

AMENDMENT ESSENTIAL

State Counsellor offers New Year Message

The following is the full text of the unofficial translation of the new year speech delivered by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor.

On this new year occasion, I wish all our countrymen and the people around the world physical and mental well-being and freedom from danger.

I'm delighted to have a chance to greet my people on such an auspicious occasion. I assume that it is a good omen for us the National League for Democracy-led new government to take over the duties of the State beginning from new year. I said this is a good omen because it is a time when we start to construct new good things for a change.

Here, I'd like to explain a bit the expression NLD-led government. This expression does not mean that NLD dominates, takes power and obtains the right to rule.

What I mean is that we are a regime which will abide by the pol-

icies laid bare to the people during the election campaign. We'll keep our words but keeping this campaign promise shall be according to the policies and principles of NLD.

As known to you all, our policies and principles are to ensure national reconciliation, internal peace, the rule of law, the amendment to the constitution and keeping the democratic system dynamic and well ingrained.

What matters most is national reconciliation. If a nation has to progress and prosper, unity is of utmost importance. That's why I'd like to make it clear that when we said we're a regime oriented towards national reconciliation, I mean that I'm in favour of entire people regardless of voting for or against us.

There shall not be whatsoev-

er discrimination. A democratically elected government is responsible for all citizens, being fair and square to everybody, harbouring loving kindness and compassion towards all. That's why we lay a special emphasis on national reconciliation. In this function, we hope that all countrymen will participate and render support.

When I mentioned the phrase rule of law, I mean we want all citizens to lead a secure life under the protection of law. Law suggests justice. And the laws shall be properly enforceable.

It's vitally important for our judicial pillar to stay upright and effective. The administration of justice shall be fair and just and be in accord with the internationally accepted norms.

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Student activists celebrate outside the prison after being released by the government's general amnesty in Yangon, on 17 April, 2016.
PHOTO: REUTERS

President grants amnesty to 83 prisoners

THE government has released 83 prisoners as part of its commitment to national reconciliation, according to an announcement released by the Office of the State Counsellor.

President U Htin Kyaw granted a general amnesty to 75 men and eight women from 25

correctional facilities on 16 April; they were released on New Year's Day.

The amnesty came eight days after the Office of the State Counsellor hinted at the release of more prisoners of conscience and political activists. The office issued an announcement on 7

April, vowing its continued efforts to free political prisoners, political activists and students on trial. The announcement was followed by a release of 161 men, 36 women and two children on 8 April.

According to official statistics, 11 men and five women were released from Insein Correctional

Facility, seven men from Pyi Correctional Facility, five men from Pakokku Correctional Facility, seven men from Zinkyaik Correctional Facility, four men from Mandalay Correctional Facility and two women from Htonebo Correctional Facility.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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Devotees visit the Shwedagon Pagoda on the New Year Day.

PHOTO: YE HTUT



Devotees throngs famous pagodas in Yangon for meritorious deeds

FAMOUS pagodas in Yangon Region were packed with devotees on New Year Day yesterday.

Religious people offered food, fruit, flowers, water and lights at pagodas on the auspicious day of New Year. The ceremonies included offering food to members of the Sangha, listening to the parittas (religious protection verses) from them, sharing the merits gained from meritorious deeds.

The devotees also conducted a communal blood donation ceremony and freed birds and fish at Shwedagon Pagoda.

At the Maha Wizaya Pagoda at the foot of Shwedagon Pagoda,



Devotees release fingerlings into a lake in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

people witnessed the King of the Sun paying obeisance to the pagoda. Legend has it that the King of the Sun pays obeisance to the Maha Wizaya Pagoda twice a year at 8.35 am and 3.25pm the same day on every New Year Day.

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Pious people performed meritorious deeds at famous pagodas in Yangon, including the Shwebonpwint Pagoda, the Kyaikday-ut Pagoda, the Kaba Aye Pagoda, the Tooth Relic Pagoda, the Loka Chantha Abayalabamuni Pagoda and the Kyaikwaing Pagoda.

It is customary on the New Year Day that people across the country throng famous pagodas to perform good deeds such as the recitation of parittas, the release of birds and fish and the keeping of the Sabbath.

Bus lines offered free rides to usher in the arrival of New Year yesterday.—Yi Yi Myint and Myat Sandi

Pious Buddhists celebrate New Year's Day through rituals

PEOPLE across the country spent New Year's Day performing meritorious deeds at pagodas and listening to parittas (religious protection verses) recited by members of the Sangha.

Many Buddhist devotees listened to parittas recited by prominent monks at the Upptasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The congregation, together with the pagoda's board of trustees and religious associations, offered food, fruits, flowers, water and lights before the Buddha Images at the pagoda.

Similar events took place at famous pagodas in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, with pious Buddhists doing meritorious deeds such as keeping the Sabbath, offering food to charities and freeing fish and birds.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture held a ceremony in Pyinmana Township to pay respects to 48 senior citizens above the age of 75 and provided them with financial assistance.

The people of Myanmar consider New Year's Day an auspicious time to do meritorious deeds to achieve a better future.—Myanmar News Agency

Ooredoo to build 1,100 telecommunication towers this year

OOREDOO, the Qatar-based telecom operator, is planning to establish more than 1,100 telecommunication towers in Myanmar this year, said the company's CEO Mr Rene Meza.

"We will make further investments into the telecommunications sector, with plans to build new 3G towers, bringing the total up to 4,500, later this year," he added. "We are scheduled to build 1,105 new 3G towers within the next eight months."

Ooredoo has installed 3,395 3G towers as of the end of February 2016.

Ooredoo will extend its fibre optic network from 7,700

kilometres to 12,000 kilometres by the end of this year.

There are nearly 6 million Ooredoo users in Myanmar, 86 per cent of whom are data users. According to the latest survey, data usage per subscriber reached an average of 580 megabytes per month.

The international telecom operator won its telecom license in 2013. The firm began operations in Myanmar in August 2014.

Ooredoo products and services are now available in over 100,000 retail outlets in addition to more than 100 official Ooredoo stores around the country.—Ko Moe

Pyithu Hluttaw organises paritta recitation ceremony



The congregation led by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint pay respect to the Members of the Sangha as the monks recite Parittas at Pyithu Hluttaw Office. PHOTO: MNA

THE PYITHU HLUTTAW invited members of the Sangha to recite parittas (religious protection verses) at its office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening, the

New Year Day of Myanmar.

The monks led by Sayadaw Bhaddanta Karunya of the Masoyein monastery in Zambaythiri township recited the

parittas. Speaker U Win Myint and his congregation listened to the parittas recited by the monks and donated offertories to them.—Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor thanks public for service during Thingyan

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, the State Counsellor, released a message of appreciation to the people on Myanmar in honour of New Year's Day yesterday.

In her message, she thanked civil service personnel for their excellent performance of duties during the water festival, as well as the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and members of the public.

She also thanked military personnel for maintaining security during the water festival in both far-flung areas and towns and villages, enabling the public to enjoy freely and happily.

She also expressed her heartfelt thanks to the police, including the traffic police, for their efforts to reduce outbreaks of crime and to ensure peace, stability and safe, smooth travel during the water festival.

She also commended health

personnel for providing of 24-hour health care.

Suu Kyi offered special thanks to employees of local development committees, fire brigades, Red Cross societies, youth associations, volunteer organisations and CSOs for the good will they showed by keeping the environment clean, providing emergency assistance, donating blood, helping to find missing people and transporting injured people to hospitals.

The State Counsellor also expressed her delight to see people preserving Myanmar traditions, behaving in a proper manner in throwing water and performing meritorious deeds.

In her conclusion, the State Counsellor credited all Myanmar citizens and requested that they continue to cooperate in years to come.—GNLM

Army chief offers New Year's wishes

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on new year day wished the people of Myanmar peace and prosperity yesterday, urging the people to play their roles in nation-building and in the maintenance of peace.

The senior general visited the water pavilion of the Defence Services Academy in Pyin Oo Lwin yesterday and expressed his New Year's wishes.

"We need to maintain the good tradition of unity for national development," the commander-in-chief said, pointing the need to come together to shoulder the responsibility of national development.—Myawady



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. PHOTO: MYAWADY

State Counsellor offers New Year Message

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It is said justice is the fair trial. Justice is not something that is uttered by the mouth; it needs manifestation by the action. This is a basic principle.

Another very important principle for the prevalence of the rule of law is that a person shall be regarded as innocent if there is no valid proof and/or evidence against him. This is a basic principle. Even those who were found guilty deserve leniency in effective administration of justice.

This is the reason why Mr President has shown leniency and/or magnanimity by signing the agreement to grant amnesty on this auspicious occasion of new year. The very essence of the rule of law is to protect the people and provide them with psychological and physical security.

The rule of law does not suggest restrictions being imposed upon the people. Nor it suggests oppression. Some people are scared by the laws. In their opinion, the laws are made to oppress the people. I would unambiguously and unequivocally say that laws are not meant for that. The rule of law is also virtually important to internal peace. Without the rule of law, we cannot construct peace. When talking about peace, I'd also like to say at the same time that we've no intention whatsoever to abandon the activities and actions of the previous regime.

We recognize their good deeds, and we'll continue to build on them. So, regarding the internal peace process, we highly appreciate their ceasefire initiative. We'll continue to strive to include in the ceasefire accord the organizations that we deem appropriate for inclusion.

Through peace conferences, we'll continue to be able to build up a genuine, federal democratic union aspired by entire countrymen. The internal peace process and the establishment of a genuine, federal democratic union are closely intertwined. That's why we need constitutional amendment.

The constitution needs to be one that will give birth to a genuine, federal democratic union. In our effort to amend the constitution, we'll choose ways and means that would not adversely affect the people. We won't resort to means which will affect national peace.

This is the principle NLD has always stuck to. People won't suffer. It will be us who will suffer if needed. We'll back you and protect you. I'd like to assert that the very firm principle of our new regime is to put the nation on the correct path, employing the ways and means that will not affect the people.

Thinking of constitution, the most important point is the basic principle No 4 of it i.e. the sovereign power descends from the countrymen. It rests throughout the nation. This is the basic principle of democracy.

We accept this principle in toto. We'll practice it. Countrymen matter most. Countrymen are the first, the second and the ultimate. The country exists for the countrymen. A country will be meaningless without the country people. And the government shall exist for the countrymen. I'd like to promise our people never to relinquish this principle.

The whole world is saying that our country abounds in natural resources. But frankly speaking, I don't take it very seriously. What really counts is the strength

of our people, not the resources, for they can be depleted someday.

And if we look around the world, even the very small countries lacking natural resources can be found to be profoundly influential. You can notice they are achieving economic growth. That's why I rely more on our people. One of the objectives of our new administration is to promote people's capacity and qualification.

We'll exert effort to enable our people to be loyal to the state and to perform national duty well. Our country will be faced with different challenges. The country has a lot of things to change and transform. At the moment, I'd not go into detail as to what changes to make. It'll be a long list. But, I believe our countrymen know what are more important matters.

Just as we believe our people, I want you to do the same and participate and cooperate with a firm belief. This is my request. Only a regime cannot make a country a success. It cannot effectuate the national development alone. Only with the participation of the people can these things be achieved. That's why I'd like to request you all to be duty conscientious and to be committed to exertion of concerted effort.

World is developing very fast now. So, we've to put forth much greater effort to keep ourselves abreast of the world. I remember my father saying in the aftermath of the World War II that we need to run while people from other countries are walking to keep peace with them. Even then, he said, we might need a 20 years' time to catch up.

