

4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham poses for documentary photo with environment ministers of GMS countries at 4th Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Ministers' Meeting.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan—The Fourth Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Ministers' Meeting took place here on Thursday, with Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham addressing the meeting, officials said.

The meeting is aimed at the continuous implementation of the call for greater growth by ministers at the 3rd Environment Ministers' Meeting held in Cambodia in 2011 and adding new momentum to action plans for the sub-region agreed at the Rio+20 Conference, the vice president said.

Senior government officials and non-government

environmental leaders, he noted, gathered at the two meetings in a bid to develop a shared understanding of key natural capital issues and solutions.

Myanmar boasts a great wealth of natural resources, with the vice president describing ecosystems and rich biodiversity as 'our natural capital' and adding that these natural assets provide people with food, water, livelihood, medicinal plants, biofuel, building material, means of natural hazard protection, and climate regulation.

He admitted some depletion of the country's resources, citing massive development projects,

illegal wildlife trade, excessive exploitation of forest resources, population explosion, unsustainable consumption patterns, poverty and lack of public awareness campaigns.

Bagan has now become an arid area, undergoing scarcity of water

with a few inches of rainfall resulting from depletion of forests in its immediate vicinity for excessive collection of firewood to bake bricks.

He cited historical researchers as saying that the ancient kingdom with thousands of pagodas and

extensive paddy fields had flourished between the 9th and 13th centuries and enjoyed a humid climate and fertile soil.

Tigers were once roaming in the plains and forests of the region, but now both tigers and forests have disappeared, he quot-

ed some written records as mentioning.

He also spoke of Shan State facing the similar fate, saying that tigers used to be spotted at night in his native town but now they have become rare sights in thick forests.

(See page 3)

Japanese firms look for business relationships with Myanmar counterparts in four areas

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 29 Jan—With a view to discover business opportunities and potential partners in the areas of manufacturing, information technology, logistics and services in Myanmar, 12 Japanese firms including Japan-Myanmar Economy and Investment Centre (JMEIC) held talks with Myanmar counterparts at a business-matching event in Yangon on Thursday.

Mitsubishi Pencil Co., Ltd, NiKKi Fron Co., Ltd, Encourage Co., Ltd and Kyushu Economic Federation were among the Japanese companies meeting Myanmar counterparts with matching business interests at the event in which more than 140 Myanmar SMEs were listed to exchange talks with Japanese counterparts.

The event organized by JMEIC and the SME Development Department

of the Ministry of Industry, enabled both sides to enhance their business networks and relationships.

"Myanmar could have access to provision of financial resources along with know-how and technical expertise from Japan

if the country continued to develop its markets for Japanese companies," Noriyuki Yonemura, JMEIC's director-general, told The Global New Light of Myanmar.

Expressing his view on Myanmar's SME sector,

the director-general highlighted the importance of human-resources development in the sector, calling for putting more knowledge and skills in the area to grow a skilled workforce.

(See page 9)

Tender invited for building Fish & Meat Whole Sale Market in Insein

YANGON, 29 Jan—Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development has invited tender for building a meat and fish whole sale market in Insein Township.

The announcement of the ministry stated that the project will be implemented with joint venture system on 67.245 acres in Insein Township with Myanmar International Cooperation Agency of the ministry.

The announcement of the ministry said a company which would develop

the project is to give all expenses for the project.

Applicants are to submit project proposals including estimated costs for the whole project, plans for selling shops to sellers, prices of shops and percentage of profit shares with MICA.

Applicants are also urged to submit the master plan and work schedule for the project and to send their proposals to Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries by 12 am, on 11 February, 2015.

GNLM



A business matching for SMEs in the fields of manufacturing, information technology, logistics and services from Japan and Myanmar takes place in Yangon on Thursday, aiming at establishing an understanding of the two markets.—PHOTO: YE MYINT

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan — Members of Union level organizations explained matters related to the 2015-16 fiscal year national planning bill and the 2015 union budget bill at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's eighth day session on Thursday.

Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung explained the ministry demanded K407.5 billion of ordinary expenditure and K349.9 billion of capital expenditure to spend the two-third of budget on providing medical treatment to the people and the one-third of budget on extension of building. The ministry plans to spend K37 billion on cost of medical treatment for over 900,000 government

service personnel. The medical treatment for the people will include basic package and benefit package.

Member of Constitutional Tribunal of the Union U Tin Myint sought approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for K0.050 million ordinary income, K774.97 million of ordinary expenditure and K4.4 million of capital expenditure for the tribunal.

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint said that the ministry will carry out tasks spending K44.049 billion on capital expenditure, K33.713 billion on construction, K8.209 billion on machine and machinery and K2.126 billion

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses 2015-16 FY national planning bill, 2015 union budget bill

on other expenditure. The ministry earmarked to get K16.955 billion from four kinds of tax. The ministry will spend K241.968 billion on ordinary expenditure, K44.049 billion on capital expenditure and K32.803 billion on Fire Services Department.

Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Dr Maung Maung Htay reported that the ministry will spend K12,810.611 million of ordinary expenditure and K1565.496 million of capital expenditure on the minister's office, Religious Affairs Department, Department for Promotion and



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continues for eighth day session.—MNA

Propagation of the Sasana vada Buddhist Missionary approval of the Pyidaungsu and International Thera- University and sought the Hluttaw.—MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw session discusses appointment of law officers and drug eradication



Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo. MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan — The Office of the Attorney-General of the Union appointed 600 law officers (grade-4) over the period of five fiscal years, Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo told the Pyithu Hluttaw session on Thursday while he was responding to a question raised by a representative who asked whether the office had

plans to appoint more law officers.

However, the deputy attorney-general said there were still 229 vacant posts for deputy township law officers in the entire country. A total of 150 law officers recruited in 2013-14 fiscal year completed their training course at the Central Civil Service University on 12 December and they were appointed to vacant posts while another 150 recruited in 2014-15 fiscal year were still under training at the university, according to the deputy attorney-general.

Two other representatives at the session submitted motions urging the government to form ward/village teams for prevention of drug abuse and to crack down drug trafficking as a public campaign enlisting personnel from

the Ministry of Home affairs, other related ministries, judicial authorities, and members of fire brigade, Red Cross societies and social organizations.

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint explained the measures being taken for eradication of drug abuse, future plans and cooperation with the international community.

The two motions on narcotic drug elimination were approved by the Pyithu Hluttaw session.

MNA

Amyotha Hluttaw

MPs debate Population Control Healthcare Bill



U Khin Maung Latt of Rakhine State Constituency-6.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan — The Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw decided to bring the Population Control Healthcare Bill back to Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee

after the bill was debated at the Hluttaw today.

U Khin Maung Latt of Rakhine State's No. 6 constituency has suggested to enact the bill as a law, stressing the need for adopting policies which are adapted to situation of Myanmar as it is located between the countries where population explosion is happening.

U Zone Hlyal Htan of Chin State's constituency No. 2 and Dr Myint Naing of Sagaing Region Constituency No. 3 have suggested to take time to be able to thoroughly make assessment to the bill before enacting it.

Maj Ye Wint Soe, a representative from the Ministry of Defence Services, has pointed out that there is no sections for punishment for hindrances to the health care services which would be carried out in accordance with the law.

He has suggested to think about whether punishments should be added to the bill.

U J Yaw Wu of Kachin State's constituency No. 12 has objected the Population Control Healthcare Bill while Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region's No. 1 constituency seconded it.

MNA

Construction of new Hanthawaddy International Airport planned to start this year

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 29 Jan — Construction of Hanthawaddy International Air-

port project will begin this year and come into operation in early 2020, U Win Swe Tun, Director-General of the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

The development of project can begin after conducting a ground survey by the Japanese group that will provide official development assistance (ODA) loan to Myanmar, he added.

The organizing committee led by Union Minister for Transport U Nyan Tun Aung and the ten-

der winner JGC-YONG-NAM-CAPE consortium successfully held their first meeting on Monday. And, they discussed project implementation processes, focusing air passengers demand and traffic data.

The project will be implemented with the 50 % stake from the Japanese ODA loan and the remaining stake from private companies. It is estimated to cost about 1.5 billion U.S. dollars and able to handle 12 million passengers per year. It also covers the construction of runway on which Air Bus (A380) can land and the installation of the state-

of-the-art air traffic and communication equipment.

The project will be developed on 9,690 acres of land near Kyauktaingkan Village in Bago region. It is located 80 kilometers north from Yangon. It will be the fourth international airport in Myanmar after the three existing airports—Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. Besides these three, Myanmar has 30 regional airports.

Currently, the government has no plan to establish new airports in the country, but plans to continue renovation and repair of old ones, U Win Swe Tun said.—GNLM

Myanmar hands over chairmanship of ASEAN Tourism Forum to the Philippines

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan — The ASEAN Tourism Forum-2015 was held at Myanmar International Convention Centre-1, here, from 22 to 29 January.

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung viewed round the press conference of ASEAN countries and local and foreign tourism booths on 28 January.

The union minister met officials of travels and tours companies home and abroad at MICC-1. In the evening, he attended the late night function of Thai Tourism Authority at Grand Amara Hotel and Tourism Malaysia Gala Dinner of Malaysia at Hotel Max. On 29 January, he visited the local and foreign booths at tourism exhibition at MICC-1.

On 29 January evening, the union minister delivered an address at the closing of the forum 2015 and handover of flag to the Philippines which will host the 2016 forum and attended the reception of Asian Trail Co Ltd. Deputy Minister Dr Tin Shwe handed over the commemorative medal and chairmanship to Mr. Arturo Boncato of the Philippines.—MNA

NATIONAL

4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting held...*(from page 1)*

The disappearance of tigers in many parts of his region indicates the depletion of biodiversity and ecosystem, he noted, calling for effective approaches to environmental conservation in the context of individual countries.

He pointed the need to provide local communities with incentives to better management, preservation and enhancement of their natural assets, and ecosystem services such as Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

He also talked of the Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan 2014-2018 (RIF-IM 2014-2018) made at the 5th GMS Summit in Bang-

kok last year, saying the plan underlines improved connectivity, competitiveness and holistic approaches to health, education and environmental issues.

He called for all GMS countries and stakeholders to unlock investment opportunities to ensure food, energy and water security in the subregion and beyond.

According to the vice president, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has helped the GMS countries make significant progress in infrastructural connectivity, information and communication technology, transport and trade facilitation, human resources development, and environmental conservation.—MNA

UEC Chairman meets election sub-commissions, political parties, CSOs in Kokang Self-Administered Zone

LASHIO, 29 Jan—Officials of election sub-commissions at different levels, staff of poll booths, members of political parties, civil society organizations and media are to abide by law, rules and work guidelines to be able to hold the elections in a transparent manner, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye said at the meeting with members of Leading Body of Kokang Self-Administered Zone, district and township sub-commissions, political parties, CSOs and local people at the national theatre in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, on 28 January.

The chairman said that the commission has released an announcement to hold the general elections at the end of October or early November this year, adding that compilation of voter list is being undertaken as of November 2014 so as to enable the voters to browse it through online.

He said that voter education will be disseminated through media such as TV, pamphlets and billboards.

Chairman of the election sub-commission of the zone U Wam Kwe Kyin reported on electoral process

in the zone.

The UEC Chairman replied to queries raised by Chairman of Kokang Democratic Party U Antony Su and stressed the need for sub-commissions to cooperate among themselves for successfully holding the elections.—MNA

Student protesters arrive in Kyaukpadaung

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan—Student who staged protest against the National Education Law left Pyiaungsan monastery in Popa,

Kyaukpadaung Township on Thursday morning and arrived in Kyaukpadaung at 3.45 pm marching along Popa-Kyaukpadaung Road.

After holding talks, they arrived at Thukhady monastery at 6.30 pm.

