

Closer cooperation matters in national development: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker

PAGE 3



Government-owned media houses to publish public criticism over government's activities

PAGE 3



ANALYSIS

The business of government

PAGE 8

P.O.C'S WALK FREE

Political prisoners, activists, students freed from jail under presidential pardon

Aye Min Soe



A student protester (C) and his family member cry after he was released by the new government's general amnesty at Thayawady court, Thayawady, Bago division on 8 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

OVER the course of yesterday 113 political 'prisoners of conscience' including political activists and students facing trial connected with political causes were released from prisons across the country, according to the police source.

Sixty-nine students from Thayawady Prison were among those released yesterday, freed by presidential pardon.

The release comes a day after newly appointed State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi pledged to strive for the granting of presidential pardon to political prisoners and other political activists deemed to be unfairly detained.

Concerning those who remain detained for political reasons but come under the umbrella of people eligible for pardon, the State Counsellor's Office released a statement signed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday stating that the cases of those who were attending hearings on 8 April were revoked but the process for dropping charges against those who had not yet been assigned a fixed court date will require further work.

She pledged in the statement that the process for releasing the remaining detainees would be carried out when courts reopen after the Myanmar new year holidays which end on 20 April.

See page 3 >>

INSIDE



Relics unearthed at ancient pagoda in Sagaing

PAGE 2



A patient receives treatment for heat stroke in Mandalay in 2014. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Temperatures in Mandalay expected to reach 44 degrees centigrade over Thingyan period

Aung Thant Khaing

TEMPERATURES are expected to reach 44 degrees centigrade over the Thingyan festival period in Mandalay, according to an official from Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (Upper Myanmar).

Temperatures reached a high of around 40 degrees centigrade on Tuesday and Mandalay's tempera-

tures are expected to soar to about 42 degrees centigrade over the next few days, said Director U Kyaw Lwin Oo of the department.

"Temperatures can reach 44 degrees centigrade in arid zones," said the director, adding that incidences of heat stroke will persist as long as there are high temperatures.

See page 3 >>

Myanmar, China make agreement on further cooperation in media sector

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint received the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call, the two representatives discussed development of the country's media sector which is being undertaken through cooperation between My-

anmar and China and further work to be undertaken.

Also present were Permanent Secretary U Tint Swe and officials. — *Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint receiving the Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang at his office in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

KBZ foundation provides water to Pyawbwelay Village

KBZ's Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation provided 2,800 gallons of drinking water to the people of Pyawbwelay Village in Twantay Township yesterday as locals were experiencing scarcity of water.

The KBZ's convoy of water bowsters reached the village located about 7 miles from Twantay yesterday and distributed drinking water to the villagers.

The foundation has also planned to supply drinking water to the people in 65 village-tracts in the township this dry season.

With 20 water bowsters, the Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation supplied water to the areas experiencing a scarcity of water nationwide.

The foundation received an award for excellence in social responsibility from the presi-

dent in 2015 for its water supply project including drilling tube wells, water supply and building water supply facilities nationwide.

It has so far spent US\$5 million on its water supply project.

The foundation also received the London-based Euromoney's Corporate Social Responsibility Award 2015 last year. — *GNLM*



KBZ foundation provides water to Pyawbwelay Village. PHOTO: KBZ

Relics unearthed at ancient pagoda in Sagaing



Unearthed Buddha Images seen. Photo: Maung Chit Lin

RELICS including 331 bronze Buddha Images were unearthed at the ancient pagoda near Meza river in Inn Daw Township, Sagaing Region recently.

The Buddha Images and relics were discovered while renovation of the pagoda was being undertaken at the end of last month, said locals, adding that the relics found in the pa-

goda are being kept for public obeisance.

The ancient pagoda, with the title of Maha Muni Datu Yanthi, was built by King Monyin in 796, they said.

The pagoda that stands 13.5 feet tall is being rebuilt to a height of 27 feet with the use of contribution funds provided by well wishers. — *Maung Chit Lin*

MNHRC welcomes State Counsellor Office's announcement

THE Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has announced their welcome of a statement from the State Counsellor's Office yesterday.

In its announcement, the Office pledges to strive for the release of political prisoners, political activists and

students charged in cases connected with politics as soon as possible with the use of all possible resources.

The MNHRC said that the commission will try its utmost to help the government's human rights promotion and protection activities. — *GNLM*

IFAD promises more agricultural assistance

THE International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has financed an agricultural development project on 303 acres of farmland in Pawsankhaw village, Pyinmana township, Nay Pyi Taw, it has been learned.

Project Director U Kyaw Win, together with IFAD officials, inspected the progress made on the project on Thursday. In meeting with local farmers, an official explained

IFAD's missions to tackle rural poverty, provide grants and loans to improve farming productivity and supply farming implements.

Farmers from Zeephyubin village proposed a similar project in their village for the local residents to access high incomes and improve the local economy. The IFAD has pledged to fulfill their requests. — *Than Oo (Laymyathnar)*

Closer cooperation matters in national development: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker

CLOSER cooperation matters most in national development, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint said yesterday during his first meeting with departmental officials and local residents in Tamwe township, Yangon Region.

The speaker stressed the need of civil servants to be accountable to the people, warning them not to abuse their positions and public trust.

U Win Myint urged them to avoid bribery and corruption in accord with the anti-corruption guidelines issued by the President's Office on Monday. Under the guidelines, civil servants are not allowed to accept gifts worth



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint. PHOTO: REUTERS

more than K25,000 (US\$21).

He also urged them to forbid discrimination on the grounds of party, race, religion or personality creed with the broader goal of

bringing co-operation to aid national development, emphasising the importance of mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Priority to be given to better livelihoods of rural people in Yangon Region, Chief Minister says

Ko Moe

THE Yangon region government is set to focus on socio-economic development of rural people in the region, said Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein.

Priorities will be given to improving the livelihood of farmers and rural people and to ensuring delivery of technology in order to add value to agricultural products through international support, added the Chief Minister.

The Yangon Region Government recently announced that K32.2 billion, 75 per cent of the region's total capital expenditure, will be allocated to 12 townships out of the municipal area of the city to improve infrastructure and services in road transport and the health sector.

On agriculture and livestock, a target has been set to ensure regional food sufficiency and to move towards export surplus as a goal, said the Chief Minister, adding that measures

will be taken to attract more investments to increase job opportunities.

Moreover, the government will do its utmost to address traffic problems and improve the sewage system, potable water supply and electricity as well.

In his address at a parliamentary session yesterday, the Chief Minister pointed out those townships outside the municipal area lagged behind in development as sufficient funds did not go to the townships.



Enthusiasts try their creative motorcycles at the Mandalay Custom Bike show in Mandalay. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Enthusiasts display creative custom bikes in Mandalay

BIKE enthusiasts displayed their creative motorcycles at the Mandalay Custom Bike show in Mandalay yesterday.

The show attracted more than 120 creative custom bikes, with an organiser saying that the event was aimed at sharing creative and imaginary arts among motor enthusiasts.

The first show was held at the Mandalay Resort Hotel in 2009 and the second at the City Hall in 2010.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

Temperatures in Mandalay expected to reach 44 degrees centigrade over Thingyan period

>> From page 1

Mandalay set a record high of 45 degrees centigrade in May, 2010, followed by 40.7 degrees centigrade in 2011, 42.5 degrees centigrade in 2012, 43.7 degrees centigrade in 2013 and 42 degrees centigrade in 2014 when 18

people suffered heat stroke and were hospitalised.

Daytime temperatures are expected to be higher due to this year's El Nino impact, said Assistant Director U Than Zaw of the department.

Excessive heat will persist unless the rains come, he added.

Spectrum Roadmap announced on ministry website

THE Directorate of Telecommunications under the Ministry of Transport and Communications has announced its plan for a National Table of Frequency and Allocations and its Spectrum Roadmap to be applicable in five years on its website.

Details of the plan are available at www.mcit.gov.mm.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Government-owned media houses to publish public criticism over government's activities

THE Peaceful co-existence of the diversity of ideologies and the right to freedom of expression is needed to ensure the prevalence of democracy in the country, said Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint yesterday.

Speaking to staff from News and Periodicals Enterprise and Printing and Publishing Department at Kyemon Daily in Nay Pyi Taw's Zeyarthingi Township the Union minister said that the state-owned media is tasked with informing the public of what the elected government is doing for the people.

He also stressed the need to point out the failures of those in government bodies, reflecting the voice of the people including individuals and organisations that have different views

of government agencies at the same time.

The government-owned media houses will publish criticism from the people over the government's activities, he stated.

During the meeting, the Union minister called for point of view of staff on implementation of the government's policies, saying that their point of view could help all involved achieve the success of implementation.

Next, the Union minister met with staff from Myanmar Radio and Television in Tatkon Township, calling for a vision set for MRTV to become a broadcast media that can draw public attention and stressing the need to work together for further development.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint talks to staff from News and Periodicals Enterprise and Printing and Publishing Department at Kyemon Daily in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Political prisoners, activists, students freed from jail under presidential pardon

>> From page 1

Bo Kyi, Joint Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) said in the exclusive interview with BBC that there are 121 political prisoners, 116 are under detention facing trial and 298 are currently on bail and facing trial.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International UK released a statement welcoming the release of the prisoners of conscience.

"Today's release of most of the student protesters is a huge step forward for human rights in Burma (Myanmar), and we are delighted that these men and women will walk free," said Amnesty International's Burma Researcher Laura Haigh in the statement.

"It sends a strong message

about the new government's intention to end the cycle of political arrest and detention in Burma. We are now looking forward to the release of all other prisoners of conscience—including those students who are facing charges in other courts. The new government must ensure that no prisoner of conscience is left in jail," Laura Haigh said.

Yesterday's release of students and political activists is the first time the new government has made use of the president's pardoning power.

Meanwhile, 2,178 prisoners who got time off for good behaviour annually granted by the Director-General of the Correctional Department were released yesterday from their respective prisons.