Now too, the situation is not very much different from that of those days, I think. When people

from other countries are walking, we need to run, taking great trouble to be able to catch them up. Well, in doing so, I prefer to choose the correct ways and means.

When I said I want to see our country stand tall among the world's nations, I'm not just referring to material wellbeing. What I mean is I want our people respected by the world's nations in terms of ability and qualifications and highly valued, too.

I want our people to be able to raise their heads, looking proud to be Myanmar wherever they go. That's how I want my people to stand tall among the world's nations.

We have to strive hard for that. When we pleaded for popular support, we didn't give any easy promises. We've never said our country will prosper overnight.

The reason of not giving such a promise is not that we don't believe in ourselves, not that we don't believe in our people but that we're aware of the herculean tasks ahead. The tasks are heavy, requiring herculean effort. The national duty is something very important and very heavy.

That's why we don't want to give easy promises in the presence of multifarious, onerous duties.

But what I dare say is we can win public participation. Nothing is unachievable if we can win popular support and public confidence. I think people will want to know our foreign policy in the global context. Since the attainment of independence, our country has maintained good relations with all parts of the world.

This is something our country can be very much proud of. Since regaining independence in January 1948, our country de-

spite being a small one and amidst war-torn damages has always won international respect. Why? Our people could have been resilient amidst the dramatic woes, showing their talents.

We're all required to make concerted effort to reach such a level of international recognition. We need to ponder over how to continue our journey and which policies and which fundamental ideologies to adopt. This will be a long journey. And the future of a nation is a thing of eternity. This is an ordeal, having to face a host of challenges.

How can we overcome them, then? Some are worried that our new regime lacks experience concerning administration and management. Yes, we lack experience. But we are not reluctant to work together with the experienced individuals. We've no idea of ignoring the people from the old regimes. We want everybody who can bring benefit to the country to join our hands.

The 1947 elections were held in the direction towards Myanmar independence. Here again, I'd like to quote my father. What he said is concise and clear. The country would be ruled based on loving kindness and loyalty. What it meant is that the countrymen will be loved and the government will be loyal to the country. Despite a very short vow, this kind of promise is one that should be made by any regime. We also have the same vow. We'll love our people. We'll be loyal to our country. We're bound to succeed if we can keep this promise.

May I conclude by wishing all my country people a success throughout the future and by urging you all to be overwhelmed with loving kindness and loyalty.

Ministry announces prompt response to water scarcity

THE MINISTRY of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has pledged prompt response to water-scarce areas, stressing its readiness to solve the problem.

The ministry will distribute

drinking water to the affected areas and help local residents build water tanks, drill wells and install water-purification equipment as necessary.

It called for prompt contact

with its local departments. Contact persons are U Win Htut Zaw, Ph: 067404048, 0943120863, U Win Zaw Htay, Ph: 067404486, 09451245637.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pwe Gauk Waterfall popular among visitors during Thingyan



Revelers seen at the Pwe Gauk Waterfall in PyinOoLwin. PHOTO:624

PWE GAUK Waterfall received more visitors during the Thingyan Water Festival than all other sites in Pyin Oo Lwin, a scenic hill town in Mandalay Region, locals say.

Mandalay Region authorities reduced the number of permits for water throwing pandals during the five-day festival this year.

“This is the main reason more revelers visited the Pwe Gauk Waterfall than during the same period last year,” one local said.

Pwe Gauk or ‘B.E’ Waterfall, known as Hampshire Falls during the British colonial period, is located between Lashio and Pyin Oo Lwin. The waterfall is a popular picnic spot among families in Pyin Oo Lwin.—624

Illegal drugs, automatic handgun confiscated in Loikaw

STIMULANT tablets and a pistol with ammunition were seized on Monday from a man who was transporting them in his waist pack, according to a police report.

During a special operation during the Thingyan festival, an anti-drug unit searched a motorbike driven by Maung Hla with one passenger on board on the Seseng-Loikaw road near Kyaukgymrauk Village in Loikaw Township.

The unit discovered about 4,000 yaba pills, a .45 millilmetre automatic pistol, bullets and a mobile phone from the motorcyclist.

According to an investigation, the suspects were on their



Maung Hla (a) Ko Hla, Ta Maung and Min Min. PHOTO: KYEMON

way to deliver the drugs to a man named Min Min, who lives in the township.

The three men involved in the case—Maung Hla (aka

Ko Hla), Ta Maung and Min Min—were arrested by the police under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Kyemon*

Lifeless man in lawless moat

A 40-YEAR-OLD man was found dead in the Mandalay Moat on 73rd Street between 26th and 27th streets on Thursday evening, police reported.

“No physical injuries were found on his body,” one police officer said.

According to the police investigation, it is believed that the unidentified man, who was wearing blue jeans and a black shirt, drowned in the moat while he was swimming.

“During the water festival, some drunken men were swim-

ming and bathing in the moat without permission from the authorities.

This is the main cause of death in the moat,” a police officer said.

Police are still investigating the case.—*Maung Pyithu*

Crime NEWS

Pickpockets charged for snatching mobile devices

LOCAL police on Tuesday arrested a man who was allegedly involved in mobile phone theft at a Thingyan pandal in Mandalay.

Tun Tun, 27, of Seinpan Ward in Maha Aung Mye Township, was found in possession of several stolen items, including a Huawei mobile phone, two Samsung handsets and two Honor mobile devices, in front of the Ninja water-throwing

pandal.

During the police investigation, the suspect admitted that he stole the mobile devices from people at the pandal, which was located on 26th Street between 78th and 79th streets in Aungmyethazan Township.

Police seized the five mobile phones as evidences and have filed charges against the suspect under the Criminal Law.—*Kyemon*



Tun Tun. PHOTO: KYEMON

Young man stabbed to death in Mandalay

A 19-YEAR-OLD man was stabbed to death on Friday by a group of youths during a quarrel, while the victim's friend sustained serious injuries, according to a police report.

According to the police investigation, a quarrel broke between a group of young people riding on motorcycles and two youths near a fuel station on the Mandalay-Sagaing road near Ngetoe Village in Amara-

pura Township.

One motorcyclist stabbed Kyaw Thet Swe and his friend Ngwe Moe with a knife. Kyaw Thet Swe died en route to the hospital with serious injuries to his neck and back. Ngwe Moe is currently receiving medical treatment at the township hospital.

Local police are still investigating the case in an effort to apprehend the attackers.—*Maung Pyithu*

Police release young men dressed as fighters

GROUPS of young men dressed in fighter uniforms were recently released from custody after police completed their investigation, according to local police.

“We released 27 revelers from custody after educating

them about their inappropriate dress,” said a police officer.

Three groups of young men were arrested on Wednesday by local police for their misleading attire while they celebrated the Thingyan holiday in Mandalay.—*Kyemon*

Delta drought gives glimpse into bleak future for mighty Mekong

CU LAO DUNG (Viet Nam) — While China has been releasing water from a hydro-electric dam in the upper Mekong River to help relieve drought down river in Southeast Asia, little of it has flowed to Nguyen Van Thach's sugarcane farm in southern Viet Nam.

After feeding his six cows with grass uprooted from a village nearby, Thach took a knife and cut a slice of sugarcane from his withered crop. "It's too salty," the 62-year-old farmer said, grimacing as he licked the piece of cane. "Even cows can't eat this."

Thach has quit growing sugarcane and is building houses instead to repay loans after his farm in Soc Trang Province in Viet Nam's Mekong Delta rice bowl lost 10 million dong (\$449).

The sprawling Mekong Delta has been worst hit by salination in a region that provides half of Viet Nam's rice and 60 per cent of its shrimp and fish.

Low river levels have allowed seawater to penetrate 90 kms (56 miles) inland, ruining vast swathes of cropland in the fertile delta. Viet Nam says the salt



A farmer harvests dried sugarcane on her drought-stricken farm in Soc Trang province in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam March 31, 2016. Picture taken on 31 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

water intrusion in the delta is unprecedented.

It could be the new normal along the mighty Mekong, the 4,900 km (3,044 mile) river that sustains 60 million livelihoods as it flows through Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

At least 39 hydro-electric dams are being built or under development in China, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia to meet the in-

dustrial demands of developing economies. Environmentalists say they are also endangering traditional agriculture downstream, where there is now less fresh water for drinking and irrigation.

The water China is discharging from its existing dams upstream has had little discernible impact as it dissipates into the expansive delta region where Thach and nearly 20 million other

people live.

Viet Nam is also suffering its most severe drought in 90 years, blamed partly on the El Niño weather phenomenon, which produces drier and hotter weather in Asia.

Climate change is also factor in the drought, said Nguyen Huu Thien, an independent expert on the Mekong Delta's ecology.

"In the context of climate change, this kind of

crisis (in the Mekong Delta) is forecast to happen more often, for example it could be once in 20 years instead of once in 90 years."

Moreover, the delta, much of which is only two metres or less above sea level, has been sinking in recent years due to rising sea levels and heavy groundwater extraction from an ever increasing number of wells. Depleted water tables cause the ground to compact, allowing seawater to intrude into cropland and water supplies.

The drought and sea water intrusion is sapping Viet Nam's economy, which leans on commodity exports. The agriculture sector contracted 2.69 per cent in the first quarter of 2016 and overall economic growth of 5.56 per cent was the slowest in two years.

Viet Nam is a major global exporter for rice, coffee, pepper, fish and shrimp. Preliminary losses for those crops so far this year are at 5.57 trillion dong (\$250 million), according to a government report as of 14 April, nearly 70 per cent of which was in the Mekong Delta.

The drought has affect-

ed a third of the coffee farms in the Central Highlands coffee belt, said the Viet Nam Coffee and Cocoa Association. Viet Nam is the world's second-biggest producer of the beans.

The agriculture ministry said sugar refineries reported an 11 per cent drop in the cane volume to 10.23 million tonnes.

The government says 240,000 hectares (593,000 acres) of paddy have been destroyed in the world's third-largest rice exporter.

Southwest of the delta in Bac Lieu, a major shrimp-raising province, signs are planted on dried-up shrimp ponds advertising land for sale or for lease.

Viet Nam, a major shrimp exporter to the United States, produced 91,900 tonnes in the January-March period, down 1 per cent from a year ago, government data says.

To Viet Tien, 61, has been raising shrimp since 1982 and has never seen it so bad. "It's been too hot toward the bottom of the pond and shrimp can't stand it," he said. "On this (salty) soil, it's impossible to switch to another crop," Tien said.—

Reuters

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Chief Executive Officer - Nakagawa Kiyoshi
ceo@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Chief Reporter - Ye Myint
chiefreporter@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Consultant Editors

Jacob Goldberg
consultanteditor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Alec Wilmot
consultanteditor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Kyaw Thura,
editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

International news

Tun Tun Naing
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Tun Aung Kyaw
reporter2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Translators

Hay Mar Tin Win
translator@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe,
Nyi Zaw Moe, Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win, Sanda Hnin,
Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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Belt and Road Initiative to benefit SE Asia, South Asia with Chinese investment

CANBERRA — The Belt and Road Initiative is an existing trend which will benefit the development of Southeast Asia and South Asia with more Chinese investment pouring in these regions, said Gordon Flake, Director of Perth USAsia Centre.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Flake said the Belt and Road Initiative is a reality, an existing trend.

In the past 25 years, the defining development of that era has been the growth of China, he said.

