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ENGINEERING EQUALITY

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES ECONOMIC POLICY



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi speaks at the ceremony to release the Economic Policy in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE Union government released its economic policy yesterday, highlighting national reconciliation and job creation as basic considerations for the policy which guarantees nationwide equitable development.

Speaking on the occasion, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stressed the importance of national reconciliation, which

she considered the most important basic point for the economic policy to achieve success.

“Without national reconciliation, we can’t move forward,” she said. She also vow to bring equitable development to the agricultural, livestock and industrial sectors.

Regarding natural resource extraction, the State Counsellor

promised to keep a balance between environmental conservation and the economic development of the country with consent of the people.

The three-page announcement, released by the Ministry of Planning and Finance, outlined 12-point policy ranging from the privatisation of some state-owned enterprises to the development of

infrastructures including electrification facilities and ports to implementing an ID card system, the Digital Government Strategy and the e-Government System.

The announcement is intended to set economic policy to “create opportunities for new generations with all-round capacity”, according to the release.

The policy also stated that

the government will draw separate policies to attract foreign investment and to promote use of copyright and the rule of law as well as establish an effective and fair tax system.

More detailed plans on energy and infrastructure will be released in future, according to the State Counsellor.—*Thein Ko Lwin & MNA*

Govt, Wa, NDAA (Mongla) meeting brings step closer to peace

Thein Ko Lwin

LEADERS from the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the National Democratic Alliance Army-NDAA (Mongla) held talks with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting the leaders of the UWSA vowed that the Wa Self-administered Division would not secede from the country, according to U Zaw Htay,



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for photo with youths and leaders of Wa. PHOTO: AUNG SHINE Oo

the President’s Office spokesperson.

Today’s meeting mainly focused on political stance and co-operation. The two organisations also supported the Union Peace Conference—21st century Panglong and vow to try to participate, said U Zaw Htay.

“This is the first step with the group. We are satisfied with the meeting,” he said.

To join the peace making process the Wa delegation would meet with the peace making committee today in Nay Pyi Taw and the NDAA delegation will also meet the committee in Yangon, according to U Zaw Htay.

Following the meeting, the State Counsellor met with youth of the two ethnic armed organizations in Nay Pyi Taw.

Electricity distribution dominates Amyotha Hluttaw



Union Minister U Pe Zin Tun.
PHOTO: MNA

SEVENTEEN of 18 villages in Salin, Magwe Region, were covered in the priority phase of the national electrification plan, Union Minister U Pe Zin Tun said yesterday in response to a query at the Amyotha Hluttaw, explaining that the villages were located within a distance of two

miles from the national grid.

U Pe Zin Tun said the project would start in two years and that the remaining villages had been put in the second phase of the national electrification plan.

Responding to a query of the installation of the power grid cable in Yay township of Mon State, the union minister responded that negotiation was under way with the Ministry of Planning and Finance to carry out the project using loans from the Asia Development Bank (ADB). When permitted, the project will install a 230KV power grid in the township.

The union minister also responded to queries relating to the distribution of electricity from the national grid to Maungtau town, Rakhine State and Paletwa town of Chin State, pledging continued efforts to bring electricity to those areas in the coming fiscal year.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets with Japanese delegation

SPEAKER of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than received Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, Member of the House of Councillors and Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Parliamentary Friendship Association,

and party in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call the two representatives held discussions on further friendship and cooperation between the two parliaments.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Japanese delegation



U Win Myint receiving Mr. Ichiro Aisawa. PHOTO: MNA

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint received Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, Member of the House of Councillors and Chairman of the Japan-Myanmar Parliamentary Friendship Association, and party in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call the two representatives discussed matters relat-

ed to parliamentary relations and cooperation, bilateral cooperation in the economic, investment, education and health sectors and the country's reforms and national reconciliation process. They also exchanged views on further friendship between the two countries.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Leave not needed to save to enjoy Leave Preparatory for Retirement



Dr Win Thein. PHOTO: MNA

GOVERNMENT employees are allowed to enjoy a period of four months to prepare for their retirement before the date on which they retire from service under the provision stated in Civil Services Regulations 81, Dr Win Thein, Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board told a session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday.

The UCSB Chairman added that it is not necessary for government servants to save their service leave to gain the four-month LPR period while answering a question raised by U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe Constituency.

During yesterday's session of the Pyithu Hluttaw, parliamentarians debated a proposal urging the Union government to reverse deforestation and environmental



U Khin Cho. PHOTO: MNA

degradation in the western part of Magwe Region.

In her discussion on the proposal submitted by Daw Yin Min Hline of Gangaw Constituency, Mindon MP Daw Khin Than Nu blamed chainsaw operators who committed excessive unregulated logging for deforestation.

She pointed out that the easy availability of electric chainsaws at shops in every town is at the root of the problem of forest decline in her constituency, Mindon Township, which used to be surrounded by dense forest.

Likewise, Saw MP U Kyaw Tin said that teak and hardwood timber production in Saw Township ended in 2007 and 2013 respectively due to overexploitation during the period from 1990 to 2000.



U Kyaw Tin. PHOTO: MNA

Regarding the proposal, Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win replied that the ministry has been establishing state and private-owned community forest plantations to minimise deforestation in Magwe Region.

So far, 285,084 acres of plantation including teak, hardwood and firewood have been established up until last fiscal year and works are underway to set up 1,000 acres of firewood plantation and 1,557 acres of teak and hardwood plantations in the region for this fiscal year, added the Union minister.

The Pyithu Hluttaw documented the proposal following the Union minister's clarification.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar Parliamentary Union meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Myanmar Parliamentary Union (MPU) held a meeting (the third for this year) at a hall of the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his address, Chairman of the MPU, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing

Than called for the formation of Region/State Hluttaw Offices to facilitate parliamentary process and stressed the need of adherence to rules and regulations while undertaking parliamentary activities.

Next, Vice Chairman of the MPU Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw

U Win Myint spoke on the occasion.

Those present including Region/State Hluttaw speakers and deputy speakers explained work progress and draft organisation set-up for the formation of Region/State Hluttaw Offices.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MoHS continues to develop guideline norms to treat hepatitis diseases

A GUIDELINE to help provide effective treatment for patients with hepatitis B and C is being developed by the Ministry of Health and Sports, said Dr Kyaw Zin Thant, director-general of the Medical Research Department.

Both hepatitis B and C viruses have the potential to lead to chronic liver infections which can be transmitted through contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person.

It is estimated that roughly 12 per cent of the country's pop-

ulation are carrying hepatitis B virus, while two to four per cent are suffering from hepatitis C, she said.

Hepatitis B and C are the most common causes of liver diseases the world over. According to global research, around 500 million people are suffering from viral hepatitis. The disease kills about 2.4 million people each year.

Myanmar has joined the global programme to celebrate World Hepatitis Day which falls on 28 July. 100 nations celebrate

the international day to raise public awareness of the chronic diseases.

A spokesperson from the non-profit Liver Foundation said around two million people received hepatitis B vaccines free of charge provided by the foundation since its establishment in 2012.

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease including liver cancer.—*Myint Maung Soe*

President U Htin Kyaw accepts credentials of new ambassadors to Myanmar

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw received the credentials of Mr. Rogelio Granguillhome, the newly-accredited Ambassador of the United Mexican States to Myanmar; Mr. Wouter Robert Marie Jurgens, the newly-accredited Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Myanmar; and Mr. Francisco Vaz Patto, the newly-accredited Ambassador of Portugal to Myanmar, on separate occasions at Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present on the occasions were Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin and Director-General U Ko Ko Naing of Protocol Department.—*Myanmar News Agency*



President U Htin Kyaw receives the credential of the newly accredited Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Myanmar Mr. Wouter Robert Marie Jurgens at Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Political literature reading marks greater transparency in politics: Union Minister Dr Pe Myint

THE Ministry of Information organised a monsoon book fair in conjunction with a reading session of political literature in the compound of the Central Printing Factory of the Printing and Publishing Department on Theinbyu road, Yangon, yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Dr Pe Myint described the development of the Myanmar language as one of the primary tasks of his ministry, stressing that the event marked greater transparency in the country's politics.

Researchers and analysts would review the sector of political literature in the reading session, while sizing up the whole literary world of the country in a bid to find out the strengths and weaknesses of different literary genres, the union minister said.

“Reading sessions play a criti-

cal role in promoting the Myanmar language,” he said, echoing the words of wisdom by the literati of the pre-independence time, which read “For Myanmar to know the world, for the world to know Myanmar and for the Myanmar people to know Myanmar”.

Dr Pe Myint promised an all-out effort to develop the Myanmar language, urging writers and literary agents to cooperate in the process.

The reading session of political literature saw influential writers read out their papers in the genre and respond to queries raised by the audience.

The three-day reading event will have 18 papers on politics, with six a day, while there are over 160 bookshops at the monsoon book fair.—*Ko Moe, Ye Ye Myint, and Ohnma Thant*



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint visits monsoon book fair. PHOTO:MNA

Leading committee on holding of 37th AIPA General Assembly meets

A MEETING to hold the 37th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary General Assembly was held at a hall of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Chairman of the leading com-

mittee for holding the 37th AIPA General Assembly Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat spoke on the occasion, and those present discussed matters related to the 37th AIPA GA.

The meeting was also attend-

ed by Vice Chairperson 1 Daw Su Su Lwin, Vice Chairman 2 U Zaw Thein and members, directors-general, Police Brig-Gen Tin Ko Ko of No 1 Police Security Command and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Migrant Resource Centre opened in Sittwe

THE opening of the Migrant Resource Centre, established by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in cooperation with International Organisation for Migration was held in Sittwe, Rakhine State yesterday, attended by Union Minister U Thein Swe, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and Mr. Kieran Gorman Best of the IOM Regional Office.

In his address, Union Minister U Thein Swe elaborated on the purposes of establishing the MRC and progress in the ministry's efforts to ensure Myanmar migrant workers have access to employment and rights.

The ministry is issuing identity cards to undocumented Myanmar migrant workers and helping workers work abroad through legal channels, added

the Union minister.

A migrant resource centre was also opened in Patheingyi of Ayeyawady Region on 17 July in Sittwe.

According to sources, 12 migrant resource centres have been opened in Kayah, Mon, Shan States and Magway, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Mandalay and Tanintharyi Region.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Appointment of Ambassador agreed

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has granted Agreement to the proposed appointment of Mr. Tshewang Chopel Dorji as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Bangkok.

