can come directly to the tractor stations and make a purchase.

"The ministry expects to sell around 65 tractors after the first 100 day-project. A total of 50

tractors have already been sold," said U Aung Zaw, director of the mechanical branch.

Payment for tractors can be made in three instalment within two years. The down payment is between K90,000 to K120,000 monthly. Tractor training courses are being conducted free of charge. Ploughshares are also being sold for between K170,000 and K1 million. The Department of Agricultural Mechanisation has invited tenders from Thailand, India and European nations.

Buyers can make enquires with the township or local division mechanical departments. They can also contact the following numbers: 067-431215/6, 431242, 431246 for the main office of the mechanical department (Naypyidaw). —*Thant Zin Win*



A farmer drives a tractor sold by Agricultural Mechanisation Department. PHOTO: KYAW YE SWE



Traders check a jade stone at the 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. Photo: MNA

3,379 jade lots sold for 385.64 million Euros

WITH the sale of 680 lots of jade yesterday the total earnings from the sales of jade lots at the 53rd Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw reached the 385.64 million Euro mark.

A total of 1,000 lots of jade

went on sale at the emporium yesterday and 680 lots, worth in total 58.64 million Euros, were bought by traders through the tender system.

So far, 3,379 lots of jade have found buyers within nine days.

More lots of jade are set to go on sale with displays of 1,000 lots today and jade lots with a reserve price of 200,001 Euros per item will be sold at auction Monday through Wednesday.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Inter Milan FC to discuss development of Myanmar football

THE Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) will reportedly hold a final set of talks with Inter Milan Football Club, the internationally acclaimed Italian side, over a concerted effort to develop the game in Myanmar.

Representatives of Inter Milan FC will travel to Myanmar for the talks with the MFF, which are

allegedly to be held between 3-7 July.

"Discussion will mainly focus around youth programs and the development of football academies within the country, along with helping to open Myanmar's door for foreign teams to come and play here," said Ko Zaw Min Htaik, from MFF's media department.

Inter Milan FC made its inaugural trip to Myanmar this May, where they reportedly met with the MFF and Yangon United Club of the Myanmar National League.

Inter Milan FC, of the Italian Serie A League, is one of the most successful clubs in Italy, and has a wide following of fans across the world.—*Myitmakha news Agency*

Over 14 million grams of narcotics from Southern Myanmar set ablaze

THE Tanintharyi Region Police Department has announced 14,299,355 grams of narcotics, confiscated from within the southern Myanmar region between 1 February – 26 June, have been set ablaze.

The compiled haul of drugs, confiscated from arrests made throughout the region, was forwarded to Yangon prior to 26 June for it to be destroyed by fire.

"The order was issued by the court; all confiscated evidence from drugs busts was sent to the Yangon headquarters, where it was all set on fire.

But, there will be a negligible number of cases for which

orders [to destroy confiscated evidence] have not yet been released," said U Myo Min, official of the Tanintharyi Region Police Department. In regard to a compiled list of drug busts per township in the region, the majority of narcotics confiscated within Dawei district were amphetamines which bore a WY imprint. Hauls from Myeik and Kawthaung districts, however, featured a more varied array of narcotics including opium powder, ICE; WY, R and SY imprinted amphetamines; liquid opium and cannabis.

The narcotics, which had finished being processed by the courts, were also reportedly sent to

the Yangon Chemistry Department in a sealed container for laboratory testing. "[The] WY [amphetamine] has a major presence in Dawei [district]. The market is more varied [further south] in Myeik and Kawthaung [districts]. [In these areas] opium powder is the most prevalent; with K4,000-5,000 one can buy as much as one desires," said a driver who traverses between Dawei, Myeik and Kawthaung.

Opium powder is a substance that requires just one step for it to become opium, gaining it real traction in the southern half of Tanintharyi Region, according to local residents.—*Myitmakha news Agency*

Educational talks on TIP held in regions



A session of educational talks on trafficking in person in progress.

PHOTO: MPF

THE Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force under the Myanmar Police Force is implementing public awareness activities for the prevention of people from being trafficked and taking severe legal action against traffickers under the first 100-day plan being carried out between 1 May and 8 August.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force organised the educa-

tion talks on human trafficking at the Yangon Eastern University in Thanlyin township, Yankin Education College's Basic Education Practising Middle School and No. 3 Basic Education Middle School in Sanchaung Township of Yangon Region, in Kawthaung township of Taninthayi Region, Kunlon and Tachilek townships of Shan State on 29 June.

Similarly, the Anti-Human

Trafficking Police Force gave the education talks on human trafficking in Ottarathiri township in Nay Pyi Taw, at Naungkayah Ward in Loikaw, Kayah State, at the Basic Education High School in Myitkyina, Kachin State and in the office of the Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force Section in Tachilek, Shan State on 26 June and on Monday.

At the talks members of the Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force explained the differences between human trafficking and human smuggling, the types of human trafficking in Myanmar, how someone might be identified as a victim of human trafficking, methods of recruitment used by human traffickers and the prevention of violence against women.

The police force gave out education pamphlets to 2499 students and 200 people in the ward who attended the ceremony.—*Myanmar Police Force*

KBZ plants trees to celebrate opening 400th bank branch

CELEBRATING the opening of its 400th bank branch, Kanbawza bank (KBZ) organised a tree planting ceremony in Aungpan, Shan State, yesterday.

The ceremony was participated in by Chairman of KBZ Group of Companies U Aung Ko Win, departmental heads,

business men at home and abroad, employees of KBZ and guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Senior Executive Director U Nyo Myint of the KBZ Group of Companies, said KBZ's bank branches have been mushrooming nationwide and the number

of banks reached 400 on Tuesday with the opening of a bank branch on west Shwegondaing Rd in Bahan Township.

KBZ, which was opened in Myanmar in 1994 and now has 400 branches and more than 16,000 members of staff nationwide, is also the only one fund settlement bank on the Yangon Stock Exchange.

With receiving permission to open its representative offices in Thailand and Singapore, KBZ has a plan to extend its banking services in ASEAN countries and east Asian countries, he added.

KBZ also established KBZ Gateway Co Ltd, a subsidiary of Myanmar's KBZ Group of Companies Ltd, using Oracle Flexcube Core Banking Software for better, faster, stronger international and local banking services.

The bank was also awarded with the Special Honourary State Excellence Award by the president for being number one on the country's tax-paying list for four consecutive years.

Besides, it has been awarded with several local and international awards for its contribution to socio-economic development, with spending more than K 103 billion.—*Myanma Alinn*



KBZ conducting a tree-planting ceremony to celebrate the opening of 400th bank branch. PHOTO: MYANMA ALINN

Sensors to be installed at three roundabouts

THE Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will install sensors at three roundabouts within two months, according to the engineering department (roads and bridges) of the Yangon City Development Committee. The sensors will be installed at Hanthdawady, U Htaung Bo and U Wisara

roundabouts.

The sensor system will have a major effect on reducing congestion, the YCDC says.

The sensors are intended to provide information on traffic jams and reduce the number of vehicles on the road, according to the traffic police office.

There are 154 traffic lights

in Yangon region. The control centre will be built to monitor the sensors at the three roundabouts in Yangon region by Shwe Yin Company and a state-owned Chinese Company. The installation will be finished at the end of August, according to the Yangon City Development Committee.—*Yin Pa Pa Tun*

Crime NEWS

Cluster collision of three vehicles occurred in Pyu

CLUSTER collision of three vehicles occurred on Yangon-Mandalay road, Zeyawady town, Pyu township, Bago region, on 30 June.

According to the investigation, a 12-wheel vehicle driven by U Zaw Than Oo, 42, crashed into the eight-wheel vehicle driven by U Kyaw Kyaw Lin,

38, when the 12-wheel vehicle driver lost control.

Then, another 12-wheel vehicle also crashed into the eight-wheel vehicle. U Kyaw Kyaw Lin sustained minor injuries in the accident. The reckless driver U Zaw Than Oo has been charged by the police.—*Myint Oo*



Cluster collision of three vehicles being seen. PHOTO: MYINT Oo

Army men seek suspects after discovering seven corpses in Mong Yaw

ARMY men are looking for wanted murderers in connection with the man slaughter of seven persons whose dead bodies were found near Mong Yaw town, Lashio township on 25 June, according to a police reported yesterday.

According to the report, a military column while taking security on the villages near Mong Yaw town, Lashio township, was attacked by SSA and TNLA groups.

Fightings broke out between TNLA and Tamadaw on 25 June, near Mong Yaw town. After 15 minutes later, TNLA withdrew to eastern part and the tamadaw cleared their place, and discovered two enemy corpses and heroin worth Ks 19 lakh and 2,000 yaba tablets worth Ks 40 lakh.

The tamadaw also found the other five corpses and ammunition in the conflict area. The tamadaw men are still investigating and searching the suspect.—*200*

Yaba, heroin and ammunition seized

A local police squad from Lashio seized Yaba from four passengers near Oriental toll gate, Nawngkhio entrance gate, on 30 June.

Acting on a tip-off, the police searched a vehicle which belongs to Shwe Li Yadanar bus line and discovered 7,800 Yaba tablets from the two passengers called Ma Nan Bauk and Ma Aye Myat on board.

Similarly, a combined investigation team comprising officers and staff from Myawady searched a house of Saw Myint Tun at ward 4, Myawady town and seized 1,375 Yaba tablets



Saw Myint Tun. PHOTO: MPF

and a gun with 203 bullets round.

And, the police from Eidu township discovered 350 Yaba tablets from Ma Mu Shin's house at Lakanar village, Hpa-an township.—*Myanmar Police Force*

LOCAL Business

Influx of illicit Thai carp takes a bite out of Myanmar's fishing industry



A Thailand fish farm near the Myawady-Mae Sot border. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

AN imported species of carp from Thailand has been domestic fish farm sales near the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border, roughly 9,780 kgs of carp crosses the border through unofficial channels everyday according to the report from the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF).