In the next 25 years, with China being strong and influential, many countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, like Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand and India, will enter a fast growing period. The centre of economic gravity begins to shift to Indo-Pacific and a large reason of that is the Chinese investment and trade with China of these countries under the Belt and Road Initiative, said Flake.

Flake said there are worries about Chinese investment in some countries. But when looking back at history, people see the simi-



Picture shows the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, collectively known as the Belt and Road initiative. PHOTO: XINHUA

lar worries over Japanese investment in the 1970s and 1980s. Bangladesh and Viet Nam worried about investment from South Korea for their labor policy.

"Now, nobody worries about Japanese investment and Korean investment. They welcome them," said Flake. As for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Flake held that the United States did not handle the response to China's initiative very well.

"AIIB is not controversial at all," he said.

"AIIB now is very different. It has evolved a lot in a good way," he said, "I wouldn't be surprised, depending on performance, if at some point the United States and Japan join the AIIB."

Flake said Western Australia is well-positioned in this Indo-Pacific era. Though quite far from Australia's economic centre on the eastern coast, Perth, the Western Australian capital, is closer to major Asian cities than the eastern cities such as Sydney and Mel-

bourne. Western Australia will be in an advanced position when the centre of economic development gravity shifts to Southeast Asia and South Asia, according to Flake. With its rich mineral and energy resources, its high level professional services in law, finance, infrastructure and basic science, Western Australia will be a perfect connecting point with the Belt and Road Initiative and support for the development in Southeast Asia and South Asia.—Xinhua

Rescue workers search for survivors in quake-hit southwestern Japan

KUMAMOTO (Japan) — The search for survivors continued Sunday on the earthquake-stricken island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan as rescue workers combed through collapsed buildings amid aftershocks and the escalating risk of landslides due to rainfall overnight.

In the village of Minamiaso, Kumamoto Prefecture, 2,000 personnel comprising members of the Self-Defence Forces, police officers and firefighters searched for those still missing. The village office put the number at eight and the National Policy Agency said the whereabouts of another five or so have not been ascertained.

A massive landslide hit the village with a population of around 12,000, causing the 200-metre-long Aso Ohashi bridge to collapse and severing a major road. A tunnel linking the village and the nearby village of Nishihara caved in.

SDF and police officers assessed the extent of damage in the town of Mashiki where the largest number of deaths occurred.

The total death toll from the wave of temblors that began on Thursday has climbed to 41, 32 of them in the quakes that struck on Saturday.

Over 196,000 people had been evacuated to shelters by Sunday morning, including about 12,000 in Oita Prefecture adjacent to Kumamoto, according to local governments.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in Tokyo the government will do all it can to find those missing and step up relief efforts. The government plans to increase the number of SDF personnel dispatched to disaster-hit areas to 25,000.

"I ordered (relevant ministries) to ensure supplies of food, medicine and water to those who have been evacuated and spent a worrying night at shelters," Abe told reporters at the prime minister's office.



Rescue workers search for survivors in the rubble of a house in the village of Minamiaso, Kumamoto Prefecture, in southwestern Japan, on 17 April, collapsed by a landslide following a magnitude-7.3 quake that struck the region the day before. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS



Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 17 April 2016, shows a fault (from R top to L bottom), that appeared on the surface of the ground in Mashiki, Kumamoto Prefecture, in southwestern Japan, following a magnitude-7.3 quake on 16 April and an M6.5 temblor on 14 April. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS



Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 17 April 2016, shows rescue workers searching for survivors in the village of Minamiaso, Kumamoto Prefecture, in southwestern Japan, in the wake of a massive landslide caused by a magnitude-7.3 quake that struck the area the day before. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ter's office.

Japan will accept an offer from the US military to airlift goods and people, Abe and Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said.

The government plans to deliver rice balls, noodles, and bread as supermarkets and convenience stores in Kumamoto are running out of food and other items.

So far, food, water, and other relief supplies such as diapers and blankets have been delivered to shelters. Evacuation fatigue and worries are growing among residents in the region as Kumamoto

and Oita continued to experience strong aftershocks.

Air, railway, and highway travel remained disrupted in the region on Sunday.

The first major quake with a magnitude of 6.5 hit Kumamoto at 9:26pm Thursday, which was later described by the Japan Meteorological Agency as a foreshock to the more powerful M7.3 quake that rocked the region at 1:25am Saturday. In Kumamoto, as many as 450,000 households experienced blackouts, and around 100,000 homes were

without gas, according to Kyushu Electric Power Co. and Saibu Gas Co.

Japanese manufacturers were forced to suspend operations at their factories in Kumamoto and adjacent areas. The hardest-hit prefecture of Kumamoto is known for its farm produce and cultural sites such as Kumamoto Castle, whose stone walls and turrets have collapsed. It is also popular among foreign visitors to Japan, as it has Mt. Aso, an active volcano, and hot springs.

As of 2pm Sunday, 436 tem-

blors that could be felt by humans had occurred since Thursday, including one registering 7 on the Japanese seismic scale of 7 and three registering upper 6, according to the weather agency.

Thursday's M6.5 quake was the first in the country to measure the maximum 7 on the Japanese seismic scale since the massive earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, 2011, that devastated areas of northeastern Japan and triggered the Fukushima nuclear disaster. —Kyodo News

North Korea's fifth nuclear test seen imminent, increased movements at site: Yonhap



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects a flight drill of fighter pilots from the Korean People's Army's (KPA) Air and Anti-Air Force, in Pyongyang on 21 February 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PYONGYANG — North Korea is likely to conduct its fifth nuclear test in the near future, possibly before its party congress in early May, a media report said on Sunday, citing South Korean government sources based on their reading of activity around the test site.

The news of signs indicating the North is readying a nuclear test comes as Pyongyang is gearing up for a ruling Workers Party congress in early May, where leader Kim Jong Un is likely to boast about his achievements in building a weapons programme.

The likelihood of North Korea conducting a fifth nuclear test, possibly within weeks, has increased because of a failed missile launch on Friday that was an

embarrassing setback for leader Kim, South Korean officials and international experts said.

"Compared to last month, the frequency of vehicle, workforce and equipment movements increased two-to-threefold recently," Yonhap News Agency said, quoting multiple government sources.

The possible test, if it happens, follows a fourth nuclear test in January and a long-range rocket launch in February, which led to new UN sanctions that have failed to halt Pyongyang's weapons programmes.

South Korea's military has said Pyongyang is technically ready for an additional nuclear test, depending on its leadership's political decision.—Reuters

US urges Japan to boost fiscal spending, cites recession risks

WASHINGTON — US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew urged Japan to consider boosting fiscal spending, citing recession risks to its stagnant economy, in a statement to the International Monetary Fund's policy-setting meeting held Saturday.

In the statement released Friday, Lew stepped up his calls for action by Japan that he had made the same day. At a press conference that wrapped up the Group of 20 finance chiefs' meeting, Lew had warned Japan "not to slip into another economic decline."

"Japan should deploy a flexible fiscal policy in the near term that provides a supportive fiscal impulse," Lew said in the statement to the International Mone-

tary and Finance Committee.

"Japan continues to confront soft economic growth and low inflation, and faces continued recession risks, against the backdrop of persistently weak domestic demand," he added.

Lew released the statement as US officials indicated the Treasury Department has been more closely monitoring Japanese economic measures than before due to a lack of signs Japan can escape from a prolonged slump.

The need to revitalise the economy through an increase in fiscal spending along with monetary policy was the main topic at the two-day meeting of finance ministers and central bank chiefs from the G-20 economies through Friday.—Kyodo News

Ted Cruz wins Wyoming Republican presidential nominating contest



Republican US presidential candidate Ted Cruz speaks at the 2016 New York State Republican Gala in New York City, on 14 April 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CASPER (Wyo) — Republican US presidential hopeful Ted Cruz won all 14 delegates at stake on Saturday in Wyoming, besting rival Donald Trump, who made little effort to win the rural state, and further narrowing the gap in the race for the party's nomination.

Cruz is trying to prevent Trump from obtaining the 1,237 delegates needed to secure the Republican nomination at the July convention in Cleveland. By continuing to rack up small wins, Cruz is gaining ground on the New York real estate mogul, who has thus far failed to shift his focus on the local-level campaigning necessary to win delegates.

Trump has been critical of

the process, again on Saturday calling it "rigged" while speaking at a rally in Syracuse, New York. He has repeatedly complained about Colorado, which awarded all 34 of its delegates to Cruz despite not holding a popular vote.

Trump said his supporters are becoming increasingly angry with states such as Wyoming and Colorado.

"They're going nuts out there; they're angry," Trump said in Syracuse. "The bosses took away their vote, and I wasn't going to send big teams of people three, four months ago, have them out there."

While Trump has won 21 state nominating contests to Cruz's 10, the billionaire leads

the Texas senator by only 196 delegates (755-559). That means he must win nearly 60 per cent of those remaining before the party's political convention in July.

Wyoming does not hold a primary vote. Instead, 475 party activists convened in Casper on Saturday to hold a state convention and award 14 delegates.

Previously, 12 other delegates had been designated at county-level conventions. Cruz won 10 of those, with one going to Trump and another being elected as "unbound."

Cruz spoke at the convention, capping off a months-long effort to organise support in the state. Trump had originally planned to send former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, who remains popular among conservatives, as a surrogate, but she canceled at the last minute.

Cruz spoke about local issues in Wyoming, the largest coal-producing state.

He discussed the Democratic "attack" on the fossil fuel, saying President Barack Obama has tried to put the coal industry out of business through government regulations targeting air pollution.

"America is the Saudi Arabia of coal, and we are going to develop our industry," Cruz said.

At the same time, Trump was speaking at a rally in Syracuse, New York, ahead of the state's Republican primary on Tuesday.—Reuters

Italians go to polls for drilling referendum Renzi did not want

ROME — Italy went to the polls on Sunday for a referendum on offshore oil and gas drilling rights, a complex issue that the government hopes voters will shun.

For the ballot to be valid, more than 50 per cent of the Italian electorate must vote and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has urged people to stay away, saying that the referendum is unnecessary and might end up hurting the economy.

It would be a blow to Renzi if substantial numbers did turn out, suggesting voters were ready to snub him just weeks before major local elections. But opinion polls have indicated that a quorum will not be reached.

The referendum focuses on whether Italy should stop renewing offshore drilling licenses within 12 miles (20 km) of the coast. New drilling concessions are no longer being handed out, but the government says old agreements should be kept in play.

Voting runs from 7.00am (0500 GMT) to 11.00pm (2100 GMT). The ballot was proposed by a number of regional assemblies, most of them run by Renzi's own

centre-left Democratic Party, which object to drilling platforms because of worries about the environment, as well as the impact on their tourist industries.

Italy imports around 90 per cent of its energy needs and successive governments have looked to boost domestic production to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers such as Russia's Gazprom.

There are 69 exploration concessions in Italian waters, most of them gas, the industry ministry says. Of these 44 fall within the 12-mile range, most of them run by Italy's Eni.

If the referendum succeeds, these 44 fields will be shut when their concessions expire, even if they are still workable.

"This not a political referendum, but concerns 11,000 workers, their future and Italy's energy supply chain," Renzi told reporters on Friday. Environmental watchdog Legambiente and other green groups say domestic oil and gas production is minimal and that continued focus on fossil fuels takes Italy further away from its renewable energy and carbon tar-

gets. Gas production from offshore fields inside the 12-mile area currently accounts for around 3 per cent of Italian consumption while oil output in the area makes up just 1 per cent.

