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ART MEETS POLITICS

Academy Awards recognise 18 films from 2014-15



Pyay Ti Oo (left) wins the best actor award and Phwe Phwe (Right) the best actress award. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT



Wut Hmon Shwe Yi wins the best supporting actress. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT



Khaing Thin Kyi wins the best actress award. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

MYANMAR'S Academy Awards ceremony was held yesterday in Yangon, with 18 awards going to films released in 2014 and 2015. A total of 30 Myanmar films came out in that period.

In a message she sent to the occasion, National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Au Kyi expressed high hopes for

improvement in the areas of art and technology as the film industry has undergone challenges and accumulated more experience.

She also called upon individual citizens to play their part in national development, the same way various people cooperate to produce a successful film.

Myanmar's film industry will

turn 100 years old in 2020.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko made the opening speech at the ceremony, urging all actors, actresses, directors, producers and technicians in the film industry and other artistic fields to cooperate with the government in order to achieve the government's

goal of establishing a genuine federal Union that can guarantee democracy, fundamental human rights, national reconciliation and eternal peace.

Famous comedians Bay Lu Wa and Gwan Pone won the awards for best supporting actor and actress, respectively, for the first time, much to the delight of

the audience.

"Kaung-kyo-ko-hnai-ti-say min" released in 2014 bagged five awards for music, editing, manuscript, film and supporting actress.

"I am a rose, my dear" released in 2015 won the best actor award and the best support actress. —GNLM

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Mandalay hosts discussion on traditional marionette arts

A TALK titled “The Future of Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes” was held at the National Theatre in Aungmyethazan Township, Mandalay, on 2 April.

Officials from the Fine Arts Department under the Ministry of Culture, students and faculty members from the drama departments at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon and the National University of Arts and Culture in Mandalay and members of the Myanmar Marionette Troupes Development Association attended the talk.

At the event, Professor U Khine Htun from the Department of Dramatic Arts at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon, author Nyo Htun Lu and Thanlyin Maung Wint War discussed “The Future of The Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”; author Chit San Win spoke about “Original Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”; Mr



Participants discuss marionette on stage. PHOTO: THIHA KO KO

Dadi Pudumjee, president of the Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA), discussed the history of that organization; Myanmar traditional orchestra artiste U Than Chaung and musician U Sein Mut Tar discussed

“Musical Beats and the Pulse of Myanmar Traditional Orchestra Associated with Myanmar Marionette”; U Khin Maung Htway of the Htway Oo Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupe discussed “Children’s Education and My-



The audience at the talk. PHOTO: THIHA KO KO

anmar Marionettes”; lecturer U Aung Toe and lecturer Daw Win Pa Pa of the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon discussed “The History of Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupes”.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Myanmar Marionette Drama Troupe Association are working to develop Myanmar marionette drama troupes.—*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*

Crime NEWS



Aung Aung, Kyaw Ye Aung and Kyaw Kyaw.

Three suspects arrested for theft

THREE young men have been arrested on suspicion of stealing mobile phones and laptops around Yangon Region, according to an announcement by the Yangon Region Police Force yesterday.

Aung Aung, Kyaw Ye Aung and Kyaw Kyaw were arrested on 13 March, and jewellery, several mobile phones and laptops were confiscated from them.

Charges have been filed against them.—*GNLM*

Police seize two kilos of heroin, 60,000 yaba pills

POLICE in Lashio seized 2.442 kilos of heroin and 60,000 yaba pills hidden in a Landcruiser on 1 April.

The combined team comprising an anti-drug squad and

local police searched the car driven by Le Lauk El carrying passenger Maran Shwe Chint on the Lashio-Mongyaw road in Lashio and found the heroin hidden in 222 soup cans, along with the

yaba pills.

Action has been taken against the driver and passenger under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Le Lauk El (Left) and Maran Shwe Chint (Right) pose beside the drugs seized from them. PHOTO: MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

Greater Mekong farmers hit by water shortages

THE falling of Mekong river water level to the lowest point so far this year have caused farmers from the Greater Mekong Subregion, which includes China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, to experience problems caused by water shortages, according to environmentalists.

It is the first time in ninety years that the waters of the Mekong have fallen to such depth, rendering farmers in villages along the Myanmar side of boarder with Laos unable to cultivate their crops.

“People still rely upon the Mekong river to cultivate their paddy as well as other crops. Us farmers are in spot of bother because of declining water level to their lowest point yet. We’ve planted our first batch of crops, but have hesitated from planting our second lot because of ascarcity of water. We’re going to have to wait for the raining season before we plant again.” said Ko Win Soe, a farmer from a village along the Myanmar side of the boarder with Laos.

Chinese State newspapers

published on 15 March by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed a decision had been made to open the Mekong Jinghong hydro-power dam, allowing water to flow into the Mekong, in light of the aforementioned water shortages.

“The falling of water level of the Mekong is also related to a lack of rain fall. The stream and water channel reserves in Thailand for instance have all but dried up. The Thai government issued a state of emergency in response, with people now sourcing water from the Mekong enmasse. They are also implementing the direct distribution of water from the Mekong to [Thai] farmers.” explained Daw May Zarkyi Lin, an environmentalist from Tachileik.

While the Chinese plan of action to introduce water into the Mekong to alleviate current water shortages is a short term solution, farmers residing along the river are concerned about what the long term affects of water shortages will have on their livelihoods and futures as farmers.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Three arrested for hunting deer in sanctuary

THREE men hunting deer in Shwesehtaw Sanctuary were arrested on 2 April by police. Staff of the Pwintphyu Township Forestry Department found the illegal hunters in the sanctuary while patrolling the area and informed the police.

Local police went to the sanctuary and arrested the three

hunters—Win Khaing, 32, Aung Ko Zin, 24, and Hlaing Min Htay, 21, while they were hunting the endangered species using 43 traps.

Action has been taken against the three men under Section 37(a) of the Conservation of Wildlife and Flora and Fauna Law.—*GNLM*

Union Minister urges state media to embrace 'public-facing' content

STATE-OWNED media should report not only departmental press releases but also news that embraces "public-facing content", said newly appointed Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint yesterday in a meeting with departmental officials and correspondents from the state-owned daily newspapers in Yangon.

The Union minister met officials from the departments and enterprises, including chief editors, editors and reporters from state-owned dailies at the Printing and Publishing Department in Yangon.

The new government will strive to turn state-run media into a public-facing platform—a slight change from what the previous government called 'public service'.

The cabinet members are ultimately accountable to the



Union Minister for Information Dr U Pe Myint meets officials from departments and enterprises of the ministry in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

people and responsible for informing them of their ministerial undertakings, Dr Pe Myint said, stressing the need for the dailies to act as intermediaries between the government and the public.

He urged state-owned papers to focus on news that com-

bats weaknesses, shortages and inconveniences in dealing with governmental departments.

The information minister also hinted at leaving the power to choose news content in the hands of the editors-in-chief.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Daw Suu sends message to Academy Awards ceremony

THE Academy Awards Presentation ceremony was held at the Myanmar Event Park in Yangon yesterday to honour the best films of 2014 and 2015, with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sending a message to the event.

In her message, the Union minister for education, foreign affairs, electric power and energy and the President's Office described the film industry as the most penetrative and the most influential medium of mass communication. The leader of the National League for Democracy attributed the success of films to the hard work and joint efforts among the people involved in producing them.

She expressed high hopes for further improvement in the areas of art and technology as the film industry has undergone challenges and accumulated experience. The film industry will turn 100 years old in 2020, she



DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI PHOTO: NLD CHAIRPERSON FACEBOOK PAGE

pointed out.

Suu Kyi called upon individual citizens to do their part for national development in the same way people must cooperate to produce a successful film.—*Myanmar News Agency*

World Kidney Day observed by MMA in Mandalay

THE Myanmar Medical Association in Mandalay celebrated World Kidney Day at its office yesterday, giving educational talks reflecting this year's theme—"Kidney Disease and Children: Act Early to Prevent It".

The day was commemorated with the aim of raising public awareness of kidney diseases, which have the potential to affect people of any age, including children, said Dr Khin Maung Kyaw, urinary and kidney specialist at the Mandalay General Hospital.

The kidney specialist advised families with a history of kidney diseases to have regular medical check-ups. The kidneys help remove waste products from the blood and produce hormones.

The World Health Organisation established the day in 2006.—*Aung Thant Khaing*



Academy Awards recognise 18 films from 2014-15



Eighteen awards were given out to winners at the Academy Award presentation ceremony for 2016. Myanma Motion Picture Association has a plan to hold the annual ceremony in late February or early March in coming years. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT (NEWS ON PAGE 1)

Dawei factory owner concedes to payment demands of employees

A DISPUTE between employees and the employer at the Heinyan Fish Cold Storage Facility, located in the Dawei Special Economic Zone, have ended with the employer agreeing to pay 40 hours of overtime per month for a period of four months to employees.

The agreement of the employer came after a field visit was made to the cold storage facility on 13 March by the township's Department of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare together with Yangon-based la-

bour unions, after a complaint was made to the township Department of Labour on 10 March by factory workers, who said they received neither overtime, breaks nor days off.

"The owner will pay a total of 40 hours of overtime for each month of the period between December last year until the end of this March. He will also negotiate [with the workers] over issues relating to breaks and days off from work," said Ko Aung Soe Naing, manager of the cold storage facility.

He also mentioned there would be consultation with relevant bodies over catering to other employee rights on top of a basic salary, with a new contract to be drawn up, which will be signed before the factory closes its doors for the Thingyan holiday period.

"We employees are satisfied [with the offer of our employer]. Just as he acted in a suitable manner concerning the death of our fellow worker, he will issue us the compensation we've called for," said Ko Ngwe Toe Oo, a

factory worker. The Department of Labour has issued a reminder to the factory owner to draw up new contracts for his employees before the factory closes for the Thingyan holiday period.

The Heinyan Fish Cold Storage Factory officially opened in Dawei in 2013 and has a workforce of over 70 employees. The intervention of a local police unit into disputes between employees and their employer earlier this month resulted in the death of an employee.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

LOCAL Business



Workers are seen at the production line of a garment factory in Yangon. PHOTO AYE MIN SOE

Employment rises throughout U Thein Sein administration

THE five-year term in office of President U Thein Sein saw an increase in foreign investment into Myanmar, with a 67.85 per cent increase in employment opportunities, according to a statement released by the Myanmar Investment Commission on 30 March.

During the 2011-12 fiscal year, there was an increase of 6,804 employees working for foreign companies, according to

the Foreign Investment Law, and rise of 9,805 workers employed within Myanmar companies, according to the Myanmar Investment Law, while the following fiscal year saw a rise of those employed in foreign companies to 62,412 workers and 18,867 workers within Myanmar companies—a rise of 5.13 per cent.