The Department of Fisheries and MFF for Kayin State will allegedly inform fish smugglers that they could be arrested, and charged as a result of trading carp and shrimp imported from Thailand.

"We've been hearing of carp being imported through unrecognised crossings from Thailand for a month now. Yet, we

have only received an official report on the matter yesterday," said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of the MFF, adding that investigations are currently underway to identify these illegal channels.

Frozen shrimp, chickens and their eggs are imported into Myanmar from Thailand when there is a scarcity of meat and fish within domestic markets, or at times when prices are high.

"The demand for shrimp domestically has risen, which we, as a nation, can't meet. The importation of shrimp was permitted after a decline in local production. This permission was

given for the legal importation of goods. Permission [to import fish] has not been granted as there isn't a large domestic demand," added U Win Kyaing.

The current price for 1.6kg of carp, within Yangon's central fish market, fetches between Ks1,200-5,000 dependant upon size. After the arrival of the carp, fish could be sold for Ks300 cheaper, per kg, than that farmed locally this will hurt fish farmers.

As of 2016, Myanmar boasts nearly 480,000 acres of freshwater fish and shrimp farms, half of which are reportedly used for the farming of carp.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

OPIC to lend US\$250 million for installation of telecom towers

THE Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) will provide a loan of US\$250 million to Apollo Towers Myanmar (ATM), said Ms. Elizabeth Littlefield, President and CEO of OPIC.

Apollo Towers Myanmar is

a firm engaged in the installation of telecom power infrastructure. The company has already been granted to build telecom towers for private telecommunication operators Telenor and Ooredoo. OPIC will provide the loans to Apollo Towers Myanmar with

an aim to promote telecom networks in Myanmar.

Myanmar telecommunication is understood to have developed impressively in a short term. However, about 30 per cent of the country still does not have coverage.—200

MTSH proposes K2,500 share dividends

MYANMAR Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Limited (MTSH), one of the two listed companies permitted to trade on the nascent Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX), has proposed the paying of a K2,500 dividend per ordinary share for the previous fiscal year, it was confirmed during a company board of directors' meeting on June 28.

This is an increase on dividends of K2,000 per ordinary share which we handed out on 28 December 2015, while the date for the release of dividends for this current year has yet to be made known.

"I'm an original shareholder. I've bought shares ever since they began to be sold for K10,000 each, so however much the price [of shares] fluctuates, I have a strong confidence in MTSH. Their way of working is also transparent," said U Maung Maung Myint, a shareholder.

The release of audited and consolidated financial statements for the previous fiscal year, by MTSH on June 28, revealed the total dividend payout for 2016 amounts to over K9,732 million, more than when compared with the year prior which saw over K7,785 million paid out.

According to the financial statement, 26 July marks the last day to trade on the YSX for entitlement as a share holder on 'record day' which takes place on 29 July, a day when shareholder entitlements to the proposed dividend are determined.

The resolution of a K2,500 dividend per share will reportedly be placed on the agenda of the 3rd Annual General Meeting of Shareholders which is scheduled for this coming 9 September.

Myanmar gold appreciates slightly following rise in value of world market gold.

A SLIGHT increase in the value of gold on the world market on Wednesday has, according to those involved in the gold industry, caused the price of a

tical (0.576 ounces) of Myanmar gold to following suit, appreciating to K820,000.

An ounces of world market gold rose in value from US\$1,312 on 29 June to US\$1,320 the following day, an appreciation in price that had a ripple effect over Myanmar gold, which increased from K818,000 a tical to K820,000.

"Not such a great change in the value of gold on the world market has seen the price of Myanmar gold hover around its current market price. It still can't be said whether prices will fall. Business, however, is continuing as normal," said U Zaw Aung, owner of Yangon's Taite gold and jewelry store.

This month of June has seen the price of world market gold peak at US\$1,359 per ounce and a tical of Myanmar gold fetch as much as K825,000. But, the value of the US dollar within Myanmar has been stable.

"The price of the [US] dollar within the country is steady. An absence of an appreciation in value [of the US dollar within Myanmar], at times when the price of gold on the world market increases, has resulted in the value of Myanmar gold increasing more than it should. We'll have to watch closely to see how the value of world market gold will transpire," said U Maw Maw, general manager of Aungthamardi gold shop.

This year has seen the value of a tical of Myanmar gold drop to as little as K732,000 in January and appreciate to as much as K825,000 in June; a fluctuation in value of nearly K100,000.

In regard to the position of the markets on 30 June, a tical of Myanmar gold valued at K820,000; a tical of 15 carat gold fetched K770,000; an ounce of gold on the world market priced US\$1,320 while the MMK – USD exchange rate valued approximately K1,180 to US\$1.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Bangladesh militants kill 20 before commandos end siege

DHAKA — Islamist militants killed 20 people, most of them foreigners, inside an upmarket restaurant in Bangladesh's capital, before security forces stormed the building and ended a 12-hour standoff on Saturday.

Islamic State said it was responsible for one of the most brazen attacks in the South Asian nation's history, but that claim has yet to be confirmed.

It marks a major escalation in a campaign by militants over the past 18 months that had targeted mostly individuals advocating a secular or liberal lifestyle in majority-Muslim Bangladesh.

The gunmen, who stormed the busy restaurant in Dhaka's diplomatic area late on Friday night, ordered all Bangladeshis to stand up before they began killing foreigners, a source briefed on the police investigation said.

Among the dead was the wife of an Italian businessman killed by a machete. She was found by her husband after he spent all night hiding behind a



People try to help an injured person, after gunmen stormed the Holey Artisan restaurant and took hostages, in the Gulshan area of Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 1 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

tree outside the cafe while the gunmen were inside, Agnese Barolo, a friend who lives in Dhaka and spoke to him, told Reuters.

Seven Italians were in the cafe when the attack

started, including several working in the garment industry, Italian media have reported, while seven Japanese citizens were unaccounted for.

The killing of foreign-

ers will likely shatter the confidence of the expatriate community in Bangladesh, many of whom work for multinationals in the country's \$26 billion garment sector that accounts

for around 15 per cent of the economy. Bangladesh is the world's second largest apparel exporter after China.

Thirteen hostages were rescued, including one Jap-

anese and two Sri Lankans, the army said.

Army spokesman Colonel Rashidul Hasan said he could not yet confirm the nationalities of those who had died. Most of them had been killed by "sharp weapons".

Hasan said initially that it seemed all the victims were foreigners but now the army believed some locals were among the dead as well.

Six gunmen were killed during the police operation and one was captured, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in a TV broadcast after the army concluded its operation to clear the cafe.

Two police were killed in the initial assault. Islamic State, which has claimed a series of machete attacks on minority groups in Bangladesh over the past year, posted photos of bodies and blood smeared across floors that it said were dead foreigners killed in the assault.

Police did not immediately confirm whether the pictures were from the site of the massacre.—Reuters

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Viet Nam urges 'fair' ruling from court handling South China Sea case

HANOI — Viet Nam has called for an international tribunal in The Hague to deliver a "fair and objective" ruling in an arbitration case lodged by the Philippines that challenges China's expansive claims in the South China Sea.

In a carefully worded statement two days after the court announced 12 July as the verdict date, Viet Nam's foreign ministry said it hoped the ruling would provide a basis for peacefully resolving rows.

Viet Nam is not a direct party to the case but stands to gain if the verdict favours Manila.

Like the Philippines, it is also at odds with China, although it is wary not to push too far against a major trade partner.

"Viet Nam has always been observing the development of the case and wants the arbitration court to deliver a fair and objective decision, creating a basis to peacefully resolve disputes in the (South China Sea)," Viet Nam's

foreign ministry spokesman, Le Hai Binh, said in a statement late on Friday.

Though the wording was similar to those used by numerous countries, Viet Nam's statement stopped short of calling for the ruling to be respected.

China has gone to great efforts to show the Permanent Court of Arbitration has no jurisdiction on the case, and Beijing will therefore not recognise it. China's official Xinhua news agency

called it a "law-abusing tribunal".

The case seeks an interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to which Beijing is a signatory.

The South China Sea is one of the world's most vital shipping lanes, with about \$5 trillion of goods passing annually through waters contested in parts by six countries, several of which are undergoing military buildups.—Reuters

Palm oil firms ditch 'no deforestation' pact in Indonesia

SINGAPORE — Major palm oil producers and traders, including Wilmar and Cargill ditched a "no deforestation" private agreement in Indonesia, saying the government's recent efforts to strengthen its certification standards were sufficient.

Indonesia, the world's biggest producer and exporter of palm oil, moved in April to prohibit the use of new land to boost pro-

duction. The country, home to the world's third-largest tropical forests, has been criticised by green activists and other Southeast Asian nations on forestry policy and for failing to stop the region's annual smoke "haze" problem from forest-burning. The government's anti-monopoly agency said in April it would investigate suspected cartel practices among the signatories to the Indonesian Palm Oil

Pledge, a landmark 2014 pledge by several private companies to cut deforestation.

Indonesia saw the pact as in direct competition with the government's own standards and too difficult for smallholders to comply with. Smallholders account for about 40 per cent of its palm output.

"IPOP signatories have decided that recent groundbreaking policy de-

velopments in Indonesia have fulfilled the purpose of IPOP to help accelerate and promote this transformation toward sustainability and therefore its presence can be dissolved," the companies said in a statement.

Other signatories include Golden Agri-Resources, Indonesia's Asian Agri, Kadin and Astra Agro Lestari, and Singapore-based Musim Mas.—Reuters

Australia votes in dead-heat polls as PM seeks reform mandate

SYDNEY/ADELAIDE —

Australia voted on Saturday to elect a government for the next three years amid concerns an anticipated close vote will deny current Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull the outright majority he needs to enact major economic reforms.

The leader of Australia's conservative Liberal Party-led Coalition dissolved both houses of parliament in May in a bid to oust intransigent independents in the upper house Senate who had blocked his agenda.