040



Student protesters marching along Popa-Kyaukpadaung Road to Kyaukpadaung.—040

Vice President U Nyan Tun meets Thai prime minister



Vice President U Nyan Tun holds talks with Thai Prime Minister Mr Prayut Chan-o-cha.—MNA

BANGKOK, 29 Jan—Vice President U Nyan Tun, who also chairs the Myanmar Joint High Level Commission for Implementation of Dawei Special Economic Zone and Related Projects, arrived in Bangkok on Thursday morning to attend the Third Meeting of Myanmar-Thailand Joint High Level Committee on comprehensive development in Dawei Special Economic Zone area and adjacent areas.

The delegation led by the vice president was wel-

comed at the Suvarnabhumi International Airport by officials of the Prime Minister's Office of Thailand, Myanmar Ambassador to Thailand U Win Maung, Military Attaché Brig-Gen Chit Swe and staff of the embassy and the military attaché office.

In the afternoon, the vice president met with Prime Minister Mr Prayut Chan-o-cha of Thailand at the prime minister's office.

Present at the meeting were Union Minister for Labour, Employment

and Social Security U Aye Myint, Chief Minister U Myat Ko of Taninthayi Region, Deputy Ministers U Thant Kyaw, U Myo Aung, Dr Maung Maung Thein, U Soe Tint, and U Phone Swe, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Set Aung, Myanmar Ambassador to Thailand U Win Maung and officials of Thailand.

At the meeting, the vice president said that it is necessary to cooperate for border trade between the two countries as it can raise the living standards of people in border areas of both countries.

Dawei Special Economic Zone is a strategic place as it is situated at the western door of the southern economic corridor which links Greater Mekong Subregion and the Indian and the Pacific Oceans while it is a route that can be relied on for development of all countries along the corridor which starts from Bumdaung in Vietnam and ends in Dawei, the vice president said.

The vice president added that he welcomed the investment of Japan in the special economic zone and expressed his hope for possibilities of linking Dawei to railroad network from Cambodia to be jointly built by Japan and Thailand.

Thailand and Myanmar are achieving success in anti-drug efforts as authorities from the two countries cooperate for seizures of

drugs and stimulant tablets and arrest of drug traffickers, according to the vice president.

Then, the vice president thanked the government of Thailand for close cooperation in migrant workers' affairs and requested the prime minister to urge entrepreneurs in Thailand to provide health, social and security guarantees to migrant workers.

The vice president also discussed promotion of tourism, investment of Thailand in special zones in Myanmar, negotiations for construction of banks on the Thaungyin River for prevention of erosion and the second Myaway-Maesot friendship bridge.

Union Minister U Aye Myint, Chief Minister U Myat Ko and deputy ministers attended the preliminary coordination meeting of the high level committee at the Four Seasons Hotel in Bangkok. The meeting focused on initial projects of the special economic zone, the main project, possibilities of Japanese investment in the special economic zone and the master plan of the project. In the evening, the vice president visited the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok and greeted the ambassador, the military attaché, staff and families.

The vice president left Yangon on Thursday morning. He was seen off at the airport by the Yangon Region Chief Minister and party.—MNA

Mandalay Region government honours outstanding persons in respective fields

MANDALAY, 29 Jan — A ceremony to present certificates of honour and gifts to those for excellent performances in Mandalay Region in 2014 was held at the city hall in Mandaaly on 28 January, with an address by Chief Minister of Mandalay Region U Ye Myint.

An official explained excellent performance of outstanding persons in their fields.

The chief minister presented certificates of honour and awards to Ashin Pada-va of Doepinaung Kantha Parahita monastery from PyinOoLwin Township in social affairs, U Than Zaw Win of Internal Revenue Department, Daw Mu Mu Wai of Budget Department, U Nay Aye of Irrigation Department, U Thurein Ko Ko Kyaw of Irrigation Department and U Sein Win



Myint of Electricity Supply Enterprise in the management field.

Region Minister U Kyaw Myint gave certificates and gifts to three outstanding persons in industrial field, Region Minister U

Myint Than, three outstanding persons in agricultural field and one in livestock breeding field, Region Minister Dr Myint Kyu, four schools in education field, Region Minister U Aung Moun, four organizations

in social field, and Region Minister U Kyaw Hsan, three social organizations in social field.

The chief minister hosted a luncheon to the outstanding persons.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Maintenance of bicycles earns income for families



TATKON, 29 Jan — Local people in both urban and rural areas of Tatkon Township use bicycles and motorcycles for their transport as inter-village roads have emerged one after another.

Most of the students use bicycles in going to the schools.

Some technicians open servicing shops for bicycles at junctions near markets and busy places. They can earn about K4,000 per day for maintenance and repairing of bicycles.

Tin Soe Lwin (Township IPRD)

Local people focus on environmental conservation at Inlay Lake

NYAUNGSHWE, 29 Jan — Local people arrested three fishermen who caught fish with battery short circuit in Inlay Lake on 25 January and handed over them together with related equipment to Inlay Lake

Sanctuary Administrator Office.

Three fishermen Myint Swe, 53, Po Kyar, 28 and Hsan Oo, 22 caught fish with the use of battery and two motorboats near Minchaung Village in the

lake. The local authorities and people from Chaungshae Village arrested them and handed over to officials.

Inlay Lake is an environmental conservation area. Catching of fish with

battery short circuit can deplete creatures in the lake and destroy wetland ecosystem process.

The administrator of office opened files against three fishermen under the law.—*Township IPRD*

A 25-member business delegation who had attended the Training Program on Business Management for the service industry, ENMS (182) in Japan seen at Yangon International Airport on 25 January to join the workshop on business management for the service industry in Japan from 27 January to 5 February.—MNA



Township Cooperative Department disburses loans to cooperative societies



MYANAUNG, 29 Jan — A ceremony to disburse loans to cooperative societies in Myanaung Township was held at the hall of Township Cooperative Department in Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, on 26 January.

Township Administrator U Min Min Tun and Staff Officer of Township Cooperative Department U Myint Kyaw explained disbursement of loans for cultivation of cold season crops and urged members of the societies to efficiently spend the loans on cultivation.

The township administrator, Chairman of Township Development Supporting Committee U Than Aye, Staff Officer U Myint Kyaw of Cooperative Department and the chairman of Township Cooperative Syndicate presented loans to the societies.

They shared K96.256 million to cooperative societies in Myoma station, K128.81 million to Tarkhwa/Htan station, K132.704 million to Kanaung station and K222.728 million to Taungyoe station.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

LOCAL NEWS

People get knowledge of vocations and skills for life in training

DAWEI, 29 Jan — Organized by education Project manager Mrs Terese of Norwegian Refugee Council, the NRC vocation and skills for life course No 3 was opened at the technical high school in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, on 27 January.

Taninthayi Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Zaw Lwin delivered an address, and the manager made a speech.

Trainees sang a song entitled "Simple Life".

It was attended by Taninthayi Region Kay-in National Race Affairs Minister U Saw Harvey, officials of KNU, UNHCR field officer U Than Maung and officials.

Altogether 120 trainees from Dawei District are attending the course up to April.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)



LBVD conducts basic livestock breeding workers courses

DAWEI, 29 Jan — Under the supervision of Taninthayi Region Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, the rural region basic livestock breeding workers was opened at the hall of the region department on 26 January.

Head of Region LBVD Dr Nyan Lin delivered a speech while Head of Dawei District Department Dr Tin Htay explained the purpose of course and its disciplines.

Head of Region Department Dr Nyan Lin, District Department Head Dr Tin Htay, Head of Township LBVD Dr Thein Zaw Min, Dr Thauang Myat San and Dr Pyae

Phyo Maung gave lectures on duty and functions of the department and ministry, livestock breeding on a manageable scale, pest free at ranches, making feedstuffs, bio-security measures, use of animal vaccination, studies in pest prevention, control of animal diseases, livestock breeding banking system, integrated farming and animal health development law.

Similar courses are being conducted at seven townships in the region.

Local youth are attending the courses from 26 January to 10 February.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)



Kachin State government gives certificates, cash assistance of President to older persons

MOHNYIN, 29 Jan — Kachin State Ministers presented certificates of honour and cash assistance to 84 senior citizens of above 100 years old at their residences in Kachin State.

On 28 January, State Minister for Finance U Nyunt Aung gave a certificate of honour and

K200,000 presented by the President to U Shwe Kwan in Nanma Village, Mohnyin Township.

The minister handed over cash assistance of the President and cabinet members and K50,000 provided by the state government to the older persons.—GNLM-001

Immigration officer presents citizenship scrutiny cards to students in Launglon Tsp



DAWEI, 29 Jan — Staff Officer U Maung Maung and staff of Launglon Township Immigration and National Registration Department together with Taninthayi Region Hluttaw representative U Kyaw Htwe and officials of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) issued citizenship scrutiny cards to students at Basic Education High School in Kyauknimaw and

BEHS Branch in Thakyetaw Village on 26 January.

Region Hluttaw MP U Kyaw Htwe, Staff Officer U Maung Maung, Kyauknimaw BEHS Headmistress Daw Tin Tin Wah and U Saw Morris of NRC presented CSCs to 43 students from Kyauknimaw BEHS and 64 at Thakyetaw BEHS Branch.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

More than 630 tourists from Cruise Liner Azamara Quest visit Yangon

YANGON, 29 Jan — Under the arrangements of Myanmar Voyages International Tourism Co Ltd, cruise liner Azamara Quest with more than 630 tourists from 30 countries arrived at Thilawa Port, here, at 5.30 pm on 24 January. The tourists visited Yangon three days.

On 24 January evening, Myanmar traditional dances were presented to tourists. They were served with Myanmar traditional foods at the People's Square in Yangon.

Managing Director U Thet Lwin Toe of Myanmar Voyages International Tourism Co Ltd said that according to the requests of tourists, evening events were held in Japan, Thailand and Myanmar. Similar events were held three times from 2013 to 2015. Presentation of Myanmar culture and serving of Myanmar traditional foods could win tourists' attrac-

tions, he said.

Director U Sein Win, in-charge of Aureum Palace Hotel and Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, said that they used over 200 staff in providing traditional foods to the tourists. Departments concerned and hotel servicemen cooperated

in giving services to the tourists. During a three-hour period, they conducted the traditional costume show, Myanmar cow show and skill demonstration of Chinlone event. Moreover, the staff made Myanmar traditional foods in a short time for the tastes of tourists.

The cruise liner left Thilawa Port on 26 January for Phuket of Thailand.

Director U Sein Win and Captain of the liner Mr Mangus extended gifts.

Myanmar expects arrival of about 4.5 million tourists in 2015.

Aung Thura



Indian PM fires top diplomat, tightens grip over policy

NEW DELHI, 29 Jan — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fired the country's highest ranking diplomat and replaced her with India's ambassador to the United States, a day after a successful visit by US President Barack Obama.

Modi's appointment of Subrahmanya Jaishankar as foreign secretary, the top bureaucrat at the foreign ministry, underscores the prime minister's control over foreign affairs.

But his abrupt sacking of Sujatha Singh, the foreign secretary appointed by the previous Congress administration, was criticised by the Congress party.

Since he swept to power last year, Modi has virtually taken over the reins of foreign policy, beginning with an unprecedented invitation to regional leaders to attend his inauguration and followed by high profile meetings with the leaders of United States, China, Japan and Australia.

Singh was asked to step down from the post, the government said late on Wednesday, with seven months to go before retirement. The last time the head of the elite foreign service was removed was in the late 1980s. "Why have you replaced the head of the foreign service so unceremoniously," Manish Tewari, a leader of the Congress party said. "The government needs to explain."

During Singh's tenure under the previous administration, India and the United States were embroiled in a diplomatic row over the arrest of a junior Indian diplomat



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

in New York for an alleged visa fraud. Ties hit their lowest level in a decade.