Furthermore, in the 2013-14 fiscal year, there were 77,597 workers in foreign companies

and 17,269 in local companies—a rise of 1.16 per cent, while during the 2014-15 fiscal year, there were 105,500 workers in foreign companies and 12,593 in Myanmar companies—a rise of 1.35 per cent. In the current 2015-16 fiscal year, there are 88,572 workers in foreign companies and 22,894 in Myanmar companies—an increase of 0.87 per cent from the previous year.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

ARDC to repay Union govt K844 million for misused finds

THE Ayeyawady Region Development Committee (ARDC) must repay the Union govt a total of K844.1 million (US\$694,079) in cash advances handed out for paving of roads in the regional capital of Patheingyi, according to the Patheingyi Township Development Committee (PTDC).

The repayment was demanded after an inquiry committee, comprising regional department officials, carried out inspections of the director of the ARDC, U Aung Min Naing, and roughly 50 of his staff, as to whether the 2015-16 fiscal budget allocated to the PTDC was used correctly or not.

“We have to pay back some

of the state budget as we didn't realise we had to act in accordance with financial regulations and make submissions to Hluttaw every time we wanted to use the budget. Of course our town is going to suffer as a result of having to pay back the state for the things our town received,” said U Tin Ohn, chair of the PTDC.

Over 300 concrete roads were paved within Patheingyi Township using 2016-17 fiscal year budget advances, but the ignorance of the PTDC over having to first request permission from Hluttaw in order to use the budget has resulted in those funds having to be repaid

back to the Union government, according to the PTDC.

According to some PTDC engineers, the PTDC Engineer Group will make the repayment to the State on behalf of the ARDC.

“The money that we will use for the coming budget has to be repaid into this budget,” explained U Aung Min Naing.

The PTDC was permitted to use the 2015-16 fiscal year budget of K1.2 billion (\$986,842). Thirty per cent of this budget was allocated for staff salaries as well as pensions for retired staff, according to the PTDC.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Large trucks can now enter Mae Sot via Myawady

TRUCKS with six or more wheels can now legally enter Mae Sot, Thailand, via Myawady starting from the second week of April after Thailand and Myanmar reached an agreement to recognize the two as sister cities, said U Si Thu Shein, the deputy district administrator of Myawady.

Thailand designated the Bumidaw Bus Station as a stopping point for buses from Myanmar; the station can hold up to 100 buses at a time. Truck drivers must hold licences and are also required to obey the rules and

regulations issued by Thailand, U Si Thu Shein added.

Six-wheel trucks from Myanmar must stay within 15 kilometres of the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge.

The trucks will be used to export dried fish, clothes and other commodities to Thailand.

Trade between Thailand and Myanmar is imbalanced, with hundreds of 12-wheel and 22-wheel trucks bringing Thai goods to Myanmar this year. The new agreement is expected to raise Myanmar exports to Thailand.—200

5th Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Emporium closes

THE 5th Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Emporium (2016), organised by ASIA Connect, was held from 1 to 4 April. The emporium aims to promote finished products from Myanmar. A total of 40 shops displayed gems and jewellery at the emporium.

Only international-quality jewellery was displayed, mostly diamonds.

“The gems and jewellery market is not very successful in

our country. We expect to explore the market via this emporium. We plan to display the gems and jewellery in other countries,” said an official from the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association.

ASIA Connect has held previous emporia at the Myanmar Convention Centre, at the UM-FCCI, the Kaba Aye Gems and Jewellery Emporium Hall and in Mandalay.—200

Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda sets K3,000 entrance fee

AN entrance fee of K3,000 will be collected from visitors to the Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda in Pintaya, southern Shan State, starting on 1 April, according to the pagoda's board of trustees. Previously, the fees were collected in US dollars.

Tour guides have already been informed of the switch to Myanmar kyats. The money collected will be used for local development.

“Previously, we accepted both dollars and Myanmar cur-

rency. But the banks do not want to accept old, dirty money, nor do the money changers. So we decided to collect the entrance fees only in Myanmar currency, said a member of the pagoda's board of trustees.

The Shwe U Min Cave Pagoda is a popular tourist attraction in southern Shan State. Around 20,000 tourists visit the pagoda every month. Visitors this year have come from 50 countries, with the highest proportion coming from France.—200

Farmers profit from organic cauliflower

ORGANIC cauliflower yields are high this season, allowing the farmer to earn higher incomes, said farmers from southern Shan State.

A head of cauliflower sells for between K300 and K700, depending on the size. Villagers in Heho, Nyaungshwe and Shwenyaung grow cauliflower on a commercial scale.

Cow dung and sesame oil cake are the main fertilisers used for farming cauliflower. A basket

of cow dung costs K350, while a viss (1.63 kilos) of sesame oil cake sells for around K1,000. Farmers use 500 baskets of cow dung and 100 viss of sesame oil cake per acre.

Organic farming is expected to widely penetrate the market because consumers prefer the organic vegetables, which are meant to be free of synthetic chemicals. The farmers mainly send their vegetables to markets in Chauk and Seikphyu townships.—200

Japan to seek greater cooperation for stability in South China Sea

TOKYO — Japan will seek further cooperation with other Asian countries to ensure stability in the South China Sea, Defence Minister Gen Nakatani said Sunday, amid territorial disputes between China and a number of countries in the region.

“It is important for the international community to work together to ensure that the seas are open, free and peaceful,” Nakatani told reporters in Kochi Prefecture.

Earlier in the day, a Japanese submarine and

two destroyers made a port call in the Philippines as part of a voyage to train Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force officers and foster goodwill with the country.

Tokyo and Manila have been cooperating amid China’s militarization of outposts in the resource-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Japan “has been involved in activities to contribute to regional stability such as joint drills by the MSDF and foreign forces in

the South China Sea,” Nakatani said. “We will continue to work together through bilateral and multi-lateral drills and other steps.”

China claims almost all of the South China Sea, where Viet Nam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also have territorial claims.

As part of efforts to keep China’s growing maritime assertiveness in check, Japan is keen to help Southeast Asian countries — including the Philippines and

Viet Nam, the two most vocal critics of China — improve their surveillance capabilities in the waters.

The MSDF submarine Oyashio and destroyers Ariake and Setogiri made the port call in Subic Bay, north of Manila. The destroyers will then head to Cam Ranh Bay in Viet Nam. Nakatani is planning to visit the Philippines later this month. “I would like to visit as soon as possible and work to further develop and enhance our defense cooperation,” he said.—*Kyodo News*



Defence Minister Gen Nakatani. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Malaysia’s 1MDB says it did not provide funds to produce Hollywood film

KUALA LUMPUR, — Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) on Sunday denied reports that it had provided funds to finance the 2013 Hollywood film *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that global investigators believe much of the funds used to make the film were diverted from 1MDB, whose advisory board is chaired by

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. The Journal quoted unnamed sources who it said were familiar with the work of the investigators.

According to the WSJ, the funds were diverted to a small production company called Red Granite Pictures, which came up with the more than \$100 million needed to finance the film starring Leonardo DiCaprio and directed by Martin Scorsese.

1MDB said in a statement it had never invested in nor transferred funds to Red Granite Pictures, whether directly or via intermediaries.

“We, therefore, deny any suggestion that 1MDB funded the production of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, or had any involvement with the film in any capacity, as has been alleged or implied in some recent media reports,” 1MDB said.

The Red Granite Pic-

tures website names Najib’s stepson, Riza Aziz, as the company co-founder and co-chairman.

Investigators in two countries believe that some \$155 million, originating from 1MDB, moved into Red Granite in 2012 through various offshore shell companies, the WSJ said, citing sources familiar with the probes.

Najib has been buffeted by allegations of graft and mismanagement at

1MDB, and the revelation that \$681 million was deposited in his bank account. He has denied any wrongdoing, maintains that he did not use the funds for personal gain and was cleared this year of any criminal offence by Malaysia’s Attorney General.

Investigations into 1MDB’s finances are underway in Malaysia, Singapore, the United States, Switzerland and Luxembourg.—*Reuters*

Gunmen seize four tugboat crew off eastern Malaysia

MANILA — Gunmen seized four Malaysian crew of a tugboat off the coast of the eastern state of Sabah, a week after a similar attack on a Taiwanese tugboat in the southern Philippines, media reported on Sunday.

The four were taken at gunpoint on Friday evening and brought by speed boat to the southern Philippines, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* said, quoting an unnamed military official. Three other crew were left behind.

The gunmen, suspected to be Abu Sayyaf militants, also took laptops, mobile phones and unspecified amounts of cash. The tugboat returned to Sabah when the gunmen left.

“We confirm receiving reports of this incident,” military spokesman Major Filemon Tan told reporters. “We have coordinated with our Malaysian counterparts.”

It was the second attack in a week on tugboats in the waters that border of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Ten Indonesians were abducted when a Taiwanese tugboat was intercepted in the southern Philippines.

The Abu Sayyaf, known for kidnappings, beheadings, bombings and extortion, has demanded 50 million pesos (\$1.09 million) for the freedom of the Indonesian crew. The al Qaeda-linked group is one of the most hardline Islamist militant groups in the Muslim south of the largely Christian Philippines.—*Reuters*

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Bangladesh former PM to seek bail over firebombing attack



Bangladesh’s former Prime Minister and main opposition leader Khaleda Zia. PHOTO: REUTERS

DHAKA — Bangladesh’s former Prime Minister and main opposition leader Khaleda Zia is expected to appear in court and seek bail after she was issued with an arrest warrant over a deadly firebombing attack, her lawyer said on Sunday.

A court in Dhaka issued arrest warrants on Wednesday for Zia, 70, and 27 leaders and activists of her Bangladesh Nationalist

Party (BNP) in connection with a petrol bomb attack on a bus in January last year during a deadly anti-government campaign.

“Most likely, Madam will appear before the court on 5 April and will seek bail,” Khaleda’s lawyer Sanaullah Miah told reporters. The BNP called for a countrywide protest on Monday against the arrest warrant, saying it was politically motivated.

More than 120 people were killed and hundreds injured early last year in political violence during transport blockades and strikes aimed at toppling the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladeshi politics has been mired for years in rivalry between Hasina and Khaleda. Both women are related to former national leaders, and they have alternated as prime minister for most of the past two decades.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 160 million, has also seen a surge in Islamist violence in which liberal activists, members of minority Muslim sects and other religious groups have been targeted.

Prime Minister Hasina has blamed the rising tide of violence on the opposition BNP and its key ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, many of whose leaders are being prosecuted for war crimes during the 1971 war of independence. The opposition denies any involvement.—*Reuters*

Debris found in Mauritius to be examined by MH370 investigators



School children look at a board showing some of the passengers aboard the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 on the second anniversary of its disappearance in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 8 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — Australia said that a piece of suspected aeroplane debris found east of Africa on a Mauritian island will be examined to see if it is part of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which went missing two years ago in one of the world's greatest aviation mysteries.

A hotel owner on the island who saw the debris said it looked like it was from the inside of a plane, with what he thought was a wallpaper "design", which if confirmed, would be the first piece of interior debris from the plane yet to be found.