But Turnbull's gamble is at risk of backfiring as the coalition faces a strong challenge not only from the main opposition Labour Party but from independents who could win enough seats to hold the balance of power in the Senate or force a minority government in the lower house.

The latest Newspoll in News Corp Australia publications placed the coalition just ahead at 50.5 per cent to Labour's 49.5 per cent in two-party preferred terms.

"There has never been a more exciting time to vote for a stable, majority coalition government and an economic plan that secures our future," Turnbull, who has invoked Brexit fears in his campaigning, told reporters



Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull casts his vote for the general election with his wife Lucy at the Double Bay Public School in Sydney, Australia, on 2 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

after voting in his Sydney electorate.

Turnbull has argued that minor parties, possibly in a coalition with centre-left Labour, could not be trusted to manage an economy hampered by the first

mining downturn in a century and balance public finances after years of deficits.

Voting is compulsory in Australia and polling day is treated as something of a celebration with booths across the country

accompanied by charity cake stalls and barbecues — the official polling map lets voters know which stations also have "sausage sizzles".

At Sydney's Bondi Beach, voters queued up with surfboards

underarm and dogs in tow. Opposition leader Bill Shorten delivered lamingtons, traditional chocolate and coconut covered cakes, as he warned against reelecting the coalition.

"The cuts are severe and they are real," he told reporters, referring to the coalition's health and education policies.

In the South Australian capital of Adelaide, one of the areas that could help swing the overall result, centrist independent Nick Xenophon zipped around on the bright orange motorcycle that has been his semi-official touring bus.

Asked if he would allow the government to immediately pass its cornerstone A\$50 billion (£27 billion) corporate tax cuts if his party held the balance of power in the senate, Xenophon said: "No.

"They need to sort out the future of manufacturing in this country and the many tens of thousands of jobs that are affected by it," he said.

Far-right parties, including Pauline Hanson's One Nation, have campaigned on anti-immigration, anti-Muslim agendas. Hanson is a strong contender to win a position in the Senate. —Reuters

As Japan re-embraces nuclear power, safety warnings persist



An aerial view shows the No.1 (L) and No.2 reactor buildings at Kyushu Electric Power's Sendai nuclear power station in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima prefecture, Japan, on 11 August 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — Japan's re-embrace of nuclear power, on display last week with the recertification of two aging reactors, is prompting some critics to warn that Tokyo is neglecting the lessons of Fukushima.

In the first such step since the 2011 disaster, Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) on 20 June approved Kansai Electric Power Co's application to extend the life of two reactors beyond 40 years.

As it became clear the NRA was going to allow the extensions, a former commissioner broke a silence maintained since he left the agency in 2014 and said "a sense of crisis" over safety prompted him to go public and urge more attention to earthquake risk.

Kunihiko Shimazaki, who

was a commissioner from 2012 to 2014, said a powerful quake in April that killed 69 on Kyushu island showed the risk to some of Japan's 42 operable nuclear reactors was being underestimated.

"I cannot stand by without doing anything. We may have another tragedy and, if that happens, it could not be something that was 'beyond expectations'," he said, referring to a common description of the catastrophic chain of events after the earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima meltdowns.

The NRA has said it would take into account Shimazaki's position in some of its assessments.

Separately when asked about the operating extensions of the reactors, a spokesman for the regulator referred Reuters to remarks

by agency chairman, Shunichi Tanaka, on the day of the extensions, when he said: "It does not guarantee absolute safety but it means the reactors have cleared the safety standards."

According to the World Nuclear Association, an industry body, early reactors were designed for a life of about 30 years, while newer plants can operate up to 60 years.

A 2012 Japanese law also limits the life of all reactors to 40 years, allowing for license extensions only in exceptional circumstances.

The meltdowns five years ago at Tokyo Electric Power Co's Fukushima Daiichi plant after an earthquake and tsunami — the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986 — were blamed in an official report on lax oversight and collusion between operators and regulators.

Kyushu Electric Power is the only utility that has been cleared to restart two reactors at its Sendai plant, while other utilities have been blocked so far by legal action from nearby residents. One more reactor may restart later this month.

After Fukushima, Japan revamped its regulator and tasked it with implementing new standards that the NRA chairman has repeatedly said are among the world's toughest.

But an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) review this year made 26 suggestions

and recommendations to address shortcomings — such as a lack of communication between departments and agencies, and failures on basic radiation standards — and cited only two examples of good practice.

Tokyo is revising the law to ensure there can be unscheduled inspections of nuclear sites, a standard practice in many countries, according to a NRA document, and the regulator is taking steps to improve its internal processes.

A US Nuclear Regulatory Commission official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Japanese regulator was still young and it would take time to build up a strong safety culture.

But opinion polls show that more than 50 per cent of Japan's population remain opposed to nuclear power following Fukushima, even if using other fuels boosts electricity prices.

The NRA faces accusations that it is caving into pressure to quickly restart an industry that used to supply a third of Japan's electricity.

"The regulator is the guarantor for the population, not the manufacturers or the utilities, and it is failing," said Mycle Schneider, an independent analyst and one of the authors of an annual report on the world nuclear industry. "The first level where the NRA is failing is every single day in their oversight of Fukushima," he said. —Reuters

Thai navy to go ahead with plan to buy Chinese-made submarines

BANGKOK — Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwon said Friday the Thai navy will move forward with its plan to buy three submarines from China set to cost a total of 36 billion baht (about \$1.1 billion).

Asked about the necessity of the three Yuan class S26T submarines, Prawit said the country has abundant maritime resources that need to be protected, adding that all of Thailand's neighbours already have their own submarines.

"Myanmar has 10 brand-new submarines, not secondhand ones," he said.

Prawit noted that the navy's submarine procurement has already been on hold for about eight years.

According to a navy source, the navy will use its budget previously approved by the National Legislative Assembly to buy the submarines, meaning Cabinet approval will not be required.

The navy's plan to buy the submarines was announced last year and subsequently suspended due to widespread criticism of the cost.

Thailand has drawn closer to China since a coup in 2014 that displaced its democratically elected government. —Kyodo News

Opinion

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Peace is a shared destiny

Kyaw Thura

HOW a government treats the ordinary class and the privileged one is a common yardstick by which the government's capacity is measured. Politically speaking, the government is mainly responsible for steering the country into stability and prosperity.

Now that the government is determined to hold the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in August, it is important to reinforce core messages through regular encouragement in a practical

and inspirational way. The time has come for the government to emphasise the critical need for constant commitment to the restoration of peace.

This commitment will require all the negotiation teams to compromise to be able to avoid the possible risk of relapsing into conflict.

There is a tendency for people at the top to make the mistake of believing that their subordinates see things as clearly as they do. It should be noted that it only takes a

stupid group at the negotiation table to create mayhem at the peace conference. In fact, building peace is an undertaking on the far side of conflict to reconstruct the foundations of peace.

On one hand, national reconciliation through trust is central to the restoration of peace, but on the other hand, as State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi put it, suspicion and mistrust create anxiety, whereas trust can clear the cloud of suspicion and mistrust.

Most important of all, all the stakeholders to be engaged in the peace conference need to ready themselves to accept the responsibility and accountability in restoring peace and stability across the country. Another important thing is that they need to speak with one voice to convince their fellows to embrace the fruits of peace. The expectation is that the peace conference will no doubt turn out to be an event that will shape the destiny of our nation.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Dr. Khine Khine Win

BEING a Myanmar woman, I am pleased to welcome the Myanmar Women's Day. Globally, international women's day is annually held on March 8. In Myanmar July 3 is Myanmar women's day. As a fulfillment of the commitment made in Beijing in 1995, the Myanmar government established the National machinery, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) on 3rd July 1996 for systematic implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for the advancement of women and systematically implement activities for the advancement of women in Myanmar. In commemoration of the establishment of MNCWA, the founding day of the committee was designated Myanmar Women's day in 1998.

With regard to Myanmar Women's Day, let me introduce the first bill of rights for women, what we call today is Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is one of the international human rights instruments. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaims the entitlement of

everyone to equality before the law and to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind and proceeds to include sex among the grounds of such impermissible distinction. However, the fact of women's humanity proved insufficient to guarantee them the enjoyment of their internationally agreed rights.

With an aim to transform the structural barriers to equality and to address multifaceted nature of problems women face, CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by votes of 130 to none, with 10 abstentions by Union General Assembly resolution 34/180 according to UN Women. It is the first document to comprehensively address women's rights to non-discrimination within political, civil, cultural, economic, social and family spheres. This is also a tool for achieving equality for women. The core principles of CEDAW are equality and non-discrimination. According to United Nations Treaty Collection, 189 countries are state parties as of today. Myanmar became the State Party on 22 July 1997. There are six parts and thirty articles in CEDAW. Article (1) clearly states the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction, made on the basis

of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human and fundamental freedoms, in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

With this in mind, CEDAW permits ratification subject to reservations, provided that the reservations are not incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. When a government ratifies CEDAW, it commits to put in place legislation and policy to ensure women's equality. Today in Myanmar, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is the focal ministry on gender related issues. Under article 18 of the convention, every state party has to submit the country report to the committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women every four years. In this regard, the first CEDAW report from Myanmar was submitted in 1999, combined second and third report in 2007 and combined fourth and fifth report was submitted in 2015. CEDAW committee consists of twenty-three experts on women rights from around the world and the responsibility is to monitor the implementation of the CE-

DAW. These reports contain detailed information about legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures that have been undertaken to implement CEDAW, as well as about obstacles encountered. During its sessions the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

There is Optional Protocol in CEDAW, which was adopted on October 1999 by General Assembly acting without vote and came into force in 2000. It provides women two mechanisms to hold governments accountable under CEDAW: (1) a communications procedure, which provides individuals and groups the right to lodge complaints with the CEDAW Committee; and (2) an inquiry procedure, which enables the CEDAW Committee to conduct inquiries into serious and systematic abuses of women's rights. These mechanisms are only applicable in states that are party to the Optional Protocol. Myanmar has not ratified this optional protocol yet. As of today only 107 countries are state parties of optional protocol to the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Gender equality is at the

very heart of human rights and United Nations value and discrimination based on sex is prohibited under almost every human rights treaty. Women comprise more than half of the today world's population and are primary caretakers for most of the children and elderly. Actually, the women rights movements had a long and good history. Women are still fighting for their rights and far more progress is needed to foster real gender equality and empowerment. They must enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure without discrimination. They should exercise their rights and gain the knowledge, skills, and information they need. They can become powerful agents of change. There is no doubt that women will never gain fully dignity until their human rights are respected and protected. This is a time to accelerate the commitment into action to the enjoyment of full rights for the women.