While the short-term impact of a "Yes" vote would be minimal it would have long-term implications as by 2027 the offshore fields could account for over 20 per cent of Italy's oil and gas production, Alessandro Pozzi, an analyst at Mediobanca, said.

The referendum comes at an awkward time for Renzi. An influence-peddling case centred on the country's main landlocked oil producing area triggered the resignation of the industry minister two weeks ago.

Opponents are seeking to use the scandal to bring voters out to test the government's mettle ahead of June local elections, where Renzi's party risks losing control of several cities. While the prime minister has played down the drilling referendum, he has said he will resign if he loses another referendum slated for October on constitutional reform.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

France committed to UK nuclear project: BBC cites Macron

PARIS — France will go ahead with construction of the Hinkley Point nuclear power plant in Britain, the French economy minister was quoted as saying by the BBC.

Emmanuel Macron was quoted by the BBC as saying the 18-billion-pound (\$25.57 billion) project was "very important" for France and state-owned utility company EDF.

"We back Hinkley Point project, it's very important for France, it's very important for the nuclear sector and EDF," Macron told the BBC.

"Now we have to finalise the work, and especially the technical and industrial work, very closely with EDF, with the British government, to be in a situation to sign in the coming week or more."

Asked whether he thought the deal would go ahead, Macron said: "That's my view, and that's our perspective, because I think it's very important for our commitment to nuclear energy."

Last week, Macron told unions at EDF that he had not yet decided whether to go ahead with the nuclear plant and has said a final investment decision will be taken by early May. The project was announced in October 2013 but a final investment decision has been delayed as EDF has struggled to find partners and financing. Chinese utility CGN signed up for a one-third stake last October, leaving EDF to fund the rest.—Reuters

India expresses concern over explosion at Sikh temple in Germany

NEW DELHI — India on Sunday expressed concern over an explosion at a Sikh temple in the German city of Essen late Saturday evening, in which three persons suffered injuries.

"Distressed to hear of an explosion in a Gurudwara in Essen in Germany. Our Mission is following up with local authorities on ground situation," Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup tweeted. Police in Germany have ruled out that the explosion as a terrorist attack and said it was caused deliberately, and the injured were guests at a wedding which took place earlier in the day.

A masked person was spotted fleeing the scene shortly after the blast at 7pm (German time) Saturday, the police said.—Xinhua

Five police injured in bomb explosion near Aden airport

ADEN — At least five Yemeni policemen were injured on Sunday when they foiled a suicide car bomb attack on the airport in the southern city of Aden, police said.

They said the policemen opened fire at a car that was travelling at high speed towards the airport. It exploded near the checkpoint wounding five policemen.—Reuters

Iran urges OPEC and non-OPEC members to accept its return to oil market — SHANA

DUBAI — Iran said it would boycott Sunday's meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC member countries in Qatar as it did not agree with a plan to freeze oil production at the January level.

"We have told some OPEC and non-OPEC members like Russia that they should accept the reality of Iran's return to the oil market. If Iran freezes its oil production at the February level, it means it cannot benefit from the lifting of sanctions," Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news agency SHANA.—Reuters

US sends nine Yemeni prisoners to Saudi Arabia from Guantanamo

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has sent nine Yemeni men to Saudi Arabia from the US military prison at Guantanamo, including an inmate who had been on a long-term hunger strike, US officials said on Saturday, the latest step in President Barack Obama's final push to close the facility.

The transfer marked the largest group of prisoners shipped out of the US naval base in Cuba since Obama rolled out his plan to shut the controversial detention centre there before he leaves office in January 2017.

With the latest departures, there are now 80 prisoners at Guantanamo, most held without charge or trial for more than a decade, drawing international condemnation.—Reuters

OPINION

Are we ready to embrace change?

Kyaw Thura

As another new year sets in, people across Myanmar are awashed with high hopes for the future of the country. Unlike previous years, this year is of special significance to all of us because of the recent inception of the democratically elected government, led by a civilian president.

It took more than half a century for the country to install a civilian government. Voters

gave an unambiguous mandate to the National League for Democracy (NLD) in the election last November to run the country on their behalf. The party won the election by a landslide, brandishing the slogan "Time to change".

It will not be difficult for the government to keep pace with the programme of reform the preceding government started. However, it should be noted that public participation is what matters most in politics. History bears witness to the fact that no government has ever survived without public involvement.

The release of student activists and prisoners of conscience is a welcoming action it is a sign that the government is going to place public and national interests at the forefront of its policies. It is important that the government continues to prevent future arrests of activists who

hold divergent political views. The new government must also bring about a new level of growth in the economic, educational and social sectors.

Now is not the time for us to sit idle and criticise whatever the government does. We should all render our service to national reconciliation, internal peace and the emergence of a constitution that favours a federal republic.

Write for us

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

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

Welcoming the Renaissance of Public Newspapers in Myanmar

Tommy Pauk

It is learned that the newly appointed Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint has urged the state media to embrace public-facing content in meeting with departmental officials and correspondents from the state-owned daily newspapers held in Yangon on 3rd of April, 2016. We, Myanmar citizens, also noted that the Minister for Information has stressed the need for the dailies to act as intermediaries between the government and the public. Therefore, those who are involved in state media and freelance journalists ought to serve the country as reliable, respectable and helpful newspapermen.

Unfortunately, the public dailies have been under the yoke of successive regimes for 54 years in Myanmar. The regimes had used all public newspapers (both Myanmar version and English version) as their own propaganda tools. The Working People's Daily (English version), The Guardian (English version), Loketha Pyi Thu Ne Zin (Myanmar version), Kye Mon (Myanmar version) and Myanma Ahlin (Myanmar version) are the state-owned daily newspapers published in Myanmar. The Botataung (The Vanguard) Daily (Myanmar version), The Guardian (English version), Loketha Pyi Thu Ne Zin (Myanmar version) are

no longer in existence. Myanma Ahlin daily was established in 1914 and the Mirror daily was established in 1957. Some of them were private-owned but they were nationalized by the Revolutionary Council Government in 1963. The sexagenarians and nonagenarians in Myanmar still remember the quality and freedom of press dominant in the Mirror daily, Myanma Ahlin daily and The Guardian. We like to read them because well-versed editors, contributors and freelancers had made concerted efforts in disseminating knowledge, information and creating the entertaining columns for satirical cartoon on politics, economy and management etc. These newspapers especially highlighted the public content and frank public comments on the government, politics and country's economy. However, the period between 1962 and the end of March 2016, the citizens have been disappointed with the features on propaganda. The so-called policies of the news and periodicals laid down by successive regimes had hindered the real public comments from appearing in the public newspapers. Due to lack of public interest and trust, the role of public dailies declined.

Nevertheless, due to political changes, the public dailies have now escaped from that abhorrent yoke of regimes. We, the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, have

noticed that the state-owned public daily newspapers started to open up the freedom of expression for the public in their dailies on the 1st of April 2016 as soon as the people's government was formed according to the constitution. In other words, they turned to the appearance of real public newspapers that we have desired for fifty four years. Not only state-owned public daily newspapermen but also those who wish to submit the true public emotions, feelings, complaints and opinions in the state-owned dailies can describe or express straight away in the dailies. We do take interest and concentrate on public newspapers while we rely on social media on a regular basis. The formation of people's government was given a rousing welcome by the public recently. The guidelines of the newly appointed Minister for Information and the change of the policies for state-owned dailies are highly appreciated by all the citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Previously, people in Myanmar used to start reading the obituary column in the public news paper and read some edited foreign news or limited local news. Even the local news events that had happened in Myanmar were lately described in the dailies. Mostly, the news items were selected or published on commendation of the project or tasks or the capacity of higher rank public officials

of the regimes. In reality, the public did not know the true news or detailed clarification of projects or public officials appointed by the regimes. During the period of over fifty years, public did not trust the news which favored the governments or fawned over the government officials. The public dailies were unwillingly acting as the government propaganda tools. Actually, those journalists or editors who had worked in the public newspapers were not allowed to freely express their own opinions or perspectives for the sake of the interest of the public. The editors and journalists of the public newspapers are obligated to describe or express or publish the articles or news according to so-called principles laid down by dictators. The state-owned public newspapers were running by public funds indeed. The news prints were imported from abroad. However, this print media has been used and the editorial staff had to obey the dictators and their minions rather than the public or the readers. Otherwise, the pressmen or editors were prone to be fired or jailed. In those days, the writings of editors were found to be obviously constrained. They did not have the right to write or express their own views on behalf the general public and under the stressful atmosphere. As a consequence, the editors could not utilize or sharpen their professional career, losing

the freedom of expression. They were not authorized to criticize the bad conduct, mismanagement, inefficiency, bribery and corruption committed by the government staff. The editors' views, opinions, perspectives were always defensive about the successive dictators and their handpicked public officials. The operations of public newspapers were under the yoke of the successive dictators and the unfair censorship.

The censorship should be existent essentially for any media field in Myanmar if it protects nationalism, religious faith and own culture. Nobody likes censorship if it protects or defends a handful of oppressors and minions. As we all know that this is the new era for democratic society and we all must (government and public) make steadfast efforts to advance our nation in the world. As saying goes; "newspapers tell the history of a particular nation", we can analyze the relations between the government and public for socio-economic development. The responsible personnel must know how well the public facing platform is established. How much freedom of expression was permitted in the public newspapers? Newspaper, being a print media must be utilized for the benefit and interest of entire people in Myanmar. Anyway, the Renaissance of Public Newspapers in Myanmar has to be warmly welcomed.

NLD CEC member U Win Htein has successful cataract surgery

U WIN HTEIN, a well-known member of the central executive committee of the ruling National League for Democracy, underwent successful cataract surgery last Saturday in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Win Htein said yesterday that the condition of his left eye is better, and it will undergo a check-up today.

Union Minister for Religious

Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, MP Daw Shwe Po underwent eye surgery operations on the same day. State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi previously underwent her second eye surgery at the same hospital.

The operations were scheduled to coincide with the 10-day Myanmar New Year holiday, which ends Wednesday.—*Myanmar News Agency*



U Win Htein, CEC member of NLD.
PHOTO: MNA

Water festival death toll climbs to 36

THE nationwide death toll for the water festival, which ended yesterday, has reached 36 deaths, while 316 people were injured over the five day period, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Forty-six traffic accidents were reported during the festival, resulting in 14 deaths and

235 injuries.

There were 17 reported deaths as a result of other circumstances, primarily drownings, during the festival.

There were three reported murders: one on 13 April and two on 16 April, the last day of the festival.

Pickpocketing topped the

list of crimes reported with 64 cases, followed by 54 cases of grievous bodily harm.

The Yangon Police Force has thanked the public for its co-operation as Yangon Region saw a decrease in the number of cases related to the Thingyan water festival since with last year.—*GNLM*

NLD pays respect to senior citizens

THE NATIONAL League for Democracy held a ceremony to pay respects to senior citizens at its headquarters in Bahan township, Yangon Region, yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and NLD's patron U Tin Oo. On behalf of the senior citizens, Thakh-

in Chan Tun delivered words of advice, followed by the recitation of parittas (religious protection verses) by Members of the Sangha.—*Myanmar News Agency*

A Very Happy New Year POEM:

This years' Thingyan Water Festival ushers in the New Myanmar Year of 1378, and has been all across Myanmar a very happy occasion witnessing spontaneous and joyous celebration with citizens' and national races' participation truly in line with the spirit of Myanmar Thingyan, long since a traditional social festive occasion.

