

For lasting peace, dialogue must be inclusive of all ethnic groups

By Ye Myint

Following strenuous efforts by the government and 16 ethnic armed groups, nearly three years of peace negotiations recently reached a successful conclusion with a tentative agreement on the single text of a national ceasefire accord.

While the agreement can help pave the way to ending more than 60 years of armed conflicts in this multiethnic country, it is only a first step toward political dialogue that is inclusive of all ethnic groups.

However, there is no doubt the historic deal reached on 31 March between the government's Union Peacemaking Work Committee and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team representing ethnic armed groups is reason for confidence.

In addition to establishing a new level of trust, it is also a signal that a cooperative political culture can flourish in the country, which has struggled with internecine strife that continues to inflict casualties on all sides.

Now is the time to cel-



The two respective negotiating teams of the government and ethnic armed organizations take a step toward a lasting ceasefire and a political dialogue that includes all stakeholders in the country's peace process on 31 March 2015.

brate the cooperative culture which once flourished when the Panglong agree-

ment was reached during the time of the independence struggle. But, we all

know that a certain amount of time is needed to achieve the shared goal of ensur-

ing national reconciliation. Peace is possible if all actors signing the truce deal

have a genuine desire for it, putting conflicting opinions aside.

"Despite challenges and criticism, we wrapped up our negotiations with agreement on the draft ceasefire accord, convincing future generations that talks at the negotiating table are the right answer for reaching everlasting peace," Union Minister U Aung Min, who led the UPWC, said on the final day of the NCA negotiation.

"It is like hill climbing. Once we accomplished our mission of scaling a great hill, we find there are many more hills to climb", said U Hla Maung Shwe, senior adviser to the Myanmar Peace Centre, told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

It cannot be said that peace prevails unless the ceasefire happens the length and breadth of the nation, NCCT leader U Nai Hong Sar said.

For the ceasefire to work in the long run, much remains to be done, the NCCT leader said, highlighting the importance of all ethnic armed groups' involvement in the signing of the ceasefire pact.

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Dr Sai Mauk Kham says ICT can help Myanmar catch up with developed countries

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April—The effective use of information and communication technology will enable Myanmar to keep pace with developed countries, Vice President

Dr Sai Mauk Kham said at the opening of the Myanmar Software Showcase 2015 here on Thursday, according to officials.

Staged jointly by the Myanmar Computer

Science Development Council and the Myanmar Computer Federation, the event is aimed at boosting the IT industry in the country. The International Telecommunication Union

(ITU) said the development of telecommunication and ICT drives eco-

nommic growth and GDP growth, with most developed countries prioritizing

ICT at a national level.

A World Bank study on over 120 countries found that every 10 percent increase in mobile penetration brings about 0.8 percent economic growth in

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UEC, CSOs take step to reduce electoral risks

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 2 April—The Union Election Commission and ballot observer organizations held a workshop Thursday to map out risks and potential problems arising from the upcoming general elections.

The aim of the workshop is to reduce problems that can happen before, during and after elections, especially in conflict zones, a participant from Kayin State said.

It is difficult for civ-

il society organizations to observe the entire electoral process in some regions, while some voters there also have limited knowledge of their voting rights, he added.

The two-day workshop was opened by UEC Chairman U Tin Aye, with the participation of representatives from around 15 CSOs.

The workshop focused on internal factors including electoral procedures, trainings for CSOs and disseminating electoral knowledge among voters, as well as

registering disputes, said U Thang Lam Pau of Chin State. During the workshop, participants discussed risk factors, including socio-economic circumstances of local people. Conflicts during transition of political power were identified as an area for concern, along with sex discrimination, criminal gang activity, human rights violations and unethical media practices.

The UEC and CSOs have gained in understanding of each other, as both

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Myanmar expresses apology for March 13 incident

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April—U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs as the special envoy of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar went to Beijing, People's Republic of China from (1-4-2015) to (2-4-2015). Myanmar Special envoy was accompanied by Lieutenant General Aung Than Htut, Commander of Bureau of Special Operations, Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and officials from the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs.