It is sure that men and women have different roles but their rights are equal. Being a women, I wish "may all women in Myanmar have equal rights without discrimination", Happy Myanmar Women's Day.

Capital city commemorates 94th Int'l Cooperative Day



A sales booth seen at the Co-operative day. PHOTO: THANT ZIN WIN

THE 94th International Cooperative Day was commemorated in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, drawing sales booths from states and regions.

The event was opened by Agriculture, Livestock and Irriga-

tion Deputy Minister Dr Tun Win, Cooperative Department Director-General U Aung Phyu and Central Cooperative Society Chairman U Khin Maung Aye.

On display for sale at the

booths were nursery plants, agricultural machinery, jade, lacquer ware, furniture, kitchen utensils, foodstuffs and clothing.

The event will continue until Monday.—*Thant Zin Win*

Over 16,000 tree saplings supplied to Shan villagers

THE Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development (MIID) will donate 16,000 tree saplings, including bamboo to six hillside villages near Shan State's Nyaungshwe Township. The four hundred households that make up the six villages will be given 41 tree saplings to plant on slopes near their homes.

Lime, mango, cassia siamea, djenkol bean and eucalyptus will reportedly also be planted, in addition to bamboo and avocado, all of which are being financially assisted by FREDA and Nepal-based ICIMOD.

"The main saplings to be

distributed out are bamboo and avocado trees," said U Soe Naing Htay, a MIID staff member from Nyaungshwe.

Adding, "Each household will receive 10 bamboo and 10 avocado tree saplings, with the remaining varieties of saplings to be shared out equally. The primary objective of the initiative is to guard against deforestation and prevent hill-side erosion by reinforcing the slopes with trees." Also saying that he planting will be a volunteering project.

"We arrived in Shan State back in January, close-by to Inle Lake and visited villages in Kal-

aw and Nyaungshwe townships near Heho," explained David Abrahamson, project official for MIID. "We began our initiative to plant trees in April 2014, starting to plant the following year. This time marks the commencing of our 2016 initiative."

It is reported that approximately 13,000 of the aforementioned saplings were planted within the grounds of schools of the six villages from 3-17 June. The villages solely rely on rainwater for drinking and cultivating their cabbage, cauliflower, butter bean, banana and bamboo crops.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Bago's unlicensed petrol stations given final warning

UNLICENSED petrol stations in Bago Region have been told by the regional government to shut down or to face charges according to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Conservation for Bago Region. 21 representatives of the stations held talks with the Minister on 14 June.

After the Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise (MPPE) for Bago Region inspected the sites over February-March earlier this year, it was found that the enterprises were against regulations.

"Talks have been held with representatives of unlicensed petrol stations from Bago Region. They were informed of the codes-of-conduct they must abide by. They also participated in discussion themselves.

They were then instructed they would be shut down if found to be not conducting themselves legally," said U Kyaw Min San, Bago Region Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Those who wish to open a petrol station legally, however, must reportedly negotiate their way to obtaining a multitude of supporting letters, such as from those in the close vicinity to the shop's location; township and district level general administration departments concerned; municipal, construction, and fire departments; the electricity department - confirming the premises is situated far from the main power line; and proof from the land registry of entitlement to utilise land for the shop.

"Our department has been doing the rounds, inspecting whether petrol stations have licenses from the Ministries of Mines and Power for the storage and sale of oil respectively.

Upon completion, our findings will be presented to regional government," said Daw Khin Soe San, assistant divisional marketing officer of the Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise for Bago Region.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and wife Daw Lwin Lwin Hman are welcomed by Ambassador of Canada to Myanmar H.E. Mr Mark MC Dowell on their arrival at the reception to mark the Canada National Day in Yangon on 1st July, 2016. PHOTO: MNA

Heart-to-heart

Tin Maung Than

THANKS to the cell phones young sweethearts as well as married couples of all ages can contact each other for having heart-to-heart chats at any time from almost any place however far they are from one another. In the past when there were no cell phones if your beloved one was not near you, you found it very difficult to contact with him or her. Sometimes and in some places, contacts could be made only through mail as landline telephones were not widely available. Besides phone charges were rather high and trunk calls were mostly difficult or unclear.

Because of their occupation

or business, sometimes married couples live separately. In some cases, the husband or the wife is away from home travelling on business or working in a faraway place. Sometimes both are away from home working in different places miles and miles apart. In such situation couples especially married pairs could not talk to each other or even know about one another for long months. It was an annoying and frustrating situation for both the husband and wife as they might have urgent cases, important matters, personal problems, family affairs, financial issues or business concerns to discuss in time.

But now, cell phones have made everything possible. These gadgets have almost solved all the abovementioned problems.

More than that, couples nowadays can check or spy each other through surprise calls at unexpected times or through frequent calls. They can know what the other is doing by contacting friends or neighbours. They can consult an important matter and make final decisions through the mobile phones. What's more they can argue or debate or even quarrel over and over again on air. Arguing is one of the common practices of nearly all the married couples, as they always agree to disagree. Without arguments or quarrels married life is not complete. Married couples, especially the ones with longer married lives, trend to make arguments, debates or disputes even on minor issues. Although couples had chosen each other

as the correct soulmates guaranteed by their many many bilateral promises of mutual concessions and indulgences, they actually have diverse views, opposite perspectives, different likes all hidden under the powerful force called "love" during their days as sweethearts, and till the early married life. As time goes by, this powerful force gradually melts away, becoming weaker and weaker and can no longer conceal these differences. So, the honeymoon is over as their true nature appears. The husband would go his own way in dealing a problem while the wife chooses another way, insisting that hers is better. Although their goal is the same, their approaching methods are different leading towards arguments on who can better handle this matter. Some of the couples, especially husbands, avoid having long conversations with their spouses because the longer a conversation is the higher the possibilities are for an argument

or a disagreement. In the past couples living apart for economic or occupational reasons normally had fewer chances for an argument or a dispute. But now it has become a thing of the past thanks to the cell phones that have become our everyday life. Wives who are keen on disagreeing with their husbands usually love making long or frequent phone calls with their Yeobos (sweeties).

With the help of mobile phones, a housewife can also detect her husband whether he is with another woman, or at a bar, or playing cards or gambling, or having a good time with his friends. As a result the progress in the utility of these tiny devices has extensively widened the wife's reconnaissance power and network while drastically shrinking the husband's screen. So, guys don't forget to have a nice heart-to-heart chat with your wife, or else she would become suspicious of your moves!

Putin hints Russia will react if Finland joins NATO

NAANTALI, (Finland) — President Vladimir Putin suggested on Friday Russia could move its troops closer to the Finnish-Russian border if Finland joins NATO and called for measures to improve conflict prevention over the Baltic.

Finnish armed forces “would become part of NATO’s military infrastructure, which overnight would be at the borders of the Russian Federation”, Putin said after meeting Finnish President Sauli Niinisto.

“Do you think we will keep it as it is: our troops at 1,500 (kilometres, 900 miles) away?”

Putin’s first visit to Finland since the Ukraine crisis erupted in 2014 comes amid increased

Russian and NATO activity in the Baltic region, and with the militarily neutral Finland and neighbouring Sweden increasing their co-operation with NATO. It also comes a week before a NATO summit in Warsaw.

“NATO perhaps would gladly fight with Russia until the last Finnish soldier,” Putin said.

“Do you guys need it? We don’t. We don’t want it. But it is your call.”

Airspace over the Baltic has been the arena for a rash of close encounters between Russian and Western aircraft in recent months, and the former Soviet Baltic states have called on NATO to step up air defences in the region.

Putin and Niinisto called for

measures to improve security, with the Finnish president urging that no military planes should fly over the Baltic with identification devices switched off.

“We all know the risk with these flights and I have suggested that we should agree that transponders are used on all flights in the Baltic Sea region,” Niinisto said.

Putin said Russian planes flew at times with identifying transponders off, but NATO planes did it much more often. He said Russia would talk to NATO about increasing mutual trust and improving conflict prevention at the Russia-NATO council meeting that will take place after the NATO summit.—Reuters



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Finland’s President Sauli Niinisto attend a joint news conference at Kultaranta summer residence in Naantali, Finland on 1 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

US attorney general to accept FBI findings in Clinton email probe

WASHINGTON — US Attorney General Loretta Lynch, seeking to tamp down a firestorm over meeting with former President Bill Clinton, said on Friday she will accept the recommendations of career prosecutors and the FBI director on whether to charge Hillary Clinton for mishandling emails.

The United States’ top law enforcement officer, however, stopped short of saying she would recuse herself from the investigation of the Democratic presidential candidate.

“I will be informed of those findings, as opposed to never reading them or never seeing them, but I will be accepting their recommendations and their plan for going forward,” Lynch said.

She was responding to questions from a *Washington Post* journalist who was introducing a talk by Lynch at the Aspen Ideas Festival, a gathering of government, technology and other business leaders in Aspen, Colorado.

Republicans, including pre-

sumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, have said a political appointee like Lynch should not be involved in the email investigation and that the Monday night meeting with Bill Clinton shows Lynch is too close to the Clintons.