Since then, Modi has moved rapidly to rebuild ties with Washington, putting behind his own embarrassment at being denied a visa for a decade for religious violence in the state he governed earlier.

He went on a state visit last September, building a relationship with Obama and then hosting him as the guest of honour at this week's Republic Day Parade, the first US president to do so.

Jaishankar, credited with helping Modi turn around the relationship, said his job was to carry out the government's priorities. "A big responsibility. I am honoured that I have been assigned this responsibility," he told reporters as he took charge. Jaishankar has previously been ambassador to China and Singapore.

Reuters

French co-pilot flying AirAsia jet before crash—investigators

JAKARTA, 29 Jan — The French first officer of an AirAsia (AIRA.KL) passenger jet that crashed into the sea last month was at the controls just prior to the accident, Indonesia's lead investigator said on Thursday.

Data from the black box flight data recorder has provided the accident probe with a "pretty clear picture" of what happened in the last moments of AirAsia Flight QZ8501, but officials offered few details.

The Airbus (AIR.PA) A320 vanished from radar screens in bad weather on 28 December, less than halfway into a two-hour flight from Indonesia's second-biggest city of Surabaya to Singapore. All 162 people on board were killed.

"The second-in-command, popularly known as the co-pilot, who usually sits to the right of the cockpit. At the time, he was flying the plane," said head National Transport

Safety Committee (NTSC) investigator Mardjono Siswosuwarno, referring to first officer Remi Plesel.

"The captain, sitting to the left, was the pilot monitoring." Captain Iriyanto, 53, was believed to have taken over control of the aircraft from Plesel when it started to ascend and then descend sharply, officials said. The cause of AirAsia's first fatal crash, which occurred around 40 minutes into the flight, was still unknown.

Investigators said the

cockpit voice and flight data recorders showed that the plane had been cruising at a stable altitude before the accident. The aircraft was in sound condition when it took off, and all crew members were properly certified, they said.

"The plane was flying before the incident within the limits of its weight and balance envelope," Mardjono said. "While the flight crew had valid licences and medical certificates."

Reuters



Warning alarms in AirAsia flight QZ8501 were "screaming" as the pilots desperately tried to stabilise the plane just before it plunged into the Java Sea last month, a crash investigator said on Wednesday.—REUTERS

Malaysia declares MH370 an 'accident', airline to proceed with compensation



Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) Director-General Azharuddin Abdul Rahman gives a statement in Putrajaya on 29 Jan, 2015, in this still image from a RTM video.

REUTERS

KUALA LUMPUR, 29 Jan — Malaysia declared on Thursday the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 an accident,

clearing the way for the airline to pay compensation to victims' relatives while the search for the plane goes on. The Boeing 777 aircraft

(BA.N) disappeared on 8 March last year, carrying 239 passengers and crew shortly after taking off from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, bound for Beijing.

Months of searches have failed to turn up any trace.

"We officially declare Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 an accident ... and that all 239 of the passengers and crew onboard MH370 are presumed to have lost their lives," Department of Civil Aviation

(DCA) director-general Azharuddin Abdul Rahman said in a statement.

The announcement is in accordance with standards of annexes 12 and 13 in the International Civil Aviation, said Azharuddin. It will allow families of the passengers to obtain assistance through compensation, he said.

Malaysia Airlines was ready to proceed immediately with the compensation process to the next-of-kin of the passengers on the

flight, he said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told reporters Malaysia should settle claims with the families.

"We hope the Malaysian side honours its promises and fully investigates the incident, settling claims and making peace with the families, especially continuing to make all efforts to find the missing plane and its passengers," Li said. Most of the passengers on the plane were from China.

International investi-

gators are looking into why the Boeing jet veered thousands of miles off course from its scheduled route before eventually plunging into the Indian Ocean.

The search in the Indian Ocean is still going on and Malaysia is also conducting a criminal investigation, Azharuddin said.

"Both investigations are limited by the lack of physical evidence at this time, particularly the flight recorders," he said.

Reuters

Singapore's crime rate rose due to surge in e-commerce cheating cases

SINGAPORE, 29 Jan — The overall crime rate in Singapore rebounded in 2014 after it reached a 30-year low in 2013, the Singapore Police Force said in its annual statistics report on Thursday.

The crime rate, which rose 7.4 percent, was largely driven by a surge in the number of cases involving e-commerce, police said, adding that the number of such cases increased by 225.3 percent year-on-year to 1,659 cases in 2014.

Police attributed the increase to a growing number of people shopping online last year. Cases of victims lured into making multiple payments online rose from 269 cases in 2013 to 904 cases last year, with a total of 735,000 Singapore dollars loss reported.

A new type of scam, which asks victims to purchase gift cards or virtual credits also emerged last year, with 149 cases reported, police said.

Housebreaking and

related crimes rose dramatically by 35.5 percent last year, while statutory rape cases rose from 51 cases in 2013 to 66. Police said that most of the offenders were youths who knew the victims. The number of youths arrested increased by 2.1 percent to 3,094 in 2014, among which 314 were arrested for rioting.

In the meantime, the number of harassment cases related to unlicensed money lending fell by 18.3 percent in 2014.—XINHUA



Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng (L) shakes hands with Sam Rainsy, president of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 29 Jan, 2015. Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng met on Thursday with Sam Rainsy, president of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), to assure the continuation of the "culture of dialogue" after mutually verbal attacks in recent public forums.—XINHUA

Dozens missing in Bangladesh ship sinking

DHAKA, 29 Jan — Dozens of people went missing as a trawler carrying more than 100 foreign job-seekers capsized in the Bay of Bengal on Thursday, local media reported.

The coast guards rescued 31 people, who were going to Malaysia illegally, according to the reports.—XINHUA

Sri Lanka's new government plans fresh war crimes probe

COLOMBO, 29 Jan — Sri Lanka is planning an investigation into accusations of human rights abuses in the final stages of a 26-year civil war amid international frustration at the failure to look into numerous civilian deaths, a government spokesman said on Thursday.

Former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was ousted in a surprise election defeat this month, had refused to cooperate with any UN investigation into claims the army committed atrocities in the war that ended in 2009. Without some accountability for civilian deaths, the United Nations argues there will be no lasting reconciliation to allow Sri Lanka to move on from the war that dragged on for decades as ethnic Tamil rebels battled for autonomy in the is-

land's north and east.

"We are thinking of having our own inquiry acceptable to them to the international standards," Rajitha Seneviratne, a government spokesman, told a forum of foreign correspondents in Colombo late on Wednesday, referring to the United Nations.

"It will be a new local inquiry. If we need, we will bring some foreign experts."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in November accused Rajapaksa's government of trying to "sabotage" its own investigation and creating a "wall of fear" to prevent witnesses from giving evidence to its inquiry set up in March. About 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final weeks of the war, most of them by the Sri Lankan



Rajitha Seneviratne, a government spokesman

army, the United Nations estimated in a 2011 report. Sri Lanka has rejected the accusations and has been conducting its own investigation. Newly elected President Maithripala Sirisena in the run up to the vote promised a new investigation under an independent judiciary, but rejected demands for an international inquiry.

This week, he sent his senior adviser on foreign relations to meet UN officials to discuss the investigation, government sources said.

Seneviratne also said the government was looking at releasing political prisoners, mainly suspected members of the defeated Tamil Tiger rebel group.

Reuters

US depends on S Korea to help solve major global issues: Sherman

SEOUL, 29 Jan — US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman said on Thursday that the United States depends on South Korea in trying to resolve major global issues.

"Whether it is Ebola, terrorist threats of ISIL, concerns in Ukraine, or the global economic status of world's economy, Korea is a leader the United States depends on to be right there with us trying to solve major issues in front of us," she told reporters.

She made the remarks after holding discussions with South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tae Yong on a wide range of issues, including North Korea. "Korea is a global leader. It is one of 10 largest economies in the world," she said.

As for North Korea, she stressed the United

States and South Korea have the "same policy" of denuclearizing North Korea.

"Denuclearization is the first priority," she said.

Sherman, who arrived in Seoul from Beijing on Wednesday for a two-day visit, is scheduled to leave for Tokyo later in the day after holding talks with South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se and senior officials at the presidential office.

On the heels of Sherman's visit, Rose Gottemoeller, US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, is set to visit Seoul to attend the US-ROK Disarmament and Nonproliferation Consultation on Friday, after which she will lead the US delegation at the US-China Security Dialogue in Beijing on Monday.

Kyodo News

Two Israeli soldiers, UN peacekeeper killed in Israel-Hezbollah violence

JERUSALEM, 29 Jan — Two Israeli soldiers and a Spanish peacekeeper were killed on Wednesday in an exchange of fire between Hezbollah and Israel, one of the most violent clashes between the two sides since a 2006 war.

The soldiers were killed when Hezbollah fired five missiles at a convoy of Israeli military vehicles on the frontier with Lebanon.

The peacekeeper, serving with a UN monitoring force in southern Lebanon, was killed as Israel responded with air strikes and artillery fire, a UN spokesman and Spanish officials said.

Hezbollah said one of its brigades in the area had carried out the attack, which appeared to be in retaliation for a 18 January Israeli air strike in southern Syria that killed several Hezbollah members and an Iranian general.

"Those behind the attack today will pay the full price," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned later on Wednesday, in televised remarks as he met with security chiefs.

The Israeli military confirmed the deaths of the soldiers, saying they had been

attacked while driving in unmarked civilian vehicles on a road next to the fence that marks the hilly frontier. Seven other soldiers were wounded.

Andrea Tenenti, spokesman for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which employs more than 10,000 troops, said the peacekeeper's death was under investigation.

The UN special coordinator for Lebanon urged all parties to refrain from any further detribalization of the situation, while Lebanon's prime minister said his country was committed to the UN resolution that ended the 2006 war.

The 80-km (50-mile) frontier has largely been quiet since 2006, when Hezbollah and Israel fought a 34-day war in which 120 people in Israel and more than 500 in Lebanon were killed.

Since the end of the war with Hamas militants in Gaza last year, Israel has warned of frictions on the northern border and the possibility that Hezbollah might dig tunnels to infiltrate Israel. In recent days it has moved more troops and military equipment into the

area.

A retired Israeli army officer, Major-General Israel Ziv, said he believed Wednesday's assault was an attempt by Hezbollah to draw Israel more deeply into the war in Syria, where Hezbollah is fighting alongside forces loyal to President Assad.

"Israel needs to protect its interests but not take any unnecessary steps that may pull us into the conflict in Syria," he said.

Netanyahu, who faces a parliamentary election on 17 March, said Israel was "prepared to act powerfully on all fronts".

He accused Iran of trying to establish a "terror front" via Hezbollah from Syria and said Israel was "acting aggressively and responsibly against this attempt". Iran is a major funder of Hezbollah, a Shi'ite group headed by Hassan Nasrallah.

In a communique, Hezbollah called Wednesday's operation "statement number one", indicating a further response to the Syrian incident was possible. Nasrallah is expected to announce the group's formal reaction to Israel's 18 January air strike on Friday.



Burning vehicles are seen near the village of Ghajar on Israel's border with Lebanon, on 28 Jan, 2015. Two Israeli soldiers and a Spanish peacekeeper were killed on Wednesday in an exchange of fire between Hezbollah and Israel that has raised fears of a full-blown conflict between the militant Islamist group and the Jewish state.—REUTERS

In Beirut, celebratory gunfire rang out after the attack, while residents in the southern suburbs of the city, where Hezbollah is strong, packed their bags and prepared to evacuate neighborhoods that were heavily bombed by Israel in 2006.

In Gaza, Palestinian militant groups praised Hezbollah. The United States said it condemned the Shi'ite

group's "act of violence" and urged all parties to refrain from actions that could escalate the situation.