Crime NEWS

344,000 Yaba tablets seized in Taunggyi

A COMBINED investigation team comprising local authorities and members of the anti-drug squad from Tachilek seized 344,000 yaba pills from a vehicle being driven by one Khun saw Htee at milepost 98, Taunggyi-Kalaw road, Haehole entrance gate on Wednesday.

Similarly, police seized 10 yaba pills from one Myo Min Tun who was interviewed by police whilst walking on Kyimyindine night market road on Tuesday. Police searched the house of by Myo Min Tun and found 610 yaba pills and meth-amphetamine weighing 2 grams. The house was located on Thayattaw 6 road, Thayattaw Southern ward, Kyimyindine township.

On the same day, police



Myo Min Tun. PHOTO: MPF

discovered heroin weighing 30 grams, 505 yaba pills and raw opium weighing 16 grams on two motorbike riders. Aung Aung and passenger Ma New Yee and

Nay Lin Aung with his passenger Aung Pu. Police have filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— Myanmar Police Force

Raw opium and Yaba seized in Kalaw



Myo Min Aung and Min Hein. PHOTO: MPF

AN anti-drug squad seized raw opium weighing 12 kilograms from a motorbike being driven by one Myo Min Aung on Pyi Htaung Su road, Kalaw town on Tuesday.

Similarly, police discovered 10,000 yaba pills on a motorbike being driven by Sai Gam Hsai and another motorbike at the Laught San at Nakhilo entrance gate, milepost 80/4, on Wednesday.

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

Raw opium and oil solid opium eized in Naung Thayar

A combined investigation team comprising local authorities and members of the anti-drug squad from Pinlaung searched a house owned by Khun Maung Pe and seized raw opium weighing 8.1 kilos, oil solid opium weighing 1.8kilos and Ks1.5 lakh at Lite Pay village, Naung Tayar township on 3 April. The police found Khun Soe Thein, son of Khun Maung Pe while Khun Maung Pe was away from his home.

And, the police searched a house owned by Ma Nan Aung and discovered Yabba 52000 tablets and raw opium weighing 36 gram at Mabein township on 2 April.



Khun Maung Pe. PHOTO: MPF

On the same day, the police seized Yabba 2600 tablets from a motorbike driven by Kyaw Ye Aung near Ngo Sin village, Ma-

bein township. The police filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Fire destroys home in Minbu

AN outbreak of fire caused by an errant cigarette destroyed a house in Kalarpar village, Minbu township on Tuesday. According to an investigation, the fire began when one U Tin Shing, 70, lit a relaxing cigarette whilst on the toilet. The

fire quickly got out of control and damaged his house, paddy and barn. The fire was put out by firemen with the assistance of neighbours.

The police have taken action against U Tin Shing.— Kyaw Zayyar



The fire destroyed a house in Minbu. Photo: Kyaw Zayyar

Police sieze yaba and one hand grenade in Bago

POLICE have arrested one Kyi Sein alias Ah Nyar Thar, 42, while he was riding a motorbike on suspicion of abusing yaba and illegally holding a hand grenade at Ma Zin 1 road, Kyun Tha Yar ward, Bago on Tuesday.

The suspect was arrested

and found to be in possession of 7 yaba tablets.

Police further searched a home owned by one Kyi Sein alias Ah Nyar Thar and found walkie-talkie, a hand grenade and KNU/KNLA/ PC name tags shirt. Police have filed charges against Kyi Sein.— Thura Aung



Kyi Sein alias Ah Nyar Thar. PHOTO: THURA AUNG

Yaba and Marijuana seized in Hpa-an

A LOCAL anti-drug squad in Hpa-an seized six yaba pills and a mobile phone from one Chit Ko on a motorbike on Bayintnaung road, ward 9, Hpa-an town on Tuesday. When interrogated, Chit ko said that he bought the narcotics from Than Zaw Moe who lived on Aung Nan 2 road in Hpa-an. Police

searched a house owned by Than Zaw Moe and found marijuana weighing 32.6 grams and related paraphernalia. The suspect fled the scene. Police have filed charges against Chit Ko, 20, and Than Zaw Moe, 35, under the Anti-Narcotic Law.— Tin Win Hlaing (Kawkaik)

China, Southeast Asian countries to improve anti-terror cooperation

BEIJING — China and Southeast Asian countries decided to improve their cooperation in security and anti-terrorism during a meeting in Beijing on Thursday.

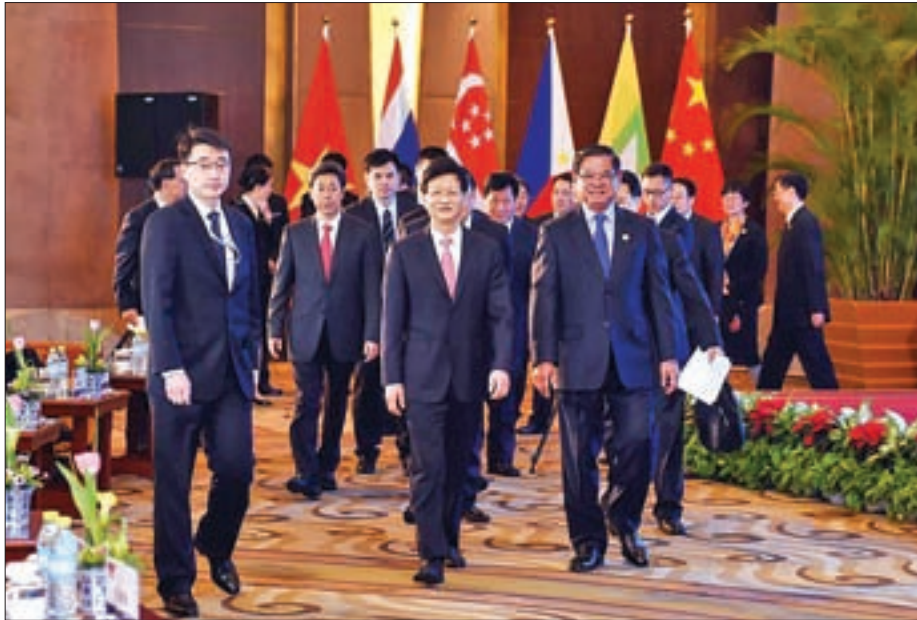
The two sides will take action to improve multilateral and bilateral cooperation against terrorism, said senior Chinese official Meng Jianzhu.

Meng, head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks while addressing the opening ceremony of the China-Southeast Asian security services counter-terrorism dialogue.

He said China and Southeast Asian nations share close geographical and cultural links as well as common interests and future.

The two sides have witnessed increasing mutual trust and cooperation in security.

He thanked Southeast Asian nations for their sup-



Meng Jianzhu, head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and officials from Southeast Asian countries attend the China-Southeast Asian security services counter-terrorism dialogue in Beijing, China, on 7 April. PHOTO: XINHUA

port to China in the fight against terrorism.

Meng said China is ready to work with Southeast Asian countries to put into action the common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security strategy for Asia, which

was proposed by President Xi Jinping at the fourth summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in May 2014.

He also called on all the countries to improve

multilateral and bilateral cooperation, increase information exchange, expand cooperation areas, and strengthen counter-terrorism collaborative capacity, so as to establish a multilateral anti-terrorism cooperation platform with regional

characteristics to protect people in the region and help maintain regional security and stability.

Officials from Southeast Asian countries agreed with Meng and pledged to further strengthen information exchange and take pragmatic actions in counter-terrorism with China.

China's State Councilor and Public Security Minister Guo Shengkun met with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Kheng, who attended the dialogue on Thursday morning.

Guo said China is willing to work with Cambodia to strengthen law enforcement cooperation in such areas as telecommunications fraud, human trafficking and cyber crimes, so as to serve the development of bilateral relations.

Sar Kheng said Cambodia will strengthen cooperation with the ministry and push forward Cambodia-China ties.—Xinhua

Thailand investigates 16 people on Panama Papers list

BANGKOK — Thailand is investigating 16 people, including current and former politicians and well-known business people, whose names appeared in the "Panama Papers", a top official at the country's Anti Money Laundering Office (AMLO) said on Friday.

The individuals are among scores of politicians and business figures worldwide who feature in the massive document leak from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, which specialises in establishing offshore companies.

The investigation into possible money laundering is at an early stage and Thai authorities have so far found no evidence of wrongdoing, AMLO acting Secretary-General Seehanat Prayoonrat told reporters on Friday. Thailand has sought cooperation from Panama's anti-money laundering agency, he said, and would not release the names of the individuals on the list until authorities had verified the leaked information.

Seehanat said he did not know if any members of the Thai military government were on the list.

"We are doing preliminary checks," he said.—Reuters

Indian minister faces arrest in loan default case

NEW DELHI — A court in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad has issued a non-bailable warrant against an India minister over an alleged loan default to a Mauritius-based bank.

The warrant has been issued against Y.S. Chowdary, India's junior Science and Technology Minister, after he failed to personally appear before the court in the case for the third time Thursday.

The minister is a leader of the Telugu Desam Party in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, which is a coalition partner in the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government.

Chowdary is also an industrialist and as a director of a company he failed to repay a huge loan taken for the company's Mauritius-based Hestia Holdings subsidiary from a bank in that country.—Xinhua

Australia to strip dual nationals involved in terror of citizenship



Police tape stretches across a road as police inspect and guard the area outside the New South Wales (NSW) state police headquarters located in the south western Sydney suburb of Parramatta, Australia, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — Australia, a staunch ally of the United States and its battle against Islamist militants in Iraq and Syria, said on Friday it would strip dual nationals convicted of terror-related crimes of citizenship.

French President Francois Hollande last month abandoned plans to strip French nationality from people convicted of terrorism, climbing down from a tough stance he took days after the November attacks in Paris that

killed 130 people.

Dual nationals who were either involved in terror activities, members of a banned organisation or convicted of terrorism offences could lose their Australian citizenship, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton told reporters in Melbourne. "There is a very significant penalty to pay if people are involved in terrorist activities and they're a dual national," said Dutton.