With a regretful tone, Lynch said on Friday she would not privately meet with Bill Clinton again and that she understood how the meeting “casts a shadow” over the perception of the Justice Department’s probe into Hillary Clinton’s email use.

The attorney general said she has received many questions about her role in the investigation and “whether someone who was a political appointee would be involved in deciding how to investigate.”

Republican lawmakers have called for an independent investigation of Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server while secretary of state, saying the Obama administration’s Justice Department could not be free of bias.

In Washington, White House spokesman Josh Earnest told a daily news briefing that the investigation is being handled completely independently of the White House and President Barack Obama.

Lynch was appointed by the Democratic president and sworn in on 1 April, 2015, well after Hillary Clinton left Obama’s Cabinet in 2013. Career prosecutors are not appointed by a president and may serve through different administrations. The FBI director is appointed by the president but is not part of his Cabinet and is considered apolitical.

Lynch said on Friday that she had already decided to accept whatever recommendations prosecutors presented her before her meeting with Bill Clinton.

The private meeting with the former president took place on Lynch’s plane after she landed in Phoenix on Monday night. Bill Clinton was leaving the airport after a rally for his wife earlier that day.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Democrats’ draft platform calls for reviews of trade deals

WASHINGTON — The US Democratic Party’s 2016 policy platform calls for reviews of trade deals, wider health coverage through public programmes such as Medicare, and federal investigations of fossil fuel companies accused of misleading shareholders on climate change, according to a draft version released on Friday.

The committee drafting the platform last weekend approved the document, which spells out the party’s policy priorities. It still must be formally adopted at the Democratic National Convention, to be held in Philadelphia in July.—Reuters

Thailand urges nationals staying illegally in Japan to return home

BANGKOK — The Thai Embassy in Tokyo has stepped up efforts to urge Thai nationals staying illegally in Japan to return to their country, following a request by the Japanese Immigration Bureau, the Thai Foreign Ministry’s spokesman said on Friday.

Sek Wannamethee said that the embassy has taken measures such as posting messages to the effect on its website and Facebook page and that the ministry will tell Thai people travelling to Japan to follow Japan’s immigration and other laws.

As of 1 January this year, there were 5,959 Thai nationals staying illegally in Japan, according to the ministry.

The number of Thai tourists to Japan has been increasing since their visas were waived starting July 2013.

Japanese authorities recently asked the diplomatic missions of Thailand and several other Asian countries and territory to promote the voluntary repatriation of their nationals who are staying illegally in Japan.—Kyodo News

Death toll from SW China landslide rises to 20

GUIYANG — The death toll has climbed to 20 in a landslide that hit a village in southwest China’s Guizhou Province with the recovery of the bodies of nine more victims.

As of 8 am Saturday, three people remained missing after intense rain triggered the landslide at around 5:30 am on Friday in Pianpo Village, Dafang County, according to the local rescue headquarters.

Thirty people were buried by the debris. Seven of them were rescued alive but sustained injuries.

More than 800 soldiers and rescuers are working with excavators to search for the missing villagers.

The landslide involved more than 95,000 cubic metres of debris and covered an area of 19,000 square metres.—Xinhua

Israeli war jets strike Gaza in response to rocket firing

GAZA — Israeli war jets hit several targets in the Gaza Strip Saturday predawn in response to earlier rocket firing from Hamas, eyewitnesses said.

Several explosions were heard in northern, central and southern Gaza after Israeli warplanes fired air-to-ground missiles on targets belonging to military groups, the witnesses and security officials said.

No injuries were reported, paramedics said, adding rescue teams and fire-fighters have arrived at the targeted places, including Hamas military training posts and other armed groups. According to residents in southern Gaza City, Israeli warplanes attacked a goldsmith workshop, from where arose columns of smoke. The security officials said that most of the security, police and military posts, training camps and other facilities were evacuated shortly before the air-strikes.—Xinhua

Serbian man kills five, injures 22, in cafe shooting

BELGRADE — Five people were killed and another 22 were wounded early on Saturday when a man entered a cafe in northern Serbia and opened fire with an assault rifle, police said.

Police arrested the suspect, a man in his late 30s identified only as Z.S., immediately after the shooting during a local festival in the village of Zitiste, around 80 kilometers north of Belgrade.

Nebojsa Stefanovic, the interior minister, told Belgrade’s B92 TV that Z.S. killed his estranged wife and another woman, before firing at others in the cafe with an assault rifle he illegally owned.

“Jealousy could be a motive,” he said. “He was a quiet man; he had no criminal record.”

Gordana Kozlovacki, the director of the hospital in the nearby town of Zrenjanin, said 22 people were treated after the shooting. Seven remained in a serious condition.—Reuters

Three killed as Libya forces close on central Sirte against Islamic State

MISRATA, (Libya) — Libyan forces fighting to free the city of Sirte from Islamic State forces have surrounded a conference hall in the area still held by militants after air strikes and clashes that killed at least three pro-government fighters, senior officials said.

Forces allied with Libya's unity government began a campaign two months ago to free Sirte from Islamic State, after militants took advantage of fighting between rival factions to gain territory and control the coastal city last year.

Three fighters were killed and more than 30 injured during fighting on Friday after Islamic State militants were driven out

of the residential 700 district in fierce clashes involving rockets, mortars and gun battles, a senior commander and hospital officials said.

Commanders of the forces, who are mainly from the nearby port city of Misrata, say remaining Islamic State fighters are in an area around Sirte's Ouagadougou conference complex and a nearby hospital. But snipers and landmines have slowed progress.

"Residential area 700 has been liberated and as of 6pm the Ouagadougou centre and the hospital are surrounded," Mohamed Gnaidy, intelligence chief for Misrata forces told Reuters. "Our forces carried out air strikes on Ouagadougou."

He said Misrata forces had also hit a house where several Islamic State commanders were hiding, but it was unclear how many casualties they suffered or how long it would take to clear out remaining militants in Sirte.

Misrata forces back the UN-supported unity government in Tripoli that is meant to replace two rival administrations and overcome the divisions among Libya's various armed factions that slowly emerged after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The battle in Sirte has been slowed by snipers and explosives as Misrata forces say they lacked the equipment and tactics to flush out militant gunmen among the villas and streets of central Sirte.



A tank from forces aligned with Libya's new unity government is seen on a road in Sirte, on 30 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Any eventual fall of Sirte would be a huge blow to Islamic State in Libya, especially as the militant group is also facing setbacks in Iraq, where it has lost the city of Falluja and other territory to Iraqi forces.

Islamic State commanders in

Iraq had sent emissaries to Libya, but the militants struggled to emulate its Iraqi and Syrian successes in the North African country, where they faced resistance from pro-government groups and also rival Islamist fighters.

—Reuters



A US Air Force MQ-9 Reaper drone sits on the tarmac at Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan after returning from a mission, on 9 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

US says kills up to 116 civilians in strikes outside war zones

WASHINGTON — The US government accepted responsibility on Friday for inadvertently killing up to 116 civilians in strikes in countries where America is not at war, a major disclosure likely to inflame debate about targeted killings and use of drones. President Barack Obama's goal for the release of the numbers, which are higher than any previously officially acknowledged but vastly below private estimates, is to create greater transparency about what the US military and CIA are doing to fight militants plotting against the United States.

But the figures, which covered strikes from the day Obama took office in January 2009 through 13 December, 2015, were below even the most conservative estimates by non-governmental organisations that spent years tallying US strikes in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

"The numbers reported by the White House today simply don't add up and we're disappointed by that," said Federico Borello, executive director for the Centre for Civilians in Conflict.

Drone advocates, including those within the US military, argue the strikes are an essential part of reducing the ability of militant groups to plot attacks against the United States. They say the government goes to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties.

Critics of the targeted killing programme question whether the strikes create more militants than they kill. They cite the spread of jihadist organisations and militant attacks throughout the world as evidence that targeted killings may be exacerbating the problem.

"We're still faced with the basic question: Is the number of bad guys who are taken out of commission by drone strikes greater or

less than the number of people who are inspired to turn to violent acts," said Paul Pillar, a former senior CIA specialist on the Middle East and now a professor of security studies at Georgetown University.

Pakistani lawyer Mirza Shahzad Akbar, who says he represents a hundred families of civilians killed by drones, questioned the validity of the data even before their release by the Director of National Intelligence.

He said Washington needed to better explain its criteria for declaring someone a civilian, something that can be difficult to do from a camera on a drone.

"President Obama is worried about his legacy as a president who ordered extra-judicial killings of thousands which resulted in a high number of civilian deaths," Akbar told Reuters. "As a constitutional lawyer himself, he knows what's wrong with that."—Reuters

Syria rebels retake key town in western coastal province

BEIRUT — Insurgents seized a strategic town from Syrian government forces and their allies in the western coastal province of Latakia on Friday, a monitoring group and the rebels said, in a rare advance for them in the area.

The Syrian government forces had captured Kansaba in February, part of a wider advance in Latakia's northern countryside at the time, backed by Russian air power.

Fighting picked up again in the area after a ceasefire deal later that month brought a temporary lull. The truce has mostly unravelled throughout areas where it took effect in the west of the country.

The al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front was among the groups that retook Kansaba, which had previously been an important base for the insurgents. The town overlooks much of the mountainous Jabal Akrad area close to the Turkish border, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The British-based monitoring group said it was part of a wider offensive launched earlier in the week. Nusra Front said in an online statement that an alliance

of Islamist rebel groups including itself had captured Kansaba and a number of other villages, seizing several tanks and artillery guns. It was a rare gain for rebels in Latakia since Russia intervened in the five-year Syrian conflict on the side of President Bashar al-Assad last September.

Northern Latakia borders Idlib province, a stronghold for insurgent groups including Nusra Front. Further to the northeast, in Aleppo province, Nusra Front and other Islamist insurgents have recently launched heavy attacks against government forces and their allies, including Iranian troops and Lebanese Shi'ite Hezbollah fighters.