Mr. Tshewang Chopel Dorji was born in 1969. He had served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Bhutan Army from 1991-1995 prior to joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan in 1995 as Assistant Director in the Bilateral and Multilateral Division.

He then served in various capacities and Divisions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including assignments abroad at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bhutan in New Delhi and the Permanent Mission of Bhutan to the United Nations in New York. Currently, Mr. Tshewang Chopel Dorji is serving as Chief of Regional Organization Division and Chief of UN Peace-keeping Coordination Office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as a Board Director of Bhutan Broadcasting Service.

He is married with one daughter.—*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with delegations of Wa State Army (UWSA) and National Democratic Alliance Army-NDAA (Mongla). PHOTO: MNA

Commander-in-Chief holds talks with UWSA, NDAA (Mongla) delegations

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing held talks with leaders from the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and National Democratic Alliance Army-NDAA (Mongla) yesterday at the Bayintnaung Yeiktha in Nay Pyi Taw.

The UWSA delegation was led by U Pao Yu Yi, Deputy Sec-

retary-General of the UWSA, and the delegation of the NDAA (Mongla) was led by U Sai Lin.

During the meeting Senior General Min Aung Hlaing clarified the Tatmadaw's work toward achieving peace in the country and stressed the importance of the role of the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organisations in achieving peace in the country.

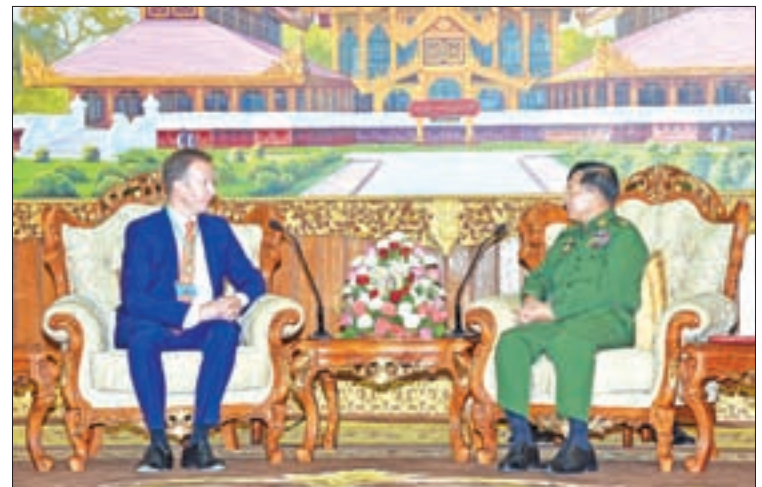
He also stressed the need for the ethnic armed organisations to work together with Tatmadaw with mutual understanding as the country is now on the path to democracy. The leaders of the two ethnic armed organisations discussed measures being taken for peace, stable and development in their respective regions. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets with Dutch Ambassador

COMMANDER-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Myanmar Mr. Wouter Robert Marie Jurgens in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call the two rep-

resentatives held discussions on more than 60 years of bilateral relations, democratisation in Myanmar, the Tatmadaw's involvement in developing the country's multi-party democracy and peace process and further cooperation between the two Defence Forces.—*Myawady*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Myanmar Mr. Wouter Robert. PHOTO: MNA



The fourth day meeting of the Ethnic Armed Organizations in Mai Ja Yang. PHOTO: PHO HTAUNG

Political dialogue framework discussed on fourth day of EAO's plenary meeting

A PLENARY meeting of ethnic armed organisations continued for the fourth day in Mai Ja Yang of Kachin State yesterday, with those present discussing a political dialogue framework to ensure participation of all EAOs in the 21st Union Peace Conference —

21st century Panglong.

The fourth day of the plenary meeting, chaired by KNU Vice Chairperson Padoh Naw Zipporah Sein, focused on representation, formation, decision-making methods and political dialogue in the framework.

Mr. Vijay Nambiar, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Myanmar, and Mr Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy on Asia Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, also spoke on the fourth day of the meeting.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt*

One law rephrased, two revoked

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw signed a law rephrasing the anti-corruption law and two laws revoking the two city development laws yesterday following approval by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The parliament replaced the words "five members each" in Section 5 of the Anti-corruption Law with "no more than five members each".

In Section 7(a), the words "by 15 appointed members" was

replaced with "by appointed members".

The parliament also revoked the Yangon City Development Law and the Mandalay City Development Law. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Reception to celebrate 89th Anniversary of Founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army held

A reception to mark the 89th Anniversary of the Founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army was held at Novotel Hotel in Yangon yesterday evening.

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint and wife, senior military officers and officials attended the reception.

They were welcomed by Chinese Ambassador to Myan-

mar Mr. Hong Liang and wife and Chinese Military Attaché and wife at the reception.

Next, Vice Senior General Soe Win spoke on the occasion and cut a cake commemorating the 89th Anniversary of the establishment of the People's Liberation Army together with the Chinese Ambassador and the Military Attaché.

Then, the Chinese Military Attaché and wife hosted dinner to those present. —*Myanmar News Agency*



Vice Senior General Soe Win and wife being welcomed by Chinese Ambassador Mr Hong Liang and wife at a reception to mark the 89th Anniversary of the Founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. PHOTO: MNA

LOCAL Business

Revenue authorities collect pre-income tax of K4b from vehicle imports

THE Internal Revenue Department has received over K4 billion as pre-income tax from vehicle importation within the past one and a half months, according to the department's spokesperson.

Between June and mid-July this year the department collected pre-income tax from around 2,700 cars imported with a free permit. According to the official figures of the department, 1,300cc and 1,600cc cars were imported most from foreign countries last month.

The department normally receives over K100 million pre-income tax from around 80 cars. The majority of individual tax payers are from the country.

A large number of imported cars enter the local market every month. Nearly 10,000 cars entered the country last month.

The Internal Revenue Department has been collecting four kinds of taxes and duties, namely income tax, commercial tax, stamp duty and state lottery tax from the 2011-2012 fiscal year onwards.—GNLM



Vehicles being seen on Strand Road in downtown Yangon on 20 July, 2016. PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

Transportation costs to be reduced 30 per cent within 15 years

TRANSPORTATION costs will be reduced 30 per cent within 15 years when the main transportation projects are accomplished under the new transportation policy, it has been learned from the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

In the declaration of the new transportation policy it is stated that about half of rural people are being faced with transportation difficulties. The new policy aims to promote the quality life of rural people, formulating a cost effective transportation system,

corporatising state-owned enterprises and creating a free competitive market.

"Transportation strategy has been drawn up with the assistance of the Asia Development Bank (ADB), and this strategy is believed to be comprehensive", said U Win Khant, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

This policy is expected to scale up Gross Domestic Products (GDP) up to US\$40 billion and all weather roads will be available for 10 million rural people.

The National Transport Plan has been drawn up with the assistance of the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA) to effectuate development in transportation. Development projects are to be implemented by linking them to the rural and urban transportation projects, it is reported.

Currently, ADB invests only 1 to 1.5 per cent of GDP in transportation sector, and so, we have encouraged ADB to increase the investment up to 3 to 5 per cent like other developing countries, said U Win Khant.—200

Myanmar has received over \$3m in FDI this FY

MYANMAR has received over US\$3 million in foreign direct investment from China, Singapore, Thailand and Britain over the past three months, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission.

Between April and the end of June this fiscal year the MIC has granted permission to four foreign businesspersons to operate investment businesses in the country, its spokesperson said.

He added that some foreigners showed greater interests in operating joint venture business in cooperation with Myanmar citizens.

The majority of monetary investment by foreign-local joint venture companies went into the manufacturing industry followed by domestic real estate market, the transportation sector, the hotel and tourism industry as well as construction.

According to economic experts international investors are still monitoring the coun-

try's economic situation. New investment is likely to flow into the country only after the government declares its new economic policies.

Among the 43 investor countries China remains the top investor for Myanmar with approved capital of around \$18 billion over 130 investment projects, according to official figures released by the Directorate of Investment and Companies Administration.

FDI has been coming into Myanmar since 1988; the majority of investment went into the country's oil and gas sector followed by the energy sector, manufacturing industry, real estate industry, mining, hotels and tourism, services business, livestock, agriculture and construction.

Myanmar has received nearly US\$64 billion in FDI since 1988 up until June this year and has seen over 1,100 development projects across the 12 investment segments previously mentioned.—200

Modern slaughterhouse to be built by Myanmar Livestock Federation

THE Myanmar Livestock Federation plans to establish a state of the art slaughterhouse in the country to produce fresh, clean meat for local consumption.

"The modern slaughter house will be developed by the MLF in partnership with City Mart Holdings Co Ltd." said U Myint Thu, vice chairman of the federation.

Several meetings have been held between the MLF and City Mart Holdings to discuss the necessary arrangements for the implementation of the new scheme.

Under the new project, City Mart will buy live farm animals including chickens, pigs, goats and cattle from local breeders as well as products manufactured by

the slaughter house to sell them on through its supermarkets.

An animal disease research programme is being conducted by the MLF to improve the country's farming industry. Among infectious diseases found in farm animals, foot-and-mouth disease and livestock anthrax are most prevalent in the country.—200

Wing part found in Tanzania is 'highly likely' from MH370 — Australia minister

SYDNEY — An aircraft wing part found in Tanzania is "highly likely" to be part of missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, an Australian government minister said on Friday, in what would be the second confirmed piece of the jetliner.

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

Investigators believe someone may have deliberately switched off the plane's transponder before diverting it thousands of miles off course over the Indian Ocean.

The wing part found in Tanzania is being examined in Australia.

"It is highly likely that the latest piece of debris being analysed is from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370," Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Dar-

ren Chester said in a statement.

"The experts will continue to analyse this piece to assess what information can be determined from it."

Investigators have confirmed a piece of plane debris found on the French island of Reunion in July 2015 as being part of MH370.

They have said several other pieces of debris found in Mozambique, South Africa and Rodrigues Island, a territory of Mauritius, are likely to be parts of the missing plane.

A search for the Boeing 777 has been going on in the Indian Ocean for more than two years but no sign of the main wreckage has been found.

Malaysia, China and Australia said last week the hunt would be suspended if the aircraft was not found in an area now being searched. —Reuters

Chinese relatives of those on MH370 ask for search to continue

BEIJING — Chinese relatives of those on board Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, which went missing two years ago on a flight to Beijing, made an emotional plea on Friday for the search to continue.