Myanmar delegation called on His Excellency Mr. Li Yuan Chao, Vice President of the People's Republic of China at the Great Hall of the People, and met with Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the visit. In Beijing, delegation member Lieutenant General Aung Than Htut, Commander of Bureau of Special Operations, Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) called on Lieutenant General Ma Yi Ming, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and also met with General Fang Fengwei, Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army.

At the discussions, Myanmar Special Envoy U Wunna Maung Lwin expressed the apology of the Government and Armed Forces of Myanmar for the March 13 unfortunate incident in which 5 Chinese nationals were killed and 8 injured because of the strayed bomb from Myanmar Air Force aircraft that hit the sugarcane field and nearby Dashuisangshu Village. They also agreed to make further discussions for the compensation for those who lost lives and injured. For the unfortunate accident, appropriate action will be taken based on the findings of the investigations. Both sides agreed that necessary and strict measures will be taken in order not to repeat similar incidents.

They also discussed maintaining stability and development in the border area, further accelerating of friendship and cooperation between the two Governments and the two Armed Forces based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.

Myanmar delegation will be arriving back in Yangon on the morning of 3-4-2015.—MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw

Education amendment bill covers all eleven points proposed by students: Bill Committee

Deputy Minister for Cooperatives U Than Tun.

MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April — The education amendment bill is found to encompass all the eleven points proposed by student protesters and expected to be approved on 7 or 8 April, an MP said after the Pyithu Hluttaw session on Thursday.

U Saw Hla Tun, secretary of the Bill Committee, said that the Amyotha Hluttaw sent the bill to the Pyithu Hluttaw. The bill contains 58 paragraphs with 105 changes, with the Pyithu Hluttaw having



U Saw Hla Tun, secretary of the Bill Committee.

MNA

agreed with 57 points and amending 48 others. The bill will be resent to the Amyotha Hluttaw after being approved.

The Bill Committee stated in its report that the government, the parliament, an education network and a student-led democratic education movement committee held talks on amending the education law based on an 11-point demand by students in February.

Students and the education network submitted

the education amendment bill, which the parliament agreed to discuss, the report said.

The Ministry of Education brought the bill before the Amyotha Hluttaw, which sent it to the Pyithu Hluttaw after hearings with interested groups, including political parties, educationists and legal experts.

Another MP asked the Pyithu Hluttaw about the privatization of a hotel owned by a cooperative society. U Than Tun, Deputy Minister for Cooperatives, responded that Bagan Hotel was operated by the cooperative society of NyaungU township, whose members, after a special meeting, decided to hand it over to a cooperative society called Htet Arkar Kyaw.

According to existing laws, cooperative societies are registered non-government organizations, with the deputy minister saying that their members reserve the rights to manage their own affairs.

MNA

Program aims to reduce deaths from drug-resistant TB

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 2 April — The Myanmar Medical Association has begun a community-based treatment programme for patients with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis in suburban townships of Yangon, Dr Khin Swe Win of the MMA said Wednesday.

“The project is aim at reducing MDR-TB incidence and mortality in the region,” she said.

The MMA in partnership with the Ministry of Health is implementing the project funded by the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund in Thakayta, Kawhmu, Dala, Kyauktan and Hmawby townships where there are significant numbers of MDR-TB patients.

The project partners will train volunteers from those townships to carry out door-to-door treatment, including education

on TB, using mobile devices.

“The use of mobile devices is to capture the attention of the patients,” Dr Khin Swe Win said.

Currently, the MMA in cooperation with the National TB Program has implemented a USAID-funded TB project in South Okkalapa, Thingangyun and Thanlyin townships in Yangon and Chanmyath-

azi in Mandalay.

“The project launched in 2013 and has achieved successes to a certain degree,” project manager Dr Khin Swe Win said. More than 70 MDR-TB patients have received nutritional and financial support every month.

“TB cases are reported mostly on the outskirts of urban areas,” a TB medical specialist said at a recent ceremony to mark World TB Day. “The outbreaks are linked to living



Project Manager Dr Khin Swe Win speaks about a project to treat patients with drug-resistant tuberculosis in suburban townships of Yangon.

PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

Amyotha Hluttaw

Supreme Court of the Union implements three-year strategic plan for completion of year long civil cases

Supreme Court Judge U Soe Nyunt.

MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April — U Hla Swe of Magway Region constituency No 12 asked plans for opening courts of civil cases at the 39th day session of Amyotha Hluttaw on Thursday.

Supreme Court Judge U Soe Nyunt replied that the Supreme Court of the Union has no plan to open the separate courts to hear civil cases but it has adopted a three-year strategic plan (2015-17) that will cover completion of year long civil cases.

U Sai San Min of Shan State Constituency No 3 asked a question whether there is a plan to install more traffic lights in Lashio and to repair three damaged lights. Deputy Minis-

standards. A decline in poverty rate may reduce the outbreak of the disease.”

According to the WHO report, there are 500,000 people with MDR-TB around the world. In Myanmar, it is found that about 5 per cent of new TB patients have MDR-TB. Myanmar is one of the 27 high MDR TB burdened countries worldwide.—GNLM



Deputy Minister at the President Office U Aung Thein.—MNA

ter at the President Office U Aung Thein said that No 65 traffic police platoon installed traffic lights at Lashioyi junction, Namtu junction, Kholauung junction and Mandalay junction as of 8 November 2008 by spending the traffic rules fund. Tow traffic lights at Kholauung junction and Namtu junction are in operation but remaining lights had been damaged

in bad weather since September 2014. The traffic police squad plans to install yellow traffic lights at Meitan junction and water fountain junction so as to ease traffic congestion. Arrangements are being made to install more traffic lights and slow down in Lashio. And, a coordination meeting will be made between the traffic police squad and district traffic rules enforcement committee for repairing the damaged lights.

The speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw sought approval for each paragraphs of the health care bill for control of population rate sent back by the Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments.

Amyotha Hluttaw ethnic affairs, easing conflict and peace-making process committee submitted its report to the Hluttaw and sought the approval.

MNA

Myanmar, Germany sign agreement of development cooperation

Deputy Minister Daw Lei Lei Thein and German Ambassador Mr Christian Ludwig Weber-Lortsch exchange notes of agreement on cooperation in development.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April — Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Daw Lei Lei Thein and German Ambassador Mr Christian Ludwig Weber-Lortsch signed the agreement on cooperation in development between Myanmar and German governments at a ceremony at the NPED Ministry on Thursday.

The agreement will cover development of Myanmar in economic, social and environmental conservation sectors and further strengthen bilateral relations between Myanmar and German government.

As of 2011-12 fiscal year, Germany has provided US\$31.613 million assistance to Myanmar.

MNA

NATIONAL

Dr Sai Mauk Kham says...

(from page 1)

developing countries and 0.6 percent in developed countries.

Socioeconomic development is impossible without the full employment of information and communication technology, the vice president commented.

ICT has become an essential tool for clean government, good governance and transparency, and its wide use will provide more job opportunities for young people.

In Myanmar, ICT has been employed in banking, insurance, tourism, supermarkets and hospitals.

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham pointed out the need to develop mobile ap-

plications in the Myanmar language, pledging government assistance to that end.

President U Thein Sein has given guidance on the establishment of a cyber city in the vicinity of Yangon City. Myanmar has so far established Yadanabon Cyber City in Upper Myanmar. Dr Sai Mauk Kham urged IT technicians and industrialists to contribute to the soon-to-be-established cyber city dubbed the "Silicon Valley of Myanmar," emphasizing a master plan to produce more human resources in IT fields.

The Myanmar Software Showcase 2015 drew 400 students from technical colleges and technological universities. —MNA



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham delivers speech at opening of Myanmar Software Showcase 2015.—MNA

Vice President U Nyan Tun and wife visit Angkor Wat Temple



Vice President U Nyan Tun holds talks with Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen at the Peace Palace in Cambodia.—MNA

PHNOM PENH, 2 April—Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Nyan Tun met with Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen at the Peace Palace on Thursday morning.