Australia has led the search for the plane, which went missing in March 2014 with 239 people on board on a flight from the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing, and Transport Minister Darren Chester

said the debris, found last week, was an "item of interest".

"The Malaysian government is working with officials from Mauritius to seek to take custody of the debris and arrange for its examination," Chester said in a statement.

He did not say from what part of the missing Boeing 777 the debris was suspected to have come.

"...Until the debris has been examined by experts, it is not possible to ascertain its origin."

The Malaysian government could not be immediately reached for comment.

William Auguste, who owns the Mourouk Ebony Hotel on Rodrigues Island, about 560 km (350 miles) east of the main island of Mauritius, said the wreckage was found by guests.

"For sure it looked like part of an aeroplane — it looks like it's from the inside part of it," Auguste said. "...there was wallpaper inside of the plane, you can see this design and part of it is still there."

Auguste said the wreckage was taken to police.

Last month, Australia said debris found in Mozambique was "almost certainly from MH370" and in 2015 French authorities said a wing part found on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion was part of the plane.

Australia said that more than 95,000 square kilometres of a 120,000 square kilometre target zone had been searched and that the entire zone would be covered by June, when the search is scheduled to end.—*Reuters*

UN Secretary General's message on the International Day For Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

4 April 2016

Mine action is critical for an effective humanitarian response in conflict and post-conflict situations. This is a central message of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

Yet in far too many places around the world, new or reemerging conflicts are creating yet another legacy of explosive hazards, such as landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices. I am particularly concerned about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The United Nations is working to alleviate the suffering of affected communities in high-risk environments.

In South Sudan, for example, more than half a million people have received risk education over the last 12 months; 14 million square meters of contaminated land have been cleared; 3,000 km of road made safe; and 30,000 mines and explosive remnants of war destroyed. This has enabled the delivery of food and water and the safe movement of those fleeing fighting.

Even in the extremely challenging context of Syria, mine action actors are achieving some important life-saving results.

Last year, more than 2 million Syrians received risk education in schools and communities, and more than 5,400 people received physical rehabilitation services. Since August 2015, 14 tonnes of unexploded ordnance have been destroyed.

But millions of Syrian people continue to face this deadly threat every day. There is an urgent need for increased support as well as full, sustained and unhindered access for all mine action activities.

Mine action is an investment in humanity. It helps nurture peaceful societies, where those in need can receive aid, and refugees and internally displaced persons can safely return home, and children can go to school.

It provides the safe space to undertake development and reconstruction activities, and lay the foundations of sustainable peace.

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will convene in Istanbul next month. My report in advance of the Summit highlights the unacceptable impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on civilians.

It also stresses the need for States to become parties to, and implement and comply with, relevant international humanitarian instruments.

I am pleased that, in December 2015, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution underlining the need for mine action to remain at the top of the international agenda, especially in humanitarian crises.

On this International Day, let us work together to advance the goal of a world free of the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war.—*UNIC/Yangon*

Japan sub makes first call to Philippines in 15 years amid China tensions

SUBIC BAY (Philippines) — A Japanese submarine made a port call in the Philippines, the first in 15 years, on Sunday in a show of growing military cooperation amid tension triggered by China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

One of the newest and largest submarines in the Japanese navy, it was escorted into the former US Navy Base at Subic Bay by two Japanese destroyers on a tour of Southeast Asia.

"This is just an exercise and the main objective is to train the officers," Captain Hiraoki Yoshino of Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force told reporters.

"We don't have any message to any country," he said, adding the ship visits were aimed at boosting confidence between the Japan and the Philippines.

China claims almost all the South China Sea, where about \$5

trillion of ship-borne trade passes every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Taiwan also have claims.

Japan and China also have conflicting claims over islets in the East China Sea. Japan is increasing its presence in the South China Sea, sending more ships and planes to allies in Southeast Asia, like Viet Nam and the Philippines.

The Philippines and the United States start military drills on Monday, including simulating the retaking an island seized by an imaginary enemy in the South China Sea, an exercise likely to rile China.

Japan has offered to help the Philippines boost its capability in monitoring what is going on in the South China Sea by leasing three TC-90 surveillance planes, a deal that could be sealed late this month.—*Reuters*



The Maritime Self-Defence Force submarine Soryu is launched at a ceremony at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd.'s shipyard in Kobe in December 2007. The sophisticated Soryu-class sub is seen as a potential candidate for sale to Australia. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Clinton, Sanders audition for role as anti-Trump candidate



US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton reacts as she waves to supporters at a campaign rally in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on 2 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

MILWAUKEE — Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are tussling in Wisconsin over who would best represent the Democratic Party against Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

The competition was in full force on Saturday night at the Wisconsin Democratic Party's "Founders Day Gala," a chance for both Clinton and Sanders to make their closing arguments before the state's primary vote on Tuesday.

Clinton, as the Democratic front-runner, is more and more taking aim at both Trump and US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, the top Trump rival who is leading Wisconsin polls of Republican voters. Trump, in response

to the threat of Islamic militants, has proposed a temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States and Cruz has called for police patrols of Muslim neighbourhoods. Clinton said these ideas are offensive.

"That does not make Trump and Cruz sound strong," said Clinton to the crowd of 1,400. "It makes them sound in over their heads... You know loose cannons tend to misfire, and in a dangerous world that is a gamble we cannot afford."

Sanders, a US senator from Vermont who has been a surprisingly strong challenger to Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination, told the crowd he would be a better opponent against Trump

than Clinton.

Sanders noted national poll numbers showing he leads Trump by a larger margin than Clinton leads the New York billionaire. Sanders said this makes him "the strongest candidate" on the Democratic side to go up against Trump.

"It's not just polling," Sanders said. "There is one campaign which has created an enormous amount of excitement and enthusiasm and that is our campaign."

For the Democratic Party to succeed in the 8 November election, Sanders said, "we need a vibrancy" and energy that brings in young people who have flocked to his campaign. —Reuters

Dacic: We cannot expect missile systems if we have no money

BELGRADE — Serbia has good military cooperation with Russia but it cannot expect to get the S-300 or S-400 missile systems from Moscow if it does not have the money for them, says Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic.

The good cooperation with Russia is not merely about military technical cooperation in terms of arms and equipment, but also about cooperation between the two defence ministries and armed forces, Dacic told Sputnik in an interview.

Russia and Serbia have signed agreements on defence and military technical cooperation, and our cooperation with other states is also underway simultaneously in a very transparent way, as part of our policy of military neutrality, he said.

Asked what arms shipment Serbia could expect in the near future, having already submitted a list of required weapons to Russia, Dacic said that a special commission on military technical cooperation will meet in Belgrade in April to discuss all facts. —Tanjug



Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic. PHOTO: TANJUG

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tsunami alert issued after large quake hits off Vanuatu

VANUATU — A large 7.2 quake struck off the coast of the South Pacific islands of Vanuatu on Sunday and there was a possibility of tsunamis, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre said.

The quake struck 151 km (94 miles) north northwest of Santo on Vanuatu and was 35 km deep, the US Geological Survey said. The shallower a quake, the more damage it is likely to cause. USGS first measured the quake at 10 km deep.

There were no immediate reports of damage. —Reuters

"Out" leads by 4 percentage points ahead of Britain's EU referendum —poll

LONDON — Support for Britain to leave the European Union stood at 43 per cent, ahead of support to stay within the 28-member bloc, which stood at 39 per cent, according to an online survey taken by pollster Opinium for the Observer newspaper.

The poll of 1,966 adults, who were interviewed ahead of a referendum to stay in the European Union on 23 June, found that 18 per cent of respondents were undecided. —Reuters

Viet Nam coast guard seizes Chinese ship in Tonkin Gulf

HANOI — Viet Nam's coast guard has seized a Chinese vessel for intruding into its territorial waters, according to a local report Saturday.

In a rare move for Vietnamese authorities against a Chinese vessel, the coast guard in the northern port city of Haiphong seized the ship carrying diesel fuel in the Gulf of Tonkin on Thursday.

The captain of the Chinese ship admitted to the intrusion, telling Vietnamese officials the ship was carrying fuel for Chinese fishing boats operating in Vietnamese waters, according to the report.

Viet Nam, China and other countries surrounding the South China Sea dispute sovereignty of island chains and nearby waters. —Kyodo News

Several explosions rock industrial zone in southwestern France

PARIS — Three consecutive explosions rocked an industrial zone near the southwestern French city of Bordeaux early Sunday, local media reported.

There were no immediate reports of casualties and damage.

The blasts, along with strong fire, broke out at around 6:40 local time (0440 GMT) in a company specialising in chemical products transportation at the industrial zone in Bassens, near Bordeaux, French radio France Bleu Gironde reported on its Twitter.

Firefighters had already been on the scene to conduct rescue operations.

"The situation seems under control," Mayor of Bassens Jean-Pierre Turon told news channel iTele, adding that two firefighters were slight injured in the rescue operations.

The outbreak of a fire may have caused the explosion of two or three tankers filled with gas, he said. —Xinhua

Conflict kills 6 including security personnel in Afghanistan

PUL-E-KHUMRI, (Afghanistan) — Five militants and a security personnel have been killed as clash erupted in Taliban former bastion the Dand-e-Shahabudin district in the northern Baghlan Province, provincial police spokesman Zabihullah Shuja said Sunday.

"The resurgence of Taliban rebels in Dand-e-Shahabudin area three days ago prompted the security forces to immediately launch operations and so far five armed insurgents have been killed and five others injured, forcing militants to flee," Shuja told Xinhua.

He said one security personnel was killed in the conflict which has been continuing sporadically.

Dand-e-Shahabudin, which had served as Taliban bastion in Baghlan Province, was captured by government forces a month ago.

Taliban militants have confirmed the clash, claiming that the Taliban fighters have killed three security personnel. —Xinhua

OPINION

Institutions and effective governance

Khin Maung Aye

THE role of institutions in the transformational process of good governance has been recognised by former president U Thein Sein. In determining the capacity of a regime or an administration to whether conduct effective governance, the role of institutions is the central focus of the institutional theory approach. To put it another way, the role of presidential institutions or that of the parliament in making the process of governance work within a state is the main focus of this approach.

In this regard, it is worth noting that scholars who are concerned with the institutional role in the governance process have raised major questions concerning the roles of non-majoritarian institutions like those of courts, bureaucracies and the central or federal banks. This approach has fundamentally engaged itself in seeking the ways to understand institutions.

It will be appropriate here to quote scholars like March and Olsen (1989) as saying: “Institutions are sets of norms and logics of appropriateness that provide guidance for the policy makers.” From this perspective, governance can be understood through logics being utilised to govern and regimes and norms being followed by the state in its attempt to govern.

Historical institutionalists view governance as path-dependent—the one that worked in the past would continue to work successfully in future, too. In their opinion, governance is largely inertial. Nevertheless, national-choice institutionalists opine that governance involves the exploitation of incentives for participants, and if it is attuned properly, governance will become a comparatively simple exercise.