Last week, Malaysia, China and Australia said in a joint statement that the hunt for MH370 would be suspended if the aircraft was not found in an area now being searched.

The Boeing 777, with 239 aboard, disappeared in March 2014 while on a flight from the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Almost A\$180 million (\$135 million) has been spent since then on an underwater search spanning 120,000 square kilometres (46,332 square miles) in the southern Indian Ocean.

About 30 family members, some in tears, gathered at China's foreign ministry to hand over the petition, and a group were allowed in despite a brief stand-off with plainclothes security.

"We oppose their decision. We don't recognise it at all. That decision has no reason behind it," said Bo-



A family member of a passenger aboard Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 which went missing in 2014 reacts during a protest outside the Chinese foreign ministry in Beijing, on 29 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lanfang, 65, whose son, daughter-in-law and grandson were on the flight.

Some family members held up placards reading "The three governments have an obligation to the world to fulfil their promise".

The families of those on board, most of whom were from China, have pressed hard for answers ever since the plane went

missing.

China's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Investigators believe the plane was deliberately flown thousands of kilometres (miles) off course before crashing into the southern Indian Ocean off Australia.

Malaysian investigators said in 2015 there was

nothing suspicious in the financial, medical or personal histories of pilots or crew.

Several pieces of aircraft wreckage have washed up on beaches in Africa and been positively identified as coming from MH370 but they shed little light on the mystery.

The search has lasted more than two years but has found no sign of the main wreckage.—Reuters

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China says to hold drills with Russia in South China Sea

BEIJING — China and Russia will hold "routine" naval exercises in the South China Sea in September, China's Defence Ministry said on Thursday, adding that the drills were aimed at strengthening their cooperation and were not aimed at any other country.

The exercises come at a time of heightened tension in the contested waters after an arbitration court in The Hague ruled this month that China did not have historic rights to the South China Sea and criticized its environmental destruction there.

China rejected the ruling and refused to participate in the case.

"This is a routine exercise between the two armed forces, aimed at strengthening the developing China-Russia strategic cooperative partnership," China's defence ministry

spokesman Yang Yujun told a regular monthly news conference.

"The exercise is not directed against third parties."

China and Russia are veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, and have held similar views on many major issues such as the crisis in Syria, putting them at odds with the United States and Western Europe.

Last year, they held joint military drills in the Sea of Japan and the Mediterranean.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest played down the significance of the exercises even though he conceded that the South China Sea was "a sensitive diplomatic topic right now". "I don't know what exercises they are planning, but in the same way the United States and China have a military-to-military

relationship, I'm not surprised that Russia and China are seeking to build upon their military-to-military relationship as well," he told a regular briefing.

China has recently taken part in US-led multinational naval drills in the Pacific and a US defence official said he did not expect the China-Russia exercises to affect US military activity or behavior in the South China Sea.

"We're not concerned about the safety of US vessels in the region as long as interactions with the Chinese remain safe and professional, which has been the case in most cases," the official said.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of trade moves annually. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam have

rival claims. China has repeatedly blamed the United States for stoking tension in the region through its military patrols, and of taking sides in the dispute.

The United States has sought to assert its right to freedom of navigation in the South China Sea with its patrols and denies taking sides in the territorial disputes.

Russia has been a strong backer of China's stance on the arbitration case, which was brought by the Philippines.

Yang said China and Russia were comprehensive strategic partners and had already held many exercises this year. "These drills deepen mutual trust and expand cooperation, raise the ability to jointly deal with security threats, and benefit the maintenance of regional and global peace and stability," he said.—Reuters

Japan to upgrade Patriot batteries for Olympics as North Korean missile threat grows

TOKYO — Japan is upgrading its Patriot PAC-3 missile defence system in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, adding range and accuracy needed to intercept more advanced North Korean ballistic missiles, four sources with knowledge of the plan said.

The move represents the most significant upgrade to Japan's missile defence system in a decade and is part of an increase in military spending in the region, where geopolitical tensions are rising.

The rollout of the new advanced Missile Segment Enhancement, which could double the range of the current PAC-3 missiles to around 30 km (19 miles), will likely start next year, said the sources, who were not authorised to speak publicly about the project.

"The upgraded PAC-3 is necessary to counter the Musudan," said one source, referring to Pyongyang's intermediate-range ballistic missile.

North Korea in June test-fired what appeared to be two Musudan rockets. The first failed, but the second travelled 400 km (250 miles), more than halfway towards the southwest coast of Japan and reached a height of 1,000 km — enough altitude to give its warhead a range of more than 3,000 km (1,800 miles).

Experts said that test represented a technological advance for the Pyongyang regime, which is also developing nuclear weapons.

It puts it one step closer to being able to lob a warhead that could plunge to its target at speeds of several kilometres a second,



Members of the Japan Self-Defence Forces stand guard near Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) land-to-air missiles, deployed at the Defence Ministry in Tokyo in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

potentially too fast for the current PAC-3 batteries that are the last line of defence against missile strikes.

South Korea's military operates the older PAC-2 system and has a programme to replace it with the PAC-3 system by 2018, a South Korean defence ministry official said. US forces based in the country were also planning to upgrade their PAC-3 batteries covering the capital Seoul, the official added.

Along with North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, tensions in Asia are being fuelled by ongoing territorial disputes between China and Japan in the East China Sea, and between China and

several Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea.

China is swiftly modernising its armed forces, in part to counter what it sees as a strategy of containment in the United States' Asian "pivot".

A spokesman for Japan's Defence Ministry said "nothing has been decided" on the PAC-3 upgrade.

The International Olympic Committee's decision to grant Tokyo the 2020 games will help unlock funding for the PAC-3 upgrade despite military budget constraints, the sources told Reuters.

Around 100 billion yen (726 million pounds) in funding

would be requested in the next defence budget proposal for the year starting April 2017, one of the sources said. Funding will need cabinet approval before going into the national budget and additional funds would have to be approved for subsequent years.

Japan is also considering purchasing the advanced Terminal High Altitude Area Defence, or THAAD, anti-missile system, which Washington and Seoul agreed to deploy in South Korea earlier this month. That decision sparked a complaint from China, which said it would destabilise the regional security balance.

—Reuters

Three Nigerians among four executed in Indonesia, 10 cases postponed

CILACAP, (Indonesia) — Indonesia executed four convicted drug traffickers, including three Nigerians, early on Friday as it pushed ahead with its "war against drugs", although another 10 scheduled executions were delayed.

As many as 14 people were originally set to face the firing squad together on Friday, but officials decided a "comprehensive review" was needed to "avoid any mistake" in the 10 cases, Attorney General H. Muhammad Prasetyo said.

The date for the next round of executions has not been set, Prasetyo told reporters in Jakarta.

At least two prisoners among that group of 10, a Pakistani national and an Indonesian woman, have applied for presidential clemency, their representatives said. They said legal proceedings could take a long time.

Those executed — three Nigerians and an Indonesian man — were shot during a thunderstorm shortly after midnight on Nusakambangan Island in Central Java. The government ignored international calls for clemency and pushed ahead with its drive against narcotics.

"Our battle against drug crimes is not over and it will continue. We will maintain our commitment, our firmness and our consistency," Prasetyo said.

Indonesia has become a "business field" for the production, distribution, import and export of drugs, Prasetyo said. —Reuters

Former Australian PM Kevin Rudd withdraws candidacy for top UN job

SYDNEY — Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Friday withdrew his candidacy to be the next UN Secretary-General after current Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declared him unfit for the job and refused to back his candidacy.

Conservative leader Turnbull denied that politics played a part in his cabinet's decision not to back the former Labour leader, who had asked the government to nominate him as Australia's candidate.

"Does the government believe, do we believe, do I as prime minister believe that Mr Rudd is well suited for that role? My considered judgement is that he is not," Turnbull told reporters in Canberra. —Reuters

Monsoon deluge in Indian cities causes traffic chaos, sewage swirls

NEW DELHI — Persistent heavy rains have caused widespread disruption in India's major cities and severe floods in the rugged northeast have killed at least 12 people, the federal government said on Friday.

About 50,000 people from southern and eastern India had to be evacuated as storms pushed water levels to dangerous levels, damaging crops and causing more than 3,000 houses to collapse.

Flooding, an annual problem during the monsoon season, has been worsened by crumbling civic infrastructure, clogged drains and uncontrolled urban expansion in a country with a fast-growing population of 1.3 billion. Thousands vented their anger on social media after being stranded for up to 12 hours as traffic gridlock paralyzed roads in the business hub of Gurugram near New Delhi, the capital. Trains were also delayed.

"It took me four hours to drive 6 km (4 miles)," said Randeep Dev, a consultant at a private bank



Vehicles waded through a waterlogged highway after heavy rains in Gurugram, previously known as Gurgaon, on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, on 29 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

in New Delhi. "Our cities are a living hell in the monsoon."

Tracts of the southern technology hub of Bengaluru, and the financial capital of Mumbai on the west coast, were inundated by flood waters and sewage swirled in the streets. Fire officials in Bengaluru, formerly known as Bangalore, used boats to rescue people stranded near Electronics City, home to technology firms

and multinationals such as Infosys, the business process outsourcing giant. Forecasters warned of a new round of heavy rains and flooding, as the government opened shelters and stepped up emergency rescue operations.

In the northeastern state of Assam, troops pressed boats and helicopters into the effort to pull hundreds of people to safety from floodwaters that had trapped them

in their homes, senior military official Ajit Borah said.

In the state's Kaziranga National Park, a sanctuary for the Indian one-horned rhinoceros, water levels were receding, four days after some of the young animals had to be rescued. Others floundered through the water or strayed across roads, in video images captured by people living nearby. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced grand designs to build 100 futuristic 'smart' cities, but this week's floods highlighted the need to improve living conditions in cities and rein in unplanned urban sprawl.

In neighboring Nepal, officials said four days of incessant rains had left 72 people dead in landslides and flash floods, and 12 missing. Authorities were distributing dry food items, such as biscuits and noodles, to those whose homes were swept away in landslides or submerged by floods, Home Ministry spokesman Yadav Koirala said. —Reuters

Opinion

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Nobody is destined for poverty

Kyaw Thura

OUR country has long been wrestling with severe social inequality and political instability since independence. A sluggish economy has created a situation in which life seems to be determined by where we live. To make the matter worse, lack of infrastructural development seems to force young people to migrate from rural to urban areas, let alone migration to richer countries. Nobody is destined to live in poverty and never to enjoy better luck.