Present at the meeting were deputy ministers U Thant Kyaw, U Kyaw Kyaw Win, U Maw Thar Htwe, Shan State Transportation Minister U Sai Naw Kham and ministers of transportation, industry, ag-

riculture and foreign affairs of Cambodia.

They discussed joint commission between the two countries, economic cooperation of CLMV, cooperation in grain trade, energy, tourism and culture

through economic cooperation strategy of the Ayeyawady, Chao Phraya and Mekong, mutual support in regional and international issues and cooperation between the two parliaments and the two armed forces.

Afterwards, the delegation led by the vice president left for Siem Reap where the governor of the state welcomed the delegation.

Then, the vice president and party visited Angkor Wat Temple, one of the most important historical heritages of Southeast Asia. With an area of 400 square kilometer, the Khmer historical heritage was built between 9th Century and 15th Century AD. The UNESCO has adopted comprehensive programmes to preserve the historical heritage with the help of 16 countries including the German Conservation Project.

MNA

U Paw Lwin Sein presents Credentials to Croatian President

NAY PYI TAW, 3 April—U Paw Lwin Sein, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Croatia, presented his Credentials to Her Excellency Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of the Republic of Croatia, on 25 March 2015 in Zagreb.—MNA

Rapid reforms present challenges to government

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April—Rapid reforms in political, economic and executive sectors present challenges to the government, Union Minister U Hla Tun told a meeting here on Thursday.

The government is carrying out reforms in order of priority, with ministries inviting local and foreign experts in a bid to add new momentum to the reform process.

A coordination committee has been set up to establish a framework for administrative reform and

facilitate the implementation of future plans, according to the union minister.

Members of the coordination committee discussed matters related to the establishment of the framework for administrative reform and the successful implementation of clean and effective government. Ministers from region and state governments participated in discussions through video conferencing and spoke about some of the difficulties they face.

MNA

UEC, CSOs take

(from page 1)

sides have relaxed some strict conditions for observing the upcoming General Election, breaking a number of deadlocks in February.

During the meeting between UEC and CSOs in February in Yangon, the UEC agreed that election observers should, rather than must, submit election observation reports, said U Han Shin Win, an advocate of Bade Dha Moe, who participated in the meeting. CSOs felt the UEC had abolished

some strict rules and removed burdens from the CSOs during the meeting, said Chan Nyein Aung, a participant from the Charity Oriented Myanmar.

Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye pledged in February that the UEC will do the utmost to ensure a free and fair general election, slated for the last week of October or the first week of November 2015. He also called on political parties to cooperate with the UEC and to serve as checks and balances on each other so that the election can be free and fair. —GNLM

For lasting peace, dialogue...

(from page 1)

Both sides had agreed to hold the dialogue within 90 days and a framework process within 60 days after a formal truce deal between the government and ethnic armed organizations. The UPWC expects to sign the ceasefire with 16 armed groups. Myanmar is thought to have 22 ethnic armed organizations.

United Nations special adviser Vijay Nambiar said the signing of an NCA is a first step towards a larger dialogue for settling the political and military issues that will pave the way for an inclusive and harmonious future for Myanmar.

"However, it is a crucial first stage that must be crossed before embarking on the next

chapter," he said.

Myanmar's ongoing peace process indicates a desire for an end to conflict on all sides. While the intention is clear, it remains to be seen whether the method undertaken will deliver the desired outcome.

There are many more losers than winners in armed struggles. To achieve lasting peace, dialogue must take place within a framework of pluralism.

In seeking to shape a promising future, players in conflicts must set aside differences and respect the desire for peace of the entire people. Flexibility of approach, in order to find an acceptable outcome for all parties, is essential to the country's quest for peace and prosperity.

GNLM

Religious examination begins across nation



TATKON, 2 April —Novices, nuns and monks began sitting religious examinations across the country from 1 April.

In total, 269 examinees undertook testing at the primary level, 99 at the junior level and 80 at the senior level at Aung San Hall in Tatkon Township on 1 April.

Local people offered meals to candidates. Local authorities arranged silence around the exam centre.