Institutional question related to civil society is also a major concern of institutional theory in finding the best strategy for governing. Concerning questions such as whether to construct civil society organisations (CSOs) to improve governance, this approach lays stress upon the building of effective institutions to be able to effectuate improvement in the methods of governance.

Nonetheless, this does not necessarily deny the importance of CSOs in governance. According to their belief, such institutions are more flexible than that of the society. In fact, they can be structurally changed quite easily by the political leader. Society may, in that case, have more defences to change imposed from the outside.

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Thingyan: The festival of goodwill and loving kindness

Reproduced from Myanmar Traditional Monthly Festivals by Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt
Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja
Sithu, Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

MYANMAR people use Lunar calendar. Months are counted according to the movement of the moon, so month in Myanmar is ‘La’ the same word for the moon. There are two types of month—30 day month and 29 day month. The month which has 15 days of waxing moon and 15 days of waning moon is of the first type and the month which has 15 days of waxing moon and 14 days of waning moon is of the second type. These two types alternate in the 12 month calendar. The year always begins with the 29 day month called Tagu, and ends with the 30 day month called Ta-baung. So it is customary for the Myanmar people to mark the day not only as the 1st day 2nd day etc. of the month but also whether the day is waxing or waning moon of the month. The days of the month counted in this way have thus a serial of 1 to 15 for the first half of the month and 1 to 15 for the second half of the month of 29 days. The 15th day of the waxing moon is called Full Moon day and the 15th (in the case of 30 day months) or 14th (in the case of 29 day months) day of the waning moon is called ‘Hidden Moon’ day.

Tagu is the first month of Myanmar 12 month calendar and its astrological name is Mesha (Aries). Of the flowers that bloom in this month **gant-gaw** (*Mesua ferea*) is traditionally regarded as the flower of Tagu. Myanmar people celebrate national festival every month, and the festival of Tagu is Thingyan festival.

Scholars give different interpretations of the word ‘Thingyan’. The word ‘Thingyan’ oBuFef is said to have been derived from a Sanskrit word ‘Thin ka ran’ (ouF&ef) which means change. So Thingyan connotes change from old season to new season, old year to new year, change from the month of Tabauing which is the twelfth month of Myanmar calendar to the month of Tagu which is the first month of the following year. Thingyan also means move, for in summer the sun

moves from South to North, or from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Tropic of Cancer. The movement of the sun causes the seasons and its re-turn to the North marks the beginning of Myanmar’s three-seasonal year. The advent of Thingyan is signalled by the movement of the sun from the month of Tabauing (Mina or Pisces rdef&moD) to the month of Tagu (Mesha or Aries rdó&moD). In Tagu the life cycle of nature begins anew, ushering in the new year. In essence Thingyan means change. Change from old year to new year, old life to new life, old cycle of seasons to new cycle of seasons. Change is in keeping with the nature, the weather and the seasons of the country. Tabauing the last month of the year has just passed. It is the month of transition—the transition from cold season to warm season. In the month of Tagu, the warm season has arrived in full swing. It is very appropriate that water pouring festival is held while the weather is favourably warm.

There is a legend which tells us how Thingyan festival originated. The two mighty devas (deities) Thagyar Min (Indra) and Athi Brahma were drawn into a controversy over the solution of a mathematical problem. They agreed to refer the matter to a sage called Kavalamine whose verdict would be accepted as final. They also agreed that the winner should cut off the loser’s head. The sage judged that Indra’s soulion was right and so Indra cut off Athi Brahma’s head. But Athi Brahma was so omnipotent a god that if his head were thrown down to the Earth, the Earth would burn to ashes, if thrown into the oceans all water would dry up. So seven goddesses of the seven days were assigned to holding his head by turn. The time when the head changes hands corresponds to Thingyan. The blood which gushed out of the head was believed to be potent and auspicious when applied to one’s body. As Athi Brahma’s body should not remain headless, Indra cut off the head of Mahapeingala Elephant, and joined it on to the Athi Brahma’s body, thereby Athi Brahma became Mahapeinne god (Ganesha). This is

the legend of Thingyan.

One traditional belief which still holds sway over the conservative Myanmar is that at the time of Thingyan, Thagyar Min or Indra descends from Tavatisa, his Celestial Kingdom to Earth for his annual round of inspection—to check whether human beings on Earth are behaving well or not. He is accompanied by two assistant gods Witha-kyone (Vissukama) and Mateli, the former is the registrar-cum-carpenter and the latter is the driver of the chariot vehicle which Indra rides. The registrar carries with him two Record Books,

one for registering the good people who have behaved well and the other for registering bad people who have misbehaved. In life hereafter the good people will be rewarded and punishment awaits bad people in hells.

The above belief may have been based upon one of Myanmar fables in days of yore. It used to be one of most edifying fables to instruct the children in good morals and manners. The elders in the usually extended Myanmar family, either grandpa, grandma, uncle, or aunt, or even old maid or nunny would tell the young ones about

the annual visit of Thagyar Min, warning them not to be naughty, wicked, and mischievous but to be good, otherwise Thagyar Min would mark them down in the black list for punishment. This belief reminds not only the young ones, but also the adults, all and everyone, to live a good life and to do good work for others. True to the teaching of this belief, Myanmar people since time immemorial have been celebrating Thingyan festival with the spirit of goodwill and loving kindness.

In the days of the Myanmar kings Thingyan was celebrated at the Palace where royalty and nobility



Water revellers seen on horse cart. PHOTO: TUN AUNG MYANMARSAR

participated in the water pouring. King Narathihapate (A.D. 1254-87) the last ruler of the Bagan Dynasty was recorded in the chronicle to have built enclosed corridors running from his palace to the bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River, inside which he and his queens, concubines, and courtiers revelled in water throwing. In the **Lawka Byu Har Kyan** (ways of the mundane world) or **Inyone Sardan** (Inyone Forum), a treatise on Court ceremonies and festivals, compiled by Minister Thiri Uzana, rules and rituals regarding the holding of Royal Thingyan are described in detail.

Usually the date of Thingyan festival falls in mid April. Normally it lasts three days but in certain

years four days. The day before the festival begins is called “Akya Ney” which means the eve day of Thingyan. The first day of the festival is called “Akya Ney” which means the day Thagyar Min descends to Earth. On this day when the signal for the exact time of his descent is announced either by beating the big drum (in old days) or sounding the siren or by the report of the cannon, people perform the Thingyan rite of pouring lustral water out of the **Atar** pot. A new earthen pot of about four to six inches in diameter especially made for Thingyan festival is known in Myanmar as “Atar Oh”. It is filled with clear cool and scented water, and is placed in the front of the house.

Sprigs of seven kinds of flora representing seven days of the week, such as **Ohn let** (Coconut palm leave, *Cocos nucifera* Linn) to represent Sunday, **Gantgaw** (Iron wood, *Mesua Ferrea* Linn) or **Khayey** (Star flower tree, *Mimusops elengi Roxb*) to represent Monday, **Sein Pan** (gold mohur tree, *Poinciana regia*) to represent Tuesday, **Ywet Hla** (Croton, *Codiaeum variegatum*) to represent Wednesday, **Myey Zar** (Couch grass, *Cynodon dactylon Pers*) to represent Thursday, **Thi** (Wood apple tree, *Feronia elephantum Corres*) or **Than** (*Terminalia oliveri Brandis*) to represent Friday, and **Dan** (Henna, *Lawsonia inermis* Linn) to represent Saturday, are arranged in order in



A beautiful scene of water throwing. PHOTO: MNA

the **Atar** (the period of thingyan) pot. Sprigs of **Thabyey** (Eugenia, *Eugenia jambolana* Lamk) are also added because Thabyey like Laurel is the symbol of victory for the Myanmar people. When the report of the Thingyan cannon signals the descent of Thagyar Min, the **Atar** pot is raised up above the head to welcome him and then water is poured out to symbolically cleanse and purify the world and its peoples. The sprigs are then made into a bouquet to be placed at the entrance of the house to usher in the new year. To-day only the elder members of the family perform this rite.

The second day of Thingyan is called “Akyat Ney” which means the day Thagyar Min goes round inspecting moral behaviour of human beings. Usually the inspection day is one day. But according to the calculations of the astrologers there can be two inspection days in certain years. Next comes the ‘Atet Ney’ which means the day Thagyar Min ascends to his Celestial Kingdom. The exact time of the ascent is announced by a signal such as beating drum, or cannon report. **Thingyan Sa** (bulletin Predicting the time of transition into the New Year and climatic and crop conditions to be expected in that year) is issued by a board of eminent astrologers. It is a bulletin predicting the time of transition into the new year, and climatic and crop conditions to be expected in that year. Sometimes future situation of the world is foretold in it.

Goodwill, loving kindness and cheerful heart vibrate the spirit of Thingyan. People go out to perform religious and social works such as keeping sabbath, meditating, visiting pagodas and monasteries for worshipping or alms offering, paying homage to the monks, parents, elders, superiors and teachers, bathing and shampooing the aged, cleaning up one’s home and surrounding, and throwing cool scented water at the passerby to cleanse him. Thingyan is a Myanmar national festival held on

a grand scale, in which all Myanmar nationalities, regardless of age, race, class, and religion participate and revel in water pouring.

More than that, Thingyan has assumed an international character since the days of Myanmar kings. It is a free for all fun-lovers festival in which people of every clime and creed can participate benevolently and joyously. The following is an account of the Thingyan Festival participated by Major Michael Symes, an English Envoy despatched to the Court of Inwa, in A.D. 1795, during the reign of King Bodawpaya (A.D. 1782-1819).

“On the 12th of April, the last day of the Birman year, we were invited by the Maywoon to bear a part ourselves in a sport that is universally practised throughout the Birman dominions on the concluding day of their annual cycle. To wash away the impurities of the past, and commence the new year free from stain, women on this day are accustomed to throw water on every man they meet, which the men have the privilege of retorting; this licence gives rise to a great deal of harmless merriment, particularly the young women, who armed with larger syringes and flaggons, endeavour to wet every man that goes along the street, and, in their turn, receive a wetting with perfect good humour; nor is the smallest indecency ever manifested in this or in any other of their sports. Dirty water is never cast; a man is not allowed to lay hold of a woman, but may fling as much water over her as he pleases provided she has been the aggressor; but if a woman warns a man that she does not mean to join in the diversion, it is considered as an avowal of pregnancy, and she passes without molestation.”