Since we were all born and created equal, we all deserve equal opportunity and safety, no matter where we live. In other words, our locality should not determine our destiny. For this reason, it is imperative for the government to adopt policies that focus on the deconcentration of rural poverty and transform economically impoverished areas into economically vibrant communities. To achieve this goal, policy makers are required to take fresh steps to enable local residents to have access to employment, education, transportation and health care.

This responsibility does not solely rest with the central government alone. All the regional governments have the responsibility to take a comprehensive approach to bridging the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged across the country. People from all walks of life, regardless of race, religion and gender, feel like transforming their communities where a quality of life is secured. The onus is on all of us, under the dynamic leadership of the government, to keep pushing our communities to a safer and more prosperous country as a whole.

Majority of Myanmar women susceptible to violence

WOMEN in Myanmar are not aware laws exist to protect them from violence, stated Daw Naw Tha Wah, director of the Department of Social Welfare, during a female violence protection training held in the Mon State town of Thaton.

She added that she is conducting such educational training across the country for women to better understand their rights and build capacity.

"The majority of women don't know there are laws enacted to protect them. The majority of women affected live in rural areas. These trainings via the department [of social welfare] are carried out to inform women about how they can use the law if they are subject to abusive behavior, which could protect women against violence," said Daw Naw Tha Wah.

Women who experience verbal insults or violent behavior can report such instances to the Department of Social Welfare by mail or phone, while the department will make timely efforts to resolve the issue in accordance

with the Prevention of Violence against Women Law that can carry from 6 months in prison to the death penalty for the perpetrator.

The Department of Social Welfare received 27 letters of complaint relating to violence towards women during 2015, of which the many cases were reportedly resolved, while this year has so far seen a total of 16 letters reach the Department of Social Welfare.

"The lives of women could become safer if those women learn about how the law can be used to protect them against violence. They can then relay information to friends and family members," said Daw Hayman Myo San, an attendee to the aforementioned training.

Myanmar signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997, while the Prevention of Violence against Women Bill was drawn up in 2014 that features 19 Sections comprising 53 Articles.—*Myitmakha Media Group*

Abstract

As Myanmar raises the quality of education system, it needs teachers with the right values, skills and knowledge to be effective practitioners. The Myanmar Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF) has been developed. The main objective of this framework is to establish an agreed set of teacher competency standards to support improvement in the quality of teachers and teaching in Myanmar. To implement this framework, the core working group was organized. The framework consists of four main areas. Each domain has competency standards and minimum requirements for teachers' professional development. To ensure that the frame is useful for Myanmar's education system, the draft of the framework will be field-tested. Such research tools as classroom observation, teacher self-appraisal, interview, etc will be used for the field-testing. 75 schools are included in this field testing. This framework will help to raise the quality of education system in Myanmar.

Introduction

Myanmar has commenced a process of significant changes in political, social and economic affairs. So has in education. The role of education is expected to play in the nations' social and economic development. As Myanmar raises the quality of education system, it needs teachers with the right values, skills and knowledge to be effective practitioners. Therefore, Myanmar needs a strong system of teacher education, with programmes that provide the theoretical foundations to produce graduates with the kinds of professional knowledge, understanding and skills associated with the role of the teacher and the process of teaching. The National Education Law of Myanmar also legislates that all teachers need to be qualified. It defines a teacher as an educator who has qualifications for serving at a specified level of education. Under the law, the Ministry and related ministries are responsible for upgrading teachers' quality. Therefore, the government of Myanmar has prioritized teacher education in its education reform efforts, recognizing that improvement in quality of teachers is essential to quality education and positive student learning outcomes. The 30-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan (2001-2031) also aims to uplift national education through a series of reform programmes, including the teacher education system. For these reasons, it is necessary to have a competency standard framework for Myanmar teachers.

The Myanmar Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF) has been developed by a group of national professional education experts and UNESCO education specialists over a period



PHOTO: AUNG SHINE Oo

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MYANMAR TEACHER COMPETENCY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

Aye Aye Myint, Yangon University of Education & Myo Win, Methodology Department, Yangon University of Education

of eight months in 2015-2016. UNESCO through the Australian aid funded Strengthening Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) project, provided technical assistance in developing the framework. The main objective for the development of this framework is to establish an agreed set of teacher competency standards to support improvement in the quality of teachers and teaching in Myanmar. To implement this framework, the core working group which consists of 14 members was organized. The members were teacher educators from Yangon University of Education (YUOE), Sagaing University of Education (SUOE), the University for the Development of National Races (UDNR) and representatives from some Education Colleges out of 22 Education Colleges, that produce primary and junior teachers in Myanmar.

Definitions of key terms

The following definitions of the key terms were used in the study.

Competency standards: It is defined as the expectations of teachers' knowledge, skills and attributes and required levels of performance at various stages of their teaching career.

Educational sciences: It refers to the theoretical foundations of education and includes intercultural, philosophical, psychological and sociological knowledge as it relates to and informs teaching practice.

The Myanmar teacher competency standard framework

The teacher competency standards framework explains what are the key characteristics and attributes of good teaching and what is expected of teachers' professional practices at various stages in their professional development. It is a guide for policy makers and

curriculum developers responsible for teacher education (pre and in-service) and basic education. The teacher competency standards refer to the expectations of teachers' knowledge, skills and attributes and required levels of performance at various stages of their teaching career and are organized in **four domains**.

A. Professional knowledge and understanding
B. Professional skills and practice
C. Professional values and dispositions
D. Professional growth

Each **Domain** refers to a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world in a particular domain. Each domain is organized by **Areas of Competence** for which the competency standard is expressed as a

concise statement with accompanying descriptors of the expected minimum requirements to be achieved by all teachers.

Competency standards are the expected professional abilities and skills a teacher should develop through their initial training and as they continue to grow and develop in their professional service and practice (i.e. through participation in induction and on-going in-service education and training).

Minimum requirements explain how knowledge, skills, actions and desired types of behaviours may be expressed. These requirements refer to all teachers' professional development and cover all phases of their professional development. They also cover teachers teaching in different stages of schooling from kindergarten to grade 12 and all systems (public and private) of education in Myanmar.

Domain A: Professional knowl-

edge and understanding

This domain encompasses the knowledge required for teaching different stages and level-appropriate subject content competency. It is necessary to understand how students learn and how they can be effectively taught in the key learning areas. Underpinning all competency standards in this domain is knowledge of educational policy, school curricula for Myanmar, its aims and objectives and developments. Under this domain, areas of competence are educational science, instructional technology, curriculum and subject matter.

Domain B: Professional skills and practices

This domain deals with what teachers are able to do. The teachers' professional knowledge and understanding (domain A) is complemented by possession of a repertoire of teaching strategies for different ed-

ucational contexts to meet the needs of individual students as appropriate to different subject areas and stages of schooling. Under this domain, areas of competence are pedagogy, assessment, classroom management and learner-centered values.

Domain C: Professional values and dispositions

This domain refers to the ideas, values and beliefs that teachers hold about education, teaching and learning. It is underpinned by the values expressed in the Myanmar National Education Laws and reflects the mutual understanding by teachers and the community about Myanmar teachers. The areas of competence specific to this domain are professional ethics, service to profession and community and community leadership.

Domain D: Professional growth and development

This domain deals with teachers continuing professional growth and development. It incorporates teachers' habits, motivation and actions related to their on-going learning and professional improvement. It advocates the importance of all teachers being aware of their role as leaders within the community and highlights the need for active research to support teachers' classroom performance and continuing professional development. The areas of competence specific to this domain relate to reflective practices, collaborative learning and initiative for research culture.

The framework is designed for use in:

- supporting teacher quality related policy design and implementation
- developing teacher education curriculum, training and professional development programs
- guiding teachers in self appraisal and training needs analysis, and
- assisting education supervisors/ managers at various levels of the system to monitor and support teachers (pre and in-service) to develop in their profession and improve their practice.

Field testing

To ensure that the frame is useful for Myanmar's system of education, the draft of the framework will be field-tested. Field-testing will be able to use to determine how relevant and useful the framework and the tools are for supporting Myanmar teachers and principals to better understand their professional learning and development strengths

and needs. It provides an opportunity for the intended users to apply the framework within an authentic context and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. UNESCO education specialists and working group team leaders worked together to plan the methodology and design the data collection tools for the field testing of the draft framework.

The field testing will provide information that will make the framework more relevant and useful as a professional learning and development tool for all teachers in Myanmar. Research tools for this field testing are **classroom observation, teacher self-appraisal, focus group discussion, key informant interview and case study**. The data collected will be used to form the final development of TCSF. The draft Framework is now ready to be piloted through a field testing exercise. A number of school types and teaching learning contexts will be field tested to reflect different types of schools and schooling systems where teachers work in Myanmar. 75 different schools and teaching learning contexts have been included in this field testing.

As the Framework provides a core set of competency standards to be used as the point of reference or benchmark for teachers and teaching quality, it is hoped that this framework will help to raise the quality of education system in Myanmar.

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Asian allies prefer Clinton to Trump, security experts say

PHILADELPHIA — Now that Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton have won their respective party's nomination for November's presidential election, security experts are assessing which of them would be a better choice for Japan and other US allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

At this point, Clinton, a former secretary of state, appears to have an edge over Trump, a business mogul and political outsider, given her deep understanding of the importance of alliances.

Trump's threat to pull US forces out of Japan and South Korea unless they contribute more to the costs of their defence makes US allies "nervous" and gets China, North Korea and Russia — countries that apparently do not wish to see firmer US engagement in the region — "excited," according to some of the experts.

"To American allies, Mr. Trump sounds like a Mafia boss, not a global leader, who says 'Pay your due, then I will protect you,'" said Lee Seong Hyon, a research fellow at the Sejong Institute, a South Korean think tank. "Countries such as North Korea, China and Russia are happy with Mr. Trump because they don't have to pay anything."

Such a posture — including the GOP nominee's controversial remarks about allowing Tokyo and Seoul to go nuclear for self-defense if US troops are withdrawn — would undermine US deterrence capabilities and presence in the region in the face of Beijing's rising assertiveness and Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development. It could also prompt Taiwan to pursue a nuclear deterrent against China.