Australia has been on

heightened alert for attacks by home-grown radicals. While nearly 200 people were suspected of being a domestic threat, Dutton said approximately 100 people had left Australia for Syria to fight alongside organisations such as Islamic State. In addition, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation was working on 400 "high priority investigations" related to potential security threats, Dutton said.—Reuters

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Australia's naval submarines to be built with local steel

CANBERRA — Australia's next generation of naval submarines will be built using local steel in order to boost the economy, the government announced on Friday.

Innovation Minister Christopher Pyne said Australia's steel industry was suffering greatly, but the contract to build the naval submarines is likely to include a clause to use local steel, something which could keep the ailing sector alive.

"Because of the government's commitment to the 12 subs, the nine frigates, the patrol vessels and so on, there will be a whole body of work coming through the pipeline," Pyne told the Nine Network on Monday.

The government is currently negotiating with companies from Japan, Germany and France to determine who will win the contract.

One of the conditions is that the winning company must use local, Australian shipbuilders.

Pyne's comments follow the announcement that Arrium Steel, which employs 7,000 Australian workers, would be placed into voluntary administration.

Pyne said the government had held talks with administrators about throwing Arrium a lifeline by way of the submarine contract.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten praised the government's quick thinking, and said he makes "no apologies" for his view that major works, such as on the submarines, should stay local.

"If there is a way in which governments can help the steel industry stay on its feet, through helping them with technology transfer so that we help upgrade our industry, we should," Shorten told Sky News later on Friday.

"I make no apologies for being nationalistic in my vision for Australia's economic future." —Xinhua

All 6 Japanese defence force members confirmed dead after jet crash

TOKYO — Defence Ministry officials said on Friday the six crew members of an Air Self-Defence Force jet that disappeared from radar earlier this week have been confirmed dead after the plane crashed on a mountain in the southwestern Japan prefecture of Kagoshima.

The ministry earlier said the six crew of the U-125 flight inspection aircraft had been found with no vital signs on Mt. Takakuma, which straddles the cities of Kanoya and Tarumizu. Four were found Thursday and the remaining two were found Friday.

Their bodies were transported to the Maritime Self-Defence Force's air base in Kanoya, where the jet took off before disappearing.

"It is extremely regrettable and sad that competent crew members with a bright future ahead suffered such an accident," Defence Minister Gen Nakatani said, adding the ministry will look into the cause.

The SDF, police and firefighters had been searching for the missing aircraft since it went missing around 2:35pm Wednesday.

The wreckage of the jet was found scattered over 200 to 300 metres in an area about 600 metres east of the peak of Mt Takakuma, according to the ministry.

At the crash site, about 20 investigators dispatched from the ASDF's aircraft accident investigation committee are trying to recover the jet's flight recorder and voice recorder

for clues as to the cause of the crash.

The U-125, belonging to the Flight Check Squadron at the ASDF's Iruma Air Base in Sayama, Saitama Prefecture, was captained by a major in his 40s.

Other members were a co-pilot, two onboard engineers and two radio operations personnel.

The aircraft left Iruma base shortly before 9am Wednesday and arrived at MSDF's Kanoya Air Base past noon.

In February last year an MSDF helicopter crashed on a mountain in neighbouring Miyazaki Prefecture after leaving the Kanoya base.

Three crew members were killed in the incident. —Kyodo News

Modi's rural income promise leaves farmers, experts cold

BARGARH, (India) / NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to need a big rise in economic growth and a run of good weather to have a chance of fulfilling his promise to double farmers' incomes by 2022.

He may also have to allow farm gate prices to rise fast, agricultural and economic experts said, jeopardising a key policy of his first two years in office: keeping inflation in check to appeal to India's swelling middle class.

The 65-year-old made his bold commitment at a February rally in the eastern state of Odisha, hoping to shore up support among 263 million farmers who will have a major say in his party's fate in upcoming state elections and a national vote in 2019.

"This is a government that thinks about farmers," Modi told the rally. To achieve this, the premier has launched a seven-pronged strategy including expanding irrigation, crop insurance, smarter marketing and incentives for farmers to grow new crops.

Some in the crowd that day were less than impressed.

"It's a political gimmick," said smallholder Durbadala Pradhan, 54, who grows 6-1/2 acres of paddy in a rain fed area of Bargarh District. "All governments give such alluring assurances, but have they made any difference?"

"If you want to survive, you have to find your own ways," he said, as he ploughed a plot in front of his mud-brick home.

Pradhan's last rice crop was rejected for sale because it was of

poor quality. To get by, he keeps three oxen and two milch cows, and sells hand-rolled cigarettes and snacks from his small shop.

Experts also call Modi's farm promise far-fetched.

To come true, output would, other things being equal, have to grow at an annual 15 per cent. That compares with an average of below 2 per cent over the past four years.

Under Modi, the guaranteed price the government pays for common grades of rice has risen at an annual rate of 3.7 per cent. That's less than inflation and below half the 9 per cent rate under the Congress government that preceded him.

"The tools available to the government to ensure that the promise doesn't descend into a pipe dream are limited," said Ashok Gulati, a leading farm economist, who said most of Modi's farm initiatives had been tried before with little success.

Officials at the farm and finance ministries and the prime minister's office, when asked whether the promise to double farm incomes was backed by solid assumptions and costing, declined to comment on the record.

Success, one senior government official said on condition of anonymity, would depend on faster economic growth generating "trickle-down" benefits for farmers.

"I don't think it will be possible with 7 per cent economic growth — it must touch around 10 per cent," the official said.



Durbadala Pradhan, 54, a farmer, stands in front of his house at Tukurla village in the eastern state of Odisha, on 2 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

India's economy is growing at a rate of 7.6 per cent.

Farm incomes have increased threefold over the past 30 years, thanks to double-digit rises in wages and hikes in state procurement prices during the Congress party's decade-long rule.

That policy led to unprecedented annual growth of 7.3 per cent in per-cultivator income from farming, but also heralded high food inflation that helped Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) thrash Congress in the 2014 general election.

While weak growth in farm wages and procurement prices have cooled food inflation, they have hurt farmers already reeling from prolonged drought.

Once seen as the rice bowl of Odisha, Bargarh District reported the most farmer suicides in the state last year. Although officials do not link the deaths to farm

distress, villagers blame them on mounting debt and crop failures.

The cost of cultivation of paddy, or unmilled rice, in Odisha rose nearly two-and-a-half times between 2004/05 and 2012/13, government data show. Farmers' incomes have failed to keep pace.

"The situation is deteriorating day by day," said farmer Ishwar Kathar, whose brother committed suicide last year after failing to repay a \$750 crop loan. "Farming has become expensive, but the government is not extending any help."

Similar misery could mar the BJP's prospects in several state elections this spring and when India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, votes in 2017.

The BJP swept Uttar Pradesh in the general election, but faces a challenge next year from regional parties. Congress is, meanwhile, staging a modest comeback.

Last year, agrarian distress contributed to the ruling party's rout in Bihar state at the hands of a regional alliance. If a similar anti-BJP coalition forms, Modi's authority could face a challenge.

Achieving Modi's goal is not impossible. Land reforms and freeing up food prices triggered rapid gains in farm incomes in China in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet he does not plan such steps.

That leaves the option of ramping up support prices for rice and wheat. That would require a policy U-turn and invite criticism that Modi was offering the same policy answers as his opponents.

"The economics of farming are determined by public policy, not by technology alone," said veteran expert M.S. Swaminathan, known as the father of India's 'green' revolution. "You have to have a pricing policy that stimulates production." —Reuters

Bill Clinton confronts protesters who say his crime reforms hurt blacks

NEW YORK — Former President Bill Clinton on Thursday faced down protesters angry at the impact his 1994 crime reforms have had on black Americans and defended the record of his wife, Hillary Clinton, who is relying on the support of black voters in her quest for the presidency.

The former president spent more than 10 minutes confronting the protesters at a campaign rally in Philadelphia for his wife over criticisms that the crime bill he approved while president led to a surge in the imprisonment of black people.

The Democratic race for the 8 November election has become increasingly heated as Hillary Clinton, stung by a string of losses in state contests, has traded barbs with her rival for the party's nomination, US Senator Bernie Sanders, over who is better prepared for the White House.

In Philadelphia, several protesters heckled the former president mid-speech and held up signs, including one that read: "CLINTON Crime Bill Destroyed Our Communities."

Video footage of Hillary Clinton defending the reforms in 1994 has been widely circulated during the campaign by activists in the Black Lives Matter protest movement. In the footage, she calls young people in gangs "super-predators" who need to "be brought to heel." Hillary Clinton, 68, who also has faced protesters upset by her remarks, said in February she regretted her language.

Bill Clinton, 69, who was president from 1993 to 2001, defended her 1994 remarks, which protesters say were racially insensitive, and suggested the protesters' anger was misplaced.

"I don't know how you would characterise the gang leaders who got 13-year-old kids hopped on crack and sent them out on the street to murder other African-American children," he said, shaking his finger at a heck-



US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton takes the stage after being introduced by her husband former US president Bill Clinton at the Hillary Victory Fund "I'm With Her" benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall in the Manhattan borough of New York City, on 2 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

ler as Clinton supporters cheered, according to video of the event. "Maybe you thought they were good citizens. She (Hillary Clinton) didn't."

"You are defending the people who kill the lives you say matter," he told a protester. "Tell the truth."

Hillary Clinton promised to end "mass incarceration" in the first major speech of her campaign last year. She has won the support of the majority of black voters in every state nominating contest so far, often by a landslide. Spokesmen for the campaign and Bill Clinton did not immediately respond on Thursday to a request for comment.

The United States has more people in prison than any other country. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1.05 million prisoners were held in federal or state facilities in 1994. By 2014, it was 1.56 million. That year, 6 per cent of all black men in their 30s were in prison, a rate six times higher than that of white men of the same age.