“About an hour before sunset we went to the Maywoon’s and found that his lady had provided plentifully to give us a wet reception. In the hall were placed three large china jars, full of water, with bowls

and ladles to fling it. Each of us, on entering, had a bottle of rose-water presented to him, a little of which we in turn poured into the palm of the Maywoon’s hand, who sprinkled it over his own vest of fine flowered muslin; the lady then made her appearance at the door and gave us to understand that she did not mean to join in the sport herself, but made her eldest daughter, a pretty child, in the nurse’s arms, pour from a golden cup some rosewater mixed with sandal-wood, first over her father, and then over each of the English gentlemen; this was a signal for the sport to begin. We were prepared, being dressed in linen waistcoats. From ten to twenty women; young and middle aged, rushed into the hall from the inner apartments, who surrounded and deluged without mercy four men ill able to maintain so unequal a contest. The Maywoon was soon driven from the field; but Mr. Wood having got possession of one of the jars, we were enabled to preserve our ground till the water was exhausted; it seemed to afford them great diversion, especially if we appeared at all distressed by the quantity of water flung in our faces. All parties being tired, and completely drenched, we went home to change our clothes and in the way met many damsels who would willingly have renewed the sport; they, however, were afraid to begin without receiving encouragement from us, not knowing how it might be taken by strangers; but they assailed Baba-sheen and his Birman attendants with little ceremony. No inconvenient consequences were to be apprehended from the wetting; the weather was favourable, and we ran no risk of taking cold. Having put on my dry clothes, we returned to the Maywoon’s and were entertained with a dance and puppet-show that lasted till eleven.” (Michael Symes, **An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava**, London 1800, pp. 178-180)

Uncertainty reigns a day before migrants are to be returned to Turkey

LESBOS (Greece) — Less than 24 hours before Greece is due to begin returning migrants to Turkey, little sign of preparation is evident on Lesbos, the island through which hundreds of thousands of people have poured into Europe since last year.

More than 5,600 migrants have been registered on Greek islands since 20 March, the date on which the agreement takes effect. Returns are due to begin on Monday, but where they will take place from and how many will be returned remains unclear.

“Planning is in progress,” said George Kyritsis, a Greek government spokesman for the migration crisis.

The returns are a key part of an agreement between the European Union and Turkey aimed at ending the influx into Europe of migrants and refugees fleeing poverty and war in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Under the agreement, mi-

grants who cross into Greece illegally from Turkey from 20 March will be sent back to Turkey once their asylum applications have been processed.

The Athens News Agency reported over the weekend that the returns would begin on Monday morning on two Turkish passenger ships chartered by Frontex, the EU border agency. The ships will sail from Lesbos across to the Turkish coastal town of Dikili.

Some 250 people would be returned each day through Wednesday, it said, without citing sources.

Greek officials would neither confirm nor deny the report. A police spokesman on Lesbos said the force was still awaiting instructions.

The EU plans to send hundreds of police and migration officers to Greece over the weekend to help carry out the first returns.



A woman bathes a child at a makeshift camp for migrants and refugees at the Greek-Macedonian border near the village of Idomeni, Greece, on 3 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

On Friday, Greece’s parliament passed an asylum amendment bill needed to implement the agreement. The legislation does not explicitly designate Turkey as a “safe third country” — a formula to make any mass returns legally sound.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and human rights groups have denounced the deal as lacking legal safeguards. Amnesty International has called it deal “a historic blow to human rights”. It said it would send a delegation to Les-

bos and nearby Chios on Monday to monitor the situation.

“The returns in particular are a flagrant violation of EU and international law, making a mockery of the global Refugee Convention,” Amnesty said in a statement.—*Reuters*

UN investigating sex abuse allegations against Tanzanian peacekeepers in Congo



Peacekeepers serving in the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) stand guard in a formation following recent demonstrations in Beni in North Kivu Province in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

KINSHASA — The UN peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of Congo said late on Friday that it has received allegations of sexual abuse against Tanzanian peacekeepers based in Congo’s northeast, the latest in a series of such accusations against UN forces.

The mission said in a statement that it received the allegations against members of its Force Intervention Brigade, tasked with offensive operations, in the village of Mavivi on 23 March and immediately launched an investigation.

“Initial results suggest that there is evidence of transactional sex and sex with minors,” the statement said. “There are also a

number of paternity claims.”

The statement did not say how many cases of abuse had been alleged or provide any further details about the accusations.

UN peacekeeping missions have been beset by accusations of sexual abuse. The United Nations reported 99 such allegations against staff members across the UN system last year.

The United Nations said this week that it has expanded an investigation into new allegations of sexual abuse by foreign peacekeepers in Central African Republic. UN officials said they have interviewed some 108 alleged victims, most of them minors.—*Reuters*

Armenian-backed troops fight Azerbaijan over disputed region for second day

YEREVAN — Fighting between Armenian-backed troops and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region flared for a second day on Sunday after clashes killed dozens, drawing international calls for an immediate ceasefire.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies inside Azerbaijan but is controlled by ethnic Armenians, has run its own affairs with heavy military and financial backing from Armenia since a separatist war ended in 1994.

But the situation along the tense “contact line” has deteriorated in past weeks and a fresh eruption of violence on Saturday left multiple dead on both sides.

The Nagorno-Karabakh military said its troops were attacked by Azeri forces at 0600 (0200 GMT) on Sunday morning.

“The enemy continued aggressive military action, using rocket artillery and armoured

vehicles,” the military said in a statement. “The army is taking necessary measures to suppress the enemy’s aggressive attack offensive.” The Armenian-backed side and Azerbaijan have both reported civilian casualties and accused each other of violating the 1994 ceasefire, a sign that the two-decade-old conflict which has left some 30,000 people dead is far from a peaceful resolution.

Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Moscow said Baku was willing to discuss a compromise with Yerevan once Armenian troops ended an occupation of what he said was 21 per cent of his country’s territory. “For 22 years there have been attempts for a peaceful resolution to this conflict. How many are possible? We are ready for a peaceful resolution to this issue, but if the peaceful route is not chosen, then we will take the military route,” Ambassador Polad Bulbuloglu told the Govorit Moscow

radio station. Crisscrossed with pipelines and sandwiched between the Caspian and Black seas, stability in the southern Caucasus is a major strategic objective for Azerbaijan and other large oil and gas producers in the region.

World top oil producer Russia — which maintains a garrison of troops, jets and attack helicopters in northern Armenia — has been a key mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and moved on Saturday to suppress the renewed violence.

President Vladimir Putin urged the warring sides to immediately observe the ceasefire while Russia’s foreign and defence ministers talked by phone with their Armenian and Azeri counterparts.

The Azeri presidential press service said Turkey, the other major power along with Russia in the region, had voiced support for Baku’s actions, Russia’s RIA news agency reported.—*Reuters*

Syrian forces enter Islamic State-held town near Palmyra

BEIRUT — Syrian and allied forces, backed by Russian air strikes, entered the Islamic State-held town of al-Qaryatayn on Sunday, having gradually surrounded it over the past few days, state media and a monitoring group said.

Al-Qaryatayn is 100 km (60 miles) west of Palmyra, which government forces recaptured

from Islamic State last Sunday.

The town has been held by Islamic State since late August.

Syrian state media said government forces entered the town from a number of directions.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said fighting continued between Islamic State and government forces in the town, which is surrounded by moun-

tains. “Practically speaking, the town can be said to have fallen militarily, because the regime controls the surrounding hills,” the Observatory’s director Rami Abdulrahman told Reuters.

The Observatory said that more than 40 air strikes from Russian and Syrian planes hit near the town on Sunday.—*Reuters*

Japanese researchers clone mice from cells in urine

TOKYO — A team of Japanese researchers has successfully produced cloned mice from cells found in urine, according to an article published Friday in the British science journal *Scientific Reports*.

The discovery by researchers from the University of Yamanashi and other institutions has potential applications in breeding endangered species, as urine can be obtained without causing harm to animals.

Along with water and waste products, animal urine contains some body cells, such as from inside the urethra.

Researchers isolated certain cells in mice urine, and put the nuclei from these cells into mice egg cells that had been stripped of their nuclei. They then implanted the resulting cloned embryos into the fallopian tubes of surrogate mother mice.

Of the four mice lineages used in the experiment, two lineages produced a total of four healthy mice. The two lineages that yielded the healthy mice had a successful birth rate of between 1 and 3 per cent of the treated embryos. Breeding the cloned mice with each other resulted in suc-



Supplied photo shows cloned mice (2 big ones) successfully produced by a team of Japanese researchers from cells found in urine and their offspring. The discovery, reported in the British journal *Scientific Reports* in its 1 April 2016 edition, has potential applications in breeding endangered species, as urine can be obtained without causing harm to animals. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

cessful birth, an encouraging sign for the application of the technology in breeding programs.

Further research will focus on whether the cloned mice live as long as normal mice.

Lead researcher Teruhiko Wakayama of the University of Yamanashi said more examina-

tion is necessary to evaluate the limits of the process.

"We want to see how long after urination the cells can be used, because urine samples taken outdoors may have been sitting around for some time after leaving the body," Wakayama said. —*Kyodo News*

New planet with triple-star system found

WASHINGTON — Scientists have discovered a rare triple-star system with a gas giant planet similar in size to Jupiter.

Researchers at the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics in US found that a binary system once thought to be a single star was actually a pair of stars orbiting one another, and are a part of the triple-star system.

Known planets with three stars appearing in their sky are rare — the new discovery is just the fourth and the closest one yet, allowing for a better look than has been possible, researchers said.

The main star is also brighter than the other stars that serve as suns for their planets, making it easier to study both the star and the planet.

In the new system KELT-4Ab, a gas giant planet, similar in size to Jupiter takes approximately three days to make its way around the star KELT-A, which serves as its sun.

The other two stars, named KELT-B and C, are much far-

ther away and orbit one another over the course of approximately 30 years. It takes the pair approximately four thousand years to orbit KELT-A, 'Phys. Org' reported.

The view from KELT-4Ab would likely be one where its sun, KELT-A, would appear roughly forty times as big as our sun does to us due to its close proximity, researchers said.

On the other hand, the two other orbiting stars would appear much dimmer due to their great distance, shining no brighter than our moon, they said.

Scientists have known of the existence of the KELT system for several years, but it was thought that the binary stars were actually just one star.

The triple-star system offers a unique opportunity for scientists trying to understand how it is that gas giants, such as KELT-4Ab, manage to orbit so close to their star.

The research was published in *The Astronomical Journal*. —PTI

As Ebola flares up, Guinea plans to vaccinate contacts of survivors

CONAKRY/MONROVIA — Guinea will soon vaccinate people who have come into contact with more than 500 men who have recovered from Ebola, a senior health official said, the first time it has vaccinated the contacts of survivors.

The decision reflects research that indicates Ebola can remain in the bodily fluids of survivors for months. The contacts will include but will not be limited to sexual partners, said Fode Tass Sylla, the spokesman for the West African nation's centre for the fight against Ebola.

"We know the virus can stay in the sperm of a healed patient for a certain period of time," Syl-

la said. "That's why we want to vaccinate the circles of 501 men, to avoid all risk of spreading the disease."

The vaccinations will begin in the next few days, Sylla said. The centre also plans an awareness campaign to warn mothers who have recovered from the virus against breastfeeding their newborns, he said.

One of three countries at the epicentre of the world's worst recorded Ebola outbreak, along with Liberia and Sierra Leone, Guinea was declared free of active transmissions of the virus in December 2015. But it announced eight new cases last month.