"There are already a lot of confusing projections about it," Lee said, wondering how Trump, if elected, would deal with US allies in Asia, especially as China flexes its muscles in pressing its territorial claims in the disputed South China Sea and North Korea conducts nuclear tests and missile launches in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

"One scenario is that North Korea will feel freer to pursue nuclear weapons and this will destabilize the region, and spark a 'nuclear domino effect' as other countries may be tempted to arm themselves with nuclear weapons," he said.

Trump's rhetoric, his supporters say, is merely a starting position for negotiations with US allies — which Trump called "the countries that we are protecting, at a massive cost to us" — to "pay their fair share."

But the problem is that "Mr. Trump doesn't know the facts of these relationships nor appreciates the degree to which state-



Democratic US presidential nominee Hillary Clinton accepts the nomination on the fourth and final night at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US, on 28 July, 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ments alone do great damage to US credibility and leadership in the world," said Brad Glosserman, executive director of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a Honolulu-based think tank.

The Washington Post similarly questions Trump's foreign and security policy credentials, saying he offers "a series of prejudices and gut feelings, most of them erroneous."

"In fact, Japan and South Korea are major contributors to an alliance that has preserved a peace of enormous benefit to Americans," the paper said in an editorial published 24 July.

In contrast, Clinton, who, as President Barack Obama's top diplomat during his first term, promoted a US strategic "rebalance" to Asia to counter the rise of China, is "rock-solid committed" to US treaty alliances in Asia and other parts of the world.

"She will maintain those commitments the same way that Democratic and Republican presidents have for decades — on the basis of the premise that this is in America's interest, it's in the interest of our allies, and it's in the interest of global stability and prosperity," Jake Sullivan, a senior policy adviser for Clinton's presidential campaign, told journalists on the sidelines of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia that ended Thursday.

Asked about Trump's threat to abandon US commitments to the defence of allies unless they pay what he sees as their fair share, Sullivan said, "This is a source of great concern for the American people who have been committed to these alliances for decades...And I think it is a gift to those who would challenge the United States or those who would choose to be our adversaries."

Comparing the positions of the two candidates, Glosserman

said, "It should be clear that Ms. Clinton, in my view, has views that are better for US alliances... Mr. Trump wants to engage the world, but solely on his terms."

Supporting his assessment, a recent multinational poll found Clinton is seen to excel Trump in the ability to manage international affairs, with 79 per cent in Germany and 70 per cent each in Japan and Australia expressing confidence in Clinton.

In contrast, 92 per cent in Sweden, 87 per cent in Australia and 82 per cent in Japan have no confidence in Trump's diplomatic skills, according to the poll conducted by the Pew Research Centre, a Washington-based think tank.

Views of Trump among the Chinese are mixed, with 22 per cent saying they have confidence in him, 40 per cent saying they do not have confidence and 39 per cent with no opinion. Similarly divided, 37 per cent in China say they have confidence in Clinton, 35 per cent say they do not have confidence and 28 per cent have no opinion.

"Beijing is not happy with Ms. Clinton, seeing her as the source of much of the unrest and difficulty that China has faced," Glosserman said, citing her hard-line stance on China in the South China Sea issue, which also involves the Philippines, Viet Nam and other smaller neighbours of China.

Clinton angered China in 2010 by affirming that the Senkaku Islands, a group of East China Sea islets administered by Japan but claimed by Beijing and Taiwan, are covered by the Japan-US security treaty.

"Any policy that would unravel or unsettle US alliances in Asia is good for China, so they probably like the Trump positions," Glosserman said. —*Kyodo News*

UN Secretary-General's Message on The International Day of Friendship

30 July 2016

Poverty, violence, human rights abuses and other major problems on the global agenda have in common a failure to respect fundamental norms and values developed over millennia. When greed supersedes concerns about the health of our planet or its inhabitants, when fanatic attachment to ideology is pursued at all costs, and when people suffer human rights violations because they are considered somehow less than equal, the heritage of humanity is betrayed and our future wellbeing is placed in peril.

In confronting these crises, we must address their roots by promoting and defending a shared spirit of human solidarity. On a global level, this can manifest in many ways, from international assistance to political advocacy. And on an individual level, it can take the simple and timeless form of friendship.

Friendship is a joy in itself, conferring happiness and a sense of wellbeing. And the accumulation of bonds of camaraderie around the world can contribute to fundamental shifts that are urgently needed to achieve lasting stability.

The forces of division that actively try to undermine peace, security and social harmony are no match for the simple but powerful act of extending a hand in our own personal circles and especially beyond. Ties of trust can weave a safety net that will protect us all. As understanding and awareness grow, we can build compassion and generate passion for a better world where all are united for the greater good.

On this International Day of Friendship, let us resolve to cherish and cultivate as many warm relationships as possible, enriching our own lives and enhancing the future. —*UNIC/Yangon*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three killed in a missile explosion at a plant in Ukraine

KIEV — Three people died, including a NATO representative, in an explosion at a military installation in northern Ukraine, the Ukrainian defence company Ukroboronprom said on Friday.

The explosion occurred on Thursday afternoon while a missile was being unloaded from a vehicle, the company said in a statement. It said two other workers were injured.

Local media said the NATO representative was an Ukrainian who monitors the disarming Soviet-era weapons, a process partly financed by NATO.

Ukraine, the western-most outpost of the former Soviet Union, inherited thousands of tonnes of obsolete ammunition and weapon which is due to destroy. —*Reuters*

Driver of bus which caught fire in Taiwan likely drunk: prosecutors

TAIPEI — Prosecutors said on Friday that the driver of a tour bus, which caught fire in northern Taiwan last week, killing 24 Chinese tourists, was likely drunk driving. Wang Yi-wen of the Taoyuan District Prosecutors' Office told reporters that an investigation had found that the driver of the bus, identified by the surname Su, was driving under the influence of alcohol when the incident happened on 19 July.

Wang said the forensic autopsy of the driver found that while drugs were not detected in Su's body, his blood alcohol concentration was 215 milligrams per deciliter, or 0.215 per cent. The legal limit for driving in Taiwan is 0.05 per cent. "All the evidence pointed to one thing: Su had drunk a significant amount of alcohol within a very short period of time," Wang said. "For a professional bus driver, it is clearly a criminal act." —*Kyodo News*

Nine feared killed in building collapse in western India

NEW DELHI — At least nine people are feared killed after parts of an under-construction building collapsed in the western Indian city of Pune Friday, a police official said.

"The 13-storeyed under-construction building caved in suddenly in the morning in the city, barely 160 kms from financial capital Mumbai, when nine laborers were working at the site," he said.

A massive search and rescue operation has been launched by the fire brigade for the laborers who are suspected to be trapped under the debris of the building, the official said.

Local TV channels reported that the construction laborers were probably not wearing safety gear such as helmets while working at the site and so chances of their survival are minimal. —*Xinhua*



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during a memorial ceremony for soldiers killed during the 2014 Gaza conflict, at a military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, on 26 July 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel's Netanyahu celebrates warming ties with Sisi's Egypt

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday praised warming relations with Egypt and its president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who ousted an Islamist government seen as hostile to ties between the neighbours.

Egypt was the first of a handful of Arab countries to recognise Israel, in 1979, but the downfall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 brought to power the government of Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood, straining relations with Israel.

Cooperation has improved since Sisi took power in 2013, with Egypt battling Islamist insurgents in Sinai near its border with Israel and both countries wary of Gaza's Islamist rulers, Hamas.

At an event at the Egyptian ambassador's residence for Egypt's national day, Netanyahu called the countries' peace treaty

an "anchor of stability and security in our region".

"I want to thank President al-Sisi for his leadership and for his efforts to advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians and in the broader Middle East," Netanyahu said in a speech.

"We welcome the effort to incorporate other Arab states in this larger effort of a broader peace between all the people of the Middle East."

Egypt's foreign minister, Sameh Shoukry, paid a rare visit to Israel this month to meet Netanyahu, offering Cairo's help to revive peace talks with the Palestinians. It was the first visit to the Jewish state by an Egyptian foreign minister in nine years.

In May, Sisi urged both sides to seize the opportunity to make peace, offering Israel the prospect of warmer ties if this were achieved.—*Reuters*

Syria's Nusra Front says ending al Qaeda ties; US fears for Aleppo

BEIRUT — Al Qaeda's powerful Syrian branch, the Nusra Front, announced on Thursday it was ending its relationship with the global jihadist network founded by Osama bin Laden, to remove a pretext used by world powers to attack Syrians.

The announcement came as Russia and President Bashar al-Assad's government declared a "humanitarian operation" in the besieged rebel-held sector of Aleppo, opening "safe corridors" so people can flee Syria's most important opposition stronghold.

Washington said that appeared to be an attempt to depopulate the city and make fighters surrender. The opposition called it a euphemism for forced displacement.

In the first known video statement ever to show his face, the leader of the Nusra Front, Mohamad al-Golani, announced that the group would re-form under a new name, with "no ties

with any foreign party".

The move was being made "to remove the excuse used by the international community — spearheaded by America and Russia — to bombard and displace Muslims in the Levant: that they are targeting the Nusra Front which is associated with al Qaeda," he said. The group would now be called Jabhat Fatah al-Sham.

Golani appeared in the video flanked by two other Nusra Front figures, in front of a new white flag for the group. Nusra Front's old flag was black, the color used by ultra-hardline jihadist groups such as al Qaeda and Islamic State. Earlier on Thursday, bin Laden's successor as Al Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, gave the Nusra Front his blessing to break away. In his message, Golani thanked Zawahri for putting the interests of Syrians ahead of organisational concerns.—*Reuters*

Up to 1 million could flee fighting in Iraq — ICRC

GENEVA — Up to million people could be forced to flee their homes in Iraq in coming weeks and months as fighting intensifies to retake the city of Mosul from Islamic State, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Friday.

The humanitarian agency

said it was seeking a further 17.1 million Swiss francs for its programme in Iraq, its third largest worldwide, bringing its budget for the country to \$137 million Swiss francs.