Bill Clinton said last year that he regretted signing the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act into law because it contributed to the high incarceration

rate of black people for non-violent crimes. On Thursday, he did not explicitly recant those regrets, but appeared to be angry at any suggestion the bill was wholly bad. The legislation imposed tougher sentences, put thousands more police on the streets and helped fund the building of extra prisons. It was known for its federal "three strikes" provision that sent violent offenders to prison for life.

The bill was backed by congressional Republicans and hailed at the time as a success for Clinton. Although Clinton is popular among Democrats who view him as a gifted orator and crowd pleaser, he has in the past veered from the carefully calibrated message put out by his wife's campaign, causing problems for her representatives. During Hillary Clinton's failed 2008 presidential bid, civil rights leaders and high-ranking Democrats in Congress criticised the former president for statements he made during a heated campaign against then-US Senator Barack Obama. Bill Clinton said Obama's campaign had "played the race card." Obama became the first US black president in November that year.—Reuters

Belgium launches appeal to find 'man in hat' bombing suspect

BRUSSELS — Belgian prosecutors appealed for help in finding a man suspected of leaving a bomb at Brussels Airport on 22 March, saying they were eager to find a coat he had discarded and to speak to people who saw him on his hour-long walk back into the city.

Federal prosecutors released new pictures of the suspect, dubbed the "man in the hat", who appeared to arrive at the airport with two suicide bombers and left along with passengers after the first two bombs exploded.

In a video to accompany

their appeal, investigators indicate the route the man took, out of the airport, through the nearby town of Zaventem and along a main road into the city.

His last appearance on security cameras was in the district of Schaerbeek almost an hour after the bombing.

Along the way, he took off his light-coloured coat and was then seen in a light blue shirt with dark patches. He was wearing a dark hat throughout.

"It is especially the coat which interests us," prosecutor

Eric Van Der Sypt told a news conference, asking if anyone might have seen it along the suspect's route. Prosecutors also want to people to come forward who might have filmed or taken a photograph of the suspect or may be able to determine where he went. Twin bombs at Brussels Airport and another on the city's metro killed 32 people, excluding the suspected bombers.

A controlled explosion destroyed a third bomb at the airport about six hours after the initial attack.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belgium to release man held over Paris attacks

BRUSSELS — Belgium's federal prosecutor said a man held since November in connection with the 13 November Paris attacks would be released on Friday under strict conditions.

Abdellah C, a 35-year-old Belgian national, accompanied one of the Paris attacks suspects, Mohamed Abrini, to the airport when the latter left to fight in Syria, state broadcaster RTBF reported.

His lawyer told Reuters he denied any involvement.—Reuters

Venezuela leader threatens to cut opposition legislature's term

CARACAS — Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolas Maduro threatened on Thursday to seek a constitutional amendment to slash the opposition-led legislature's term and vowed to lead a "revolution" should his foes wrest him from the presidency.

The socialist leader's strong words deepened the already bitter political standoff in the OPEC member nation since the opposition coalition won control of the National Assembly in a December vote and vowed to seek Maduro's exit this year.

During a rally, pro-government constitutional lawyer Hermann Escarra proposed that Maduro seek a constitutional amendment to reduce the assembly's term from five years to 60 days.

"I'll look at it very seriously," Maduro said, to cheers from several thousand red-clad supporters demonstrating against an assembly law intended to free jailed opposition activists.—Reuters

Greece ferries migrants to Turkey under EU pact

LESBOS (Greek) — A ferry carrying 45 migrants left the Greek island of Lesbos for Turkey on Friday, part of a European Union deal that began this week to stem mass migration to Europe across the Aegean Sea.

A second boat carrying a larger group was scheduled to leave the island later in the morning, state TV reported. Those who left early on Friday were from Pakistan, it said.

At least two activists plunged into the water close to the small ferry, dangling from the heavy chain of the anchor and flashing the 'v' for victory sign in an attempt to prevent the vessel from sailing from the port of Mytilene. They were plucked from the water by the Greek coastguard. Activists, who say the deal runs roughshod over human rights, stood at the gates of the port blowing whistles and banging on metal barriers.—Reuters

Germany records 181,000 asylum applications in first quarter

BERLIN — Germany registered 181,405 asylum applications in the first three months of this year, the Interior Ministry said on Friday, adding that the figure marked a 112 per cent rise compared with the same period in 2015.

The big jump in applications is due to the fact that most of the more than one million migrants who arrived in Germany last year were first registered at shelters where they wait for weeks or month before they can file an asylum application.

The number of arrivals has dropped to a trickle in March as the Balkan route through southeastern Europe is virtually shut. This compares with some 10,000 people who entered the country each day at the peak of the crisis in late summer last year.

But because of the huge backlog of migrants waiting in shelters to apply for asylum, German authorities recorded some 60,000 such applications in March, an 87 per cent rise compared with March 2015 and an 11.5 per cent drop from February.—Reuters

Political stability, reforms vital for Serbia

VIENNA — A new period of political stability and continued reforms is vital for Serbia to position itself even better on the European economic map, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl said in a meeting with President of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Marko Cadez in Vienna on Thursday.

To that aim, the Austrian chamber organised a meeting with 70 Austrian companies which Cadez informed about Serbia's advantages as an investment destination, the strengthening capacities of the domestic economy to join their supply chains as a reliable partner, and the Serbian chamber's support for companies interested in investing and expanding their business operations in Serbia.—Tanjung

OPINION

The business of government

Kyaw Thura

THERE is little reason to believe that our country will not be able to secure a great future without the army's involvement in the political process. At a time when the world is experiencing change at a rapid rate, it will be fatally wrong if the army think the public institutions are not strong enough to stand on their own. The primary responsibility of the military is to safeguard the interests, properties, lives of the people.

Now that almost all information is just a few clicks away, even the ordinary people are now in a position to keep a close watch on the latest developments of the country and the world. In other words, the people are no longer green to politics. Instead, they have come to accept politics as a national concern.

In recent days, the parliament took a normative approach to the creation of the State Counsellor post, over the serious objections of the military representatives. They stood in objection to the bill that allowed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to contact ministries, departments, organisations and associations in an official capacity. In addition, they considered the newly-created position as a violation of the separation of powers embedded in the constitution.

Understandably, it is hard to reconcile the needs of the country with constitutional reality. This will not matter so much as long as the decisions made by parliament benefit the people.

Since the business of the government is to bring about stability and prosperity across the country, they have no alternative but to be accountable to the people who sent them to office. It should be noted that any attempt to go against any decision made in the name of the people is none but a problematic exercise. In democracy, power is derived from the people after all. The key is that it takes wisdom and experience to successfully practise democracy.

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Good Governance and Human Rights

Dr. Khine Khine Win

GOVERNMENT is a combination of the people of a country to affect certain objects by joint effort. Abraham Lincoln said "the legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done but cannot do at all, or cannot, so well do, for themselves in their separate, and individual capacities. This statement expresses the fundamental role of government in society and the importance of "good governance" in any community. Governance concerns the State's ability to serve its citizens. A good government ought to provide good environment for development to every single citizen.

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, there is no single and exhaustive definition of good governance nor is there a delimitation of its scope that commands universal acceptance. The term is used with great flexibility. It has been said at various times to encompass: full respect of human rights, the rule of law, effective and multi stakeholder participation, transparent, accountable process, legitimacy, equality, political empowerment of people, values that foster re-

sponsibility and so on. They are the main characteristics of good governance. However, the establishment of good governance is not an easy one. It is easier said than done.

My understanding is that good governance is the precondition for meeting the challenge of enhancing education, improving health care, reducing poverty, establishing rule of law, protecting our environment, financial economic development, stability, equality and sustainable human development. By linking good governance to sustainable human development, emphasizing principles such as rule of law, accountability, participation and enjoyment of human rights. And also human rights and human development are linked in ways that we have long understood. Mr. Selim Jahan, Director of Human Development Report Office, New York writes human poverty is a denial of human rights because it infringes on human freedom, it destroys human dignity and it implies discrimination and justice.

There is no doubt that nurturing good governance is essential to ensuring respect for human rights. They are mutually reinforcing both being based on core principles of participation, accountability, transparency and State responsibility. Universally

agree that human rights are universal, individual, indivisible and interrelated. In view of the important role which good governance plays in human rights, United Nations resolution 2000/64 clearly states that the need for a closer examination of the role of good governance for the promotion of human rights and the relationship between good governance practices and the promotion and protection of all human rights in all countries. It recognizes that transparent, responsible, accountable and participatory government, responsive to the needs and aspiration of the people, is the foundation on which good governance rests, and that such a foundation is a sine qua non for the promotion of human rights.

Although human rights empower people, they cannot be respected and protected in a sustainable manner without good governance. Human rights strengthen good governance frameworks. They require: going beyond the ratification of human rights treaties, integrating human rights effectively in legislation and State policy and practice; establishing the promotion of justice as the aim of the rule of law; understanding that the credibility of democracy depends on the effectiveness of its response to people's political, social and economic de-

mands. There are four areas between good governance and human rights, Democratic Institutions, Service Delivery, Rule of Law and Anti Corruption.

Good governance reforms of democratic institutions create avenue for the public to participate in public affairs in policy making led by human rights value. Good governance reforms advance human rights when they improve the State's capacity to fulfill its responsibility to provide rights for their people such as right to education, health and development. Good governance initiatives reforms legislation to better implement that legislation. To eradicate corruption, good governance efforts rely on principles such as accountability, transparency and participation to shape anti corruption measures.

We must bear in mind that when governance fails and human rights are violated there can be no full development without good governance. Promoting human rights and good governance is the only way to guarantee security, stability and sustainable developments.

Well, now we recognized that human rights and good governance are intrinsically inter-linked. The question is how to build good governance? Who have responsibilities to build good governance? What is the

role of people? From my point of view, in order to solve all these issues first we need to create the conditions in which people are empowered to participate freely in their political, social and economic development and in so doing to achieve their potential.