Latakia's coastal areas, including the provincial capital city of the same name, are the heartland of Assad's minority Alawite community and are also home to a Russian air base. Rebels have in the past sought to bring the fight closer to the coast. They were regularly shelling Latakia city before the Russian intervention.

Bombings claimed by Islamic State in two cities along Syria's Mediterranean coast in May killed scores of people.—Reuters



A woman inspects damage at a camp for internally displaced people after it was hit by what residents said was shelling carried out by government allied forces, near the Syrian-Turkish border in Jabal al-Turkman, Latakia Province on 31 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pacific Alliance must reject Brexit path, seek integration — leaders

PUERTO VARAS, (Chile) — The presidents of the four nations in Latin America's Pacific Alliance trade bloc met on Friday to forge an integrationist path that runs counter to Britain's recent exit from the European Union, emphasizing the need to make economic growth more inclusive.

The bloc, composed of Colombia, Mexico, Chile and Peru, accounts for 38 per cent of Latin America's gross domestic product. Some 92 per cent of trade between member nations is free of tariffs.

At the group's annual summit, leaders stressed that additional agreements, such as moves to integrate financial systems, were within reach, and were symbolically important in a time marked by increasing protectionism.

"When you look at Brexit, when you look at what is happening in the United States with support for Donald Trump, these are people of modest means that got left behind by globalisation and that live in rural areas," said Chile's president, Michelle Bachelet.

"My colleagues have all ex-



Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto, Peru's President Ollanta Humala, Chile's President Michelle Bachelet, Peru's President-elect Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos and officials attend an official meeting during the XI Summit of the Pacific Alliance in Frutillar, Chile, on 1 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

pounded on the importance of integration, but this needs to have social well-being, improved and shared prosperity as a key element," said Bachelet, who add-

ed that deepening economic ties within the trade bloc could add 1 to 2 percentage points of GDP growth in coming decades.

To that end the heads of

state committed their countries to establishing policies to support small and medium scale companies, which employ millions in the region, and to help worker

mobility across borders.

Speaking to the conference, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and Mexican leader Enrique Pena Nieto also said that further integration would serve as a counterpoint to the path represented by "Brexit."

Leaders agreed at the conference that the bloc's likely next steps concern financial integration, which they hope will spur infrastructure investment and open up options for the region's public investment funds.

Finance ministers from the bloc agreed to evaluate the taxation and financing barriers that impede regional investment. They also agreed to work to even out tax rules between member nations so that pension funds are subject to fewer regulatory burdens.

"If we consider ourselves only one country, one market, then what we need to do is make it easier for our pension funds and other instruments and entities be treated as if they were one market," Colombia's Santos said. "If I invest in Mexico or Chile, it's as if I invested in Colombia." —Reuters

Two suspects in Istanbul attack identified as Russian: Turkish media

ISTANBUL/TBILISI — Two Russian nationals have been identified as suspected Islamic State suicide bombers in the attack on Istanbul's main airport that is thought to have been masterminded by a Chechen, Turkish media said on Friday.

Forty-four people were killed in Tuesday's bombings and shootings, which targeted one of the world's busiest airports.

Prosecutors have identified two of the three suspected attackers as Russians Rakim Bulgarov and Vadim Osmanov, state-run Anadolu Agency said.

Turkish officials declined

to comment. One government official had previously said the attackers were Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationals.

The pro-government *Yeni Safak* newspaper has said the organiser of the attack, the deadliest in a series of suicide bombings in NATO-member Turkey this year, was suspected to be a Chechen double-amputee called Akhmed Chatayev.

Chatayev is identified on a United Nations sanctions list as a leader in Islamic State responsible for training Russian-speaking militants.

He was arrested in Bulgaria five years ago on a Russian

extradition request but freed because he had refugee status in Austria, a Bulgarian judge said. A year later he was wounded and captured in Georgia but again released.

Turkish police on Friday detained 11 foreigners in Istanbul on suspicion of belonging to an Islamic State cell linked to the attack, Anadolu reported, bringing the number of people detained in the investigation to 24. A police spokesman could not confirm the report.

In a separate operation, 17 Islamic State militants were detained in the southeastern city of Gaziantep on Friday, the

city's governor office said in a statement.

Turkish officials have not given many details beyond confirming the attackers' nationalities.

They have previously said that forensic teams were struggling to identify the suicide bombers from their limited remains.

Yeni Safak has said one of the bombers was from Dagestan, which borders Chechnya where Moscow has led two wars against separatists and Islamist militants since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. — Reuters

Venezuela's Maduro ends power rationing as drought eases

CARACAS — Venezuela as of Monday will end an electricity rationing programme launched in April in response to a severe drought that crimped the operations of the OPEC nation's hydroelectric generators, President Nicolas Maduro on Friday.

Maduro's government had rationed electricity in the provinces, cut the work week for public employees to two days per week, and cancelled school on Fridays to save power as the country's massive Guri dam dried up.

"As of Monday we can say that the power administration plan will stop and electrical service will function normally throughout the country," Maduro said in a televised broadcast.

"Today we can say that Guri has recovered and we have the conditions under which power service can function normally."

Heavily subsidized electricity has spurred one of the region's highest rates of power consumption and left the state-run utilities with limited revenue. Opposition critics say the government has failed to invest in generation and transmission facilities, leaving the system prone to blackouts and unable to maintain service during periods of limited rainfall. Maduro's government often blames power problems on sabotage by opposition leaders seeking to destabilise his government. —Reuters

Paris drives old cars off its streets

PARIS — Paris banned old, exhaust-belching cars from its streets on Friday in a war on air pollution that environmentalists hope will also drive dirty vehicles from the centres of other European cities.

Air pollution, in large part caused by fine particulate fuel emissions, kills 48,000 people each year in France, some 400,000 in Europe and around 3.7 million worldwide, data published by France's public health agency this month showed. Any car registered before 1 January, 1997, will be

barred from the city's streets from Monday to Friday, from 8am to 8pm.

Some owners protested by parking their vehicles near the National Assembly and Champs Elysees avenue to denounce a ban they say will hurt poor people most and slash the resale value of their vehicles.

"I drive 50 km per week, I don't have the means to change vans so I will continue using it, I'll get fined every week and there you go," said Marc Martin, who uses his aging Peugeot van to deliver picture frames to

clients.

"And if it goes too far, I'll close my business, people will lose their jobs, that's it. What can I say, not much. This law is pathetic."

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo says the ban could be extended in 2020 to all combustion-engine cars more than nine years old. After an initial tolerance period, motorists who flout the ban face fines of 35 euros (\$39), an amount that is set to jump from the end of the year.

Upwards of half-a-million owners in and around Paris

will be hit by the ban, according to a driver defence group, 40 million d'Automobilistes, which is taking legal action to seek financial compensation for drops in the value of now-banned vehicles.

Norway is planning to ban petrol- and diesel-fueled cars from 2025 and several cities in Europe are testing various anti-pollution or anti-congestion measures based on tolls for city centre access or temporary and selective car bans during surges in pollution levels. — Reuters

Israel to cut Palestinian tax transfers over 'terrorist payouts'

JERUSALEM — Israel will reduce monthly transfers of tax collected on behalf of the Palestinians in what aides to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described as a response to the killing of two Israelis in Palestinian attacks in the occupied West Bank this week.

The amount deducted from about \$130 million sent to the Palestinian Authority (PA) each month will be equal to stipends it pays militants in Israeli prisons and the families of jailed or slain militants, Netanyahu's office said on Friday.

The move, which follows the killings of an Israeli man and girl in the West Bank this week, will be a blow to the already weak finances of the Western-backed Palestinian Authority (PA).

"Incitement and payouts to terrorists and their relatives constitute an incentive to murder," Netanyahu's office said in a statement announcing the funding cuts, effective immediately.

Under interim peace deals from the 1990s, Is-



Israeli security forces gather at the scene following a shooting on an Israeli car near the West Bank city of Hebron on 1 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

rael collects tax revenues on behalf of the PA, which exercises limited self-rule. The monthly duties currently amount to between \$130 million and \$155 million,

Israeli and Palestinian officials say.

The cash is crucial for running the PA and paying public-sector salaries. Israel withheld tax money in 2012

and 2015 in response to Palestinian moves for statehood recognition abroad.

Palestinians condemn such measures as collective punishment. "The decision

to freeze a part of the tax revenues is a theft and piracy of money that belongs to the Palestinian people," Wasel Abu Youssef, a senior official with the umbrella

la Palestine Liberation Organisation, told Reuters.

Friday's statement by Israel did not specify how much money it would now cut. That may depend on whom it deems militants.

According to retired Israeli intelligence official Yosef Kuperwasser, in 2015 the PA paid out around \$13.4 million a month to the next-of-kin of "martyrs" — a term it applies to all Palestinians killed by Israeli forces, whether they were carrying out militant attacks or were non-combatants.

PA officials did not immediately confirm that account.

One PA official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the PA also now pays some \$10.9 million each month to Palestinians jailed on charges ranging from murder and espionage to stone-throwing, fund-raising for banned groups and inciting against Israel on social media. Were Israel to deduct both sums fully from the monthly tax handovers, that would potentially constitute a cut of between 16 per cent and 18 per cent.—Reuters

Witnessing migrants being rescued at sea

ABOARD THE TOPAZ RESPONDER — The first reports came in at dawn. A growing number of flimsy rubber dinghies, packed with migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, in difficulty in the Mediterranean Sea.

By the time the ship Topaz Responder arrived on the scene, some 20 nautical miles (37 kms) off the Libyan coast, on 23 June, its crew counted 21 inflatable boats.

By the end of the day, the vessel and other ships had plucked about 5,000 people from more than 40 boats, according to the Italian coastguard. One person died before they arrived.

"I was on the boat for five hours at sea ... I didn't feel good because it wasn't safe," said Afigu Barrie, 20, a student from Sierra Leone rescued by the crew of the Topaz Responder.