"The situation is unpredictable but we must prepare for the worst. There's the likelihood that

fighting will intensify, particularly in the Mosul area. Hundreds of thousands of people may very well be on the move in the coming weeks and months, seeking shelter and assistance," said Robert Mardini, ICRC director for the Near and Middle East on return from Iraq.—*Reuters*



A woman walks past the site of the Karrada suicide bomb attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on 26 July 2016. Photo: Reuters

Afghan government loses 5 per cent of territory in 4 months

WASHINGTON — The Afghan government lost control or influence of nearly 5 per cent of its territory between January and May, the US government's top watchdog on Afghanistan said in a report on Friday, an indication of the challenges its forces are facing.

Fifteen years after the United States invaded Afghanistan to topple the Taliban rulers who had harboured al Qaeda militants who attacked the United States, the Taliban have made major gains and are estimated to control more territory than at any time since 2001.

Washington has been training and equipping Afghan security forces in order to withdraw America troops from the country, but the Afghans remain short of personnel and hardware.

The report, published by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), said the area under Afghan government "control or influence" had decreased to 65.6 per cent by the end of May from 70.5 per cent near the end of January, based on data provided by US forces in Afghanistan.

That translates to a loss of 19

of the country's approximately 400 governing districts.

The report cited US forces in Afghanistan as saying the loss of control was because Afghan forces were redeployed from lower-priority areas to "conduct offensive operations, gain and maintain the initiative, exploit opportunities, and consolidate tactical gains."

The commander of US Forces in Afghanistan, Army General John Nicholson, said most of the areas the Taliban control were rural.

"They believed they were going to be able to seize and hold terrain, and they failed to do so," Nicholson told a Pentagon briefing via video link on Thursday. The report, however, said insurgents had 10 additional districts under their control or influence in the same timeframe. It was not possible to reach the Afghan government immediately for comment.

Acknowledging that security in Afghanistan remained precarious and Taliban forces had gained ground in some places, President Barack Obama shelved plans to cut the US force in Afghanistan nearly in half by year's

end, opting instead to keep 8,400 troops there through to the end of his presidency in January.

Obama also approved US forces new authorities that enable them to accompany Afghan forces, while allowing greater use of US air power.

Previously, Nicholson - who commands both the NATO-led Resolute Support mission and a separate US counterterrorism mission — was permitted to take action against the Taliban only "in extremis," or when US assistance was necessary to prevent a significant Afghan military setback.

A report by the Centre on International Cooperation commissioned by the United Nations and published earlier this year found that the government had access to 61 per cent of districts in 2015, down from 67 per cent in 2010.

"The deficiencies and incapacities of the Afghan security forces have really not been addressed enough to avert such a scenario (of losing territory) in the future," said Michael Kugelman, a South Asia specialist at the Woodrow Wilson Center, a Washington think-tank.—*Reuters*



A combination photo shows US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (L) and Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump (R) in Los Angeles, California on 5 May 2016 and in Eugene, Oregon, US on 6 May 2016 respectively. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump, Clinton to be given intelligence briefings

WASHINGTON — US intelligence officials next week will invite the presidential and vice-presidential candidates from both political parties to receive top secret briefings on world crises and security threats, two US officials familiar with the plans said.

Now that their nominations have been confirmed, Democrat Hillary Clinton and her vice presidential running mate, Senator Tim Kaine, and Republican Donald Trump and his running mate, Governor Mike Pence, will be offered identical intelligence briefings, the officials said.

Candidates customarily get one briefing although they may ask that it be broken into segments.

Aides and advisors to the candidates will not be allowed to attend the briefings unless they have security clearances granting them access to Top Secret intelligence, the officials added.

There could be questions about whether Trump aides who have done business in Eastern Europe could attend such briefings, the officials said. Clinton aides involved in the controversy over her private email server also might not be eligible, they said.

Asked on Thursday wheth-

er the intelligence community has any hesitation about briefing Trump or Clinton, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper replied: "No, there isn't."

"Both candidates will be reached out to, and offered briefings," although they are not mandatory, Clapper said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. "We've got a team all prepared, and have had for some time."

While the briefings are expected to include some classified material, Clapper described them as "fairly general". Other officials said they will provide a broad overview of the most important issues, threats, and trends, including terrorism, Russia, and China.

The briefings will track unclassified assessments that Clapper presented to Congress earlier this year in an annual "Worldwide Threat Assessment," one of the officials said. The briefings will not include information about US intelligence sources and methods or current covert operations, both officials added.

Trump was nominated last week at his party's convention and his rival at the 8 November election, Clinton, is due to accept the Democratic nomination on Thursday night.—Reuters

Spain's Rajoy accepts mandate to form government, warns he may fail

MADRID — Spain's acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said on Thursday he had accepted a mandate from the King to form a government although he warned he might fail and left open the date for a potential confidence vote in parliament.

Rajoy said he would now open a round of talks with other parties to try to convince them to vote for his conservative People's Party.

Most of them declined to support plans for a conservative-led government in talks with the King on Thursday and earlier this week, however, leaving the PP with just 137 votes in parliament when 176 are needed to secure a majority.

"Spain needs a government now, this government should be headed by the PP and there is no alternative to this," Rajoy told a news conference after meeting with King Felipe.

"I will try to form this gov-

ernment but not everything depends on me."

National elections in December and June both resulted in hung parliaments, forcing the parties to try to negotiate their way to a viable coalition — so far without success, despite four rounds of formal consultations with the king.

Insiders were hoping a deadline to pass a budget for 2017 by the end of September will concentrate minds.

But the left-leaning parties, the second-placed Socialists and Unidos Podemos ("Together We Can"), reiterated after the talks with the King that they would oppose Rajoy.

Liberal party Ciudadanos ("Citizens"), which came fourth in the June 26 election, said it would abstain in a confidence vote.

"We want to change Rajoy's government and this is why we will vote 'no' in a confidence vote," Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez told journalists.

Without backing or at least an abstention from the Socialists, Rajoy would find it almost impossible to secure a majority for a second term in office.

The conservative PP was the only one of the four main parties to win more seats in June than in December and Rajoy said that if he failed to win a stable majority, he would seek to run a minority government.

This would require other parties to initially abstain in a confidence vote and then each law would have to be negotiated on a case by case basis, starting with next year's budget, which must be passed in time for an EU deadline in October.

"This period should not drag on in such a way that we would not be able to fulfil our European commitments, such as the spending limit, the deficit target and the budget," Rajoy said. "Before mid-October, this should be sent to Europe,"—Reuters

Japan, UN agree on need for united front against terrorism

NEW YORK — Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon agreed on Thursday that the international community need to take a united front against terrorism, Japanese officials said.

In the meeting at UN headquarters, Kishida pledged Tokyo's support for the action plan to combat terrorism, which Ban in January called on countries to carry out, and expressed hope for its swift implementation.

Kishida was visiting New York to preside over an open debate at the UN Security Council on peace-building in Africa earlier in the day.

Ban expressed his desire to help bring to a successful conclusion the next round of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development to be held in Kenya in late August, the officials said. Ban is scheduled to attend the leaders' summit between Japan



Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida (L) and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon shake hands at the UN headquarters in New York, on 28 July 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

and African nations, the sixth of its kind and the first to be held in Africa.

Kishida and Ban also confirmed the importance of continuing to urge North Korea to exercise restraint over its nuclear and mis-

sile development, they said.

Furthermore, they agreed that Japan and the United Nations will work together toward putting the Paris global climate deal into force at an early date, according to the officials.—Kyodo News

Killing TPP would hand China 'keys to the castle': US trade representative

LIMA — Failure to ratify the US-led sweeping trade pact TPP would hand China "the keys to the castle" on globalisation and do nothing to solve the real problems underlying American anxiety over jobs, the top US trade official said on Thursday.

The tariff-slashing Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has turned into a hot-button topic in the run-up to the 8 November US election, threatening to dampen support from lawmakers needed to pass a deal critics condemn as a job-killer.

US Trade Representative

Michael Froman said he was still optimistic Congress would pass the 12-member TPP, in part because China has been moving ahead with a trade deal of its own, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), that would boost its exports and let it set labor and environmental standards in the fast-growing Asia Pacific region.

"We're one vote away from either cementing our leadership in this region and in the global trading system or ceding it to China," Froman told reporters in Lima after attending the inaugu-

ration of Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

"At the end of the day I don't think Congress wants to be responsible for handing the keys to the castle to China."

Froman's defence of the TPP follows weeks of heated attacks on the deal as anti-TPP chants and signs have peppered the Republican and Democratic conventions.

Republican nominee Donald Trump has called the TPP a "death blow" for manufacturing jobs and his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton has firmed up her

opposition to it in recent days.

Froman declined to comment on the candidates but said the TPP had become a "scapegoat" for legitimate concerns over income inequality, stagnant wages and jobs lost to automation. "You don't get to vote on the next generation of robots," he said, "you get to vote on trade agreements".

But the debate over TPP has also helped broaden support for domestic policies, such as infrastructure development and educational programmes, to help Americans adapt to rapid economic change, Froman said.

US President Barack Obama wants the TPP passed this year.

Froman ruled out renegotiating the "carefully balanced" text, but said issues were being solved by working on country implementation plans. He cited pork producers, dairy farmers and financial services as once-reluctant stakeholders that now back the TPP. "The last major issue outstanding has to do with biologics and intellectual property rights," Froman said. "We're having good constructive conversations" with members of Congress.—Reuters

In a country wary of migrants, Pope tells Poles to welcome refugees

KRAKOW, (Poland) — Pope Francis urged young people on Thursday to welcome migrants and refugees, putting himself in direct contrast with the government of Poland on the second day of his visit there.

Francis addressed more than 600,000 young people gathered in the city of Krakow for World Youth Day, a jamboree that actually lasts six days and has been dubbed the “Catholic Woodstock”. After watching performances from around the world, he urged them in an address to leave their comfort zones and be ready to embrace those in need.

“A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; a merciful heart is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion,” he said.

“A merciful heart opens up to welcome refugees and migrants,” he told the youths gathered in a large field near the city center. Despite being rooted in Christian values, Poland’s conservative



The faithful cheer as they welcome Pope Francis during World Youth Days at Blonia Park in Krakow, Poland, on 28 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Law and Justice (PiS) party government disagrees with Francis on refugees and opposes mandatory European Union quotas for accepting asylum seekers.

Some of the country’s conservative Church leaders have also been hesitant over

migrants, particularly those from Islamic countries, fearing that they will dilute Poland’s Christian identity.