We need to build a strong civil society where people can exercise their rights and lead fulfilling lives. The responsibility for delivering good governance is not the preserve of government alone. It is also the responsibility of citizens, civil society and the private sector and also parliaments, as one of the key state institution in a democratic system, governance have a critical to play in promoting good governance. In deed the international community too has a responsibility to not only promote but also practise good governance.

Let me conclude the article by expressing my favorite quote by Frank Herbert, Author of Dune.

"Good governance never depends upon laws, but upon the personal qualities of those who govern. The machinery of government is always subordinate to the will of those who administer that machinery. The most important element of government, therefore is the method of choosing leaders."

LOCAL Business



PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Broiler chicken breeders prepare for high demand

BROILER chicken breeders and sellers are discussing matters related to the distribution of broilers in the market, said Daw Hla Hla Thein, the chairman of the Broiler Association.

The rise of broiler prices is under control in the local mar-

ket. The ceiling price is set between K5,000 and K6,000 per viss (1.63 kilos).

"Breeders and depots arranged the price ceiling because most of the vendors sell the chickens at higher prices during Thingyan, when stock

usually runs out," she added. Chicken breeders will provide chicken to markets in order to fulfil the consumers' demands during Thingyan. They will collect the money earned through sales after Thingyan.—200

Deposits for meat processing licences rise to K4 million

THE Veterinary and Slaughterhouses Department under the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will collect a K4 million (US\$3,345) deposit from those who apply for meat processing licences during the 2016-2017 fiscal year. This is up from K2 million (\$1,672) in previous years. Other taxes will remain unchanged.

Applications for meat pro-

cessing licences for this fiscal year will be approved after applicants pay the relevant taxes. Licences will be valid from 1 April to 31 March.

A total of 83 licences have been granted by the Veterinary and Slaughterhouses Department: 39 for cattle, seven for goats and lambs and 10 for pigs in Ywathagyi; 22 for pigs in Ywama; two for cattle and two for goats and lambs in Hlaing-

thaya; and one for goats and lambs in Shwepyitha, according to Dr Hla May Oo, assistant head of the department.

All of this year's applicants sought extensions of their existing licences. New applicants are required to submit recommendations from locals, the police and the township administrator. The department inspects meat processing facilities before granting licences.—200

CNG, fuel filling stations to alternate during Thingyan

COMPRESSED natural Gas (CNG) and other fuel filling stations under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy will open on an alternating basis during the Thingyan holidays between 11 and 20 April, a ministry spokesperson said.

"We have no plan to close our filling stations during the long holidays; we have an arrangement to

alternate these stations in Yangon and Mandalay," he added.

Effective action will be taken against those who sell CNG or fuel at higher prices during Thingyan. Customers who have to buy fuel at a higher price may report to the appropriate departments. The current selling price of CNG is K275.5 per kilogram.—200

Earthenware drinking pots in high demand in Yesagyo

DEMAND for earthenware drinking pots in Yesagyo Township has risen as a result of the scorching weather.

This year, an earthenware drinking pot sells for between K1,000 and K1,500, which is up from between K800 and K1000 last year, said a pot maker.

"Drinking pots have been in high demand starting from Tabaung (mid-March) due to the

hot weather. Drinking pots are expected to be in higher demand in April because there's a custom that Myanmar people change old pots with new ones during the Thingyan Water Festival and Myanmar New Year. Earthenware pots are produced in many villages, but those from Thepon Village in Yesagyo Township gain higher demand as they are designed to keep water cool.—Phay Tun Zaw

State-run dailies to alternate during Thingyan

DAILY newspapers published by the News and Periodicals Enterprises under the Ministry of Information will be published on an alternating basis throughout the Thingyan holiday.

The publication of Myanmar Alinn will continue from 11 to 15 April, while The Mirror and The Global New Light of Myanmar will stop during that time and resume publication on 16 April. Myanmar Alinn will not be pub-

lished from 16 to 20 April.

The sub-printing house in Mandalay will halt its work on 13, 16 and 20 April, and the sub-printing house in Mawlamyine will take a holiday on 17 April.

Advertisements will continue to be accepted during the alternating holidays. All of the state-run dailies are set to resume their regular publications on 21 April.—GNLM

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For NATO trainers, race against time to prepare Afghan troops to go it alone

SORAB, (Afghanistan) — Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Chung, leading a team of US advisers in Helmand Province to help train the Afghan army's embattled 215th Corps, knows he does not have much time.

If Washington sticks to its schedule for withdrawing troops, by the time his tour ends in November, the NATO training mission in Afghanistan will be nearing its end, despite local forces struggling to fight the Taliban insurgency alone.

"There is still much work to do," said Chung, a veteran of several Afghan tours, speaking at Sorab base, a dusty expanse of blast walls and wire fences in Helmand.

"You have to adjust your expectations," he told Reuters during a recent visit to the base in the southern province, where Taliban militants, bent on overthrowing the government and driving out foreign forces, made major gains in recent months.

Corruption and issues like irregular leave due to

heavy fighting and pay have undermined efficiency and hurt morale among local troops.

He has seen progress since arriving in February but remains realistic: "We understand we're not going to be able to fix all that."

As things stand, US forces in Afghanistan are due to be nearly halved to 5,500 from the current level of 9,800 by the start of 2017. At that level, US officials say the training mission would not be able to continue.

But the timetable is coming under scrutiny, as the new US commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan conducts a review of security before making recommendations to Washington some time in June.

General John Nicholson recently told Reuters that heavy fighting and casualties in 2015 had meant the training mission was behind schedule.

NATO commanders say big strides have been made by fledgling Afghan security forces, built virtu-



Afghan National Army (ANA) officers stand at attention during a training exercise at the Kabul Military Training Centre in Afghanistan, in October, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

ally from scratch since the Taliban was toppled from power in 2001.

But the sharp escalation in casualties and territorial losses in 2015, the first year Afghan forces fought without combat support from NATO, has underlined the risks involved

in having only 5,500 US soldiers in the country.

Afghan officials say forces lack vital resources including close air support, which the small local air force cannot yet provide at anything like the levels NATO could, as well as expertise in areas like mainte-

nance and logistics.

"Those capabilities are still under development and there is a lot more work needed," Acting Defence Minister Masoom Stanekzai said on a recent visit to the Afghan 215th Corps headquarters at Sorab. "We need international

assistance."

One of the biggest challenges Chung said he faced was trying to change the mindset of Afghan soldiers, as NATO pushes them to be more offensive in operations against the Taliban.

"They'd go out to a certain area, and the first thing they'd do is ... build a checkpoint. From that point on, they'd become very stationary," he said, describing how local forces tended to operate.

Chung and his team are among around 500 US troops dispatched to bolster 215th Corps, a reflection of international alarm at how Helmand security had deteriorated early in 2016.

The training, mainly by Afghan officers backed up by US mentors, covers everything from battle tactics to driving, vehicle maintenance, equipment care and bomb disposal. "At some point, there's going to be an end-date on this," Chung said. "We're here to help them build something that they can sustain and manage."—Reuters

UN Syria envoy delays peace talks to ensure players are serious

GENEVA — The start of a new round of peace talks on the Syrian war has been pushed back by two days so that UN mediator Staffan de Mistura can travel to Damascus and Tehran to sound out their position on a political transition, the envoy said on Thursday.

De Mistura told a news conference he wanted to verify the position of international and regional parties to the conflict to ensure there was a critical mass about "what could be a framework of a political transition".

"The next round of the talks needs to be quite concrete in the direction of a political process leading to a real beginning of a political transition," he said.

A first round of talks ended on 24 March with de Mistura determined that the Syrian government would move beyond discussing principles and procedure in the next round, which had originally been scheduled to resume on 9 April and was then pushed back to 11 April.

De Mistura said he had already heard some interesting ideas from Russia and would also consult Turkish, Saudi, Jordanian and Lebanese officials before the talks



UN mediator for Syria, Staffan de Mistura holds a document listing his points of commonalities during a news conference at the end of the Syria peace talks at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 24 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

resume on 13 April.

Syria is holding parliamentary elections on 13 April, and the Syrian government delegation would not arrive until 14 or 15 April, he said.

The talks have gone hand-in-hand with a cessation of hostilities which has lasted more than a month, raising the prospect of an end to a war that has killed more than 250,000 people and driven many Syrians from their homes.

There has also been a push to improve access for humanitarian aid, which has faltered in the past week.

Jan Egeland, who advises de Mistura on humanitarian issues, said he was

"disappointed and disheartened" at the slowdown and called on the Syrian government to live up to its promises to allow aid in.

"April was supposed to be our best month. It's not looking so, so far," Egeland said. "We had five convoys ready to go, the last four days. All of the five convoys could not go. 287,000 people therefore did not get the relief, in hard-to-reach areas or in besieged areas."

However, he said there was hope of an evacuation in the next week of up to 500 people — the wounded and sick and their relatives — from the four towns of Madaya, Zabadani, Foua and Kufreya.—Reuters

Syrian rebels seize Islamic State stronghold — monitor, sources

AMMAN — Syrian rebel forces on Thursday took over a town near the Turkish border that had been the main stronghold of Islamic State in the northern Aleppo countryside, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and rebel sources said.

The monitor said factions fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), some supplied with arms by Turkey and other foreign backers, captured the town of al-Rai after fierce battles with the militants. "This is the beginning of the end of Daesh (Islamic State), those who have bet the FSA have been decimat-

ed are now proven wrong. It's a victory for the Free Syrian Army," said Abu Abdullah from the Nour al Din al Zinki brigade that participated in the assault on the heavily defended border town. "We will continue our path to al Raqqa and all the towns occupied by Daesh," he said referring to Islamic State's acronym in Arabic and its defacto capital.

The rebels said their next step was advancing towards the Islamic State-held city of al Bab, south of al Rai and northeast of Aleppo.

The recent gains by the mainly non-jihadist rebels is a boost to Turkey, which

has sought to prevent Syrian Kurdish-led forces from expanding their stretch of territory along the border.