The examinations, which will be held until 7 April, are conducted by the Religious Affairs Department under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.—*Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon IPRD)*



Natogyi to get modern clinic of health care association

NATOGYI, 2 April — Thukha Chantha health care association plans to construct a modern clinic building in the precinct of Theindaw monastery on Myingyan-Mandalay Road in Ward 2, Natogyi, Mandalay Region, chairman of the association U Aye Lwin (Thazin Press) told media.

The abbot of the monastery donated a land plot for the clinic to the association. More than K30 million will be spent on construction of a 60-foot-long and 30-foot-wide clinic.

At present, the clinic gives health care services to about 100 patients free of charge once every week.

Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)

Local residents receive firewood from natural forest



Departmental officials share firewood to local residents in Kyigon Village, Taungtha Township.

TAUNGTHA, 2 April — The Dry Zone Greening Department in Taungtha Township, Mandalay Region, is carrying out conservation of natural forests in the township.

The department is conducting natural budding and drafting to increase the sawn acreage of forests in the township.

It has been able to extract 7.39 cubic tons of firewood from 1,000 acres

of Myisaingtaung forest reserve in fiscal 2014-15, sharing it with local people on 1 April.

Assistant Director U Myint Sein of Myingyan District department and staff officer of the township department distributed 7.39 cubic tons of firewood to 110 households from Kyigon Village free of charge.

Kyaw Myo Naing (Taungtha)

Cartoonists depict traffic rules enforcement

BAGO, 2 April — Bago Region Directorate of Road Administration in cooperation with Heineken Co. Ltd., held a cartoon contest to promote awareness of traffic rules at KM Mark on Yangon-Mandalay Highway in Bago on 31 March.

Cartoonists depicted experiences of traffic rules shared by local residents.

Similar cartoon contests will be held in Yangon, Bago, Toungoo, Pyinmana, Nay Pyi Taw, Meiktila and



Mandalay from 1 March to 25 April. Officials will present K1 million to the first prize winner, K500,000 for second and K300,000 for third.—*GNLM*

MYAWADY, 2 April — A ceremony to launch the basic literacy campaign 2015 was held at Myasandi Independence Monument Ground in Myawady, Kayin State, on 1 April morning, with Chief Minister of the state U Zaw Min in attendance.

The chief minister urged volunteers to join the campaign to broaden the horizons of national brethren and help overcome challenges.

Kayin State Minister for Social Affairs U Chit Hlaing and Pro-Rector Dr

Myat Nyunt of Hpa-an University made speeches.

Director of Kayin State Education Department U Aung Moun reported on the progress of the literacy campaign. On behalf of the volunteer students, first year master student Ma Nang Khaing Zar Zar accepted duty assignment.

A total of 134 local teachers together with 137 university students will teach 1,490 local people during 142 teaching sessions in the campaign that will run up to 15 May.

Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

University students join basic literacy campaign



REGIONAL

Philippines braces for typhoon over Easter

MANILA, 2 April — The Philippines issued warnings of possible landslides and storm surges, with typhoon Maysak set to strike eastern coastal areas, where many resorts are located, over the Easter weekend.

Maysak, initially a top-rated category 5 typhoon, has weakened to category 4 as it lost strength over the water. It is expected to further lose strength as it hits the mountains of northeastern Philippines on Saturday or Sunday, the weather bureau said.

But authorities are concerned foreign and Filipino tourists spending the long Easter weekend on the beaches along the eastern coasts of the main Luzon island may ignore warnings. The typhoon is expected to make landfall within 72 hours. The Easter holidays began on Thursday in the Philippines.

“This will bring waves which our surfers really like. But this is a typhoon we are facing, even if we say it may become just a storm...The waves will be strong and it will be dangerous for our fellowmen in the eastern coasts,” Esperanza Cayan, an officer at the weather bureau, said in a televised disaster briefing.

Officials of Aurora province northeast of Manila estimate about 10,000 tourists were expected to troop to its Baler Bay, a popular spot for surfers.