On Thursday morning at the shrine city of Czestochowa, Francis prayed before Poland’s holiest icon — the Black Madonna of Jasna

Gora — and said outdoor Mass for a congregation of tens of thousands, thanking Poles for holding on to their faith in difficult times.

Francis praised what he called “the contagious power of a genuine faith, passed down from family to family”

in Poland, which is about 98 per cent Catholic.

He said their faith had stayed strong in many situations throughout history. Poland is renowned for keeping its Catholic flame burning during decades of Communist rule. As the 79-year-old

pope was blessing the altar at the start of the Mass, he tripped on a step but was helped up by aides and did not appear to be hurt. He continued the Mass and read his homily normally. Francis suffers from sciatica, a medical condition in which pain sometimes shoots down the leg from the lower back.

The shrine is home to the Black Madonna, a Byzantine icon from sometime between the sixth and ninth centuries and brought to Poland some 600 years ago. The icon is painted on wood and covered with silver and jewels. The shrine has been a focal point in difficult periods of Polish history. Poles flocked there to pray when martial law was declared by the communist government in the early 1980s. The late Pope John Paul II, who reigned for nearly three decades until his death in 2005, visited the shrine often during his trips to his homeland and donated the blood-stained white sash he was wearing on 13 May, 1981, when he was shot in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca.—Reuters

Rare Canada police conviction puts spotlight on race relations

TORONTO/MONTREAL — A six-year prison sentence given to a Toronto policeman in the shooting death of a teenager three years ago was a rare occurrence in Canada, where activists say officers too often get off easy in brutality cases.

The case, along with this week’s death of a black man who witnesses say was beaten by police officers, has brought race relations in Canada to the forefront.

The 2013 fatal shooting of Sammy Yatim, 18, which occurred after an altercation on a streetcar with

the teen, who was brandishing a knife, was caught on video and led to widespread protests in Toronto.

The sentencing of the officer, James Forcillo, who was convicted in January, came days after a mentally ill black man, Abdirahman Abdi, died following his arrest by police in Ottawa.

The deaths have shone an unflattering light on race relations in Canada, which prides itself on its multiculturalism and tolerance, especially in contrast to the United States.

In Montreal, about 50

protesters demonstrated over Abdi’s death, chanting: “Black lives matter.” Marlihan Lopez said that as the mother of a 6-year-old black boy with autism, the case hit close to home.

“In terms of the police, we live in a world where my son’s skin color is deemed as being threatening and his mental state is not understood,” she said.

The deaths echoed events in the United States, where a string of police killings of black men and allegations of police brutality and racial bias have sparked protests. Some confrontations in the United States were also caught on video.

Julian Falconer, a lawyer for Yatim’s mother, said police needed more training to deal with mentally ill people as well as lapel cameras to ensure accountability.

“You have people that are not well and they are shot like dogs in the street,” he told reporters.

“It’s a tragic day for the Forcillo family, for the Yatim family, for the community, and for policing,”

said Michael McCormack, president of the Toronto Police Association union.

“There’s never going to be any good outcome from this and it’s tragic all around.”

Last year, a Toronto police officer shot and killed Andrew Loku, a 45-year-old Sudanese immigrant with a history of mental illness. No charges were filed.

Sandy Hudson, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto, the only official Canadian chapter of the movement, said police shootings were underreported by media in Canada because surveillance footage was not as accessible and data was not always compiled by race north of the border.

“The reason for our existence is to dispel the myth that it is somehow safer in Canada, that it doesn’t happen in Canada,” she said.

The group strategizes with Black Lives Matters’ national chapter in Los Angeles, which has provided organizational support for larger protests, she added.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO (120N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY NO (120N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.7.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTERAISA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV THAI BINH 688 VOY. NO (05/2016)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH 688 VOY NO (05/2016) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.7.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of SPW-1 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 G-LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928



Toronto police officer Constable James Forcillo (L) leaves the court after being let out on bail in Toronto, on 20 August, 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS



Cast members (L-R) Christina Applegate, Mila Kunis, Kristen Bell, Annie Mumolo and Kathryn Hahn pose at the premiere of "Bad Moms" in Los Angeles, California US, on 26 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Mila Kunis, Kristen Bell celebrate motherhood at 'Bad Moms' premiere

LOS ANGELES — Actresses Mila Kunis, Kathryn Hahn and Kristen Bell were in Los Angeles to premiere "Bad Moms," a film that brings a string of female stars together to take digs at the modern day perils of parenting.

Kunis, who is pregnant with her second child, paid homage to her co-stars, saying: "This group of women are unbelievably inspirational. When I signed on to the project it was the first movie I decided to do after having Wyatt and I was so nervous about going back to work with these 17-hour-long days and if not for these girls, I don't know how I'd have got through it."

The film follows three 'bad moms,' Amy (Kunis), Kiki (Bell) and Carla (Hahn), who decide to break away from their responsibilities and have some freedom and fun for a change.

However, their attempt at freedom is looked on with disdain by straight-laced Gwendolyn (Applegate) and Stacy (Jada Pinkett Smith).

"We're all kind of more the bad moms rather than the Gwendolyns. I'm more of a Gwendolyn than I knew," Applegate said of her

co-stars, all of whom are mothers.

"I'm very type A, I'm really controlling about everything and through this movie, I've learned that I really have to step back and have some time for me because you can sometimes lose your identity from trying to be perfect."

"The good news about this movie is you can take out the word 'bad' and put just 'Real Moms.' None of these ladies are bad moms," said Kathryn Hahn, who plays the most care-free of the "Bad Moms."

"I certainly play a character, however, who is certainly unshackled from feeling any sort of guilt or shame about her 'me time' which is 24 hours a day." Although the film is centered on women and motherhood, it was written and directed by two men — Jon Lucas and Scott Moore, who wrote 'The Hangover' film, released in 2009.

"You never would have known it was two guys who wrote this script when you read it," admitted Bell. "It was so authentic. It was so accurate. They nailed it."

"Bad Moms" goes on release in North America on Friday, 19 July.—Reuters

Star-studded lineup unveiled for 73rd Venice Film Festival

ROME — The Venice Film Festival revealed a star-filled lineup for its 73rd annual edition on Thursday, featuring top Hollywood names and auteur directors in a wide selection of US and international movies.

The world's oldest film festival will open with Damien Chazelle's "La La Land", starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling in a musical romantic comedy-drama about a jazz pianist who falls in love with an aspiring actress in Los Angeles.

In competition for the top prize are 20 films, including Ana Lily Amirpour's "The Bad Batch", a black comedy about cannibals in a Texas wasteland, and fashion designer Tom Ford's thriller "Nocturnal Animals", featuring Jake Gyllenhaal and Amy Adams.

Serbian director Emir Kusturica will be also be vying for the Golden Lion award with his "Na Mlijecnom Putu" (On the Milky Road), featuring himself and Monica Bellucci in a story that stretches through war, love and living as a reclusive monk.

Other films in the main lineup include German director Wim Wenders' "Les Beaux Jours d'Aranjuez", Canadian filmmaker Denis Villeneuve's "Arrival", Dutch director Martin Kool-

hoven's "Brimstone" and Russia's Andrei Konchalovsky with "Rai" (Paradise).

Pablo Larrain's biopic "Jackie" starring Natalie Portman as first lady Jacqueline Kennedy in the aftermath of her husband's assassination was added to the competition at the last minute.

The festival's artistic director Alberto Barbera said that this year's films spoke about universal themes but took a more subtle and less graphic approach to depict day-to-day life, violence and poverty than in previous editions.

"The great themes, philosophical and existential questions...this time are approached with film-makers taking a distance from the brutality of reality," he told a press conference announcing the line-up.

"So there are no more scenes of everyday life or footage of today's wars, but the great themes are still there. It is not an escape from the contemporary world, it is used as a way to reflect on today's world in a different way."—Reuters



Actress Emma Stone. PHOTO: REUTERS



Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. PHOTO: PTI

Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan reunite for her directorial debut

LOS ANGELES — You've Got Mail stars Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks have reunited onscreen for Ithaca, which marks the actress' directorial debut.

Hanks is doing a cameo in the movie, which is adapted from William Saroyan's 1943 novel The Human Comedy. The story revolves around a teenage boy, Homer (Alex Neustaedter), who comes of age working as a telegraph messenger in the hopes of supporting his recently widowed mother (Ryan) after her eldest boy is shipped off to fight during World War II.

Ryan's real son, Jack Quaid, is also a part of the film besides Hamish Linklater and Sam Shepard.

Hanks makes an emotional cameo in the film as the deceased husband of Ryan's character. The

trailer offers a short look at the touching moment shared between the veteran actors, who previously starred together in popular romantic comedy Sleepless in Seattle, reported Entertainment Weekly.

It took a day for Hanks to shoot the cameo but Ryan was touched with the gesture.

"He's just so dear. He so did not have to do that. At the end of his time, he says to the crew, 'All right, gather 'round. Listen, I know we've gotten to know each other very well over the last 10 hours together, but I just want to thank you for being here for my friend Meg'," Ryan told EW.

Ithaca an American drama film written by Erik Jendresen and based on the 1943 novel The Human Comedy by William Saroyan also stars Alex Neustaedter, Jack Quaid, Meg Ryan, Sam Shepard and Hamish Linklater.—PTI

Robot-themed theater production draws diverse crowd in Kyoto

OSAKA — A robot-themed theater production in Kyoto, western Japan, has attracted packed houses including many foreign visitors and young children since opening in 2012.

“Gear,” a 75-minute non-speaking performance that combines music, projected images and human movement, tells the story of humanoid “Roboroids” who continue to make dolls at the assembly line of an abandoned toy factory.

The show is also popular among people with hearing impairments, with many coming in groups, according to producer Keito Kohara. The show has been performed some 1,300 times since its opening.

The cast for the twice-a-day performances that take place most days of the week includes mimes, break dancers, magicians and jugglers.

Members of the production crew represent a variety of unique personalities. For exam-

ple, designer Takaaki Tsujino, 51, who has worked with stars such as Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, is in charge of costumes, while popular manga artist Akihiro Yamada, 59, produced the image illustrations in the show.

Meanwhile, there is no actual director behind the production. In fact, On Kyakuyou, the name listed as Gear’s director on its program pamphlets and website, is a fictional character with its name being a pun upon “okyakusama,” the Japanese word for guest and customer.

The crew proactively listens to the comments and response from the audience, and revises the show’s content from time to time.