It was the first retreat by the Islamic State militants since they made major advances in that area last May against rival insurgents and captured areas close to the Azaz border crossing with Turkey.

Amaq news agency, which is linked to the militants, conceded that forces it described as "US- and Turkish-backed opposition brigades" had taken the town after days of intense "US bombing and Turkish artillery" fire.—Reuters

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Earplugs can prevent hearing loss from loud music

WASHINGTON — It might seem a little strange, but wearing earplugs to loud music concerts

can be an effective measure in preventing temporary hearing loss, a study said on Thursday.



PHOTO: REUTERS

The prevalence of acquired hearing loss has risen in past years. In the US, a survey found that the number of American adolescents with hearing loss has increased by 31 per cent since 1988.

An explanation for this trend is the increase in exposure to recreational noise, such as visiting concerts, festivals, and night-clubs, where sound pressure levels can stay at 100 to 110 decibels for several hours.

In the new study, Wilko Grolman of the University Medical Centre Utrecht, the Netherlands, and colleagues randomly assigned 51 individuals attending

an outdoor music festival for 4.5 hours in Amsterdam to earplugs or no earplugs.

The average age of the participants was 27 years and the average sound pressure level experienced was 100 decibels during the festival.

After the festival, the proportion of participants with temporary hearing loss was only eight percent in the earplug group, compared with 42 per cent in the unprotected group, the study found.

In addition, a lower percentage of participants had tinnitus in the earplug group — 12 per cent against 40 per cent in the unprotected group.

tested group.

“The present randomized clinical trial (RCT) adds proof to the scarce evidence and knowledge on this topic, which is a growing global problem,” Grolman wrote.

“This RCT adds evidence that earplugs are effective in preventing temporary hearing loss during high recreational music levels. Therefore, the use of earplugs should be actively promoted and encouraged to avoid noise-induced hearing loss.”

The study was published in the US journal JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery.—Xinhua

China, Thailand sign MoU for cooperation in polar science

BEIJING — China and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in polar science research on Wednesday, the State Oceanic Administration of China said.

The MoU was signed between Polar Research Institute of China and Thailand National Science and Technology Development Agency, Chulalongkorn University, Purapha University, National Institute of Development Administration, National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand. According to the MoU, the two countries will strengthen long-term cooperation in polar marine biology, oceanography, atmosphere and astronomy, geophysics, geochemistry, and other fields. The MoU was a result of cooperation between the two countries under the framework of Asian Forum for Polar Science. Five Thai scientists have joined China's Zhongshan Station and Great Wall Station in Antarctica to conduct scientific research.—Xinhua

India's IPCA says Global Fund stops buying its anti-malarial drugs

MUMBAI — India's IPCA Laboratories Ltd said on Thursday that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, would no longer buy the company's anti-malarial treatments after a US regulatory warning about quality lapses at its factories.

IPCA said in February that the US Food and Drug Administration had issued it with a warning letter outlining manufacturing quality lapses observed at three of its Indian factories. Those plants had already been banned from supplying to the United States after earlier inspections.

The Global Fund will no longer source Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy (ACTs), an anti-malarial treatment, from IPCA following a “risk consideration exercise”, the drugmaker said.

The Global Fund “will not allocate any volume of ACTs to the company and ... will only source ACTs from other pre-qualified suppliers that have no outstanding issues with the regulators,” IPCA in a statement to the Indian stock exchange.



A government health worker takes a blood sample to be tested for malaria in Ta Gay. PHOTO: REUTERS

IPCA has 16 manufacturing plants in India from where it supplies to more than 120 countries. The three sites with US bans also supply to India, UK and Canada.

Several drug factories in India have been cited by the FDA

over the last two years for violating manufacturing quality standards, as the regulator has increased its oversight of the industry, which is a key supplier to the United States.

Geneva-based, the Global

Fund is a public-private partnership set up in 2002 that has made considerable progress in tackling epidemics of deadly infectious diseases. No one at the organisation was immediately available for comment.—Reuters

HIV can resist promising ‘molecular knife’ therapy

WASHINGTON — The idea that HIV is notoriously good at surviving and thriving with new mutations proved to be true again.

A new study by Canadian and Chinese researchers said Thursday that the AIDS virus can quickly develop resistance to the promising CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing technology, also known as molecular Swiss army knife.

The findings, published in the US journal *Cell Reports*, showed that CRISPR/Cas9 may need a little bit more tweaking before it can be used as an effective antiviral tool.

Upon entry into a cell, HIV's RNA genome is converted into DNA and becomes entwined with the cellular DNA, where CRISPR/Cas9 can be programmed to target a DNA sequence and cleave viral DNA.

The new study used the “molecular knife” therapy to cut off HIV-1 within cellular DNA and found while the resulting mutations can inhibit viral replication, some also led to unexpected resistance, or virus escape.

“When we sequence the viral RNA of escaped HIV, the surprise is that the majority of the

mutations ... instead of resulting from the errors of viral reverse transcriptase, are rather introduced by the cellular non-homologous end joining machinery when repairing the broken DNA,” said senior author Chen Liang, senior investigator at the Jewish General Hospital, Canada.

“Some mutations are tiny — only a single nucleotide — but the mutation changes the sequence so Cas9 cannot recognise it anymore.

Such mutations do no harm to the virus, so these resistant viruses can still replicate,” said

Liang, also associate professor of Medicine at the McGill University AIDS Centre.

The study was a collaborative effort between researchers at McGill University and the University of Montreal in Canada and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and Peking Union Medical College in China.

The researchers said it serves as a cautionary tale for those who hope to apply CRISPR/Cas9 as an antiviral tool.

They proposed some strategies that could overcome this limitation, including targeting

multiple sites with CRISPR/Cas9 or using other enzymes aside from Cas9.

Once a solution is identified, the next barrier will be identifying ways to deliver the treatment to patients, Liang said.

“CRISPR/Cas9 gives a new hope toward finding a cure, not just for HIV-1, but for many other viruses,” he said.

“We have a long road toward the goal, and there may be many barriers and limitations that we need to overcome, but we're confident that we will find success.”—Xinhua

Iceland protesters call for government to quit, want immediate vote

REYKJAVIK — Icelanders, not satisfied with the departure of the prime minister and a promise to hold elections this autumn, took to the streets again on Thursday to demand the government quit over the Panama Papers leaks.

About 2,000 people showed up at parliament for another day of demonstrations, banging pots and pans and calling for immediate elections.

Iceland fell into political crisis this week after documents leaked from a Panamanian law firm linked the then Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson to an offshore company that held millions of dollars in debt from failed Icelandic banks. He stepped down on Tuesday.

The centre-right coalition tried to appease Icelanders by naming Fisheries Minister Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson as prime minister and calling for early



People demonstrate against Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson in Reykjavik, Iceland on 5 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

elections in the autumn.

But many Icelanders, who have a deep distrust in government following a 2008 banking crisis which wrecked the economy, are saying it is not enough that

Gunnlaugsson step aside.

Saga Stephensen, a 33-year-old multicultural adviser who showed up at Thursday's protest, said others should resign.

"They act like nothing

happened and don't bear responsibility and don't apologise. I am fed up with their arrogance," Stephensen said.

Johann Bjornsson, a 50-year-old teacher, called

for elections as soon as possible.

"To appoint Sigurður Ingi as Prime Minister is no solution," he said.

Earlier on Thursday, the head of Iceland's an-

ti-establishment Pirate Party — which polls show would win an election if held today — filed a vote of no-confidence motion in parliament.

The motion is seen however as largely symbolic since the coalition of the Progressive and Independence parties has a solid majority in the 63-seat parliament with 38 seats.

"How are we going to reclaim our reputation if things just go back to normal?" Birgitta Jonsdottir, head of the Pirate Party, told Reuters. "We are the laughing stock in the international community because of the former PM. It's too little and too late."

A poll by Icelandic media outlet Visir showed this week 43 percent of those polled would cast ballots for the Pirate Party if elections were held now, a stunning victory for a group set up by opponents of copyright enforcement rules. —Reuters



The grandmother of the kidnapped Elamine family children sits in the family home in Beirut, Lebanon, on 7 April 2016. Lebanese police have detained an Australian film crew and accused them of involvement in a kidnapping of two children from their Lebanese father on behalf of their Australian mother. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lebanon detains Australian TV crew over child custody row

BEIRUT — Lebanese police have detained an Australian film crew and accused them of involvement in a kidnapping of two children from their Lebanese father on behalf of their Australian mother.

"Four Australian nationals have been stopped on suspicion of kidnapping the two children," the Lebanese internal security services said on their Twitter account.

CCTV footage broadcast on Lebanese TV appeared to show the two children, who the father said were aged five and three,

being bundled into a car by several attackers on a busy street in southern Beirut. The children's grandmother told media she had been hit on the head with a pistol during the abduction.

The father, Ali Zeid al-Amin, said by phone that he was scared for the children's safety but that they were with their mother. "It's their mum that kidnapped them, and that's what we know. She contacted me and told me she has the kids," he said.

A Lebanese security source said the mother and two children had been

found and were with the authorities.

The four-member crew was making a film about the mother's efforts to recover her children for the Australian current affairs show "60 Minutes". The incident took place in the Hadath area of southern Beirut at 7.10am on Wednesday.

Lebanon, unlike Australia, is not a signatory of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which allows for children normally resident in one location to be returned if taken by a relative. —Reuters

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Five men indicted over Taiwan quake deaths

TAIPEI — Prosecutors in Taiwan on Thursday indicted five men suspected of using shoddy materials in the construction of an apartment complex that collapsed when a powerful earthquake struck the island in February, causing the deaths of more than 100 people.

Following a months-long probe into the tragedy, the Tainan District Prosecutors Office indicted the five men involved in the construction of the 16-story Weiguan Jinlong complex in Greater Tainan that col-

lapsed when the magnitude 6.4 quake struck southern Taiwan on 6 February.