With an Israeli election looming and Hezbollah deeply involved in support of Assad in Syria, there would appear to be little interest in a wider conflict for either side.

Regional analysts said they did not expect events

to spiral. "Netanyahu most likely realizes that a prolonged military engagement in Lebanon could cost him the election," said Ayham Kamel and Riccardo Fabiani of the Eurasia Group.

"Instead, Israel will pursue limited actions targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon, but the low-scale, tit-for-tat exchanges will not broaden into a wider war."—Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 30 January, 2015

Time to change the mindset in drafting and debating bills

By Myint Win Thein

TO the relief of the entire nation, Myanmar has successfully averted a crisis, which put the government and students on a collision course, thanks to the right decision of all stakeholders.

The entire nation was gripped by worry last week as students were protesting the national education law, which had been enacted but has not been exercised. The crisis indicates that those involved in the process of legislation still need to change their mindset in drafting and debating bills.

The law was drafted by experts, approved by the parliament and enacted by the government without much controversy. However, it has to be amended even before it has not been exercised because those who drafted and approved it are still clinging to the old mindset of ignoring the consequences of a law. What a waste of time, effort and public funds!

Experts who drafted the law failed to consider its consequences, and so did the parliament which approved it, leading to a crisis of student

protests which could have led to a full-blown disaster if the government had not handled the situation properly. The government urged the parliament to amend the brand-new law and held negotiations with students on how to amend it.

It is high time the approaches to drafting and debating bills and enacting of laws were changed.

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Transforming information into knowledge in higher education institutions

By Myo Myint

THE early decades of the 21st Century is widely known as the Information Age. True to its name, never has so much information become accessible to so many people, and never has so much information been transferred from one person to another, between man and machine, and from one machine to another taken place in the history of mankind. Due to the unprecedented development of technology, information can be transferred from one person to another easily with the barriers of time and place being dismantled. Just as the Information Age has impacted on the economy, so also it has impacted on the social sphere including the education sector. The easy access to information and ICT has greatly influenced the teaching and learning methodologies used in all

levels of education, especially higher education, especially in countries that have the financial and technological resources to exploit ICT in education.

One of the goals of education is to impart knowledge. Information cannot be equated with knowledge. The difference between information and knowledge can be noted from their definitions in the 3rd edition of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Information is defined as "facts about situations, persons and events" while knowledge is defined as "understanding of, or information about a subject which a person gets by experience or study and which is either in a person's mind or known by people in general". Similarly, the website Innovation Zen points out that information is general data expressed by numbers, words, images, sounds and so on, and that knowledge

refers to the practical use of information. Hence from the above explanations, it will be clear that information is not the same as knowledge. Certainly, knowledge is based on information, but to transform information into knowledge, one has to make careful study of it, and be able to make practical use of it.

An important goal of higher education institutions is to train students to become independent learners so that they can do life-long learning. In the 21st Century, just as people are eager to acquire information, so also people are eager to share information. Hence, there is a proliferation of information and a variety of means is employed to convey it. Hence, the very first step in training students to become independent learners is to make them realize how much information is available to them. Information can be derived from tradi-

tional print and audio sources around them such as books, newspapers, journals, radio, TV, CDs, billboards, wall posters, notices, pamphlets, brochures, flyers, etc. In addition, information can be derived from verbal communications such as presentations, talks and explanations and from information resources such as the library and the Internet. The next step in getting students to utilize information is to show students how they can access information from the various sources and to impart skills they will need to do so, such as text comprehension skills which involve knowing the functions of each sentence and paragraph, and ICT skills for example using the Internet. Then, students will need to be shown how to make a preliminary selection from the vast pool of information available based on the reason for accessing the information. As the preliminary selection will still be large, they will need to further narrow it, by matching the selection with the scope and depth of their interest. The next step is to critically analyze and interpret the information gained. In this step, the person accessing information will need to evaluate such aspects as the following -

- who the provider of the information is
- what the purpose of providing the information is
- how fresh the information is
- how useful the information is for one's purpose
- how complete the information is
- how reliable the information is
- how the information is reacted by others if readers' comments are available

- who the provider of the information is

- what the purpose of providing the information is

In the next stage, students have to synthesize the information extracted from various sources and develop a coherent and logical piece of information. In the final stage, the information the student has gathered and studied is turned into knowledge, when it is used for some purposes, such as to do presentation in class which will include the presentation of one's opinion and evaluation. (When doing so, he must never forget to give credit to the sources in order not to be accused of stealing other people's ideas.) The last mentioned two stages are associated with 2 of the 6 specific recommendations of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (ACCU) 2002 panel report, related to information that students need to learn which are to interpret and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and to transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgement and action.

In the process of transforming information into knowledge by students, teachers have many important roles to play. Firstly, teachers must be thoroughly familiar with the existing information and knowledge related to their field of specialization so that they can guide their students to sources of information. Secondly, they need to show students how information is structured in a text such as the functions of the different paragraphs,

the functions of sentences in the paragraphs such as to serve as topic sentence, or to support the topic sentence with explanations or to express reasons, evidences, examples and details. Thirdly, in addition to developing comprehension skills, teachers also need to develop the critical thinking skills of students in order to promote their ability to evaluate the information and change it into knowledge, make use of it and to express their own opinion regarding the information presented, so that the information will not remain in their memory as a mere jumble of facts and figures.

In this age of information explosion, people are becoming more generous about sharing information both about themselves and what they know. They are also willing to collaborate on producing information and are willing to let people know their opinions and to receive comments, and to discuss. This willingness to share information is greatly assisted by ICT resources and various platforms. As there is so much contending information vying for attention, it is all the more important that our young people have the thinking skills to be able to evaluate the correctness and value of a piece of information, decide which are the acceptable ones among the contending views, gauge the value of information in outdated posts, hasty posts, biased posts, and posts under the guise of providing information but are actually marketing ideas and things and to transform it into knowledge by making active use of it.

Youth golfers take part in Junior Golf Myanmar Tournament

YANGON, 29 Jan—Under the supervision of Myanmar Golf Federation, Junior Golf Myanmar (JGM) organized the 5th Junior Golf Myanmar Tournament at Yangon Golf Club in Insein Township, on Thursday.

A total of 16 golfers participated in the U-24 event, eight in U-15 event, 10 in the U12 event and five in the U-10 event.

President of MGF U Ko Ko Aye, Secretary of JGM U Myint Aung and officials formally launched the first round of the tournament.



The second round of the tournament will continue tomorrow.

GNLM

President of MGF U Ko Ko Aye launches Junior Golf Myanmar Tournament.

NATIONAL

Myanmar moves to win OGP membership

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan— The government is striving for the realization of good governance and clean government in terms of transparency and accountability, Union Minister U Soe Thane told a conference that was held here on Thursday to discuss Myanmar's entry to Open Government Partnership (OGP).

Myanmar's attempt to join the group is aimed at providing better public services and fulfilling public needs, he said, urging people and civil society organizations to join hands with the government in the process.

The minimum eligibility criteria include fiscal transparency, access to in-

formation, public officials asset disclosure and citizen engagement. According to the union minister, Myanmar has more fiscal transparency and freer access to information in the time of the incumbent government than the previous one.

The general public now enjoy the right to freedom of expressions, but he stressed the need to do so in the right way.

Speaking at the conference, Mr Andrew, British Ambassador to Myanmar, called the country's membership of the group a vital step during its transitional period, pledging his assistance to the country.

Mr Alessandro Bellan-
toni, Project Manager of



Union Minister U Soe Thane highlights Myanmar's entry to Open Government Partnership (OGP).—MNA

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), called for the government to open up and organize more public

engagement and urged the people and civil society organizations to make concerted efforts.

The conference, named

“International Conference on Open Government: The Way to Membership” was jointly organized by the Leading Committee for

Membership of OGP, the British Embassy in Myanmar and the OECD, and will continue on 30 January.—MNA

GMS environment ministers' meeting continues



Union Minister U Win Tun delivers speech at 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Jan— Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun and SEA Director-General of ADB Mr James Nugent presided over the 4th GMS Environment Ministers'

Meeting, here, on Thursday.

Representatives reported on results from discussions at natural capital business forum, biodiversity landscapes forum and environment youth

meeting.

The meeting also discussed the report of the senior official meeting, remarks of GMS environment ministers and the joint statement.

The environment min-

isters' meeting (retreat) focused on problems to be solved by GMS countries, future plans, and regional investment framework implementation plan 2014-18.

At the press conference, Union Minister U Win Tun and SEA Director-General of ADS Mr James Nugent explained results of senior official meeting, natural capital business forum, biodiversity landscapes forum and environment youth meeting held on 27 January, results of the natural capital dialogue held on 28 January and discussions of the GMS environment ministers' meeting.

Value of natural capital within the context of sustainable and inclusive development of the sub-region; integrating natural capital considerations into subregional and national

development planning; priority actions to increase natural capital investments and its importance and stakeholder coordination and collaboration to promote investments in natural capital were among the topics discussed at the Natural Capital Dialogue Wednesday.

The Natural Capital Business Forum of environmental conservation in Greater Mekong Sub-region kicked off at Hilton Hotel, here, on 27 January.

The forum focused on natural capital management, investment of natural resources, raising investment through value chain, and raising investment of natural capital in green trading in GMS.

The biodiversity landscapes forum highlighted biodiversity regions sharing border with GMS, Taninthayi Region, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

The Senior Official Meeting of GMS envi-

ronmental conservation discussed technological matters for 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting-EMM4, preparations for the meeting, joint ministerial statement final draft at EMM4 and schedules for GMS environmental conservation group meeting in 2015.

Environment Youth Meeting held discussions on natural resources in GMS, regional environmental network of youths in GMS and proposals of youths in natural capital business.—MNA

Japanese firms look for business...

(from page 1)

Through such business matching events, SMEs in Myanmar will be able to promote and facilitate the formation of business linkages with Japanese counterparts, said a deputy director-general of the Ministry of Industry.

“I am looking to expand my business and want to tap in new markets, Daisuke Numata of NiKKi Fron Co., Ltd told The GNLM, adding he hopes he can find himself in win-win relationships with Myanmar potential partners through the event.

According to statistics of the ministry, the number of registered SMEs in the industry sector has reached 40, 000 while the number of unregistered SMEs is estimated at more than 60,000 in Myanmar.— GNLM

Tripartite dialogue for good community engagement in extractive industries held in Yangon

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 29 Jan — A tripartite dialogue to encourage good community engagement in extractive industries in Myanmar took place in Yangon, with parties concerned having a constructive and positive discussion on responsible business practices paving the way for strategic community investment and wider engagement in the country.

The dialogue titled

“Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Community Engagement in Extractive Industries” aimed to share experiences of community engagement, identify the interests in community investment and complaint resolution of different stakeholders for the industries and facilitate the creation of opportunities for cooperation and future dialogue on the issues related to community investment and engagement, said Myanmar Centre for Respon-

sible Business (MCRB) in a press release on Wednesday.

The meeting served as a first step guiding stakeholders—government, communities and companies—towards further dialogues, said Daw Dewi Thant Cyn of Myanmar Green Network.

The tripartite dialogue, the first of its kind organized by MCRB, brought together responsible persons from government departments, oil, gas and mining

companies and civil society organizations across the country.

It was held for two reasons, firstly to learn from good practices elsewhere, including how to deal with complaints and grievances, and secondly to highlight the creation of “shared value” through strategic community investment rather than undertaking philanthropy, said Vicky Bowman, director of MCRB.

It is expected to hold follow-up multi-stakehold-

er workshops that are intended as a complement to the multi-stakeholders dialogue on revenue transparency taking as a result of Myanmar's candidacy for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the statement added.