"Now I'm comfortable. I appreciate this so much. I thank God."

Europe's worst immigration crisis since World War II is showing little sign of a slowdown in the flow of people heading across the sea from North Africa to Italy.

According to the In-

ternational Organisation for Migration, 225,095 migrants and refugees have arrived in Europe by sea so far this year. There have been 2,889 deaths in the Mediterranean compared with 1,838 in the first six months of 2015.

Last week, thousands of people were pulled from international waters in just several days, according to the Italian coastguard, as people smugglers increased operations in good weather. Many set off from Libya.

Reuters photographer Darrin Zammit Lupi on board the Topaz Responder, operated by the privately funded Malta-based Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), witnessed one major rescue operation, also involving other humanitarian and navy ships and the Italian coastguard.

MOAS was founded in 2014 by entrepreneurs Christopher Catrambone and his wife Regina in response to the tragic death of several hundred migrants who drowned when their boat sank off the southern Italian island of Lampedusa in October 2013.

It says it has since res-



Migrants are transferred from the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) ship Topaz Responder to an Italian Coast Guard vessel after being rescued around 20 nautical miles off the coast of Libya, on 23 June 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

cued more than 15,000 people. "The pressure is there, it hasn't abated in any way. You still have a very strong and steady flow of Africans coming on the central Mediterranean route," Ian Ruggier, MOAS head of operations, said.

"I think nothing has happened since last year to change that ... There is still a significant number of people wanting to leave Libyan shores."

The Topaz Responder had been at sea for six days conducting patrols before it was called to help late last week by the Rome Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre.

Upon arrival, it launched one of its two Fast Rescue Daughter Craft (FRDC), named after Syrian brothers Aylan

and Galib Kurdi whose deaths while trying to reach Greece from Turkey last year made global headlines.

The crew on the smaller vessel, including two rescue swimmers and a medic, approached the nearest overcrowded dinghy and began throwing life jackets to those on board.

The Topaz Responder drew closer and the FRDC nudged the dinghy against the ship, allowing the migrants to scramble aboard. Many dropped to their knees in prayer while waiting to be frisked by security personnel before the ship headed on to help another dinghy.

"I feel so good," said Osman Kalokoh from Sierra Leone. "So relieved."—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PACAO VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PACAO VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3.7.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Zayn Malik. PHOTO: REUTERS

Zayn Malik's heritage-inspired clothing collection

LONDON — Former One Direction star Zayn Malik's 23-piece clothing collection was inspired by his family's Pakistani heritage.

The "Pillowtalk" hitmaker has released a 23-piece collection of t-shirts, hoodies and sweat-shirts inspired by his latest music release and his roots, reported Contactmusic.

"Everything was created with the idea that this is something I would want to wear. I wanted to approach this as an opportunity to extend my ideas as an artist, and to give fans another facet of who I am..."

"My family is from Pakistan, so having artwork in Urdu has huge significance to me," he said.—PTI

Illinois man agrees to plead guilty in celebrity hacking case

LOS ANGELES — An Illinois man accused of breaking into the Apple iCloud and Gmail accounts of celebrities to obtain their private photos and videos has agreed to plead guilty to a felony computer hacking charge, prosecutors said on Friday.

Edward Majerczyk, 28, facing up to five years in prison, is the second man charged in a federal investigation into the leaks of nude photos of several Hollywood actresses, including Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence, in September 2014. According to a plea agreement signed by Majerczyk, he illegally accessed Apple iCloud and Google Gmail accounts belonging to more than 300 people, using an email "phishing" ploy to obtain their user names and passwords.

Through this scheme, Majerczyk was able to access full iCloud backups belonging to numerous victims, including at least 30 celebrities, many of whom reside in the Los Angeles area, the plea agreement stated.

"Many of these backups contained sensitive and private photographs and videos," it said.

Under his deal with federal prosecutors, Majerczyk, a Chicago resident, will formally plead guilty in US District Court in Illinois to

a felony violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, according to the US Attorney's Office in Los Angeles.

A 36-year-old Pennsylvania man, Ryan Collins, pleaded guilty in March to the same offense in a case stemming from the same investigation.

Like Collins, federal authorities said they had found no evidence linking Majerczyk to actual public circulation of any of the photos to which he gained access.

While no victims were named in court documents, the investigation began after Lawrence and other celebrities, including actresses Kirsten Dunst and Gabrielle Union and model Kate Upton, complained in interviews about having their private photos end up publicly disseminated online.

It was not the first time celebrity nude photos obtained through by computer intrusions led to a criminal prosecution. A Florida man was sentenced in 2012 to 10 years in prison for hacking into email accounts of Scarlett Johansson, Mila Kunis and Christina Aguilera to leak private information and explicit photos. Pop star Taylor Swift said her Twitter and Instagram accounts were hacked in January 2015.—Reuters

Paris Hilton launches perfume

LONDON — Socialite Paris Hilton released her 20th perfume Gold Rush this Wednesday.

Hilton, 35, said she created the new scent to compliment confident women.

"I created this scent for the woman who is truly confident in who she is. She's a dreamer, doer, thinker. Gold Rush is all about that indescribable feeling you get when you see endless possibilities... When you're alive and unstoppable," she said.

Gold Rush, is an oriental, fruity fragrance that gives off floral notes while caressing the skin with a seductive undertone.

Hilton further commented, "I've grown a lot over the years and Gold Rush is a major milestone for me. It's a reflection of who I am today and the person I aspire to be.—PTI



Paris Hilton. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hathaway celebrates 10th anniversary of 'The Devil Wears...'

LOS ANGELES — Oscar-winning actress Anne Hathaway celebrated the 10th anniversary of "The Devil Wears Prada" on Instagram.

She posted a tribute to the movie that changed her life.

The 2006 comedy drama took over USD 300 million at the worldwide box office upon its release and raised Hathaway's

profile significantly, helping her transition into more adult roles.

Posting a gif of Meryl Streep's as fashion editor Miranda Priestly giving one of her trademark "That's all" after signing offs, Hathaway wrote, "What else can I say about the movie that changed my life? Thank you (The Devil Wears Prada) and happy 10 year an-

niversary!! (don't let this make you feel old- good style is eternal)"

In the film, Hathaway starred as Andy Sachs, an aspiring journalist, with little interest in fashion, who lands a job as the junior personal assistant to Miranda Priestly, the editor of the world's biggest fashion magazine Runway.—PTI

Beyonce kicks off UK leg of 'Formation' world tour

LONDON — Pop star Beyonce kicked off the UK leg of her Formation world tour at Sunderland's Stadium of Light.

Most fans were delighted that the singer slayed the stage despite the wet British weather, but others felt a little left out in the cold, as the gig started 45 minutes later than expected.

On twitter one fan wrote, "You should never be late to a concert. It is your job. Be on time. Especially when it is raining and freezing cold. Not impressed #beyonce."

While another added, "Beyonce was late but still finished on time. Didn't even sing single ladies."

Taking the stage she told the crowd, "If y'all came to slay tonight, say 'I slay'. If you slay tonight and every day say, 'I slay'."

Later she added, "Most of you met me 19 years ago when I was in Destiny's Child. Thank you for allowing me to evolve and grow.—PTI



Beyonce. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rome shows off cleaned up Colosseum

ROME — Rome's Colosseum was visibly cleaner on Friday as Italy showed off the latest phase of restoration of one of its most famous landmarks.

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, speaking on a stage in the amphitheatre built to host gladiatorial contests nearly 2,000 years ago, hailed the mammoth clean-up project as an example for protecting the country's vast cultural heritage.

Italy's monuments were neglected for decades amid shrinking government funding and alleged mismanagement, which put some of its 51 UNESCO World Heritage sites at risk of crumbling.

They included the Colosseum, which had fallen into disrepair when luxury shoemaker Tod's pledged 25 million euros (\$28 mln) to restore it five years ago.

The project risked being canceled after coming under scrutiny from regu-



A view of the Colosseum after the latest stage of restoration by luxury goods firm Tod's in Rome, Italy, on 1 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

lators and unions, mostly over the awarding of the restoration contract, but the cleanup of the outer surface of the amphitheatre, which required covering parts of it

in scaffolding, is now complete.

Renzi, standing on a floor above cages where lions and other wild animals were let loose during

gladiator fights, praised the private investment in a site that attracts 6 million visitors a year.

"Someone who got their wallet out and wrote

a big check has shown that maybe the idea that you can't get things done in Italy is finished," the premier said.

Over the past three

years, restorers have delicately cleaned more than 10,000 square metres of the stone facade with natural-fiber brushes, applying 1,700 kilograms of lime putty and filler into cracks in the surface, while the monument remained opened to throngs of tourists.

In a bid to support its artistic heritage, Italy introduced tax credits on donations to the arts in 2014. The government has also raised the culture ministry's budget after years of cuts.

Restoration work will now focus on the inside of the Colosseum, repairing its passageways and underground vaults and building a visitors' centre.

Culture Minister Dario Franceschini said 18 million euros of public money has already been set aside to extend the central floor of the Colosseum in order to make it more suitable as a venue for cultural events. —Reuters

Japan's tallest Ferris wheel opens at commercial complex in Osaka

OSAKA — Japan's tallest Ferris wheel started operating Friday at a large commercial complex in Osaka, its operator Ferris Wheel Investment Co. said.

The 123-metre-high Redhorse Osaka Wheel is located in Expocity in Suita city in the western Japan prefecture. The complex opened last November in the Expo '70 Commemorative Park, the site of the 1970 World Exposition.

"I was scared but it was fun. I want to come here

again," Motonari Yamazaki, a 9-year-old elementary school boy from nearby Ibaraki city, said after riding the Ferris wheel.

The number of visitors to the retail and entertainment complex totaled 14 million by the end of May and is expected to reach 17 million over the first year, according to the complex developer Mitsui Fudosan Co.