One must say this year's Thingyan celebrations can be termed a success of no mean proportion regarding cultural norms and values preservation, and toning down of Thingyan's commercialization instead, encouraging family centered participation. Like dousing one another with bowls of clean water to cool and symbolically cleanse the dirt of yester year, community centered offering alms to the religious order and performing various meritorious deeds together. Entertainment 'Mandats', public and private, attracted huge crowds of revelers on cars and on foot who participated with pretty damsels on wings of the stage, in water sprinkling and enjoying the on-stage performers,' singing and dancing. The bold revival as well, of the traditional 'Thangyats' was a new feature this year of some 'Mandats'.

Thanks are due to the local governments for their leadership and effective management of the security, traffic and water resources, with help of Municipalities and Police Forces.

So in the best spirit of traditional Thingyan the fervent hopes and prayers of the layman is that the new year and the new Union Government be harbinger to all of good health, wealth, happiness as well as good governance, as are the wishes of every citizen of the Union of Myanmar at home or abroad, wherever they are.

At the same time wishing a very happy new year to all citizens and friends of Myanmar, far and near.

Lokethar

East Asia Pacific growth remains resilient in face of challenging global environment, says World Bank

Careful macroeconomic management and structural reforms key to maintaining resilience

WASHINGTON Growth in Developing East Asia and Pacific has remained resilient and is expected to ease only modestly during 2016-18, according to a new World Bank report. This outlook is subject to elevated risks and countries should continue to prioritize monetary and fiscal policies that reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen credibility, while deepening structural reforms.

Growth in developing East Asia is expected to ease from 6.5 percent in 2015 to 6.3 percent in 2016 and 6.2 percent in 2017-18. The forecast reflects China's gradual shift to slower, more sustainable growth, expected to be 6.7 percent in 2016 and 6.5 percent in 2017, compared with 6.9 percent in 2015.

"Developing East Asia and Pacific continues to contribute strongly to global growth. The region accounted for almost two-fifths of global growth in 2015, more than twice the combined contribution of all other developing regions," said Victoria Kwakwa, incoming World Bank East Asia and Pacific Regional Vice President. "The region has benefited from careful macroe-

conomic policies, including efforts to boost domestic revenue in some commodity-exporting countries. But sustaining growth amid challenging global conditions will require continued progress on structural reforms."

The East Asia and Pacific Economic Update examines the region's growth prospects against a challenging backdrop: slow growth in high-income countries, a broad slowdown across emerging markets, weak global trade, persistently low commodity prices, and increasingly volatile global financial markets.

Not including China, the region's developing countries grew by 4.7 percent in 2015, and the pace of growth will pick up slightly — to 4.8 percent in 2016 and 4.9 percent in 2017-18 — driven by growth in the large Southeast Asian economies. However, the outlook for individual countries varies, depending on their trade and financial relationships with high-income economies and China, as well as their dependence on commodity exports. Among the large developing Southeast Asian economies, the Philippines and Vietnam have the strongest

growth prospects, both expected to grow by more than 6 percent in 2016. In Indonesia, growth is forecast at 5.1 percent in 2016 and 5.3 percent in 2017, contingent on the success of recent reforms and implementation of an ambitious public investment program.

Several small economies, including Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea, will continue to be affected by low commodity prices and weaker external demand. Cambodia's growth will be slightly below 7 percent during 2016-18, reflecting weaker prices for agricultural commodities, constrained garment exports, and moderating growth in tourism. In the Pacific Island Countries, growth is likely to remain moderate. "Developing East Asia and Pacific faces elevated risks, including a weaker-than-expected recovery in high-income economies and a faster-than-expected slowdown in China. At the same time, policy makers10IS, have less room to manoeuvre in setting macroeconomic policy," said Sudhir Shetty, Chief Economist of the World Bank's East Asia and Pacific

Region. "Countries should adopt monetary and fiscal policies that reduce their exposure to global and regional risks, and continue with structural reforms to boost productivity and promote inclusive growth."

Slower-than-expected global growth could weaken demand and reduce growth in developing East Asia and Pacific, especially among commodity exporters. The report calls for close monitoring of economic vulnerabilities, particularly those associated with high levels of debt, price deflation, and slower growth in China, and high corporate and household debt in some other large economies. In addition, the region should be prepared for natural disasters, which pose a substantial risk for Pacific Island countries.

The report calls for continued macroeconomic prudence and sustained structural reform. In China, it recommends strengthening market discipline in the financial sector, including by allowing credit allocation to be more market-driven; gradually opening up sectors dominated by state-owned enterprises to

greater competition; and continuing to reform the household-registration system. It also urges a shift in public spending from infrastructure toward public services, such as education, health, and social assistance, and towards environmental protection.

Across the region more generally, there is a growing need for prudent fiscal policy to guard against future external shocks. This is especially important in those economies where growth has been sustained through increased public or private sector borrowing, or where external demand has been supported by the commodities boom.

Over the longer term, the report calls for governments to boost transparency and strengthen accountability. It urges countries to reduce barriers to regional trade, such as non-tariff measures and regulatory barriers, including to trade in services. And the report stresses that the benefits from the digital revolution will be maximized by developing regulatory regimes that favor competition, and by helping workers adapt their skills to the demands of the new economy.—*GNLM*

Heavy fighting continues in Afghan city Kunduz

KUNDUZ — Afghan forces fought back a renewed series of attacks on Kunduz, killing dozens of Taliban fighters, officials said on Sunday as insurgent forces stepped up their bid to retake the northern city that they captured briefly last year.

The attack on Kunduz, involving hundreds of insurgent fighters, has intensified just days after the Taliban announced the start of their annual spring offensive, aimed at driving out the Western-backed government in Kabul.

The Taliban's brief capture of Kunduz last year underlined both their growing strength and the lack of readiness of Afghan security forces fighting largely on their own since the NATO-led international coalition ended its combat operation in 2014.

Attacks overnight appeared aimed at cutting off Chardara district on the southwest outskirts of the city, which insurgents used as a base in last year's attack, with several checkpoints targeted, Kunduz police chief Qasim Jan-galbagh said.

"They wanted to cut the road which connects the district to Kunduz city to stop us sending reinforcements," he said.

In addition, he said a major attack was driven back at Charkh



A member of Afghan security force takes his position during a battle with the Taliban on the outskirts of Kunduz Province, Afghanistan, on 16 April, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ab, to the east of Kunduz, as Taliban forces sought to stretch the city's defences.

Casualty estimates provided by Afghan officials varied slightly, with Kunduz police saying 49

Taliban fighters had been killed and another 61 wounded, while the defence ministry said 38 were killed and 13 wounded over the past 24 hours.

A police spokesman said

four members of the security forces were killed and 11 wounded.

Kunduz public health director Saad Mukhtar said six dead and 107 wounded had been

brought to city hospitals over the past three days, which have been put under heavy strain by the destruction of the hospital run by aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres in a US air strike last year.

The heavy fighting around Afghanistan's fifth-biggest city underlines the concern highlighted in the United Nations' latest report on civilian casualties, which pointed to a sharp rise in the number of children killed or injured as a consequence of combat in built-up areas.

The fall of Kunduz last year followed months of attacks that began in the spring. The attacks weakened security forces before Taliban fighters seized the city centre at the end of September, holding it for two weeks before pulling out.

However, officials have made a major effort this year to reassure residents that there would be no repeat of last year's demoralizing collapse, which prompted thousands to flee to city.

Although heavy fighting continued over the winter months in Afghanistan, notably in the southern province of Helmand, the approach of warmer weather is likely to bring an increase in operations in the north of the country as snow clears.—Reuters

Vujovic: Education sector reform key to better society



Serbian Minister of Finance Dusan Vujovic. PHOTO: TANJUG

WASHINGTON — Serbian Minister of Finance Dusan Vujovic said at a roundtable on education in Washington Saturday that reforms in that sector were key to getting other important things moving and was therefore crucial to raise awareness about it.

Vujovic said that the transition process was not just about a transition from a non-market to a market-oriented economy, as it implied transformation in all areas that should all together lead to a major change in society.

Vujovic said that reforms were badly needed in the sector, and the price of not making those changes was too high.

The Serbian minister added that Serbia should better balance the roles played by the private and public sectors in the educa-

tion system, as the public budget was overburdened while and we relied little on private resources.

The high-level meeting in Washington was attended by heads of development banks and international financial institutions and its aim was to discuss local and international options for financing and introduction of new, innovative ways to finance the sector that were vital to securing the future of education for the generations to come.

The conclusions from the meeting will be included in a report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity and create a set of policies in this area that will be presented at the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2016.—Tanjug

Israel slams UNESCO decision denying Jewish connection with Temple Mount

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed UNESCO late Saturday for saying Jews "do not have a connection" with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

UNESCO "ignores the unique historic connection of Judaism to the Temple Mount, where the two temples stood for a thousand years and to which every Jew in the world has prayed for thousands of years," Netanyahu said in a statement.

The executive board of UNESCO gathered Friday in Paris and passed a motion that does not recognise Jewish ties to the Temple Mount, a site holy to both Jews and Muslims in east Jerusalem.

The resolution referred to the

site solely as Al-Aqsa Mosque, believing it is where Prophet Mohammad ascended to heaven. It also denounced Israeli actions against Palestinians in east Jerusalem. Jews, however, believe the site is part of an ancient Jewish temple.

"This is yet another absurd UN decision," said Netanyahu, who often accuses the UN of being biased against Israel, adding that the world body is "rewriting a basic part of human history and has again proven that there is no low to which it will not stoop."

Israel's Ambassador to UNESCO Carmel Shama said in a statement following the publication of the resolution that regardless of UNESCO's decision, "Jerusalem will always remain as

part of the capital of Israel and the Jewish people." The Temple Mount, or the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which Israel occupied from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast War, has been under joint supervision of Israel and Jordan following the 1994 peace agreement. The site has been a vortex of strife and violence since October amid attempts by right-wing Israeli activists and some lawmakers to allow Jews to pray in the site, and therefore to change its status quo.

During related violence, nearly 30 Israelis have been killed in attacks by Palestinians, and around 200 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces during protests or after trying to carry out attacks.—Xinhua

Yemen police say foil two bomb attacks day before peace talks

ADEN — Police in Yemen said they foiled two car bomb attacks in the southern port city of Aden early on Sunday, a day before peace talks to end a year of war were due to start.

Police at a checkpoint opened fire at a car travelling at high speed which then exploded, wounding at least five officers, they said. One of the policemen later died in hospital, a medical

source said. Officers also safely disarmed a booby-trapped car parked on a beach road near the airport in the northeastern part of the city, police added.

Security forces closed off the area and were investigating.

No one has claimed responsibility for the planned attacks near Aden airport in Khor Mak-sar district, which took place before UN-sponsored peace talks

between President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government and the Houthis movement were scheduled to open in Kuwait on Monday.

Fighting involving the forces of the Saudi-backed government and the Iranian-allied Houthis, a militia group which controls much of northern Yemen, has killed more than 6,200 people.—Reuters

New fish-inspired lens to see in the dark

WASHINGTON — Scientists have combined the best features of a lobster and a fish to create an artificial eye that can see in the dark and may be used in surgical probes, search-and-rescue robots or planet-seeking telescopes.

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in US improved the sensitivity of the imaging system through the lenses rather than the sensor component.

Bomb-diffusing robots, laparoscopic surgeons and planet-seeking telescopes all need to resolve fine details through almost utter darkness.