Undertaking remarkable efforts increasing transparency and accountable management in its oil, gas and mineral sector, Myanmar was accepted as an EITI candidate country in July 2014. — GNLM

Greek PM freezes privatizations, markets tumble

ATHENS, 29 Jan — Leftist Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras threw down an open challenge to international creditors on Wednesday by halting privatisation plans agreed under the country's bailout deal, prompting a third day of heavy losses on financial markets.

A swift series of announcements signalled the newly installed government would stand by its anti-austerity pledges, setting it on a collision course with European partners, led by Germany, which has said it will not renegotiate the aid package needed to help Greece pay its huge debts.

Tsipras, who was congratulated by US President Barack Obama in a phone call for his decisive election victory on Sunday, told the first meeting of his cabinet members that they could not afford to disappoint voters battered by a plunge in living standards under austerity.

After announcing a halt to the privatisation of the port of Piraeus on Tuesday, for which China's Cosco Group [COSCO.UL] and four others had been short-listed, the government indicated it would put the whole programme on hold.

It said it would stop the sale of stakes in the Public Power Corporation of Greece (DEHr.AT), Greece's biggest utility, and refiner Hellenic Petroleum (HEPr.AT), and put other planned asset sales of motorways, airports and the power grid on ice.

The government also plans to reinstate public sector employees judged to have been laid off unfairly, including a group of finance ministry cleaners whose case attracted publicity last year, and announced rises in pensions for retired people on low incomes.



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

Uncertainty over the new government's relations with the European Union went beyond economic policy. A day before the EU is expected to extend sanctions against Russia for six months, Greece's energy minister said the country was against sanctions. Athens had already dissented over a joint statement from the bloc on Ukraine on Tuesday.

Tsipras, who met Russia's ambassador to Athens on Monday and the Chinese envoy the next day, told ministers that the government would not seek "a mutually destructive clash" with creditors. But he warned that Greece would not back down from demanding a renegotiation of debt.

"We are coming in to radically change the way that policies and administration are conducted in this country," he said.

Financial markets have taken fright. Greek bank stocks .FTATBNK plummeted more than 26 percent on Wednesday, taking their cumulative losses since the election to over 40 percent. The overall Athens stock market fell over 9 percent .ATG, while Greek five-year government bond yields hit around 13.5 percent. This marked their highest level since a 2012 restructuring which wrote off a large proportion of Greek debt held by private investors.—Reuters

Raul Castro warns US against meddling in Cuba's affairs

SAN JOSE, 29 Jan — Cuba will not accept any interference from the United States in its internal affairs, President Raul Castro said on Wednesday, warning that meddling would make rapprochement between the two countries "meaningless".

His comments came after US Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson, the highest-ranking US government official to visit the island in 35 years, held talks with Cuban officials on restoring diplomatic relations. Jacobson also met Cuban dissidents, annoying Cuban officials.

"Everything appears to indicate that the aim is to foment an artificial political opposition via economic, political and communicational means," Castro told a summit in Costa Rica.

"If these problems are not resolved, this diplomatic rapprochement between Cuba and the United States would be meaningless," he said.

Castro made it clear, however, that he was committed to the talks despite his concern that Washington might try to stir up internal opposition within Cuba through greater telecommunications access and the Internet. Castro said during the visit with American diplomats that Cuba had proposed that it be removed from a blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism, and the return of the US Guantanamo naval base.

The Cuban leader also urged US President Barack Obama to use executive powers to ease a decades-long embargo against Cuba, saying Washington could extend measures like those announced for telecoms to other areas of the economy.

While Obama can gut much of the embargo, only Congress can lift it completely.

Snowden files show Canada spy agency runs global Internet watch

OTTAWA, 29 Jan — Canada's electronic spy agency has been intercepting and analyzing data on up to 15 million file downloads daily as part of a global surveillance programme, according to a report published on Wednesday. Critics said the revelations, made in 2012 documents obtained by former US spy agency contractor Edward Snowden and leaked to journalists, showed much more oversight was needed over Canada's Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

The documents are the first indication from the Snowden files showing Canada had its own globe-spanning Internet surveillance in a bid to counter extremists.

The covert dragnet, nicknamed Levitation, has covered allied countries and trading partners such as the United States, Britain, Brazil, Germany, Spain and Portugal, the report by CBC News and news website The Intercept said. The Intercept, which includes journalist Glenn Greenwald, obtained the documents from Snowden.

Brazil's government, which fell out with Washington in 2013 over revelations that the US National Security Agency, Snowden's former employer, had eavesdropped on President Dilma Rousseff, criticized the reported Canadian spying.

"Brazil regrets and repudiates all unauthorized espionage on foreign officials by intelligence agencies," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement emailed to Reuters on Wednesday. It said Brazil has sought to enhance Internet privacy and security through

international governance agreements. Obama has asked Congress to do so, and has started by easing restrictions on telecommunications companies in Cuba, among other measures.

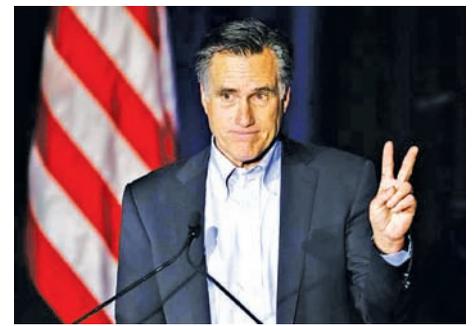
Any US companies would have to reach an agreement with Cuban authorities before doing business on the island.

Castro reiterated that he has no plans to budge from Cuba's single party political system, although observers have said that does not rule out the possibility that independent politicians might be given space to run for local elections in the future.

Castro said Obama's decision to hold a debate in Congress about eliminating the embargo was "significant", adding that he was aware that ending it "will be a long and hard road". The historic high-level talks between United States and Cuba in Havana are expected to lead to re-establishment of diplomatic ties that were severed by Washington in 1961.—Reuters



Cuba's President Raul Castro (R) walks with Costa Rica's Vice President Ana Elena Chacon (L) after arriving at the Juan Santamaria international airport in Alajuela in this on 27 Jan, 2015. Handout photo by the Costa Rica Presidency.—Reuters



Former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney gestures as he speaks at the Republican National Committee Winter Meeting in San Diego, California on 16 Jan, 2015.—Reuters

Romney takes aim at Hillary Clinton in new speech

WASHINGTON, 29 Jan — Republican Mitt Romney criticized Democrat Hillary Clinton over foreign policy and the economy on Wednesday in what could be a prelude to the line of attack he takes if he decides to run for president a third time.

Romney seemed to be in campaign mode in a closely watched appearance in Starkville, Mississippi, delivering a speech at Mississippi State University and stopping at a local barbecue restaurant, where he ate a pulled-pork sandwich. In his speech, the 2012 Republican presidential nominee looked past potential Republican rivals for 2016 and raised questions about President Barack Obama's struggle to contain Islamic militants in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

He criticized Obama over his refusal to refer to the militancy movement as "radical Islam." "I don't know how the president expects to defeat the jihadists if he won't even call them what they are," Romney said.

Romney targeted Clinton in his remarks, accusing her of making mistakes as Obama's first-term secretary of state and of being out of touch with how jobs are created.

The wife of former President Bill Clinton and former senator from New York is the overwhelming favourite to be the Democratic presidential nominee in 2016 should she decide to run.

She "cluelessly pressed a reset button" in US relations with Russia, which did not work, Romney said, because Moscow proceeded to invade Ukraine.

And he assailed her declaration to an audience last October not to let anyone tell them that "it's corporations and businesses that create jobs." Clinton disavowed the remark soon after.

"How can Secretary Clinton provide opportunity for all if she doesn't know where jobs come from in the first place?" Romney said.

Applause erupted in the speaking hall when Romney said he was considering another presidential run. Having endured relentless Democratic attacks over his wealth in 2012, he made a joke about it in his speech, saying he did not need to make paid speeches because "as you've no doubt heard, I'm already rich."

Romney is to decide in a matter of weeks whether to seek the presidency again. If he does, advisers say, he will run a different kind of campaign than last time, including more of a focus on the plight of people living in poverty.

Romney would face a formidable contender in former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who is also exploring whether to run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016.—Reuters

Pilot to be killed unless inmate release ready by sunset

AMMAN/TOKYO, 29 Jan — A new audio message apparently recorded by Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, who is believed to be held by Islamic State militants, was posted online on Thursday, saying a Jordanian pilot also held captive will be killed unless Jordan gets ready to release an Iraqi woman on death row by sunset.

In the audio message, a man identifying himself as Goto says, “If Sajida al-Rishawi is not ready for exchange for my life at the Turkish border by Thursday sunset 29th of January Mosul time (northern Iraqi local time), the Jordanian pilot Muath al Kasaesbeh will be killed immediately.”

Tokyo’s hunt for ways to win the release of 47-year-old journalist Goto has gained urgency after Jordan offered on Wednesday a prisoner swap for the death-row inmate and the military pilot.

Japanese government officials were trying to

verify the authenticity of the recording, issued after a 24-hour deadline set by Islamic State militants expired Wednesday for the release of al-Rishawi for Goto in a one-for-one exchange. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the voice is highly likely to be Goto’s.

“As a new statement that is likely from the ISIL side was posted on the Internet, we are analyzing the content in a prompt manner,” Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said during a Diet session, referring to the Islamic State group by one of its acronyms.

Abe again condemned the hostage-taking incident as a “simply unforgivable” act, saying Japan will never yield to terrorism. “We are making all-out efforts to secure (Goto’s) release as soon as possible,” the premier said.

With Jordan holding the key to the ongoing hostage crisis, the Japanese government has been seeking Jordanian support to



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (far R) attends a ministers’ meeting over the hostage crisis involving a Japanese journalist on 29 Jan, 2015, in Tokyo. —KYODO NEWS

rescue Goto, who was taken hostage last year.

The Islamic State group warned in an online video on Tuesday that Goto and Jordanian pilot al Kasaesbeh will be killed within 24 hours unless Jordan releases al-Rishawi.

Al-Rishawi has been sentenced to death for her involvement in a 2005 terrorist attack that killed about 60 people in Amman.

they have requested proof of the pilot’s safety but have not received any.

Judeh said in an interview with CNN that Goto is part of the negotiations with the terror group. “As you know our priority is our pilot, but we are cooperating very, very closely with our Japanese friends and allies,” he said.

The pilot has been held captive since last December and many Jordanians have been clamoring for their government to prioritize securing his freedom.

In a video message posted Wednesday night, a group believed to be Islamic State criticized the Jordanian military pilot for coming to kill its members. Goto was not mentioned in it. In Tokyo, Junko Ishido, the 78-year-old mother of Goto, said in a statement that she hopes “the situation will take a turn for the better.” Her family member said Ishido has spent sleepless nights and is suffering from exhaustion.

Kyodo News

21 killed in southern Afghan traffic accident

QALAT, 29 Jan — At least 21 people were killed and more than 30 others wounded after a bus collided with a truck in the southern Afghan province of Zabul on Thursday, police said.

The crash occurred in Kakarano Chine of provincial capital Qalat city, along the Kabul-Kandahar Highway at around midday, deputy provincial police chief Ghulam Jiliani Farahi told *Xinhua*. “Nearly all 50 people aboard the passenger bus were affected as a result of the accident. A total of 21 people were confirmed dead and over 30 others were wounded. All casualties were shifted to hospitals in Qalat city,” the official said. The bus was traveling to the capital of Kabul when the incident took place. Afghan officials blamed reckless driving for most traffic incidents, saying reckless driving on congested roads and highways is the main cause of road accidents in the Central Asian country.—*Xinhua*

Hostage in Sydney siege ‘killed by police bullet ricochet’

SYDNEY, 29 Jan — One of the hostages held during a siege at an Australian cafe last month was killed by a ricochet of at least one police bullet that also injured three other hostages, an inquest into the deaths was told on Thursday.