There are 10,000 survivors

of the deadly hemorrhagic fever in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, according to the World Health Organisation.

The WHO said 800 possible contacts of people suffering from Ebola had been vaccinated against the virus in the so-called "ring vaccination" method. That means swiftly vaccinating anyone who has come into contact with an Ebola sufferer and contacts of theirs.

More than 1,000 people were under observation.

Liberia, which has declared the outbreak over three times, closed its border with Guinea after its neighbour announced its fresh cases. —*Reuters*

Drinking coffee may cut colorectal cancer risk

LOS ANGELES — Coffee lovers, rejoice! Drinking coffee, including decaf, instant and black, may decrease the risk of colorectal cancer, according to a new study which found that the benefits increase with more consumption.

Researchers from the University of Southern California (USC) examined over 5,100 men and women who had been diagnosed with colorectal cancer within the past six months, along with an additional 4,000 men and women with no history of colorectal cancer to serve as a control group.

Participants reported their daily consumption of boiled (espresso), instant, decaffeinated and filtered coffee, as well as their total consumption of other liquids.

A questionnaire also gathered information about many other factors that influence the risk of colorectal cancer, including family history of cancer, diet, physical activity and smoking.

"We found that drinking coffee is associated with lower risk of colorectal cancer, and the more coffee consumed, the lower the risk," said Stephen Gruber from USC.

The data showed that even moderate coffee consumption, between one to two servings a

day, was associated with a 26 per cent reduction in the odds of developing colorectal cancer after adjusting for known risk factors, researchers said.

Moreover, the risk of developing colorectal cancer continued to decrease to up to 50 per cent when participants drank more than 2.5 servings of coffee each day, they said.

The indication of decreased risk was seen across all types of coffee, both caffeinated and decaffeinated.

"We were somewhat surprised to see that caffeine did not seem to matter. This indicates that caffeine alone is not responsible for coffee's protective properties," said Gruber.

Coffee contains many elements that contribute to overall colorectal health and may explain the preventive properties. Caffeine and polyphenol can act as antioxidants, limiting the growth of potential colon cancer cells, researchers said. Melanoidins generated during the roasting process have been hypothesised to encourage colon mobility. Diterpenes may prevent cancer by enhancing the body's defence against oxidative damage, they said.

The findings were published in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*. —PTI



A billboard with a message about Ebola is seen on a street in Conakry, Guinea in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan to have record 1 million foreign workers this year

TOKYO — The number of foreigners working in Japan is expected to top 1 million for the first time this year as the nation moves toward utilizing their labour power more, especially in nursing care and housekeeping fields, government sources said Saturday.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government basically does not allow immigration for permanent settlement, but it has been promoting an increase in foreign workers on the back of calls from the business community to make it easier to hire foreign personnel amid a falling population and globalization of business.

The projection compares with some 910,000 as of the end of last October.

The government is planning to set up an advisory panel at the premier's office to compile the nation's basic policy to address a decline in population, including a labour shortage.

A new growth strategy to be drawn up by the government in May or June is expected to confirm the need to promote employment of high-skilled foreign workers and reviewing an on-the-job-training programme for those from emerging economies, the sources said.

The number of foreign workers in Japan has been on the rise



A symposium in Tokyo on the issue of trainees from Myanmar on 27 March. The number of foreigners working in Japan is expected to top 1 million for the first time in 2016 as the nation moves toward utilizing their labour power more, especially in nursing care and housekeeping fields, government sources said on 2 April. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

in recent years. As of last October, people from China accounted for the largest 35.5 per cent of total foreign workforce in Japan, followed by Viet Nam, the Philippines and Brazil. The number of Nepalese workers has also increased sharply.

The most common employers of them are small or midsize manufacturers. But major Japanese companies in the service sector have increased foreign employees.

Around 30 per cent of the total foreign workers are employed

in Tokyo, and the next common workplaces are the central prefecture of Aichi — home to Toyota Motor Corp. — and Kanagawa Prefecture, near Tokyo.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party launched a committee in March to explore ways to cope

with a labour shortage. Ideas being discussed include the introduction of a new resident status to allow foreigners without any special skills to work in Japan, or easing requirements to enable such people to become part of the labour force in Japan, the sources said.

Efforts have been under way to expand the foreign workforce in Japan. For instance, the Diet is now deliberating a bill to add "nursing care" to the category of reasons to grant resident status, in addition to the currently allowed purposes such as carrying out "diplomacy" and "study."

Japanese immigration law does not give resident status to foreigners seeking to work as housekeepers. But such workers became eligible if they are employed by operators that clear certain requirements under a revised law on special deregulation zones that took effect last September.

People in the related industry are now making preparations for removal of the ban on housekeeping services by foreigners in Kanagawa and Osaka prefectures, designated as special strategic districts.

The government is also expected to expand support for foreigners seeking to work in the areas of information and technology, as well as tourism.—Kyodo News

Trump again slams NATO allies despite Obama plea

WASHINGTON — Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump on Saturday again accused US allies of not pulling their weight in the NATO military alliance, despite a call from President Barack Obama to tone down his foreign policy rhetoric.

The billionaire businessman told a campaign rally in Racine, Wisconsin that allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation "are not paying their fair share" and called the 28-nation alliance "obsolete."

"Either they pay up, including for past deficiencies, or they have to get out. And if it breaks up NATO, it breaks up NATO," Trump said.

Trump has frequently criticized NATO in recent weeks

as the race for the Republican nomination for the 8 November election has heated up.

On Friday, Obama cast doubt on Trump's fitness for office after the former reality TV star refused to rule out using nuclear weapons in Europe and said that Japan and South Korea might need nuclear arms.

"The person who made the statements doesn't know much about foreign policy or nuclear policy or the Korean peninsula, or the world generally," Obama said, warning that the world is closely watching the US election rhetoric.

"I've said before that people pay attention to American elections. What we do is really important to the rest of the world,"

Obama said. Trump's comments on NATO have also sent ripples through the Republican Party, which has traditionally promoted a muscular foreign policy.

Tuesday could be a turning point in the Republican nomination race, when Wisconsin hosts its nominating contest.

Trump, 69, trails his leading rival, US Senator Ted Cruz, 45, of Texas in the Upper Midwestern state.

A Cruz win would make it harder for Trump to reach the magic number of 1,237 delegates needed to secure the nomination before the Republican national convention in July.

The winner will get to claim all of Wisconsin's 42 delegates.—Reuters

Malaysia favours China on high-speed rail project

KUALA LUMPUR — Chinese companies are widely considered as the forerunner for the proposed high-speed railway project linking the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, a local media reported on Sunday.

A series of recent investment by Chinese state-owned companies have helped to lay the ground for the bid for the 350 km high-speed railway, according to the *Sunday Star*, a Malaysian English newspaper.

In March, China Railway Group Limited (CREC), one of China's largest state-owned companies, announced a 2 billion-US dollar investment to build its regional headquarter in Bandar Malaysia, the proposed terminal for the Kuala Lumpur to Singapore line.

The announcement came three months after CREC's successful bid with its Malaysian joint-venture partner in December to acquire 60 per cent of the equity in the Bandar Malaysia project.

On the railway bid, China is facing competitors from Japan, South Korea, France and several other countries.

One of the advantages of the Chinese side is the experience of working with Malaysia on the latter's regular railway system and light rail transit projects, according to the *Star*.

Chinese companies have supplied about 75 to 80 per cent of the locomotives and coaches and related equipment to Malaysia.

China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) has built a manufacturing center for Southeast Asia in Malaysia.

Despite being a late comer in high-speed railway, China has developed the most cost-effective rail system in the world, thanks to China's research and development on major train projects and super lengthy tracks, said Goh Bok Yen, a well-known transportation planning consultant.

However, Goh told the newspaper that it was far from a done deal as the project remains in an early stage.

The governments of Malaysia and Singapore are expected to finalise the commercial model and procurement approach of the project by this year.—Xinhua

Indian priest kidnapped in Yemen 'could be freed soon'

MUMBAI — An Indian priest abducted by gunmen in Yemen last month is safe and could be released soon, a Catholic group said on Sunday, quoting the Indian foreign minister.

Father Tom Uzhunnalil was captured from the southern Yemeni city of Aden by gunmen who killed at least 15 people at an old people's home in an attack that was condemned by Pope Francis.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) said a delegation met Indian Foreign

Minister Sushma Swaraj who said the government was working to secure the priest's safe return.

"She has assured us Father Tom is safe and negotiations are on for his release which could happen very soon," said Father Joseph Chinnaiyan, deputy secretary of the CBCI.

Media reports last week said the priest was killed by Islamic State militants on Good Friday, although no one has claimed responsibility for last month's attack in which gunmen killed four

Indian nuns, two Yemeni female staff members, eight elderly residents and a guard.

Father Chinnaiyan said the reports were inaccurate.

Aden has been racked by lawlessness since Hadi supporters, backed by Gulf Arab military forces, drove fighters of the Iran-allied Houthi group from the city in July last year.

International aid groups have pulled most of their foreign staff from Yemen due to security concerns.—Reuters

PICTURE OF THE DAY



BUENOS AIRES — People let go blue balloons during an event to mark the World Autism Awareness Day at Plaza de Mayo, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 2 April 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

Former Macau partner gets court nod to sue Las Vegas Sands for billions

HONG KONG — A Macau court has ruled that a former business partner of Las Vegas Sands Corp, the world's biggest casino company, can proceed with a lawsuit seeking billions in damages for breaking the terms of their former partnership agreement.

In a filing made on 16 March, a court in the Chinese southern territory denied Las Vegas Sands a motion to dismiss the lawsuit, which alleges that the company, headed by US billionaire Sheldon Adelson, misused trade secrets obtained during their venture.

The former partner, a company called Asian American, which is headed by Taiwanese businessman Marshall Hao, is asking for just over 70 per cent of Las Vegas Sands' profits from 2004 to 2022. Even before taking into account future profits, that would exceed \$8 billion on reported profits to 2015, according to Reuters calculations. Las Vegas Sands, which has taken legal action in Nevada and Macau to try and stop the suit, said: "The company has consistently maintained that this case has no merit. We have confidence that ultimately

the Macao judicial process will reach the same conclusion." Hao's lawyer Jorge Menezes said the court had not yet set a date, but a hearing should take place in the coming months.

He said he could not comment further due to the legal proceedings.

The partnership of Las Vegas Sands and Asian American submitted a bid for a gaming concession in 2001 in Macau, which has since become the world's largest gambling hub.

During the process, Las Vegas Sands switched partners, and instead teamed up

with Hong Kong group Galaxy Entertainment, a venture that went on to win a licence in the former Portuguese colony over a decade ago.

Asian American claims that Las Vegas Sands terminated its joint venture and then made a near identical bid submission with Galaxy, using details that were exclusive to their previous partnership.