The five men face charges of professional negligence resulting in death. If convicted, they could face prison sentences of up to five years. Prosecutors charged that one of the suspects, Lin Ming-hui, whose now-defunct company constructed the apartment complex, instructed two unlicensed designers from his company to design the building, while using the names of licensed designers.

While constructing the apartment complex, Lin allegedly not only borrowed a construction license from another legitimate company but also used shoddy materials and did not hire certified inspectors. Investigators found empty tin cans packed inside the concrete walls of the 23-year-old building.

Lin's company, which eventually lost its operation license, constructed the Weiguan Jinlong apartment complex and two other buildings in Tainan, but prosecutors did not say how

many others Lin may have been involved constructing elsewhere in Taiwan.

While 115 bodies were pulled from the rubble of the Weiguan Jinlong apartment complex, 200 people were rescued from the building. Two other people died elsewhere as a result of the quake. Apart from the complex, the quake also toppled other buildings in the city of some 1.9 million people and left more tilting noticeably.

The quake left more than 550 people injured. —Kyodo News

US military christens self-driving 'Sea Hunter' warship



The autonomous ship 'Sea Hunter', developed by DARPA, is shown docked in Portland, Oregon after its christening ceremony, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

PORTLAND (Oregon) — The US military on Thursday christened an experimental self-driving warship designed to hunt for enemy submarines, a major advance in robotic warfare at the core of America's strategy to counter Chinese and Russian naval investments.

The 132-foot-long (40-metre-long) unarmed prototype, dubbed Sea Hunter, is the naval equivalent of Google's self-driving car, designed to cruise

on the ocean's surface for two or three months at a time — without a crew or anyone controlling it remotely. That kind of endurance and autonomy could make it a highly efficient submarine stalker at a fraction of the cost of the Navy's manned vessels.

"This is an inflection point," Deputy US Defence Secretary Robert Work said in an interview, adding he hoped such ships might find a place in the western Pacific

in as few as five years. "This is the first time we've ever had a totally robotic, trans-oceanic-capable ship."

For Pentagon planners such as Work, the Sea Hunter fits into a strategy to incorporate unmanned drones — with increasing autonomy — into the conventional military in the air, on land and at sea. It also comes as China's naval investments, including in its expanding submarine fleet, stoke con-

cern in Washington about the vulnerability of the aircraft carrier battle groups and submarines that remain critical to America's military superiority in the western Pacific.

"We're not working on anti-submarine (technology) just because we think it's cool. We're working on it because we're deeply concerned about the advancements that China and Russia are making in this space," said author Peter Singer, an expert on robotic warfare at the New America Foundation think tank.

Work said he hoped the ship, once it is proven safe, could head to the US Navy's Japan-based 7th Fleet to continue testing.

His goal is to have ships like the Sea Hunter operating on a range of missions, possibly even including counter-mine warfare operations, all with limited human supervision.

"I would like to see unmanned flotillas operating in the western Pacific and the Persian Gulf within five years," he said, comparing the prototype ship to early drone aircraft. —Reuters



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I'm not dating Selena Gomez: Charlie Puth

LOS ANGELES — Singer Charlie Puth has slammed the reports of him dating Selena Gomez saying they are just friends.

The 24-year-old "One Call

Away" singer said he has never hooked up with the former Disney star, reported *Aceshowbiz*.

"We're friends. I'm not dating Selena Gomez. There is nothing

to say," Charlie said. However, he said he "hopes" to see Gomez, 23, in the front row of one of his shows. The singer also denied dating Meghan Trainor.—*PTI*



Singer Selena Gomez performs during We Day California in Inglewood, California, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: REUTERS

Gucci ad featuring 'unhealthily thin' model banned in Britain

NEW YORK — Italian fashion brand Gucci has been prohibited from using an advertisement in the United Kingdom which features what the Advertising Standards Authority describes as an "unhealthily thin" model.

The ASA ran the rule on the fashion house's new 'The Cruise 2016' campaign, which first appeared in Britain in December 2015. It judged that the female model in question, Avery Blanchard, who is seen in one still from the video leaning against a wall in a long-sleeve printed dress — with, it must be said, a noticeably thin torso — was too thin in the way it was presented, reported *New York Times*.

The fashion house had defended the image, saying it was aimed at an "older, sophisticated audience" and that the question of whether Blanchard was too thin or not was a subjective one for the individual reader.

Gucci also pointed out that "nowhere in the ads were any models' 'bones' visible, their make-up was natural rather than heavy" and that the lighting was "warm to ensure there were no hollows caused by shadows and their clothes were not revealing."—*PTI*

Madonna lands to London to reunite with son Rocco

LONDON — Queen of Pop Madonna returned to the UK this morning with the hope of being reunited with her eldest son Rocco.

Following a bitter four-month custody battle with her ex-husband Guy Ritchie over the 15-year-old, she touched down in London's Heathrow Airport, dressed all in black, reported *Telegraph* online.

The 57-year-old mother-of-

four reportedly made the plans to visit the UK in order to get Rocco back in school, following his holiday in the Maldives with his father and step-mother.

Rocco has been living in London with his filmmaker father and Guy's new wife Jacqui, along with their three young children, ever since reportedly leaving his mother before Christmas.

He is alleged to prefer his "normal family life" in the British capital. Last month, a High Court judge in London urged Madonna and Ritchie to try to settle the four-month battle over their son and focus on enjoying what is left of Rocco's "precious" childhood.

Justice MacDonald said it would be a "very great tragedy" if more of the "fast receding" days of

Rocco's youth were taken up by litigation.

The judge warned the pair that "summer does not last forever" — and said their child would "very quickly" become an adult.

He pleaded with them to resolve their differences in a ruling on the latest stage of litigation following a hearing in the Family Division.

MacDonald ruled that Madonna could halt legal action in England — and allow a judge in New York to make decisions.

Madonna's arrival in the UK signals the end of Rebel Heart global tour, which made her the most successful solo touring artist of all time. She has completed 82 shows and earned over 120 million pounds from the tour.—*PTI*

Austrian museum reaches settlement over Nazi-looted artwork

VIENNA — Vienna's Leopold Museum said on Thursday it had reached a settlement over five Nazi-looted works of art in its collection that will return two of them to the heir of their original Jewish owner, a victim of the Holocaust.

The five pieces, all by Austrian painter Egon Schiele, had been owned by Viennese businessman Karl Maylaender, who died after being deported to a labour camp during World War II. The museum will return two watercolours, including a self-portrait of Schiele, to Mayhlaender's 95-year-old heir.

The remaining three pieces will stay in the museum, which owns the world's largest Schiele collection.

"This is a happy day," Austria's Culture Minister Josef Ostermayer said at a news conference. The long-running discussion had cast a shadow over the museum and now a "Solomonic solution"

had been found, he said.

Under Adolf Hitler, the Nazis forced Jewish artists and collectors to sell or give away their works, and many pieces were confiscated outright. A law Austria introduced in 1998 directed that its museums return the looted art, and major works have been given back to descendants of the former owners.

However, the Leopold Museum — privately funded and therefore not obliged to follow the law — would have preferred to keep all five drawings. In 2011, it sold one Schiele painting so it could pay \$19 million to the heirs of a Jewish art dealer and — as part of the deal — keep another painting.

The New York-based heiress with whom the museum reached Thursday's agreement, who officials connected with the case said preferred to remain anonymous, had turned down an offer of money and insisted on getting the artwork back.—*Reuters*



Elisabeth Leopold, the widow of Museum founder Rudolf Leopold, stands next to the two paintings, "Sitting Boy With Folded Hands" (*Sitzender Bub mit gefalteten Haenden*) (L) and "Self Portrait with Striped Armlets" (*Selbstdarstellung mit gestreiften Aermelschonern*), by Austrian artist Egon Schiele during a press conference in the Leopold Museum in Vienna, Austria, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

A pint or a prayer? Monks in Japan put Buddhism on the menu



People trace Buddhist sutras with brushes at Tera Cafe in Tokyo, Japan, on 1 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — The hum of conversation and the clinking of spoons and coffee cups fills the wood-panelled cafe in a fashionable Tokyo neighbourhood as more than a dozen customers sip drinks and nibble desserts.

At first glance, the cafe, which also serves alcohol, looks

like any other except for an altar next to the countertop bar with a Buddha statue set against a gold backdrop.

Its name, Tera Cafe, is another hint — Tera is Japanese for temple.

The menu confirms this is something different. It lists class-

es for 1,500 yen (\$14) in weaving prayer beads, calligraphy with sutras, or lines of scripture, and consultations with a Buddhist priest.

Tera Cafe is part of a flourishing phenomenon in Japan where Buddhist monks are seeking to make inroads in the modern world as the public's connection with a 15-century-old tradition fades.

Gone are the days when the faithful would drop by their neighbourhood temple to talk to a monk over tea.

Famously areligious, many Japanese observe rituals from different traditions, perhaps going for a church wedding and worshipping at a Shinto shrine at the New Year. Buddhism is associated with funerals.

Hirotake Asano, head priest at the Shingyoji temple near Tokyo who opened Tera Cafe in 2013, said Buddhist priests had to venture into society to build

links. "Instead of lamenting that people no longer visit temples, I wanted to bring the temple to the people," said Asano, who owns four restaurants and a golf shop.

His businesses underscore the need for Buddhist monks to find a livelihood outside the temple.

Among other businesses with Buddhist themes are rent-a-monk services from Amazon Japan and retail giant Aeon, for funerals and other rituals.

There is also a chain of bars where ordained priests clad in traditional robes serve cocktails and offer advice.

Many sects of Japanese Buddhism allow priests to drink alcohol, eat meat, and marry.

Such acts are forbidden for monks in places like Southeast Asia where there have been instances of association of Buddhism with bars triggering public outcry and prosecutions.

—Reuters

Rowling's 'Harry Potter' chair sells for bewitching \$394,000

NEW YORK — A wooden chair used by J.K. Rowling when she wrote her first two "Harry Potter" books has sold for \$394,000 at a New York auction — more than eight times its opening bid.