Jeremy Gormly, counsel assisting the New South Wales state coroner, said lawyer Katrina Dawson, 38, was hit by six fragments of a police bullet, or bullets, with one striking a major blood vessel.

“She lost consciousness quickly and died shortly afterwards,” Gormly said at the opening of the inquest. Police stormed the Lindt Chocolat Cafe in central Sydney in the early hours of 16 December, ending a 17-

hour siege by Man Haron Monis after the gunman shot cafe manager Tori Johnson, 34. Johnson’s execution — he was ordered to kneel and then shot without warning at close range in the back of the head — was witnessed by a police marksman, Gormly said. Monis, 50, who fired five rounds from a sawn-off pump action shotgun, was killed instantly by several police bullets and bullet fragments to the head and body, Gormly added.

The inquest is running alongside a government inquiry into how Monis was able to access a gun and why he was granted bail while facing charges as an accessory to the murder of his ex-wife. He was also facing more than 40 sexual assault



Photographs of Sydney’s cafe siege victims, lawyer Katrina Dawson (L) and cafe manager Tori Johnson are displayed in a floral tribute near the site of the siege in Sydney’s Martin Place, on 23 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

charges. The self-styled sheik harboured deep grievances against the Australian government and had found little kinship in the city’s large Muslim community, where he was seen as deeply

troubled.

He was found guilty in 2012 of sending threatening letters to the families of eight Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan as a protest against Australia’s involve-

ment there.

Gormly said investigators had so far not established any contact between Monis and Islamic State before the siege. There was evidence that a psychiatric

profile of Monis “will throw light” on his motivations, he said. Monis ordered and consumed a piece of chocolate cafe and tea after entering the cafe early on 15 December, the inquest heard. Around half an hour later, he asked to move tables and to speak to manager Johnson, who then asked an employee to lock the doors. Once that was done, Monis stood up, putting on a vest and bandana, telling staff, according to one hostage account: “This is an attack. I have a bomb.” Coroner Michael Barnes said he would conduct the inquiry as quickly as possible, noting it raised “issues relevant to the actual security and the sense of security of the wider population”.—*Reuters*

New Iran UN envoy appointee expected to get US visa

UNITED NATIONS / ANKARA, 29 Jan — Iran’s newly appointed UN ambassador is set to receive a US visa so he can take up that key post, diplomatic sources said on Wednesday, likely removing a major strain on Teheran’s tense relations with Washington.

Washington had infuriated Iran’s leadership last year by rejecting its previous appointee as head of its sole

diplomatic mission on US soil over his suspected role in a 1979-81 hostage crisis. Iran’s state-run *Tasnim* news agency carried an official announcement on Wednesday that Iran had appointed career diplomat Gholamali Khoshrou, whose surname is also spelled Khoshroo, as its United Nations envoy. But it did not say whether he had been approved by Washington. Several diplomatic

sources, including a senior Iranian official, told *Reuters* on condition of anonymity it was almost certain that Khoshrou, a US-educated veteran diplomat with close ties to the reformist camp of former president Mohammad Khatami, would be approved by the United States.

An Iranian official told *Reuters* that the appointment had already been discussed at a senior level by US and

Iranian officials prior to the Iranian announcement. “Khoshrou has already been at the Iranian mission (to the United Nations) with the rank of ambassador and unless something crazy comes up, he’s going to get his (UN) accreditation,” a Western diplomatic source said.

The United States, which hosts the United Nations, said in April that Iran’s initial candidate, Hamid

Abutalebi, was unacceptable given his role in a 444-day crisis in which Iranian students stormed the US embassy in Teheran and took 52 Americans hostage.

Abutalebi said he acted only as a translator. US officials told *Reuters* that Abutalebi was not the first Iranian diplomat to be refused a visa to work at the Iranian UN mission, though his case was the first to be

publicised.

Washington’s refusal to issue a visa for Abutalebi last year came at a sensitive time for the two countries. Both the United States and Iran have been involved in negotiations on a long-term nuclear agreement under which Teheran would curb sensitive nuclear work in exchange for a gradual end of sanctions.

Reuters

Japan archaeologists launch NPO to help preserve S Asia heritage

TOKYO, 29 Jan — From the ancient Indian city of Mohenjo-daro to Buddhist Gandhara art, South Asia is rich in cultural heritage, but many sites are being threatened by sprawling economic development and the lack of restoration.

To help in preservation efforts, a group of Japanese archaeologists have set up a nonprofit organization to provide advanced equipment as well as pass on their know-how to local researchers.

Pakistan and India, for example, have numerous sites of cultural heritage.

With the exception of a few famous ones, however, most are little known globally and international aid is limited. Local governments face financial constraints, and in some cases, sites are even being neglected or abandoned.

Fearing the loss of valuable heritage to land development as a result of the region's economic growth in recent years, the Japanese archaeologists and other experts launched the Japanese Centre for South Asian Cultural Heritage in October last year.

"Through our network

of researchers, we want to provide meticulous support in areas that (local) governments and international organizations can't get around to," said Atsushi Noguchi, the NPO's secretary general.

In light of the marked technological innovations in the field of cultural heritage preservation, such as the use of infrared laser scanners and radio-controlled helicopters for metric documentation of sites, the center plans to supply local researchers with such equipment as well as the Japanese archaeologists'

expertise.

The first project under way is to help preserve the Buddhist artifacts in the Gilgit-Baltistan region in northern Pakistan, which are expected to be submerged under water due to dam construction.

Preservation of the sites, which include about 30,000 items comprising Buddha statues and pagodas, as well as rock carvings and paintings dating back to around 4000 BC to the 10th century AD, is a top priority as some of the murals have already been destroyed by construction for the dam project. Experts believe there are also numerous cultural assets yet to be identified.

In cooperation with Pakistan's Hazara University, the group will use global positioning systems to record the locations of the cultural assets, while documenting and surveying the sites. The centre in Tokyo will provide assistance such as data analysis.

While Pakistan is an Islamic nation, there are many enthusiastic scholars of Buddhist art. "The Buddhism that was first introduced to Japan came from this region," said Noguchi. "It is meaningful for us as Japanese to be involved in this." —Kyodo News

Three scientists win Japan Prize in river engineering, gene therapy

TOKYO, 29 Jan — Three scientists have been selected as winners of the Japan Prize in the fields of river engineering and gene therapy, the Japan Prize Foundation said on Thursday.

Yutaka Takahasi of Japan won the Japan Prize in the field of "Resources, Energy and Social Infrastructure" for his contribution to "development of innovative concept on river basin management and reduction of water-related disasters," the prize citation said.

Theodore Friedmann of the United States and Alain Fischer of France were recognized in the field of "Medical Science and Medicinal Science" for their "proposal of the concept of gene therapy and its clinical applications."

Takahasi, born in 1927, a professor of the University of Tokyo, urged in the 1970s a drastic change in water control policies that were focused on physical infrastructure such as banks.

He proposed an integrated flood management approach that includes river as well as environment and human communities in river basins. His concept laid the foundation for the 1997 amendment to Japan's River Act, which is still known as one of the most advanced river-related legislations in

the world.

Friedmann, 79, a professor of pediatrics at the University of California San Diego, School of Medicine, proposed the concept of gene therapy in the 1970s and pioneered the early phase of basic research in the field. Regarded internationally as the "father of gene therapy," he has also been at the vanguard of ethical issues surrounding this field as an opinion leader for the past 40 years.

Alain Fischer, 65, director of Institut Imagine in Paris, a leading research institute on genetic diseases, and professor at Collège de France, used hematopoietic stem cell gene therapy to treat children with a fatal genetic disorder called X-linked severe combined immunodeficiency. He has clinically demonstrated efficacy of gene therapy with dramatic effectiveness for the first time in the world, realizing what was once thought to be a miracle cure. The Foundation will host an award ceremony to honor the laureates of the 2015 Japan Prize on 23 April in Tokyo. Each of them will receive a certificate of recognition and a commemorative gold medal. A cash award of 50 million Japanese yen (about 420,000 US dollars) will also be given to each prize field. —Xinhua



Supplied photo taken on 10 Sept, 2014 shows badly damaged rock paintings in the Gilgit-Baltistan region in northern Pakistan. Photo courtesy of the archaeology research department at Pakistan's Hazara University. —KYODO NEWS

Pentagon official urges NATO to focus on innovative weapons

WASHINGTON, 29 Jan — US Deputy Defence Secretary Robert Work on Wednesday urged NATO allies to develop and make more innovative weapons, and said bold action was needed to stay ahead of rapid weapons development by China, Russia and other countries.

Work said the Pentagon has a new plan called "Defence Innovation Initiative" and a separate effort targeting longer-term projects to ensure that the United States continues to have a decisive competitive advantage against potential foes.

"We must coordinate and collaborate, avoid duplication, leverage niche capabilities, and push our establishments to innovate in technology, concepts, experimentation, and wargaming," Work told a conference hosted by the Centre for a New American Security. NATO members

needed to make good their vows last year to spend 2 percent of national output on defences, he said.

Work said it was critical to increase collaboration with allies in NATO, Asia and other areas, ranging from mission planning to investments in new weapons programmes.

General Jean-Paul Palomeros of France, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, told the conference that NATO was looking at innovative approaches, including increased training and more joint exercises.

Work said concerns about advances by other countries were a key reason that the Pentagon's fiscal 2016 budget plan to be delivered to Congress on Monday will exceed budget caps set by Congress and reverse five years of declines in US military spending.

He gave no details, but

said the budget would include "significant" investments in nuclear weapons, space control capabilities, advanced sensors, missile defences and cyber, as well as unmanned undersea vehicles, high-speed strike weapons, a new jet engine, high-energy lasers and rail gun technology.

Work said the plans need to address different threats in different regions, and should leverage work by commercial firms on robotics, autonomous operations and other key technologies.

Lockheed Martin Corp, Boeing Co, and other key weapons makers have repeatedly urged the Pentagon to step up investments in key technologies.

Pentagon arms buyer Frank Kendall told the House Armed Services Committee in a separate hearing that he was deeply concerned about heavy investments by China, Russia

and others in weapons designed to target critical US military capabilities such as aircraft carriers and satellites.

"I am very concerned about the increasing risk

of loss of US military technological superiority," he said. "We're at risk and the situation is getting worse."

Kendall said the department would also earmark funds for develop-

ment and prototyping of a new "next-generation X-plane" that would eventually succeed the F-35 fighter jet, and a new engine.

Reuters



Soldiers in military vehicles take part in NATO's "Steadfast Jazz" military exercise at the military area in Drawsko Pomorskie, northern Poland on 7 Nov, 2013. —REUTERS

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV SHAHR E KORD VOY NO (ISCOO69E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.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 Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

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**Imabari Shipbuilding
to build new dock for
1st time in 16 years**

TAKAMATSU, (Japan), 29 Jan — Imabari Shipbuilding Co said on Thursday it will invest some 40 billion yen to build a new dock for the first time in 16 years as the yen's depreciation has improved its competitiveness.

The dock will be completed by October 2016 in Marugame, Kagawa Prefecture, to build 11 mega container ships ordered

recently. These ships will each carry up to 20,000 containers.

"By developing a production base to meet diversified needs in the world, including those for mega ships, we would like to enhance our international competitiveness," said an official of the shipbuilder based in Imabari, Ehime Prefecture.

Kyodo News

Flooding leaves mess in oceanfront Massachusetts after storm

MARSHFIELD, (Mass), 29 Jan — Ocean Street in the waterfront Massachusetts town of Marshfield was littered with lobster traps, downed wires and chunks of houses on Wednesday, after a massive blizzard hammered New England.