"We are delighted and looking forward to see this dispute adjudicated on the merits for the first time. We have walked a long and difficult path to reach this goal," Hao told Reuters.—Reuters

Doping-British doctor alleges he doped 150 sportsmen

LONDON — UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) said it was "deeply concerned and shocked" by a *Sunday Times* report in which a British doctor alleged he had prescribed banned performance-enhancing drugs to 150 sportsmen including several Premier League footballers.

The paper said Dr Mark Bonar claimed his "clients" included an England cricketer, British Tour de France cyclists, a British boxing champion, tennis players and martial arts competitors as well as footballers. In the past six years he had treated more than 150 sportsmen from the UK and abroad with banned substances such as erythropoietin (EPO), steroids and human growth hormone, and the performance improvements were "phenomenal", the report added.

The *Sunday Times* said that during a series of meetings with undercover reporters, Bonar had spoken about sportsmen he had treated. The newspaper also sent a sportsman to Bonar's clinic, who recorded his appointments with a hidden camera. Neither the newspaper nor Reuters was able to substantiate the claims made by the doctor.

UKAD chief executive Nicole Sapstead said the body had been aware of allegations against Bonar after a sportsperson approached them two years ago but had not been able to act upon them because he was not affiliated to any particular sport.

"Under current legislation, UKAD has the power only to investigate athletes and entourage (including medics) who are themselves governed by a sport," she said.

UKAD had considered informing the General Medical Council, which oversees medical practitioners in Britain, but decided the evidence they had was insufficient for such a referral, Sapstead added.

UKAD chairman David Kenworthy said an independent review would be conducted into the issues raised by the report.

"They will be asked to look at the way the information supplied by the sportsperson was handled and whether proper procedures were followed," he said.

"They will also be asked to make any recommendations to improve the way in which intelligence is dealt with in the future so that UKAD can be as effective as possible in keeping sport clean." The news is likely to cast a further shadow on the sporting world ahead of the Rio Olympics.

Russia was suspended from international track and field last year following a report exposing widespread cheating and corruption among its athletes.

The country faces a ban from the Olympics unless Russia can prove to the World Anti-Doping Agency and the IAAF governing body that it has met a series of conditions regarding its anti-doping operations.—Reuters

One person dies when small plane hits car on California highway

LOS ANGELES — A passenger in a car died when a small plane carrying two people made an emergency landing on a Southern California highway on Saturday and struck the vehicle in a crash that left five others injured, officials said.

The single-engine Lancair IV came down on I-15 near Highway 76, in the area of Fallbrook, said Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor in an email.

The propeller plane made an emergency land-

ing on its belly and skidded along a lane for more than 100 feet (30 metres), crashing into the back of a Nissan Sentra parked at the side of the highway, said North County Fire Protection District spokesman John Buchanan.

Before the plane came down, the four people in the Nissan had stopped to sync the sedan's Bluetooth wireless system, Buchanan said.

The crash killed a woman in the car's back seat, Buchanan said.—Reuters

Advertisement for YWB Seismic Survey IEE Report

Total Exploration & Production Myanmar is going to carry out a marine seismic survey in Yetagon West Block (YWB) located 250 km west of the territorial water of Tanintharyi Division, Myanmar. This survey is scheduled to start in April 2016 and requires 25 days to complete.

Total EP Myanmar has prepared an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) with Artelia Co., Ltd for the proposed project. The report is available to see at:

- Total EP Myanmar's webpage <http://www.total.com/fr/dossiers/total-au-myanmar-engagemnt-et-responsabilite>
- Total EP Myanmar office in Yangon: No. 5, Sacred Tooth Relic Lake Avenue, Punh Pin Gone Quarter No.5, Mayangone Township, Yangon,
- Artelia's office in Yangon: No. 53/61, Thein Phyu Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon-Myanmar
- Chief Minister Office, Tanintharyi Region, Dawei
- Myeik District Fisheries Department office, Tanintharyi Region, Myeik
- Dawei Department of Fisheries, Tanintharyi Region, Divisional Fisheries Office, Dawei
- Environmental Conservation Department, No. (59) Seik Kan Thar Lane, Kyat Sar Pyan Ward, Tanintharyi Region, Dawei

Feedback and comments on the report can be provided in writing to EIAFeedback.TEPM@Total.com, Charles.bouhelier@arteliagroup.com and Artelia's offices in Yangon by 15 April 2016.

Amid ticketing fraud, China box office up 51% in first quarter

BEIJING — China's box office revenues grew 51 per cent in the first quarter of 2016, Chinese state radio said on Sunday, although a ticketing scandal has cast doubt on the real size of the country's booming movie market.

Total sales of tickets in China were 14.5 billion yuan (1.57 billion pounds) in the first three months of the year, boosted by a 6.9 billion yuan haul in February as millions flocked to cinemas over the Lunar New Year holiday, said China National Radio.

Despite government censorship and a limit of 34 foreign films a year, Hollywood has become increasingly reliant on China's rapidly growing box office as US market growth has stalled.

In February, Chinese sales topped the US for the first time, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Eager to cash in on the boom, and create a rival to Hollywood that could promote Chinese values, domestic companies like e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd are working with US studios in an



Actors Donnie Yen (5th R) and Mike Tyson (centre L) attend a promotional event for the movie "Ip Man 3" with other actors and crew members in Beijing, China, on 1 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

effort to produce local blockbusters.

But a ticketing fraud has called into question the validity of sales data. More than 100 Chinese investors descended on the offices of one financier of martial arts movie Ip man 3

on Thursday, demanding their money back after the film's distributor admitted to buying 56 million yuan in tickets to bump up sales.

Among the bright spots for China's film industry was local hit "The Mermaid", an oddball

romantic comedy which broke box office records by bringing in around 3.4 billion yuan.

Chinese films accounted for almost three-quarters of the country's box office in the first quarter, China National Radio reported.—Reuters

'I Am Cait' wins outstanding reality show at GLAAD Awards

LOS ANGELES — Caitlyn Jenner's "I Am Cait" has tied with TLC's "I Am Jazz" to win the honour of outstanding reality program at the 27th Annual GLAAD Media Awards.

In its applauded first season, the show documented Jenner's transition and her introduction into the world as a transgender woman, including legally changing her name and accepting the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2015 ESPYs.

Now currently in its second season, "I Am Cait" follows Jenner, 66, and her friends, including trans activists Candis Cayne, Chandi Moore and Jenny Boylan, as they embark on a cross-country road trip to raise awareness for LGBT issues, reported E! Online.

The other nominees in the reality television category included Discovery Life's "New Girls on the Block", "Oxygen's The Prancing Elites Project" and "Fuse's Transcendent".—PTI

Reese Witherspoon honoured by magazine

LOS ANGELES — Actress Reese Witherspoon and singer Dolly Parton have been named among Southern Living magazine's top Innovators Changing the South for 2016.

The 40-year-old "Sweet Home Alabama" actress-turned-lifestyle entrepreneur, who hails from Nashville, Tennessee, has been celebrated by the publication's editors for her Draper James clothing and home collection, applauding the star for prioritising "made-in-America, made-in-the-South products".

They notified Witherspoon of her inclusion in the annual list via Twitter, to which she exclaimed, "Such an honour!!! Thanks @SouthernLiving! @draperjames #SouthernPride".

Country legend Dolly Parton was also recognised for her continued philanthropy work with Imagination Library, which provides free books to underprivileged kids, and the success of her biographical TV movie, Coat of Many Colours, which became a huge hit with viewers in December last year.

Others included as top innovators of the south were blues rockers Alabama Shakes and their frontwoman, Brittany Howard, comedians Aziz Ansari and Tig Notaro, documentary maker Joe York, authors Jesmyn Ward and Brene Brown, US women's soccer

star Morgan Brian, and jazz musician Jon Batiste and Stay Human, the house band on America's The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.—PTI



Actress Reese Witherspoon. PHOTO: REUTERS

I can inspire young women: Rihanna

LONDON — R&B star Rihanna says she might not be given the title of a role model by people but the singer feels she can inspire young women.

The 28-year-old "Work" singer received the Rock Star Award at the BET's Black Girls Rock! ceremony in New Jersey on 1 April and used her acceptance speech to encourage her fans to love themselves, reported Female First.

"Thank you so much for celebrating us in a world that doesn't celebrate us enough. The minute you learn to love yourself, you will not want to be anybody else."

"Role model is not the title they like to give me...But I think I can inspire a lot of young women to be themselves and that is half the battle. Hopefully one day I'll be raising my own little black girl



R&B star Rihanna. PHOTO: REUTERS

who rocks," she said.

Actress Tracee Ellis Ross hosted the event which will air on BET on 5 April.

Founder/CEO Beverly Bond

created Black Girls Rock! to highlight the achievements of black female pioneers in art, music, philanthropy and community service.—PTI

Amber Rose's emojis rake USD 2 million on first day

LOS ANGELES — Model-designer Amber Rose's new emoji kit reportedly made USD 2 million on its opening day.

The 32-year-old star debuted her MuvaMojs, a set of 900 symbols available from Apple and Android app stores on 31 March and the model is said to be set to receive a cut of the profits after the successful start.

Rose has already made USD 4 million out of the app after signing a deal with developer Appmoji.

Her app features many designs, including one glittery emoji stating 'Free Kesha', in support of the "Tik Tok" hitmaker who is currently involved in a very public legal battle with her record label to

be released from her contract over allegations of sexual abuse she has made against producer Dr Luke. Announcing MuvaMoji, Amber said, "Hey, you guys. It's Amber Rose, and I've got a new app — MuvaMoji."

"Download it on iTunes and Android. Have fun, Rosebuds! I love you guys! (sic)."—PTI

Greeks celebrate Pillow Fight day with anti-war message



People fight with pillows during the International Pillow Fight Day in Bucharest, Romania's capital, on 2 April 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

ATHENS — Hundreds of Greek citizens "armed" with pillows participated in a fun street fight in the center of Athens and the northern city of Thessaloniki on Saturday, celebrating the International Pillow Fight day and sending an anti-war message.

In the second annual edition of the flash mob event held in Greece, children and adults played "clashing" on central squares in order to release stress and spread the joy.

The main goal of the organisers of the pillow fight in Greece, as well as their "fellow" fighters abroad, is to offer people a chance to decompress and have fun.

"We are all hiding a kid inside. It is time we let it free to play and let go for a few minutes all the

problems on its mind," Elina Andreadou, a member of the Greek organising committee explained.

With about 50,000 migrants from war-torn countries stranded in tragic conditions in Greece over the past two months, Greek pillow fighters added one more goal for the event this year: call for an end to wars.

"Our message is clear: The only war we accept is pillow fight... We strongly believe that our world would be a better place if only we could hold pillow fights more often, let's say once a week," Andreadou said. The International Pillow Fight Day is celebrated over the past decade annually on 4 April with pillow fights in over 100 cities around the world.—Xinhua

Chef uses burning passion for smoked food to stoke unique business

SAPPORO — Kosuke Nagai, a chef based in northern Japan, has been so charmed by the magic of smoked foods that he created "smoked cakes," taking the cooking method to new and unusual lengths and coming up with interesting results.