These false eyes could help search-and-rescue robots or surgical scopes make dim surroundings seem bright as day, researchers said.

“These days, we rely more and more on visual information. Any technology that can improve or enhance image-taking has great potential,” said Hongrui Jiang, professor at UW-Madison.

Most attempts to improve night vision tweak the “retinas” of artificial eyes — such as changing the materials or electronics of a digital camera’s sensor — so they respond more strongly to incoming packets of light.

However, rather than interfering with efforts to boost sensitivity at the back end, researchers set out to increase intensity of incoming light through the front end, the optics that focus the light on the sensor.

They found inspiration for



PHOTO: REUTERS

the strategy from two aquatic animals that evolved different strategies to survive and see in murky waters.

Looking between the prominent proboscises of elephant-nosed fishes unveils two strikingly unusual eyes, with retinas composed of thousands of tiny crystal cups instead of the smooth surfaces common to most animals.

These miniature vessels collect and intensify red light, which helps the fish discern its predators.

The group emulated the fish’s crystal cups by engineering

thousands of miniscule parabolic mirrors, each as tall as a grain of pollen.

The researchers then shaped arrays of the light-collecting structures across the surface of a uniform hemispherical dome.

The arrangement, inspired by the superposition compound eyes of lobsters, concentrates incoming light to individual spots, further increasing intensity.

“We showed fourfold improvement in sensitivity. That makes the difference between a totally dark image you can’t see and an actually meaningful image,” said Jiang.

The device could easily be incorporated into existing systems to visualise a variety of vistas under low light.

Although superposition compound eyes are exquisitely sensitive, they typically suffer from less sharp vision. Increased intensity costs clarity when lots of light gets compressed down to individual pixels.

To recover lost resolution, researchers captured numerous raw images and processed the set with an algorithm to produce crisp, clear pictures.

The study was published in the journal *PNAS*.—PTI

Experimental inflatable module attached to space station

CAPE CANAVERAL — A NASA ground-control team on Saturday used a robot arm to unpack an expandable module and attach it to the International Space Station, setting the stage for a novel test of a habitat for astronauts, researchers and even tourists.

The 3,100-pound (1,400 kg) module, manufactured and owned by Bigelow Aerospace, was launched aboard a SpaceX Dragon cargo capsule that reached the station on Sunday.

The module was attached to the station at 5:36am EDT (0936 GMT) as the station flew about 250 miles (400 km) above Earth, the US space agency said during a live broadcast on NASA TV.

The Bigelow Expandable Activity Module, or BEAM, is scheduled to be inflated with air in late May, beginning a two-year experiment to see how it holds up in the harsh environment of space.

Made of impact-resistant, Kevlar-like materials and other fabrics, the lightweight habitats could save millions of dollars in launch costs compared with metal modules. They may also offer better radiation protection for astronauts, officials with NASA and Bigelow Aerospace said before the 8 April launch.—Reuters

Pine wood cancer wreaks havoc in east China Province

JINAN — Pines covering 7 million mu (470,000 hectares) in east China’s Shandong Province are under threat from pine wood nematode disease, the local forestry department said.

Currently, pines in 98,000 mu across 13 counties have already been infected by the disease, which is moving rapidly toward the western part of the province.

More must be done to bring the disease under control, it was agreed at a recent forestry conference.

The disease, also known as pine wood cancer, can kill a pine tree in 40 days, destroying huge swathes of pines within a short time. It was first detected in 1982 in eastern Jiangsu Province and spread to neighbouring Shandong in 1990.—Xinhua

Special warm up could cut injuries, save millions of dollars in youth soccer

ALBERTA — Including neuromuscular training in youth soccer warm ups reduces injury rates and could save \$2.7 million Canadian dollars (\$2 million) in healthcare costs over one season in Alberta, Canada, according to a new study.

Neuromuscular training targets strength, agility and balance more than a standard warm up routine. “When you have benefit from an intervention and also reduce healthcare costs, there’s good on both sides,” said lead author Deborah A. Marshall of the University of Calgary, the Alberta Bone and Joint Health Institute and the Health Research Innovation Centre in Calgary.

“A lot of new technologies that are introduced are better but cost more,” Marshall told Reuters Health.

The researchers studied data from a randomized trial of 744 youth soccer players ages 13 to 17 years, including boys and girls, during the 2006-2007 indoor soccer season in Alberta. The players had been followed through the sea-

son and injuries were recorded.

Half of the players were led through a 15-minute warm up before play, including five minutes of aerobic and dynamic stretching components and 10 minutes of neuromuscular training consisting of eccentric strength, agility and jumping exercises. They were also directed to do 15 minutes of balance training at home using a wobble board.

Players in the comparison group had a “standard of practice” 15-minute warm up before play, including on aerobic components, static and dynamic stretching and a home programme that only involved stretching.

As had been previously published, players in the neuromuscular warm up group had 38 per cent fewer injuries during the season than those in the comparison group.

For the new study the researchers estimated direct cost savings related to these injuries, including visits to healthcare professionals, treatments, surgeries, X-rays, supplies and equip-



A boy plays soccer in a park in Porto Alegre in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

ment used by injured players. They added direct costs to the healthcare system in Canada to out-of-pocket medical costs incurred by players and their families, which may include physiotherapy, splints, braces, crutches and chiropractic visits.

The researchers estimated that for 58,100 Alberta youth soccer players during one indoor season, there are about 12,000 injuries. Almost 5,000 injuries could be avoided and \$2 million in healthcare costs saved with the neuromuscular training programme, according to the results in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

“I perceive savings of 689 Canadian dollars for every 1000 participation hours as very notewor-

thy, especially considering that the only intervention was a more effective 15min warm-up,” Jeppe Bo Lauenstein of the Institute of Sports Medicine Copenhagen in Denmark said by email.

The training aims to improve muscle coordination and dynamic joint control to reduce undesirable loads in specific muscles, tendons, joints, and bones, Lauenstein, who was not part of the new study, told Reuters Health.

In this trial the neuromuscular training programme did have some costs, like training coaches in how to direct the warm ups and purchasing the wobble boards for players to use at home, Marshall said.—Reuters

Powerful earthquake kills 77 in Ecuador

GUAYAQUIL — A powerful earthquake killed at least 77 people, injured hundreds more, ravaged coastal towns and sent residents fleeing for higher ground in Ecuador on Saturday night.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck off Ecuador's Pacific coast and was felt hundreds of miles (km) away in the capital of Quito as well as in the large commercial city of Guayaquil, where rubble lay strewn in the streets and some buildings were cracked or partially collapsed.

A bridge in the city collapsed on top of car, crushing it. The earthquake was Ecuador's worst in decades and officials said the death toll was likely to rise even higher as rescue teams headed into the hardest-hit areas.

"It was terrifying, we were all scared and we're still out in the streets because we're worried about aftershocks," said Guayaquil

security guard Fernando Garcia. "Everything is damaged."

A state of emergency was declared in six provinces.

The areas worst affected include Pedernales, which draws tourists with beaches lined with palm trees and tropical thatched restaurants, as well as nearby Cojimies.

"There are villages that are totally devastated," Pedernales' mayor, Gabriel Alcivar, said in a radio interview. "What happened here in Pedernales is catastrophic."

Ramon Solorzano, 46, a car parts merchant in the city of Manta, said he was getting ready to leave the city with his family.

"Most people are out in the streets with backpacks on, heading for higher ground," he said, speaking in a trembling voice via a WhatsApp phone call. "The streets are cracked. The power is out and



People stand next to the debris of a building after an earthquake struck off the Pacific coast, in Manta, Ecuador, on 16 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

phones are down."

The quake struck at a depth of 20 km (12.4 miles), and was followed by 55 aftershocks.

President Rafael Correa declared a national emergency and cut short a trip to the Vatican to coordinate the rescue efforts.

"Everything can be rebuilt, but lost lives cannot be recovered, and that's what hurts the most," he told Ecuador's state tele-

vision channel from Rome. "The material part is the least important, what is fundamental is guaranteeing human life."

Parts of the capital were without power or telephone service for several hours, though the city government said that services were quickly restored and that there were no reports of casualties in the city. The government described it as the worst quake in the

country since 1979, when 600 people were killed and 20,000 injured, according to the United States Geological Survey. A tsunami warning was lifted on Saturday night but coastal residents were encouraged to seek higher ground in case tides rise.

The OPEC nation's oil production was not affected by the quake but that the principal refinery of Esmeraldas, located near the

epicenter, had been halted as a precaution.

Across the Pacific in Japan, a 7.3 magnitude tremor struck Kumamoto province early Saturday, killing at least 32 people, injuring about a thousand and causing widespread damage, in the second major quake to hit the island of Kyushu in just over 24 hours. The first, late on Thursday, killed nine.—Reuters

Helicopter crashes on train tracks near Baltimore-Washington Airport

WASHINGTON — A helicopter that was inspecting power lines crashed on rail tracks near Baltimore-Washington International Airport on Saturday, sparking a brush fire and delaying Amtrak train service along a major passenger route, officials said.

The crash, which injured three on board, resulted in delays to Amtrak service between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., according to the railroad's statements and social media posts.

An Amtrak spokeswoman said that by mid-afternoon all service had resumed between the two cities. Airline operations were not affected, airport spokeswoman Whitney Kidd said. The helicopter was flying at low altitude around a power line when it crashed a mile north of the Maryland airport, near Amtrak's BWI Station, the Federal Aviation Adminis-

tration and Anne Arundel County police said.

The helicopter was destroyed in the crash and the three people hurt were transported to the hospital with non-life threatening injuries, said Ariel Jackson, a lieutenant at the Anne Arundel County Fire Department.

No one else was hurt, the FAA and police said.

The crew of the helicopter, which was operated by a private contractor, was inspecting transmission lines for Baltimore Gas and Electric, a division of Exelon Company [EXXGC.UL], said BGE spokesman Justin Mulcahy.

The crash, which was reported just before 1 pm on the major passenger train corridor linking Washington and other northeastern cities, sparked a fire in the wooded area where the helicopter came down, but firefighters extinguished the blaze, Maryland State Police said in a statement.—Reuters

Congress to vote on impeaching Rousseff in divided Brazil

BRASILIA — Brazil's lower house of Congress will decide on Sunday whether to recommend impeaching President Dilma Rousseff on charges of manipulating budgetary accounts, in a vote that could hasten the end of 13 years of leftist Workers Party rule.

The political crisis, which comes amid Brazil's worst recession since the 1930s, has deeply divided the South American country and sparked an acrimonious fight between Rousseff and her Vice President Michel Temer, who would take over if she is dismissed.

In a frenzied round of last minute deal-making on Saturday, Rousseff appeared to have clawed back the votes of some wavering lawmakers but still appeared to lack the one-third of votes needed in the 513-seat lower house to avoid being sent for trial in the Senate.

Rousseff's charismatic predecessor, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, led the

deal-making to keep her in office and drafted in governors from several states to pressure legislators on Saturday, swinging the momentum back in Rousseff's favour.

"The governors' participation is proving decisive," said Paulo Teixeira, one of the Workers' Party's leaders in the lower house. Thousands of police were due to deploy in the capital Brasilia on Sunday, and in the mega-cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where hundreds of thousands of pro- and anti-impeachment demonstrators were expected to take to the streets.

A 2-metre (6.5-foot) high wall outside Congress, stretching for more than 1 km (0.6 of a mile) on the grassy esplanade between rows of ministries, showed the stark political divide in what remains one of the world's most unequal societies.