Notably absent was much of the 2 feet (30 cm) of snow that blanketed much of the Boston area, since for much of the storm, Ocean Street was under water because of flooding from a breached sea wall. About a dozen homes were badly damaged.

"This area sees flooding regularly, but we haven't seen damage like this since the blizzard of '78," town planner Greg Guimond said as he surveyed the wreckage. "The problem was the sustained wave action; the houses can't handle it."

Millions across Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York were digging out on



Waves crash against an ocean front house after causing a break in the sea wall during a winter blizzard in Marshfield, Massachusetts on 27 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

Wednesday from the storm, which dumped up to 3 feet (90 cm) of snow in places, though it largely bypassed New York City.

Schools remained closed in Boston and most of its suburbs for a second straight day but life was otherwise returning to normal with the city's transit system and airport resuming service and a travel ban lifted.

But the recovery in the ocean-facing section of Marshfield was far from seamless on Wednesday, with many homes without power and coated in ice. Residents who rode out the storm said they had relied on fireplaces to keep warm.

Further up the coast, Governor Charlie Baker met with officials in Scituate, which also reported flood damage and where

roads were blocked by a mix of snow and water-borne debris that had blocked access to some homes without power. Baker said he would order additional state heavy equipment into the region to help with cleanup.

"There is so much snow and other activity associated down here with that storm that their resources and their assets are pretty much flat out," Baker told reporters in Scituate.

Tim Mannix, whose Marshfield house was pounded by waves after the seawall failed, watched a front-end loader clear debris away from the front of the building. His face was badly bruised and marked by a long line of stitches above his nose after waves knocked a sliding glass door on him.

"Thankfully it was a fast-moving storm, just one tide," the 58-year-old fisherman said. "Imagine what it would have been like had it stayed around."

As he surveyed the damage in Marshfield while walking his dog, 67-year-old Donny Boormeester said the storm was the worst he had experienced since moving to the town in 1969.

"Every year, the storms get worse and worse," the retired produce buyer said. "The water gets closer to the houses."

He said the streets near his home flooded twice a year in recent years, an estimate his neighbours agreed with.

"It used to be a novelty," Boormeester said.

Increased flooding is a problem up and down the New England coastline that has been exacerbated by rising sea levels, said Cameron Wake, director of the University of New Hampshire Climate Change Research Centre.

"Places that used to not flood are getting flooded now and the reason is not because we didn't have hurricanes or Noreasters in

the past," Wake said. "The reason is because sea level has risen and so for any given storm surge we've added an extra foot of sea on top of that. It doesn't make a big difference until we see a big storm and we see systems fail that haven't failed in the past."

Marshfield is looking for other ways to protect homes from flooding, including seeking Federal Emergency Management Agency funding to help raise other houses above potential floodwaters.

"We just had a meeting with FEMA on Thursday about elevation grants," Guimond said of the talks held last week.

The severe weather claimed the lives of at least two people, an 80-year-old man who collapsed and died while shoveling snow in Trumbull, Connecticut, on Tuesday and a teenager who died while snow-tubing outside New York City on Monday.—Reuters

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the South Bay and generally fair in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 30th January, 2015: Rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State, weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

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Photo taken on 29 Jan, 2015 shows the colourful 3D zebra crossing on Kaiyuan West Road in Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province. The 3D zebra crossing are designed to alarm drivers as they drive across the intersection.—XINHUA

Meet the “sick” Oscar’s best actor, actress nominees

BEIJING, 29 Jan — In the world of Oscar, madness survives and stands out as its awards of best actor and actress often go to those who have mental problems in their roles.

As expected, these Oscar “psychiatric patients” appear on the list of nom-

inations announced for 87th Academy Awards.

Best Actor nominee Steve Carell from “Foxcatcher” is a ghastly rich man who bets on people’s lives to get his mother recognition. Actor Michael Keaton from “Birdman” plays the role of a washed

up actor, who once played an iconic superhero, battled his ego and attempted to recover his family. In “Gone Girl”, Rosamund Pike is a wife who regards man and marriage as games.

Besides, Eddie Redmayne plays Stephen Hawking who was born with cerebral palsy in “The Theory of Everything”, Julianne Moore plays an Alzheimer’s patient in “Still Alice”. In “Two Days, One Night”, Marion Cotillard is a chronic invalid.

Xinhua

Actress Lindsay Lohan’s community service questioned in court

LOS ANGELES, 29 Jan — A Los Angeles judge on Wednesday gave a prosecutor more time to investigate whether actress Lindsay Lohan failed to complete her community service requirements in a reckless driving case. Santa Monica city prosecutor Terry White will present his findings in court on 18 February after disputing Lohan’s claim that she completed her sentence while living in London, Lohan’s attorney, Shawn Holley, said.

The 28-year-old “Mean Girls” star was ordered to complete 30 days of community service in addition to rehabilitation and therapy as part of a 2013 plea deal after she crashed her Porsche into dump truck near Los Angeles en route to the set of TV movie “Liz & Dick” and later lied to police.

The former child star known more for her legal troubles than big-screen roles has been living in London where Holley says she has completed her community service. White alleges Lohan, who was not at the hearing, received credit for a “meet-and-greet” with fans as well as letting two young people shadow her while at work, according to City News Service.

Lohan has been arrested in the past for drunk driving and theft before the 2012 car crash. She has been on probation since 2007 and gone to rehab six times.—Reuters



Actor Chris Pine (L) and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences President Cheryl Boone Isaacs (R) announce the nominees for Best Directing during the nominations announcement for the 87th Academy Awards in Beverly Hills, California, the United States on 15 Jan, 2015.—XINHUA



Actress Lindsay Lohan

Margot Robbie, Miles Teller to host Oscar technical awards

LOS ANGELES, 29 Jan — Actors Margot Robbie and Miles Teller will host the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ Scientific and Technical Awards Presentation on 7 February.

They will present 21 awards to 58 individual recipients during the evening at the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills. “We are very excited to have Margot and Miles hosting this year’s Sci-Tech Awards,” said Academy President Cheryl Boone Isaacs.

“Both are fresh voices in our industry and will be a welcome addition to the night where we honour our colleagues’ technical achievements.”

“Margot and Miles represent some of the best of the next generation of rising stars and it is only fitting that they host an evening saluting the film innovations and innovators who will inform the future,” said Oscar producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron. Portions of the Scientific and Technical Awards Presentation will be included in the Oscar telecast. The 87th Oscars will be held on 22 February, 2015, at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Centre in Hollywood.—PTI

Angelina Jolie to direct Brad Pitt in ‘Africa’

LOS ANGELES, 29 Jan — Hollywood star Brad Pitt is eyeing another collaboration with his wife Angelina Jolie and is set to appear in the actress-turned-director’s ‘Africa’.

The 51-year-old actor is set to lead the biopic, playing a paleo-archaeologist named Richard Leakey who fought elephant poachers in the 1980s in Kenya, reported *The Wrap*.

Pitt and Jolie first worked together in ‘Mr and Mrs’ Smith’. Most recently, they collaborated as actor/director in ‘By the Sea’. The drama which centres on a couple in the 1970s is possibly set for release later this year.—PTI



Elton John, Alan Ball’s musical period drama gets pilot

LOS ANGELES, 29 Jan — ‘Virtuoso’, a long-gestating project from Elton John and Alan Ball has given a greenlight by HBO.

The hour-long drama is set in 18th century Vienna and follows a class of musicians from all across Europe at the prestigious Academy of Musical Excellence.

The pilot is written by Ball based on a story he co-wrote with his partner, actor Peter Macdissi, and Steve Hamilton Shaw, reported *Ace Showbiz*.

The three will executive produce the pilot along with John and his husband, David Furnish. Filming is set to take place in

the spring in Budapest.

Macdissi will also star in the drama pilot, playing Salieri, an accomplished composer and conductor who is appointed by the dying Emperor Joseph I to start the university to honour Joseph’s legacy.

Iva Babic will play Leonid, a Russian cello prodigy. Francois Civil will portray Isidoro, a guitar and flute prodigy. Lindsay Farris will play Heinrich, an Austrian piano prodigy. Nico Mirallegro is cast as Franz, an Austria self-taught violin prodigy, while Alex Lawther lands a role of Battista, an Italian Castrato prodigy.—PTI



Chinese singer Zhang Jie (R) poses for photo with three wax figures of late pop star Michael Jackson at the Madame Tussauds Wax Museum in Beijing, capital of China on 28 Jan, 2015. The Beijing leg of the Michael Jackson Wax Figure World Tour was unveiled at Madame Tussauds Beijing on Wednesday.—XINHUA

GENERAL

Dry Christmas tree causes deadly mansion fire in Maryland, killing six

WASHINGTON, 29 Jan — Authorities in the US State of Maryland said on Wednesday a deadly fire at a residential mansion in the state's Annapolis last week was caused by a dry Christmas tree, causing six deaths, including four children. An electrical failure in the home's Great Room, which had six-metre-high ceilings and was connected to the sleeping and living areas,

ignited the blaze on 19 January, which also burned down the six-million US dollar house, according to a news statement of Annapolis County Fire Office. It took the lives of mansion owners Don and Sandra Pyle, along with their four grand children aged from six to eight, the statement said, adding that it's believed all six died of

smoke inhalation, but had yet to receive the final report from the medical examiner. The five-metre-high Christmas tree had been cut about two months earlier and the family had gathered around it to celebrate Christmas last month, said the statement. The house was equipped with a smoke alarm system monitored by a security

company. In the morning of the fire, the alarm company received the alarm and called back the house but got no answer. The company then called a nearby fire department to rush to the house, but the fire spread rapidly because Christmas trees can provide lots of fuel when they are dry, said local fire authorities.—Xinhua

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- * Local News
- * Distinct People, Different Lifestyles (Pan-Pack Village)
- * World News
- * Myanmar Masterclass: Cubism
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- * Myanmar China Friendship Tour
- * Local News
- * Mogok: The Colourful Land of Rubies
- * World News
- * Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Decision"
- * Local News
- * The Precious Lands Of Myanmar (Mandalay)
- * World News
- * Not Just a Bridge

Enrique, Rafael Nadal to open string of Spanish restaurants

LONDON, 29 Jan — Singing sensation Enrique Iglesias and tennis star Rafael Nadal are set to take the world by storm with their string of Spanish restaurants called Tatal — which are already in the pipeline and will be going international soon.



The multi-award-winning singer and the 28-year-old tennis champion, who is currently ranked No 3 in the world, will be opening their first restaurant in Madrid in March, reported *Hello* magazine. The two have teamed up with basketball star Pau Gasol and businessman Abel Matutes Prats for the

business venture. "The food of our country is very famous. There are many Spanish restaurants but none have tried to become the reference at a nation-

al or even international level," a spokesperson for the investors said. The flagship Tatal in the Spanish capital will be 800-square metres, decked out in 1920's

inspired decor and divided into three zones — the restaurateurs hope to "surprise customers with performances."

Tatel Ibiza is set to open in 2016, with future plans to expand to Barcelona, London, and Las Vegas already in the works.

Enrique, 39, son of iconic Spanish singer Julio Iglesias, was born in Madrid and at the age of 15 moved to the US, where he grew up.

Rafa, meanwhile, was born on Spanish island Majorca, where he bought a luxurious villa in 2013. PTI

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(30-1-2015, Friday)

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Laudrup eyes retirement despite Qatar success

DUBAI, 29 Jan — Michael Laudrup could quit coaching in a year, with the Dane reluctant to grow old on the bench after turning 50 last June, the former Barcelona and Real Madrid playmaker told *Reuters*.

boots in 1998, Laudrup embarked on a coaching career that included stints at Spain's Getafe and Mallorca, Spartak Moscow and Swansea City of the English Premier League, where he won the League Cup in 2013.

had that experience, I preferred something different in this last part of my coaching career," Laudrup added. "I don't have a long-term plan because I will not be a coach for that long.