Exposing food to smoke is an ancient method for cooking and preserving many types of food, and Nagai says the "magic of smoke drastically transforms ingredients."

In January, Nagai opened "Ozu Smoke Lab" in Sapporo in the northernmost Japanese prefecture of Hokkaido, a specialty shop which sells smoke-cooked cakes.

"Some people visit here lured by the smell. (A lot of people) are surprised when they learn that I'm making cakes," said Na-

gai, 34, while smoking scones.

To make his creations, Nagai smokes almost all the ingredients, such as flour, cheese and butter, for up to one day. After mixing them, the chef bakes cakes in an oven and smokes them in a high heat to add the final touch. His shop is filled with the spicy odor of wood chips used in the smoking process.

"The smoke mellows the sweet flavor, so people who are not very fond of sweet stuff also love it," said Nagai.

Nagai, who is schooled in traditional Japanese cuisine, opened a smoked Japanese food store when he was 27, seeking to establish a "one-of-a-kind" outlet.

Nagai's pursuit of his passion has not always been easy, and he has quite literally had some ideas go up in smoke. But while there

were many failures, there were also breakthroughs — opening up new possibilities for the cooking method, he says.

Experience prompted him to take on the challenge of baking the cakes he has always loved.

Almost all ingredients he uses, except chocolate, are locally sourced in Hokkaido.

"Hokkaido's climate with low humidity is very suitable for smoked food," Nagai said.

He is now trying to develop "new smokes" using rice chaff and buckwheat husk, introducing them at three stores he runs — respectively specialised in "washoku" Japanese food, meat and baked goods.

"I would like to spread Hokkaido's charms through the characteristics of smoke," Nagai says—Kyodo News

Millions of Chinese honour deceased on Tomb-Sweeping holiday

BEIJING — The first day of China's traditional Qingming holiday, or Tomb Sweeping Day, saw millions of Chinese visit burial sites to honour their deceased family members.

More than 3.9 million people

followed the Chinese tradition and visited the grave sites of relatives on Saturday, according to a statement by an office of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, quoting statistics collected at 150 major cemeteries nationwide.

This figure marked a 13.8-per cent decrease from the same period last year, it said.

The authorities sent more than 23,000 workers to help ensure order at relevant areas across the country.—Xinhua



News Channel in Brief

4-4-2016 (Monday)

6:00 am

- Paritta By Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw

8:35 am

- Documentary (Women In Myanmar Society)

9:35 am

- Dances of Thingyan Festival
- Weekly Entertainment News

11:15 am

- Documentary (ASEAN)

11:35 am

- MRTV's Youth Programme

12:35 am

- 2014-2015 Academy (Delay)

4:35 pm

- University of Distance Education

(TV Lectures)

-Second Year (Psychology)

5:15 pm

- Documentary

5:35 pm

- Socio Economic Scenes

6:35 pm

- Yes or No Talk Show (Review of Season-1) (Part-2)

7:15 pm

- TV Drama Series

8:35 pm

- Documentary

9:00 pm

- News

- TV Drama Series

- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

Note / Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Spring beauty attracts many people on 1st day of Qingming Festival



Children play at the botanic garden of Shijiazhuang, capital of north China's Hebei Province, on 2 April 2016. The spring beauty at the botanic garden attracted many people on the first day of the three-day Qingming Festival. PHOTO: XINHUA



(4-4-2016 07:00am ~ 5-4-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	The Rising Glory Of Myanmar Arts
07:55	Am	Myanmar Street Foods
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	"Myanmar's Beauty and Nature" Beach
08:51	Am	Thingyan Songs & Dances
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Continuation In Rural Tradition
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Jade Pagoda
10:45	Am	We'll Leave After 12 Passengers Are On Board

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Food Trip (Ep-5) (Part-2)
07:53	Pm	Dengue Fever
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Noodle With Fermented Soya Bean)
08:43	Pm	Next Weekend
08:51	Pm	Thingyan Songs & Dances

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

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



(4-4-2016, Monday)

6:00 pm

- Weather Report
- Music Programme

6:30 pm

- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

6:40 pm

- Thingyan Dances

7:00 pm

- International Drama Series

7:40 pm

- International Drama Series

8:30 pm

- Myanmar Video

From 4-4-2016 (Monday) 6:00 Pm
To 5-4-2016 (Tuesday) 6:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Ronaldo goal hands Barca first defeat in a year

BARCELONA — Cristiano Ronaldo struck late to give Real Madrid a 2-1 victory in the 'Clasico' and ruin Barcelona's 39-game unbeaten run in a tense game overshadowed by debatable refereeing decisions on Saturday.

Gerard Pique headed in a corner to give La Liga leaders Barcelona a deserved lead after 56 minutes but Karim Benzema's acrobatic volley levelled for the visitors who were lucky to avoid conceding a penalty in the first half.

Real captain Sergio Ramos was also fortunate to escape with a yellow card from referee Alejandro Jose Hernandez in the second half although the defender was eventually sent off in the 83rd minute.

Hernandez also ruled out a headed goal by Gareth Bale.

Barcelona failed to capitalise on their numerical advantage in the closing stages and went 2-1 behind in the 85th minute when Ronaldo chested down a high cross from Bale and fired the ball in at the near post.

"Winning here is a huge prize for all our players because they put in an enormous performance," Real coach Zinedine Zidane told a news conference after handing Barca their first defeat in any competition since February 2015.

"I'm very happy because it's not easy to win here, few teams win here."

Barcelona have 76 points with seven matches to play, seven ahead of third-placed Real. Atletico Madrid are six points off the pace after Antoine Griezmann hit two goals in their 5-1 rout of Real Betis.

Fernando Torres, Juanfran and Thomas Partey also netted for Atletico. Real's win was their first in the league at the Nou Camp since 2012. It was also Barca's first home defeat since they were beaten 1-0 by Malaga in February 2015.

"It's painful to lose at home but it had to happen some day," said coach Luis Enrique.

"I'm happy with the attitude of our players if not the result. We could have won, or drawn, but Madrid were effective at the end." Barca made a rampant start and Luis Suarez missed a glaring chance in the 10th minute. They could also have had a penalty midway through the first half when Lionel Messi fell over Ramos' trailing leg after a mazy run into the box.—Reuters

Kane keeps Spurs dreaming as Arsenal, City win

LONDON — Harry Kane was on target again to earn Tottenham Hotspur a 1-1 draw at Liverpool on Saturday but the stalemate opens a path for Leicester City to forge seven points clear in the title race this weekend.

While Arsenal crushed Watford 4-0 and Manchester City hammered Bournemouth by the same score to breathe fresh life into their faint hopes, Leicester's closest pursuers moved to within four points thanks to Kane's predatory instincts.

After Philippe Coutinho had put Liverpool ahead soon after halftime in a vibrant contest, Kane conjured a brilliant strike

out of very little to become the first Spurs player in the Premier League era to score 22 league goals in a season.

Leicester, who have played one game fewer, now have the chance to open a huge gap over Mauricio Pochettino's side with just six matches left if they can beat Southampton at the King Power Stadium on Sunday.

Kane, who felt "very proud of a great achievement" after becoming Spurs' highest scorer in any league season since Gary Lineker in 1991-92, said his team were "a tad disappointed" with the result.

"We will watch

the Leicester game tomorrow and hope Southampton can get a result and do us a favour," he told Sky Sports.

In the battle for Champions League football next season, not even another free kick masterpiece from Dimitri Payet could inspire fifth-placed West Ham United as they had Cheikhou Kouyate sent off in a 2-2 draw with Crystal Palace.

At the other end of the table, Aston Villa's disillusioned fans made a long, loud protest as their side were humiliated 4-0 at home to Chelsea and now stand on the verge of relegation.

Newcastle United are

hot favourites to join Villa in the Championship next season after going down 3-2 in a dramatic clash at fellow strugglers Norwich City who celebrated a 93rd-minute winner from Martin Olsson.

United's north-east rivals Sunderland are also in deep trouble, four points adrift of safety after a goalless home draw with West Bromwich Albion.

After losing three home games in a row, Arsenal rebounded to dominate Watford, who had knocked them out of the FA Cup at the Emirates Stadium last month, with Alexis Sanchez, Alex Iwobi, Hector Bellerin and Theo Walcott on target.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who singled out exciting young Nigerian Iwobi for praise, said the performance had "brought a lot of belief back".

On whether the Gunners were still in the title hunt, Wenger said: "It doesn't matter how realistic our challenge is, we can only believe in our own game. We just continue".

Manchester City had lost four of their last six games but stopped the rot with a blistering start at Bournemouth, Fernando, Kevin de Bruyne and Sergio Aguero scoring within 19 minutes.

Aleksandar Kolarov added the fourth in the dying seconds.

Arsenal are third, eight points behind Leicester and four adrift of Spurs, but they lead fourth-placed Manchester City by four. The most dramatic action came in the relegation dog-fight at Carrow Road where Aleksandar Mitrovic looked set to be Newcastle's hero again.—Reuters



Manchester City's Sergio Aguero in action with Bournemouth's Steve Cook during Barclays Premier League at Vitality Stadium on 2 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Classy Medvedeva bags world title on debut

BOSTON — Russian teenager Evgenia Medvedeva put on a flawless display with a record-setting free skate to cap a stunning debut senior season with the women's title at the world figure skating championships in Boston on Saturday.

The 16-year-old combined seven triples with exquisite spins as she tallied 150.10 in her four-minute programme that ended with her thrusting both fists in the air in triumph as she broke the record set by South Korea's Kim Yuna at the 2010 Olympics.

Medvedeva finished with 223.86 points overall to add the

world crown to her Grand Prix Final and European titles, finishing 8.47 points ahead of Ashley Wagner, who claimed a first podium place in 10 years for an American in the event.

"I won't realize quickly I won today because one year ago, I was still skating juniors," she told reporters through a translator. "Actually I don't really have any emotions right now... I left everything on the ice."

Fellow Russian Anna Pogorilaya finished third and American champion Gracie Gold, who led after the short programme, fell early in a nervous performance to drop down to fourth.

Medvedeva also became the first woman to win world junior and senior women's titles in successive years.

Earlier, Canadians Meagan Duhamel and Eric Radford came from behind to successfully defend the pairs title they won in Shanghai 12 months ago.

The Canadian duo had struggled for most of the season since that triumph in China but Duhamel and Radford found their form with a personal-best free skate score of 153.81 points for a 231.99 total. They skated to Adele's "Hometown Glory" and were the only pair to land a quad throw Salchow. "It was an out-

of-body experience," Duhamel said. "How did we just do that? It's like a dream."

China's Sui Wenjing and Han Cong, who led after the short programme, struggled with a poor free skate to settle for a silver medal for the second straight year. The Chinese pair led by 2.67 after the short program but could only manage a score of 143.62 for 224.47 total points. Five-time champion Aliona Savchenko of Germany and new partner Bruno Massot, skating together at a world championships for the first time, took bronze with a 216.17 total.—Reuters