The complex includes a shopping mall and combined aquarium, zoo and museum.—Kyodo News

Supersized resort Nesta opens near Kobe

KOBE — The huge Nesta Resort Kobe opened for business on Friday, with management aiming for 600,000 visitors and sales of 2.5 billion yen (\$24 million) during the first year of operations at the Hyogo Prefecture property.

Situated on a plot of roughly 2.3 million square metres — about 60 times larger than that of the Koshien baseball stadium in the same prefecture — the resort features water park facilities, a luxury barbecue park that accommodates up to 900 people and other amenities in addition to a hotel.

Following Friday's opening, which includes only a part of the expan-

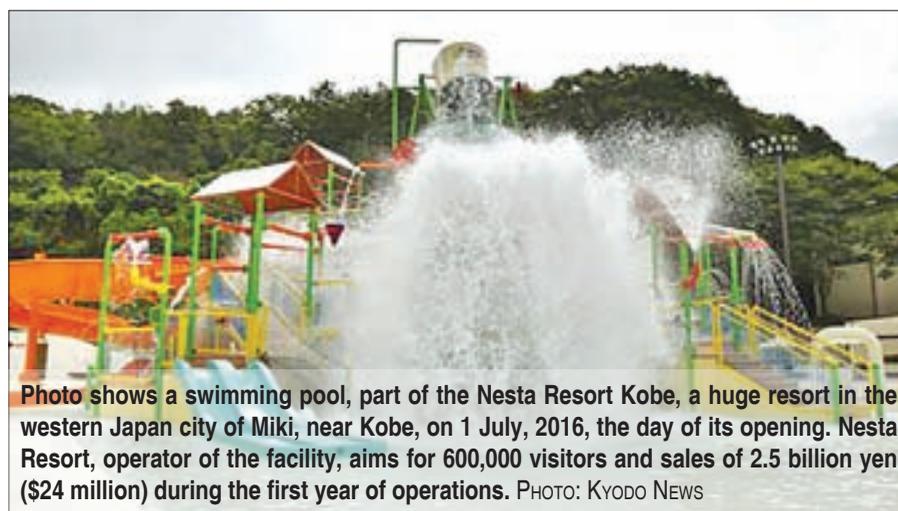


Photo shows a swimming pool, part of the Nesta Resort Kobe, a huge resort in the western Japan city of Miki, near Kobe, on 1 July, 2016, the day of its opening. Nesta Resort, operator of the facility, aims for 600,000 visitors and sales of 2.5 billion yen (\$24 million) during the first year of operations. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

sive grounds, further developments such as a spa and a separate hotel on the property will be opened in sequence until the entire resort is complete by

spring 2018, according to Nesta Resort management.

Nesta Resort, operator of Nesta Resort Kobe, is a wholly owned subsid-

iary of Osaka's Nobuta Group, whose portfolio consists of leisure and entertainment ventures such as pachinko parlors. —Kyodo News



Entertainment Channel

(3-7-2016, Sunday)

<p>06 : 00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather Report • Cartoon Programme "Inside Out" (Part-2) <p>06 : 50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Movie Songs <p>07 : 10 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Video <p>08 : 30 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV Entertainment Music 	<p>08 : 50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Stories of The Great Souls (Mar Mar Aye) (Episode -2) <p>09 : 30 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Programme" <p>09 : 50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clay Toy Pots Festival <p>10 : 00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Movie <p>Midnight</p> <p>Close Down</p>
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From 3-7-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 pm
To 4-7-2016 (Monday) 6:00 pm



Myanmar International

(3-7-2016 07:00am ~ 4-7-2016 07:00am) MST

<p>Today Fresh</p> <p>07:03 Am News</p> <p>07:26 Am Geographic Center of Myanmar</p> <p>07:45 Am Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Family"</p> <p>07:54 Am A Photographer's Life at Shwedagon Pagoda</p> <p>08:03 Am News</p> <p>08:26 Am Coconut Shell Artist</p> <p>08:50 Am Myanmar Noble Flowers</p> <p>09:03 Am News</p> <p>09:26 Am Bagan: The Land of Pagoda</p> <p>09:51 Am Yoghurt Vendor</p> <p>10:03 Am News</p> <p>10:26 Am Impressionist Myanmar Master Artist — U Lun Kywe</p>	<p>10:42 Am Paper Flower</p> <p>10:47 Am Ywar Thit's Monhinkhar</p> <p>(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)</p> <p>Prime Time</p> <p>07:03 Pm News</p> <p>07:25 Pm MOYINGYI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY</p> <p>07:43 Pm Black Gold (Part- II)</p> <p>07:49 Pm Today Myanmar: First Hundred Days of the New Government</p> <p>08:03 Pm News</p> <p>08:26 Pm The Writer: Chit Oo Nyo (Part II)</p> <p>08:57 Pm Myanmar Masterclass: Portraiture</p> <p>(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)</p> <p>(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)</p>
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Ibrahimovic ready to create special memories at United

LONDON — Zlatan Ibrahimovic completed his move to Manchester United on a Friday with the flamboyant Swedish striker saying he was ready to create “more special memories” at the Old Trafford club.

United did not disclose any contract details but British media reported that Ibrahimovic had signed a one-year deal to join up again with the Premier League club’s new manager Jose Mourinho. United have not paid a fee to sign the 34-year-old, who was out of contract after leaving Paris St Germain.

“I am absolutely delighted to be joining Manchester United and am looking forward to playing in the Premier League,” he said in a club statement.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my career so far and have some great memories. I am now ready to create more special memories in England,” he added. “It goes without saying that I cannot wait to work with Jose Mourinho once again. He is a fantastic manager and I am ready for this new and exciting challenge.” Ibrahimovic has won titles in four different countries in a career which began with his hometown team Malmo in 1999 and has included spells at Ajax Amsterdam, Juventus, Inter Milan, where he played under Mourinho, Barcelona and AC Milan.

—Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS



Wales' Gareth Bale in action with Belgium's Thomas Meunier during the EURO 2016 Quarter Final at Stade Pierre-Mauroy, Lille, France on 1 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Wales down Belgium to reach first ever semi-final

LILLE (France) — Wales produced a stunning upset to reach the Euro 2016 semi-finals after Hal Robson-Kanu’s superbly fashioned goal and Sam Vokes’s late header secured a 3-1 comeback win over Belgium on Friday to set up a clash with Portugal.

Robson-Kanu left three Belgium players for dead with a ‘Cruyff’ turn and calmly stroked the ball home to put Wales ahead in the second half, while substitute Vokes’s header ensured they reached their first major tournament semi-final.

It was a crushing blow for heavy favourites Belgium,

who had taken the lead in the 13th minute when Radja Nainggolan rifled a shot into the top corner from distance only for Wales captain Ashley Williams to level with a header from a corner.

“I said before we kicked the ball today, we’re not here to enjoy it, we are here to compete,” Wales manager Chris Coleman said. “Don’t be afraid to have dreams. Four years ago I was as far away from this as you could imagine. I’ve had more failures than successes but I’m not afraid to fail. We deserve this.”

Wales, playing in their first quarter-final, and major tournament, since losing to Brazil at the 1958 World Cup, next have a match that pits the world’s two most expensive players — Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo and his Real Madrid team mate Gareth

Bale — against each other in a mouth-watering clash.

Coleman’s side, however, will have to cope without their inspirational midfielder Aaron Ramsey and defender Ben Davies who both picked up bookings that ruled them out of the semi-final in Lyon on Wednesday.

Belgium coach Marc Wilmots was left to rue an injury and suspension in defence that robbed him of the experienced Jan Vertonghen and Thomas Vermaelen as their younger replacements, Jordan Lukaku and Jason Denayer, were frequently exposed.

The manner of the defeat, however, is likely to increase the scrutiny on Wilmots, who has faced criticism for failing to make the most of what many be-

lieve to be a golden generation of Belgium players.

“This Belgian team is a team that demands respect, but we let things go a bit today and we paid for that in cash,” he said, before adding he would take time to consider his future.

There was a frenetic opening to Friday’s match, which many had predicted would be a cagey encounter, as Belgium took the early initiative and would have grabbed the lead after seven minutes but for some superb last-ditch Wales defending.

Wayne Hennessey saved superbly from Yannick Carrasco before efforts from Thomas Meunier and Eden Hazard were blocked by lunging defenders as Wales, looking to talisman Bale for an outlet, sought to stem the early Belgian tide.—Reuters

Serena survives three-set thriller, racket not so lucky

LONDON — Serena Williams composed herself after a first-set loss and a burst of anger that made her smash her racket, to beat tenacious fellow American Christina McHale in a tense second-round match at Wimbledon on Friday.

The defending champion finally ran out a 6-7(7), 6-2, 6-4 winner against the world number 65 on Centre Court, marching on in her quest to emulate Steffi Graf’s Open era record of 22 grand slam singles titles.

Williams thought she had

won the first set and was walking back to her chair after a McHale forehand was called long with the world number one 5-4 and 40-30 up. To her chagrin, however, a Hawk-eye challenge showed the ball brushing the baseline.

McHale went on to win the game and force a tiebreak in which a rattled Williams made a string of errors, including two double faults, before burying a forehand into the net to lose the set.

Furious as she sat down,

she repeatedly hammered her racket into the ground in frustration before hurling it behind her.

“I was just really, really, really angry. I had a lot of chances,” Williams told reporters after the match, adding that she would “definitely” be fined.

“I’ve cracked a number of rackets throughout my career. I’ve gotten fined a number of times for cracking rackets,” she said. “I don’t want to go too long without cracking a rack-

et. You know, I’m on track. I try to crack a certain amount a year. I’m a little behind this year, so it was good.”

The 34-year-old put the disappointment of the tiebreak behind her and showed the battling form that has won her six Wimbledon crowns to take the next two sets, closing out the two-and-a-half hour match with three aces.

In a classy final flourish, she autographed her bent and discarded racket for a fan as she walked off court.—Reuters