Michael Laudrup gestures during a news conference in Doha on 2 July, 2014. REUTERS

Laudrup enjoyed a dazzling playing career for club and country, his honours including Italy's Serie A championship, five consecutive Spanish La Liga titles and the European Cup.

"If I am a coach for one, two or five years more, I don't know yet, but I turned 50 this (past) summer and don't want to become old on the bench," Laudrup said in an email interview.

"I was offered a longer contract in Lekhwiya but I wanted to see what it was like in Qatar, on and off the pitch." Laudrup has a tough act to follow after ex-coach Eric Gerets led Lekhwiya to their third title in four seasons last term.

clear of third after 15 matches. "I think we can be very pleased with our season so far," Laudrup said.

For Denmark, he was the balletic genius in the country's joyous 1986 World Cup team that beat former champions Uruguay and West Germany 6-1 and 2-0 respectively before losing in the last 16.

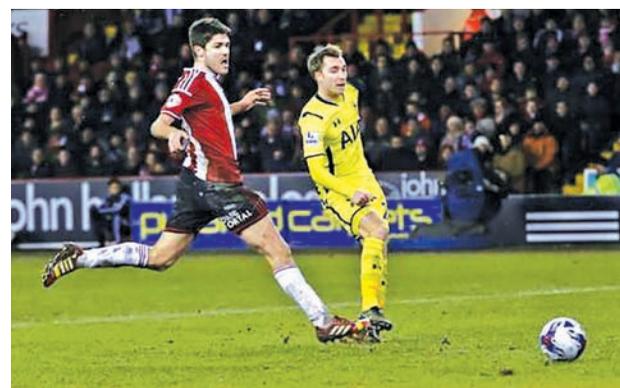
The nomadic Dane is now coach of Qatar's Lekhwiya, signing a one-year contract last June after refusing offers from England and Spain.

Those are the club's only championships and historically Qatar's biggest club is Al Sadd with 13 titles.

He said success would constitute winning the league or domestic cup, plus qualification for the knock-out stages of the Asian Champions League, which is played over the calendar year. — Reuters

After hanging up his

"Because I already



Tottenham Hotspur's Christian Eriksen (R) scores a goal against Sheffield United during their Capital One Cup semi final second leg soccer match at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, northern England on 28 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

Ice-man Eriksen sends Spurs into League Cup final

LONDON, 29 Jan — Christian Eriksen was Tottenham Hotspur's ice-man as they suppressed a late revival from third-tier Sheffield United to reach the League Cup final 3-2 on aggregate on Wednesday.

free kick which took their aggregate advantage to 2-0.

with two minutes remaining and calmly slotted home.

stunning free kick from the right side of the area into the far top corner off the post with the hosts' keeper Mark Howard rooted to the spot.

Tottenham, who will face Chelsea in the final at Wembley on 1 March, appeared to be cruising when they took a first-half lead through Eriksen's stunning

Sheffield United teenager Che Adams came off the bench, however, to turn the tie on its head with two goals in two minutes, giving his team a 2-1 lead and levelling the aggregate score.

"Sheffield United definitely gave us a big fight. They gained confidence after they scored their first goal, the second one was a bit lucky but we came back at the end," Eriksen told Sky Sports.

The lower league side, whose cup pedigree has upset five Premier League sides in the last 12 months, laboured to claw a way back into the match, but the more they pushed on the likelier it looked that Spurs would add to their tally.—Reuters

Eriksen ensured four-times winners Spurs avoided playing extra time when he found space on the edge of the lower league side's box

Eriksen's opener on 28 minutes was a moment of supreme quality.

The Dane whipped a

Serena to face Sharapova in Australian Open final

MELBOURNE, 29 Jan — Serena Williams overcame feisty teenage challenger Madison Keys to advance to her sixth Australian Open final on Thursday with a 7-6(5), 6-2 victory.

Williams will now face Maria Sharapova for the title after the Russian second seed beat compatriot Ekaterina Makarova 6-3, 6-2 earlier on Rod Laver Arena.

American Williams has won all five of her previous Melbourne Park finals, and while pushed by her clean-hitting compatriot on Thursday she was able to win the critical points to get out of trouble.

"She pushed me hard the first set and I had to dig deep mentally to get through that," Williams said in a courtside interview. "I'm really excited to be in the final again. I didn't come here with that expectation so it's exciting."

Both players had entered the semi-final with injury and illness concerns, with Keys suffering a recurrence of an adductor injury, which ruled her out of Wimbledon last year, during her quarter-final victory over Williams' older sister Venus.



Serena Williams of the US reacts after winning the first set against compatriot Madison Keys during their women's singles semi-final match at the Australian Open 2015 tennis tournament in Melbourne on 29 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

Williams was also battling a cough after a virus swept through the tournament.

Keys continued to demonstrate the clean power-hitting she has shown throughout the tournament, forcing the aggressive Williams behind the baseline and even breaking in the first game to get her first grand slam semi-final off to an explosive start. However, Williams, bidding for a 19th grand slam title, got the match back on serve in

the sixth game when she closed off Keys' options from the net and the 19-year-old sprayed her backhand wide.

Williams, 33, then produced several important serves in the tiebreak, including one down the centre line on set point to clinch it in 45 minutes.

Williams put pressure on Keys' serve in the second set, which resulted in two breaks of serve to give her a 5-1 lead, and while Keys saved seven match



Maria Sharapova of Russia celebrates after defeating compatriot Ekaterina Makarova in their women's singles semi-final match at the Australian Open 2015 tennis tournament in Melbourne on 29 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

points in the seventh game and one more in the eighth, she could not stop her compatriot from advancing to the final against Sharapova.

"She came up with some great shots," Williams said of Keys' battle to prolong the match. "I could have done a little more and been more aggressive, but that's a great sign that she played so well when she was down and didn't give up."

Reuters

Cahill quiet on Australia future, focused

SYDNEY, 29 Jan — Veteran striker Tim Cahill refused to touch upon his future with the Australia national team beyond Saturday's Asian Cup final and says his focus is on helping the Socceroos become continental champions for the first time. "That (my future) is something I'll talk about that after. My main focus is the final and hopefully trying to win something that's really special for our country," Cahill told Sky News on Thursday.

The 35-year-old has been a part of the Socceroos' set-up for over a decade, and has turned out in three World Cups including last summer's finals in Brazil, where he scored one of the goals of the tournament in a 3-2 first-round defeat to the Netherlands. Cahill has played under some big name coaches, including the likes of Gus Hiddink, Pim Verbeek, and Holger Osieck.

But he has praised current coach Ange Postecoglou for bringing the passion back to the Socceroos and says this is the most enjoyable experience he's had with the national team. "Always in football we've never really had a fair go of people believing in the team and the players that were coming through but it's great when you have someone who loves the game, who is passionate about the game and is Australian,"

Cahill was quoted as saying of Postecoglou on the Socceroos' official website. "It's all well and good when you can bring someone in for a couple of years, then he leaves and goes and becomes the national team manager of some other country but when you're not Australian you don't understand what it means to wear the badge."

"I've never met anyone who loves the Socceroos as much as me which is hard. It's the attention to detail behind what we've done. When we were getting written off, playing in all these crazy games that we were never going to win the boss believed in us." He added, "We identified the way we can play and the belief inside ourselves and we've shown that on the pitch."

Cahill was part of the Australia team that lost 1-0 to Japan in extra time in the 2011 final in Qatar and he reckons this team can go one better and win the final. "Did we deserve to win the final? Possibly, possibly not. Were we managed as well as we are now? Possibly not. We gave it everything but at the final hurdle physically we weren't ready," Australia's greatest-ever goal-scorer said. —Kyodo News

No love lost as managers face title showdown

LONDON, 29 Jan — It is hard to imagine two more different characters than Jose Mourinho and Manuel Pellegrini, so it is no surprise that the Chelsea manager and his Manchester City counterpart seem to rub each other up the wrong way.

Their simmering rivalry is set for another chapter in Saturday's top-of-the-table Premier League clash at Stamford Bridge, with a potentially pivotal three points on offer. Should Chelsea claim the spoils, they will lead the champions by eight points, while a City success would leave them just two points adrift with 15 games to play.

The bragging rights, however, also count double in battles between two coaches whose

spiky relationship stretches back to their stints in charge of Real Madrid.

Pellegrini had only one season as coach at the Bernabeu, where, having failed to come out on top in the habitual two-horse race with Barcelona, he was replaced by Mourinho.

The Chilean joined Malaga and Mourinho taunted him on the way out. "If Madrid were to fire me, I wouldn't go to Malaga. I'd go to a top-level team in Italy or England," he said.

The normally unshakeable demeanour of Pellegrini, one of football's most sombre coaches, is clearly ruffled by the in-your-face ebullience of the self-styled "Special One". The corresponding fixture at Stamford Bridge



Chelsea's manager Jose Mourinho gestures after their English League Cup semi-final first leg soccer match against Liverpool at Anfield in Liverpool, northern England on 20 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

last season ended with Fernando Torres scoring a late winner, Mourinho diving into the crowd and Pellegrini refusing to carry out the usual post-match etiquette.

"I didn't want to shake his

hand," he said tersely when asked whether he had gone to Mourinho at the final whistle.

While that battle went Mourinho's way, the war was won by Pellegrini, who claimed the Premier League title and League Cup as the Portuguese ended the campaign empty-handed.

Saturday's game, however, could be decided by which players are absent as much as who is on the pitch.

After a gruelling League Cup semi-final against Liverpool, Chelsea are likely to be without injured midfielder Cesc Fabregas and defender Filipe Luis, while league top scorer Diego Costa faces suspension after being charged by the FA for stamping on an opponent. City, who have not won in the league since 1 January, will have to discover how to beat teams without midfielder Yaya Toure whose involvement in the African Nations Cup has hit them hard and he will again be missing on Saturday. Among the weekend's other fixtures, Manchester United take on Leicester City and Liverpool play West Ham United on Saturday. Arsenal host Aston Villa on Sunday.—Reuters

Neymar double sends Barca into semi-finals

BARCELONA, 29 Jan — Neymar struck twice as Barcelona came from behind to seal a 3-2 victory over nine-man Atletico Madrid and reach the King's Cup semi-finals 4-2 on aggregate on Wednesday.

Fernando Torres put Atletico ahead inside the first minute with a precise strike from the edge of the area but Barca have clicked into form recently and hit back quickly through Neymar.

Atletico were awarded a penalty when Javier Mascherano was adjudged to have fouled Juanfran Torres on the half-hour mark, though television replays appeared to show the incident occurred out-

side the area.

Raul Garcia made no mistake from the spot to restore Atletico's advantage. Miranda put the ball into his own net as he attempted to clear a corner which had been flicked on by Sergio Busquets and in a lightning attack from Barca Jordi Alba found Neymar in the area and the Brazilian finished clinically. There were heated exchanges throughout the match with plenty at stake and it boiled over at halftime with Atletico midfielder Gabi Fernandez sent off following a confrontation in the tunnel.

Mario Suarez was also dismissed six minutes from the end after receiving his second yellow

card. The Atletico players were angry with the performance of the referee but Busquets felt that neither side benefited from his decisions. "I've also been told that the penalty conceded by Mascherano shouldn't have been given. There were mistakes made against both teams," he told reporters.

"There was little control in the game in the first half. It was a good half for the fans and we took advantage of the openings that we had." Despite the fact they were chasing the game, Atletico coach Diego Simeone said he asked his players to show more restraint at half time.

Reuters

Asian Cup Australia 2015

3rd / 4th Place

15:30 MST (30.1.2015)

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Editorial Section — (+95) (01) 8604529
Advertisement & Circulation — (+95) (01) 8604532

gmlmally@gmail.com
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
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