The chair, on which the British novelist painted the words "I wrote Harry Potter while sitting on this chair," came from a dining set that Rowling was given when she was a struggling single mother living in Scotland.

It was put on the block by businessman Gerald Gray, who bought the chair in 2009, and auctioned in New York by Heritage Auctions on Wednesday. The buyer wished to remain anonymous, Heritage said.

James Gannon, director of rare books at Heritage Auctions, said the chair itself had little value but its literary association made it prized.

"She (Rowling) said at the time that it was something you would pick up at a junk shop," he said. "But it's really just the fact that she took the time to decorate it and the fact she actually wrote the books on it that is important."

Rowling's seven Harry Potter books about a boy wizard and his friends have become a worldwide phenomenon selling more than 450 million copies. The books also spawned eight blockbuster movies and theme park attractions in Florida and California.

A few years after the publication in 2000 of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Rowling donated the chair to an auction benefiting a British children's charity. Gray, a native of England and CEO of the vehicle speed control company AutoKontrol USA, bought it in 2009 for about \$29,000 at another auction.

Gray said he hoped the chair would now go on display in a museum or one of the Harry Potter attractions.

He also said he would donate 10 per cent of Wednesday's auction profits to Rowling's children's charity Lumos. —Reuters

Large vivid pink diamond expected to fetch millions at auction

LONDON — A rare, pear-shaped, vivid pink diamond will go under the hammer in Geneva next month, where auctioneers expect it to fetch some \$38 million.

The "Unique Pink", described by Sotheby's as "supremely rare and exceptional", weighs 15.38 carats.

"The Gemological Institute of America, the highest body for grading diamonds, have given this stone their highest possible grading, which is vivid pink," David Bennett, worldwide chairman of Sotheby's international jewellery division, told Reuters.

"It's so strong the colour. That makes it a very rare stone indeed, in fact it's the largest pear-shaped fancy vivid pink diamond ever to be offered at auction."

The discovery of gem-quality pink diamonds is rare, according to Sotheby's, which will auction this one as part of its "Magnificent Jewels and Noble Jewels" sale in Geneva on 17 May.

"We're estimating between \$28-38 million," Bennett said of pre-sale estimates during a pre-



An assistant poses with a 15.38 carat vivid pink diamond at Sotheby's auction house in London, Britain, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

view of the diamond in London.

"There have been a couple ... of stones that have sold for around \$2 million per carat or a

little more historically so it seems to be perfectly correctly estimated ... We will see." Earlier this week, a 10.10 carat oval, internally flaw-

less, fancy vivid blue diamond sold for \$31.8 million at an auction held by Sotheby's in Hong Kong. —Reuters

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(9-4-2016 07:00am ~ 10-4-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon- The Architectural Heritage
07:53	Am	A Photographer's Life at Shwedagon Pagoda
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Traditional Rakhine Thingyan Festival
08:43	Am	Htan Taw Drums (Part-II) "Dobat"
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar Game Changers (Episode - I)
09:51	Am	Myanma Cultural Heritage From Kyar Paing Village
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Karaweik Palace- A Symbol Of Glorious Myanmar Culture

10:40 Am Thingyan Songs & Dances

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	To My Dream City (Part- 2)
07:44	Pm	Thingyan Songs & Dances
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Architect: U Thaw
08:50	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass "Aung Thiha"

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

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MRTV Entertainment Channel

(9-4-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm	9:40 pm
• Weather Report	• Music Programme
• Thingyan Dances	9:50 pm
6:40 pm	• International Drama Series
• Music Programme	10:00 pm
7:00 pm	• Myanmar Movie
• Cassette Recording	Midnight
8:10 pm	• Close Down.
• Special Movie	
"The Defender"	

* **8:30 pm** — Live: English Premier League Liverpool Vs Stock City

From 9-4-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 Pm
To 10-4-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 Pm

Liverpool hold Dortmund on Klopp's return, Sevilla win

LONDON — Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp enjoyed a satisfying return to Borussia Dortmund as his new side frustrated his former charges and claimed a valuable away goal to draw 1-1 in their Europa League quarter-final, first leg on Thursday.

Klopp, whose seven-year Dortmund spell ended last season, was warmly welcomed back to the Westfalenstadion and enjoyed his night as Liverpool took a first-half lead through Divock Origi before Mats Hummels levelled after the break.

Holders Sevilla are well-versed in the art of getting results in two-legged knockout ties and their bid for a third successive Europa League title stayed firmly on course with a 2-1 win at La Liga rivals Athletic Bilbao.

Villarreal, the third Spanish club in the last eight of Europe's second-tier competition, also enjoyed first-leg success with a 2-1 win at home to Sparta Prague, while Shakhtar Donetsk won at Braga by the same scoreline.

Klopp's return was always going to be an emotionally-charged occasion for the Liverpool boss and the Dortmund fans, whose affection for their former coach, who delivered two Bundesliga titles, remains undimmed since his departure.

There was warm applause from all around the stadium as



Borussia Dortmund's Marco Reus shoots from a free kick during UEFA Europa League Quarter Final First Leg at Signal Iduna Park, Dortmund, Germany, on 7 April. PHOTO: REUTERS

Klopp was welcomed back prior to kickoff and the spirit of friendship between the teams extended to a unified and rousing rendition of both clubs' anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone". Dortmund have been in superb form — unbeaten in 16 matches in 2016 — but they were sluggish in the opening 45 minutes when Liverpool chased,

harried and pressed relentlessly.

The visitors took the lead after 36 minutes when industrious Origi, preferred in attack to Daniel Sturridge, latched on to a flick forward, took a touch to control the ball and squeezed a low shot across Roman Weidenfeller into the net.

The Belgian should have

doubled the lead before halftime but shot straight at Weidenfeller and Liverpool were made to pay three minutes after the break when Hummels powered a header from Henrikh Mkhitaryan's cross past Simon Mignolet.

Liverpool comfortably survived Dortmund's best efforts for the remainder of the match and

will head to Anfield buoyed by their performance, with a knee injury for captain Jordan Henderson the only disappointment for Klopp. "Dortmund is a pretty good side and everyone could see that but we had our moments and we could have won the game," Klopp told BT Sport.

"I'm pretty sure a lot of people thought we would lose 2, 3 or 4-0. But at some moments we had Dortmund and around our goal we were brilliant."

Sevilla, aiming to become the first side to lift the trophy for three years running, but had not won an away game in Europe or La Liga all season and were behind early in the second half.

Athletic's Aritz Aduriz, the Europa League's top scorer this season, got his ninth in the competition when he dipped low at the back post to head Iker Muniain's cross past keeper David Soria three minutes into the second half.

The two teams, locked together on points in La Liga, were level on the night, however, when Muniain's poor header back was intercepted by Ever Banega, who fed Timothee Kolodziejczak to finish left-footed after 56 minutes.

The comeback was complete with seven minutes remaining when Kevin Gameiro found Vicente Iborra on the counter and he poked the ball past Bilbao keeper Iago Herrerin.—Reuters

Morality police should not judge Sharapova — GB Olympian

LONDON — Tennis player Maria Sharapova should not be judged by sport's 'morality police' for taking meldonium for 10 years before it was banned, according to British Olympian Susan Egelstaff.

Egelstaff, a badminton player, says the former world number one has been unfairly accused of acting against the spirit of sport.



Tennis star Maria Sharapova speaks to the media announcing a failed drug test after the Australian Open during a press conference in Los Angeles, on 7 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sharapova, the biggest name to test positive for meldonium since it was officially banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in January, admitted using the drug, which boosts aerobic performance, for health reasons.

The Russian, who is provisionally banned pending an International Tennis Federation (ITF) investigation, said she had not read an email saying meldonium had been added to WADA's list of banned substances.

"When Maria Sharapova tested positive for meldonium the backlash was immediate and fierce," Egelstaff told The Mixed Zone website.

"The outcry focused more on the fact she had been taking meldonium, reportedly prescribed by a doctor for a decade without an apparent medical need for the drug, rather than the fact she failed a doping test.

"The morality police were out in force, decrying Sharapova for taking a drug for its performance-enhancing qualities," added Egelstaff, a Commonwealth Games bronze medallist in 2006.

"This condemnation amazed and frankly stupefied me. There was a remarkable number of people who believed themselves qualified to judge what is morally acceptable in sport."

There have been more than 100 positive tests since then but in some countries meldonium was routinely used as a supplement before it was added to the WADA list.

Egelstaff argues there is no difference between athletes who took meldonium to boost aerobic performance and the use of other legal treatments.

"During qualifying for London 2012 (Olympics) I had severe pain in my foot...I got a cortisone injection and within 24 hours I was completely pain-free," she said. "This injection was, indisputably, performance-enhancing. Without it I'm not sure I could have continued playing, with it I qualified for Team GB.

"I didn't feel the tiniest pang of guilt about having the injection and neither should I, it was legal after all," added Egelstaff.—Reuters



Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri and Tottenham's Harry Kane pose with their monthly Premier League awards. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ranieri, Kane pick up monthly Premier League awards

LONDON — Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri has been named the Premier League manager of the month for March, while Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane has won the players' award.

Ranieri guided his team to three wins and a draw during the month to consolidate their position at the top of the table, where they currently sit seven points clear of Tottenham with six games to play.

This is the second time this season that Ranieri, who has also been named Italian coach of the year on the back of

Leicester's remarkable season, has won the award.

He saw off competition from West Ham United manager Slaven Bilic, Swansea City boss Francesco Guidolin and Bournemouth's Eddie Howe.

The Foxes began the month with a 2-2 home draw with West Bromwich Albion, followed by three 1-0 wins against Watford, Newcastle United and Crystal Palace. Kane netted six times in the league in March to climb to the top of the scoring charts on 22 goals, three ahead of his closest rival, Leicester City's Jamie Vardy.—Reuters