Polls suggest that more than 60 per cent of Brazil's 200 million people support impeaching

Rousseff, whose inner circle has been tainted by a vast corruption scandal at state oil company Petrobras (PETR4.SA).

The Workers Party, however, can still rely on strong support among millions of working class Brazilians, who credit its welfare programmes with pulling their families out of poverty during the last decade.

The impeachment crisis has paralyzed activity in Brasilia, just four months before the country is due to host the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, and as it seeks to battle an epidemic of the Zika virus, which has been linked to birth defects in newborns.

While Rousseff herself has not been personally charged with corruption, many of the lawmakers who will decide her fate on Sunday have.

Congresso em Foco, a prominent watchdog group in Brasilia, says more than 300 of the legislators who will vote on Sunday — well over half the chamber

— are under investigation for corruption, fraud or electoral crimes.

If Rousseff loses Sunday's vote, the Senate must decide whether there are legal grounds to hear the case against her, a decision expected in early May.

Should it agree to do so, Rousseff would be suspended from office and Temer would automatically take over. Financial markets in Brazil have rallied strongly in recent weeks on hopes that Rousseff's dismissal would usher in a more business-friendly Temer administration. Sources close to the vice president told Reuters on Friday he was considering a senior executive at Goldman Sachs in Brazil for a top economic post. Whoever governs the country in the coming months, however, will inherit a toxic political environment, a deeply divided Congress, rising unemployment and an expected contraction of four percent this year in the world's ninth largest economy.—Reuters

Castro, 84, says Cuba's leaders are too old, proposes limits

HAVANA — Future top leaders of Cuba's Communist party should retire at 70 to let in younger blood, President Raul Castro said on Saturday, suggesting older members of the party hoping for promotion to the top table could play with their grandchildren instead.

Cuba's current leaders include several septuagenari-

an or octogenarian veterans of Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution. There is a growing urgency for them to make succession plans to keep the party alive once they are gone. Raul Castro himself is 84 and after his planned retirement from government in two years time the country is likely to be led by somebody with a different surname for

the first time since his brother overthrew a pro-US government nearly 60 years ago.

His comments during a two hour speech at the inauguration of the Communist Party's twice-per-decade congress were met with silence, perhaps because some members were disappointed with the idea.

"So serious! What silence is caused by this subject. Don't think that just because you can't be in the leadership of the country you can't do anything," Castro said, suggesting the elderly continue as party activists and spend more time with their grandchildren.

Before the congress, the current party leadership faced some discontent among younger members critical of the slow delivery on promised economic reforms in the past five years and a lack of transparency.

Fidel Castro, whose 90th birthday is in August, retired in 2008 after a serious illness and his younger brother took over, introducing a limit of two five-year terms for leaders. That limit has yet to be tested.

The proposed new rules would affect new entrants into the leadership and must be approved by the party over the course of the four-day congress. Castro said there should then be a constitutional amendment and a referendum to codify this and other reforms. Castro proposed that 60 years be fixed as the age limit for entering the party's central committee and up to 70 years as the maximum age to perform duties in the party leadership, saying the new rules would have a knock-on effect of bringing younger leaders up through the ranks more quickly.—Reuters

IMF to proceed with more quota reform reflecting emerging powers

WASHINGTON — The International Monetary Fund pledged Saturday to proceed further with quota reform to reflect the expanding global influence of emerging economies.

The reform "is expected to result in increases in the quota shares of dynamic economies in line with their relative positions in the world economy," the International Monetary and Financial Committee said in a communique released after its meeting in Washington.

The IMF's policy-setting body called on the lender's Executive Board to complete the review, including devising a new quota formula, by 2017.

But it is unclear

whether the reform will be able to be quickly implemented as it took more than five years for the previous quota reform to become effective, due largely to a delay in approval by the US Congress.

IMF member economies agreed in 2010 to shift 6 per cent of voting rights to developing economies through redistribution of quotas, given the growing clout of these countries in the global economy. Congress approved the reform in December last year. Under the changes, China's expansion of voting rights made it the third-largest fund contributor to the Washington-based lender after the United States and Japan.—Reuters



Cuba's President Raul Castro speaks during the opening ceremony of the seventh Cuban Communist Party (PCC) congress in Havana 16 April, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

On the run: Chacha the chimp escapes from Japan zoo

TOKYO — Chacha the chimpanzee made his own great escape on Thursday, fleeing from a zoo in northern Japan and leading authorities on a dramatic chase.

The male primate went missing from Yagiyama Zoological Park and was seen roaming in a neigh-

bourhood in Sendai.

Video footage showed the 24-year old chimp atop an electricity pole, then swinging from power lines in between buildings.

A veterinarian was lifted up in a cherry picker to shoot him with a tranquilizer gun.

The chimp made his

way to another pole, before loosing his grip and dangling from the lines as the sedative kicked in. He eventually fell to the ground where rescue workers had gathered with sheets.

Chacha has since made a full recovery, local media reported.—Kyodo News



Male chimpanzee Chacha screams after escaping from nearby Yagiyama Zoological Park as a man tries to capture him on the power lines at a residential area in Sendai, northern Japan, in this photo taken by Kyodo, on 14 April, 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Woman seen in Texas funeral home video stealing rings off corpse

AUSTIN — Police in west Texas are searching for a woman seen in a surveillance video at a funeral home in Odessa stealing a ring from the body of an 88-year-old in an open casket.

In a video posted on the

Facebook page of the Odessa Police Department on Monday, the suspect is seen standing alone in front of the body of an elderly woman for about a minute on Friday and apparently twisting the woman's finger to remove a ring.

Police said after stealing the ring, the suspect fled in a car.

The daughter of the woman, whose funeral was scheduled for Monday, told the Odessa American newspaper the family did not know the suspect.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KUO HSIUNG VOY NO (1049)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KUO HSIUNG VOY NO (1049) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18.4.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S CHINA SHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BC MUMBAI VOY NO (012E)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BC MUMBAI VOY NO (012E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.4.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S ORIENT OVERSEA

CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV CAPE FLORES VOY NO (019)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV CAPE FLORES VOY NO (019) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.4.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S COSCO CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose to join Australian rock band AC/DC tour

MELBOURNE — Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose will join the remaining leg of Australian rock band AC/DC's world tour, after front man Brian Johnson's doctors raised concerns over his hearing loss.

The band rescheduled concerts on their Rock or Bust World Tour in March after Johnson's doctors told him to stop touring immediately or "risk total hearing loss". Johnson has fronted the band since the death of the original lead singer Bon Scott in 1980.

"As much as we want this

tour to end as it started, we understand, respect and support Brian's decision to stop touring and save his hearing," a statement on the band's website said.

"We are dedicated to fulfilling the remainder of our touring commitments... and are fortunate that Axl Rose has kindly offered his support".

The statement said Rose would join the band for a European leg of the tour starting on 7 July in Lisbon and that 10 US dates would be announced soon.—Reuters



Axl Rose of Guns N' Roses performs at the Rock in Rio Music Festival in Rio de Janeiro in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

Singer Katy Perry.
PHOTO: REUTERS



Orlando Bloom.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Katy Perry, Orlando Bloom show PDA at Coachella 2016

LOS ANGELES — Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom turned up the heat at Coachella.

During Day 1 of the California music festival, which was attended by a slew of celebs, the new couple was spotted showing some PDA while watching a set by the blues and punk duo The Kills, reported E!Online.

Fans posted pics of the two on Twitter and Instagram.

"They came in about 20 minutes in to The Kills set," an eyewitness told E! News exclusively.

"They were hugging and with a group of other people. Orlando was behind her and swaying with her to the music. They also were vaping together. They were kissing and very much a couple."

Perry, 31, and Bloom, 39,

were also spotted watching Ellie Goulding's set Friday night. They have kept silent about their budding relationship.

The two sparked romance rumours in January when were photographed together at a 2016 Golden Globes after party. They have since been spotted looking cozy together many times in Los Angeles, where they live separately, and other cities.—PTI

Beijing opens 6th Int'l Film Festival

BEIJING — The 6th Beijing International Film Festival kicked off in Beijing on Saturday with a starry attendance and hundreds of movies to be screened.

Celebrities including Oscar winners Natalie Portman and Christoph Waltz, American film

directors Anthony and Joe Russo, and Hong Kong actor Chow Yun-fat attended the opening ceremony.

A total of 2,329 films from 105 countries and regions have applied for screening during this year's festival. About 500 films

have been selected by the organisation committee to be screened, up from about 300 last year.

Fifteen movies have been accepted for the main competition and a chance at the Tianan Award, which offers honours in ten categories, including best fea-

ture film, best director, best actor, best actress and best music.

The event, which will run until 23, will also be participated by more than 200 film-related companies and institutions that will display their products and technologies.

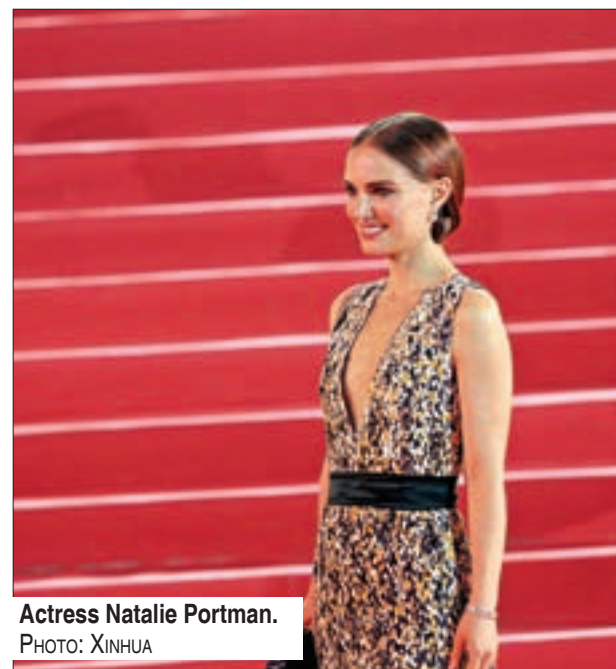
The festival has attracted increasing global attentions thanks to China's booming film market, the world's second largest with 44 billion yuan (6.8 bln US dollars) in box office sales in 2015. The festival last year inked deals worth 13.8 bln yuan.—Xinhua



Young singer Lexi Walker.
PHOTO: XINHUA



South Korean actor Lee Min-ho. PHOTO: XINHUA



Actress Natalie Portman.
PHOTO: XINHUA

Budget train service launched in southern Xinjiang

URUMQI — A low-cost train service linking Kashgar and Hotan, two cities in the south of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, will begin in May.

According to the regional railway authority, a journey between the two cities will cost 28 yuan (4.3 US dollars), and a ticket for the cheapest section will be just one yuan.

The line will link a total of nine cities and counties in the

underdeveloped region and a complete journey will take about eight hours.

Si Shenmin, an official with the Urumqi railway bureau, told Xinhua that the low prices will not come at the cost of speed or service.

Southern Xinjiang has many poverty-stricken counties.