“Harmony” is the performance’s theme, according to producer Kohara, 56.

“In the face of the growing trends around the world such as of marginalizing certain social groups or forcibly determining what is right and wrong, I wanted



Photo taken 3 July 2016, shows a scene from “Gear,” a nonverbal performance staged at a theater in Kyoto, western Japan. The 75-minute performance attracted visitors from across age groups and nationalities, combining music and images with human movements and featuring a story of humanoid robots “Roboroids.” PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

to convey, through a stage without words, the feelings of give and take as well as mutual recognition,” Kohara said.

An underlying element, he added, is the Japanese way of “ambiguity” under which diverse groups of people have coexisted.

The show is housed in Art Complex 1928, a historic building that has been officially designated by Kyoto city as a Tangible Cultural Property. A visit to the vintage building, which also includes an art gallery and other properties, is for some visitors an attraction in itself.

Nonverbal performances have also achieved success overseas, such as South Korean show “Nanta,” which premiered in 1997, became the country’s most-viewed theater play of all time, and was staged on Broadway. Other famous performances include “Stomp” that originated from Britain and “Blue Man Group” from the United States. —Kyodo News

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(30-7-2016, Saturday)

6:00 am	4:15 pm
• Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw	• Documentary
7:35 pm	5:20 pm
• Hypert Sports	• Documentary
8:35 am	5:35 pm
• Pan Pyo Khin	• NHK Program “All About Rice” (The life Cycle of Rice)
9:35 am	6:35 pm
• Business News	• Tasty Trip
10:35 am	7:15 pm
• Poem For Children	• Myanmar Series
11:15 am	8:00 pm
• Health and Vegetables	• News / International News/ Weather Report
11:35 am	8:35 pm
• Game For Children	• What is CEDAW?
2:00 pm	9:00 pm
• Teleplay	• News
2:35 pm	• Gitadagale Phwintbaohn
• Weekly Entertainment News	• TV Drama Series
3:35 pm	
• Teleplay	

No winners in US Powerball, jackpot grows to \$478 million

MILWAUKEE (Wisconsin) — No one won the multi-state Powerball jackpot on Wednesday, pushing the grand prize to \$478 million, the fifth largest in the game’s history and the eighth-biggest lottery prize ever in the United States, officials said.

The winning numbers selected were 10 47 50 65 68, with the Powerball 24. The next drawing will be held on Saturday.

The jackpot has rolled over 23 times since it was reset to its starting sum of \$40 million for a drawing on 11 May, lottery officials said.

The Powerball game is based on lottery tickets sold for \$2 apiece. It is played in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

A winning ticket will be worth an estimated payout of \$478 million if spread over 30 years, or the winner may opt for a lump-sum payment of \$330.6 million before federal taxes.

Wednesday’s draw came about 2-1/2 months after a \$429.6 million winning Powerball ticket was sold in New Jersey, and two weeks after a \$540 million Mega Millions lottery jackpot was clinched in Indiana.

The largest all-time lottery prize offered in North America was a Powerball jackpot worth nearly \$1.6 billion for winning tickets sold in California, Tennessee and Florida in January. —Reuters



A woman holds Powerball lottery tickets outside Bluebird Liquor in Hawthorne, Los Angeles, California, United States, on 12 January 2016. The Powerball Jackpot has reached a record \$1.5 billion. PHOTO: REUTERS

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(30-7-2016, Saturday)

06 : 00 pm	09 : 10 pm
• Weather Report	• International Movie Songs
• Cartoon Programme “Final Fantasy The spirits within” (Part-1)	09 : 20 pm
07 : 00 pm	• Interesting Features of Rakhine
• Cassette Recordings	09 : 40 pm
08 : 20 pm	• Music Programme
• MRTV Entertainment Music	09 : 50 pm
08 : 40 pm	• Come Beat Eggs For Fun & Reward
• Myanmar Music Icon Ko Nay Win, Creator of Myanmar Own Tune Songs (Episode-1)	10 : 20 pm
	• Myanmar Movie
	Midnight
	• Close Down

From 30-7-2016 (Saturday) 6:00 pm
To 31-7-2016 (Sunday) 6:00 pm

mitv Myanmar International

(30-7-2016 07:00am ~ 31-7-2016 07:00am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon- Nine Wonders Around The Platform Of Shwedagon Pagoda
07:38	Am	Sons of the lake
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Ananda Temple Festival (Pyartho Pwe)
08:41	Am	Sightseeing in Yangon: Inya Lake
08:52	Am	Pretty Play Things From Pakokku
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Kyauk Gu Umin Cave Gu Pha Ya
09:41	Am	Travelogue: “Anyar Myay” or Upcountry (Part- III)
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Elegant and Exquisite Myanmar Cotton Fabrics
10:39	Am	All About Orchids
10:52	Am	Kayah

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	To The Land Of Countless Temples — Bagan Trip (EP-1)
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar: Small & Medium Enterprises (SME)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part- 2)
08:53	Pm	Modifying Natural Thanakha Bark into Ready-Made Skin Care Product

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

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

Cech trusts Wenger to buy right players for Arsenal tilt



Arsenal head coach Arsene Wenger (middle) with his players Petr Cech (left) and Jack Wilshere (right) during the MLS All Star Game joint press conference at the Fairmont San Jose, in San Jose, CA, USA, on 26 July. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Goalkeeper Petr Cech expects manager Arsene Wenger to bring in the right players necessary to improve Arsenal's bid to win a first Premier League title since 2004 without wasting money on panic buys.

Wenger has made three additions to his squad so far in the close season, bringing in midfielder Granit Xhaka, defender Rob Holding and striker Takuma Asano, and, according to

media reports, is actively looking for another forward.

"I think you need to buy players you need, you need to buy players that will improve the team and not to buy players just for buying. That's the philosophy of the club," Cech told British media.

"I've been here since last season and you can see that every time we bring in a player, it's a player we need, and the manager believes he improves

the team.

"There is a core of the players who have been at Arsenal for years, and they know that is an advantage as well. People get to know each other, how to play together."

Leicester's Jamie Vardy has already spurned the advances of the north London club in favour of extending his stay at the King Power Stadium, while Olympique Lyonnais said they rejected a 29 million pound

(\$38.27 million) bid for Alexandre Lacazette.

However, Per Mertesacker's injury, which will see the centre back miss several months, is likely to force Wenger to begin the search for another defender, with media reports touting Valencia's Shkodran Mustafi as a possible target.

Arsenal begin their new campaign on 14 August, when they host Liverpool at the Emirates Stadium.—Reuters

Conte urges Chelsea to carry aggression into new season

LONDON — New Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has urged his players to retain the aggressiveness they have shown during the pre-season, saying that the combative nature of the game was essential to the style of play he is looking to impose at the club.

Six players were booked, while midfielder Cesc Fabregas was shown a red card, in Chelsea's feisty 1-0 victory over Liverpool on Thursday after Gary Cahill's early header condemned the Merseyside club to their first pre-season defeat.

Fabregas will now be suspended for Chelsea's friendly clash against Champions League winners Real Madrid on Saturday but Conte was not ready to criticise the Spaniard.—Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

Taekwondo — Martial art mixes it up at Rio

MELBOURNE — Taekwondo's battle for relevance at the Olympics continues at the Rio de Janeiro Games, with tournament organisers introducing coloured pants and a mixed martial arts flavour in a bid to spice up the competition.

The fringe sport, which made its Olympic debut at the 2000 Sydney Games, is assured of its place until Tokyo in 2020 but is feeling the heat to modernise as the International Olympic Committee looks to appeal to a younger demographic.

Taekwondo is far from a blood sport, but appears to have taken a cue from mixed martial arts by changing its square fighting mat to an octagon, the shape of the Ultimate Fighting Championship's cage.

Competitors will also be allowed to wear coloured pants with their national flags at the Aug. 17-20 tournament at the Carioca Arena 3, which may upset purists accustomed to the starched-white trousers of Olympics past.

"The introduction of coloured pants for athletes will transform the look of competition, adding to the vibrant, carnival atmosphere in



Japan's Erika Kasahara (R) fights against China's Jingyu Wu during their women's -49kg quarterfinal taekwondo match at the ExCel venue during the London Olympic Games, in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rio, and will give athletes an even greater sense of national pride as they compete for their countries," World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) president Chungwon Choue said.

The WTF has had its critics in the past for being aloof and reactive but earned praise at London for introducing a new scoring system and instant video reviews which banished much of the refereeing controversy that blighted previous tournaments.

In Rio, fighters will now be

fitted with electric sensors in their protective head gear to help referees detect scoring shots, adding to the torso sensors introduced at London.

Competitors will also enter the arena to theme music of their choice, adding a bit of theatre to a discipline which has its origins in ancient Korean martial arts.

The improved scoring system at London saw all eight titles go to different nations and the field is expected to be wide open again.—Reuters

Djokovic stands between Murray and second gold

ISLAMABAD — Britain's Andy Murray, bristling with confidence after ending a three-year wait for another grand slam title at Wimbledon, will seek to make history in Brazil by becoming the first man to win successive Olympic gold medals in men's singles tennis.

But to replicate his London Olympics triumph Murray will need to find a chink in the armour of Novak Djokovic, the proud Serb who has dominated men's tennis in recent years and now has his eye on the only major honour to elude him.

In recent years Murray has struggled to hold his own in the rivalry against childhood friend Djokovic, who defeated him in the 2016 Australian and French Open finals to become the first man since 1969 to hold all four grand slam titles at once.

Djokovic's maiden French Open title elevated the Serb, a winner of 12 grand slams, to the pantheon of tennis greats but a lacklustre third-round

exit at Wimbledon has offered hope to Murray and his other rivals that his dominance may be ebbing.

"Winning medals for your country is as good as it gets," said Murray, who in 2012 became the first Briton in 104 years to win a men's singles gold medal at Olympics.

Three-time grand slam winner Murray will be hoping to improve on his 24-10 career match record against Djokovic in Brazil, where the two men are favourites to take gold.

Roger Federer's hopes of winning a men's singles Olympics gold to go with the doubles title he won in 2008 look to be at an end, however, after the 34-year-old pulled out of Rio — and the rest of the season — to undergo rehabilitation on his left knee.

In the women's game, 22-time grand slam winner Serena Williams is hot favourite to retain the Olympic singles gold that she won for the first time in 2012.—Reuters