The income of locals are below the national average. —Xinhua

Small eruption on Japan's Mount Aso after earthquake

TOKYO — A small eruption occurred at Mt. Aso in southern Japan on Saturday around 8:30am local time (2330 GMT Friday) following a strong earthquake in the area, with smoke rising about 100 metres (300

feet) high, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The Japanese Meteorological Agency kept its alert level at 2 on a scale of 5 for Mt. Aso, which has had eruptions in the past.—Reuters

5th Sydney Brick Show attracts over 15,000 visitors



SYDNEY — Children attend the Sydney Brick Show at Sydney Town Hall in Sydney, Australia, on 16 April 2016. The Sydney Brick Show is held at Sydney Town Hall with 2,500 square metres in size and on two levels, featuring the latest original LEGO brick creations by over 80 LEGO fans from Sydney and across Australia. First held in 2012, the annual event is now in its 5th year and welcomes around 15,000 visitors. PHOTO: XINHUA

Mali bids final farewell to renowned photographer Malick Sidibe

BAMAKO — Mali bid a final farewell on Saturday to Malick Sidibe, an award-winning photographer considered a national treasure for his unique studio portraits and candid black-and-white depictions of popular culture in his West African homeland.

From humble beginnings in Mali's capital Bamako, Sidibe, who died at the age of 80 on Thursday, rose over the course of a career that spanned six decades to become one of Africa's most decorated artists.

Hundreds of people — from Mali's arts scene, Sidibe's family and the government — gathered on a football pitch in Daoudabougou, the Bamako neighbourhood where he lived much of his life in a modest house among extended family.

Soldiers saluted his body, which was wrapped in a cloth according to Muslim tradition and draped in Mali's tricolour flag of green, yellow and red.

"He's a piece of world herit-

age. It's not just Bamako, or Mali, or Africa," said Igo Diarra, director of Bamako's Medina Gallery.

"He was always accessible, always smiling and generous. He told people to always be very hon-

est in their art and not follow what is fashionable, but instead to concentrate on their work and do what they love," he said.

Sidibe's instantly recognisable images from the 1950s and

60s of sharply dressed teenagers twisting on nightclub dance floors or mugging for the camera in bathing suits captured Mali's transformation from a French colony to a modern independent nation.

In the process, he shattered stereotypes of Africa and connected it with the rest of the world.

"The youth he photographed shared the same struggles for equality and freedom with black Americans, who listened to Sam Cooke and Otis Redding and who danced," Malian art critic Chab Toure told Reuters.

Later, at a studio where he welcomed visitors even in the last years of his life, he turned to portraits, meticulously positioning his subjects before basic backgrounds in a style that was both simple and unique.

"To be a good photographer you need to have a talent to observe and to know what you want," Sidibe told *The Guardian* newspaper in a 2010 interview. "Equally, you need to be friendly, sympa-

thetic. It's very important to be able to put people at their ease. It's a world, someone's face."

Sidibe meticulously archived his photographs and he had already accumulated a sizeable body of work when his art began gaining international recognition in the 1990s, a period when Malian painters and musicians were also breaking out.

His images have since been exhibited around the world, including at New York's Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as the Barbican Art Gallery in London and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

In 2007, he became both the first photographer and the first African to win the Venice Biennale's lifetime achievement award. He was also honoured with a Hasselblad Award, a lifetime achievement award from the International Centre of Photography and a World Press Photo prize. —Reuters



A woman holds her child while walking past the studio of the late, celebrated photographer Malick Sidibe in Bamako, Mali, on 15 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Entertainment Channel

(18-4-2016, Monday)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 6:00 pm | "Old Master Q and Little Ocean Tiger" (Part-1) |
| • Weather Report | |
| • Music Programme | |
| 6:20 pm | • Music Programme |
| • Pyi Thu Ni Ti | |
| 6:50 pm | • Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part-3) |
| • Music Programme | |
| 7:10 pm | • International Movie Songs |
| • International Drama Series | |
| 7:50 pm | • Dances |
| • International Drama Series | |
| 8:40 pm | • Myanmar Video |
| • Cartoon Programme | |

From 18-4-2016 (Monday) 6:00 Pm
To 19-4-2016 (Tuesday) 6:00 Pm



Myanmar International

(18-4-2016 07:00am ~ 19-4-2016 7:00am) MST

Today Fresh

- | | | |
|-------|----|---|
| 07:03 | Am | News |
| 07:27 | Am | Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations-Lacquaware Making |
| 07:52 | Am | Great Minds of Myanmar (Anthropologist U Kyaw Win) |
| 08:03 | Am | News |
| 08:26 | Am | Hive Hunter |
| 08:46 | Am | Dengue Fever |
| 08:53 | Am | Guiding Star of Song Birds |
| 09:03 | Am | News |
| 09:26 | Am |Shan Novices To Be..... |
| 09:41 | Am | Crab Business (Part-II) Soft Shell Crab |

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| 09:54 | Am | Will you feed the pigeons? |
| 10:03 | Am | News |
| 10:26 | Am | Products Of Myanmar - Pictures Decorated With Sea shells And Gemstones |
| 10:38 | Am | On the River |

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

Prime Time

- | | | |
|-------|----|---|
| 07:03 | Pm | News |
| 07:26 | Pm | Food Trip (Ep-3)(Part-2) |
| 07:50 | Pm | Distinguished Myanmar Ladies "Tin Moe Lwin" |
| 08:03 | Pm | News |
| 08:26 | Pm | Taste Of Myanmar (Rice Salad with Vegetables) |
| 08:45 | Pm | Director: Thiha Kyaw Soe |

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

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

Aston Villa relegated as Sunderland, Newcastle boost hopes

LONDON — Former European champions Aston Villa had their fate confirmed and were relegated from the Premier League with a ninth straight defeat on Saturday as north-east rivals Sunderland and Newcastle United both won to boost their battle against the drop.

Villa, who had not been relegated since the Premier League began in 1992, lost 1-0 at Manchester United where teenager Marcus Rashford scored the only goal in the first half.

Sunderland improved their chances of staying up by beating Norwich City 3-0 at Carrow Road while Newcastle fuelled their survival hopes with a 3-0 win over Swansea City at St James' Park.

In the day's late game, Sergio Aguero scored a hat-trick and Chelsea keeper Thibaut Courtois was sent off for the second time

this season as Manchester City thumped the outgoing champions 3-0 at Stamford Bridge.

Aguero, who missed a penalty when City beat Paris St Germain to reach the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday, completed his hat-trick from the spot in the 80th minute after Courtois was sent off for bringing down Fernandinho.

The Belgium international keeper was also sent off in the opening league game of the season against Swansea City.

The win meant City moved up from fourth to third on 60 points from 33 games while Chelsea stayed 10th.

With the top three at the start of the day — Leicester City (72 points), Tottenham Hotspur (65) and Arsenal (59) — not playing, all the attention was focussed on the bottom of the table where Norwich remain in 17th place



Duncan Watmore rounds Norwich's John Ruddy to score the third goal for Sunderland during Barclays Premier League at Carrow Road on 16 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Manchester United's Chris Smalling in action with Aston Villa's Jordan Ayew during Barclays Premier League at Old Trafford on 16 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

on 31 points, nervously looking over their shoulders.

Sunderland's victory moved them on to 30 points, one point behind Norwich with a game in hand, while Newcastle also closed the gap, moving on to 28 points. They have also played a game fewer than Alex Neil's side.

Villa, who have only won three of their 34 league matches, have 16 points and have long seemed condemned to finishing bottom and falling out of the top flight for the first time since 1988.

Villa had won only one of their last 40 league matches against United and there was never any indication they were going to improve on that woeful record.

United, who had Wayne

Rooney back in their starting lineup for the first time since mid-February, were totally dominant.

Rooney, who has recovered from a knee problem, did not score as he often has against Villa in the past, but showed no signs of injury during his 67 minutes on the field.

The only goal came from Rashford, who took his tally to seven in his 12th United appearance with a well-taken shot after 32 minutes.

Sunderland kept up their fight to avoid the drop after a first-half penalty from Fabio Borini put them ahead at Norwich before Jermain Defoe and Duncan Watmore wrapped up the points with goals in the second half.

Jamaal Lascelles, Moussa

Sissoko and Andros Townsend scored Newcastle's goals against Swansea, who are almost certainly safe on 40 points.

There was drama at The Hawthorns where Watford beat West Bromwich Albion 1-0 after Saido Berahino missed two second-half penalties for the home side.

Watford keeper Heurelho Gomes guessed correctly both times, saving the first penalty in the 67th minute and the second in the 87th. He became the first keeper in Premier League history to save two penalties in a match twice, the first time for Tottenham against Sunderland in 2010.

Ben Watson scored the only goal, volleying home a near-post corner in the first half. Everton drew 1-1 with Southampton in the day's other match.—Reuters

Madrid ease to victory at Getafe to put pressure on Barca

BARCELONA — Real Madrid moved to within a point of La Liga leaders Barcelona after five of their leading attacking lights got on the scoresheet in a 5-1 thrashing at struggling Getafe on Saturday.

Karim Benzema, Isco, Gareth Bale, James Rodriguez and Cristiano Ronaldo all scored as Madrid moved on to 75 points and provisionally ahead of city rivals Atletico, who play Granada on Sunday, when Barcelona host Valencia.

Sporting Gijon remain in the relegation zone, despite ending Las Palmas's three-game winning streak by coming from behind to draw 1-1, while Real Sociedad failed to build on last week's win over Barca and lost a controversial Basque derby with Eibar 2-1.

Benzema opened the scoring for Real after 29 minutes by tap-

ping home from close range and then laid on the pass for Isco to double the lead in the 40th.

Bale got the third five minutes after the restart, taking his league tally to 16 goals this season, his best since moving to Madrid in 2013.

Pablo Sarabia pulled one back for Getafe in the 84th when he curled the ball into the top corner from the edge of the area, but Rodriguez added another for Madrid, before Ronaldo tapped in with the final kick of the game.

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said in February that the title race was over, but after watching his side outclass Getafe he was far more optimistic about their chances.

"I think we have a better chance of winning the league be-

cause we keep on getting closer," Zidane told reporters.

"We believe it's possible and against Getafe we showed from the start that we wanted to do everything right. We played a fantastic game, but now we have to keep going because we still haven't achieved anything."

Benzema put them ahead, volleying Rodriguez's cross into the bottom corner for his 22nd league goal of the season, which surpassed his previous record of 21 goals in the 2011/12 campaign.

The Frenchman, who learned this week that he would not be going to the European Championships with France due to his alleged involvement in a blackmail scandal, played a one-two with Isco to allow the Spanish midfielder to get the second.—Reuters

Messi, Bolt, Serena among top contenders at Laureus awards

BERLIN — From soccer genius Lionel Messi to sprint king Usain Bolt, a shimmering array of the world's greatest sports stars are in the race for top honours at the prestigious Laureus World Sports Awards — also called the 'Oscars of Sport' — to be presented here tomorrow.

The generous sprinkling of stars is not just limited to the men's nominations with the women's category also featuring iconic names like tennis queen Serena Williams and track and field's "Pocket Rocket" Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce among others.

In the men's category, three-time winner Bolt and five-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, are joined by tennis No.1 Novak Djokovic, triple Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton along with first time nominees Stephen Curry, star of NBA's

Golden State Warriors, and golf's world No.1 Jordan Spieth, who has also been nominated in the 'Breakthrough of the Year' category. In the quintet, Messi is perhaps the biggest star to have never won this coveted trophy even though he has been nominated in five previous editions.

Winner of the Ballon d'Or for a fifth time, the Argentine genius played a crucial role in Barcelona's outstanding season last year, in which the Spanish giants won the Champions League, La Liga and the Copa del Rey treble.

Among his 43 goals in La Liga, he scored a record 32nd hat-trick for Barcelona.

Djokovic, who won this award in 2012 and '15, clinched three Grand Slams — Australian, Wimbledon and US Open — last year and was finalist in the French Open.—PTI