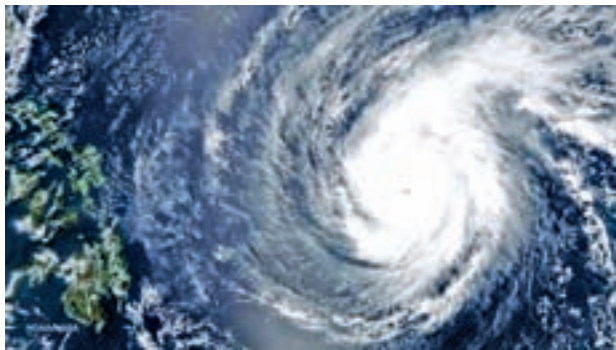
Storm surges 3 to 4 metres high were expected along eastern coasts, Cayan said.

Maysak, packing winds of 175 kms per hour (109 miles per hour) near the centre and gusts of up to 210 kph, entered Philippine territory late on Wednesday.

The typhoon was spotted 995 kms (618 miles) east of Catarman in Northern Samar province southeast of Manila before noon of Thursday, and was moving northwest at 19 kph. Heavy rainfall was expected within a radius of 150 to 200 km (93 to 124 miles) from the eye of the storm, Cayan said.

The typhoon could damage rice and corn crops in central and northern areas of the Philippines, although damage is likely to be minimal as the major harvest of the national staple rice was finished around February.

Reuters



Super Typhoon Maysak is seen tracking west-northwestward through the western Pacific Ocean, northwest of Yap Island in this image taken by the Suomi NPP satellite's VIIRS instrument around 04:25GMT (00:25 ET) on 1 April, 2015.—REUTERS

Thailand lifts martial law, issues new order to empower military

BANGKOK, 2 April — Thailand on Wednesday lifted martial law, which had been in place since just before the military coup last May, while Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha issued a decree on the same day enabling the military to detain people and conduct investigations without court authorization to maintain social order and security.

The country's interim constitution has accorded enormous powers overriding those of the interim administration, parliament

and court to the head of the National Council for Peace and Order, as the junta styles itself. Prime Minister Prayut concurrently holds the post. Voices calling for an end to martial law were growing abroad from human rights advocates as well as at home from businesses concerned about the measure's adverse impact on tourism, the country's major industry.

Critics, however, say the new decree may prevent any changes from the status quo under martial law.—Kyodo News



Children pick tea leaves during their farm vacation in Laozhaixi Village of Xuanen County, central China's Hubei Province on 1 April, 2015. Farm vacation is an unfixated vacation in some regions for school children to go back home to help their family in busy farming seasons.—XINHUA

Thai junta's opponents fret over plan to grant coup plotters amnesty

BANGKOK, 2 April — Under the new constitution being drawn up by a committee appointed by Thailand's junta and tasked with protecting the country from “parliamentary dictatorship”, the architects of last year's military coup would enjoy immunity from prosecution.

Two people on the 36-member drafting committee, who declined to be named because of the secrecy surrounding the new charter, told Reuters that the article on amnesty was passed last week with little debate.

Critics of the junta say the provision is one of several proposed constitutional changes that would turn Thailand's clock back to a pre-1997 era of weak political parties dominated by the royalist and military elite.

Reuters has not seen the draft constitution in its entirety, but previously reported provisions that may also be contentious include a proposal to select upper house senators from candidates picked by former politicians and military officers.

The draft proposes setting up a council of so-called “wise men” to oversee junta-approved reforms and a plan for proportional representation that would make coalition governments more likely, potentially neutering the opposition.

Nipit Intrasonbat, a deputy leader of the con-

servative Democrat Party which is a rival to the Puea Thai Party ousted in the 2014 coup, said junta leader and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha may try to prolong his grip on power.

“Over the past week Prayut has sent signals that are worrying, signals that show if Thailand is not

appearing despotic.

Prayut denies the accusations. “I am not power hungry,” he said on Wednesday. “I am not a dictator as many people accuse me of being.”

Kiat Sittheeamorn, a senior member of the Democrat Party, said some articles in the draft constitution

tation despite promises of a “people's charter”.

“Our views have not been accepted by the constitution-drafting committee,” said Nipit. “This constitution has a mechanism that stops it from being changed for five years, and if it is poorly written there will be a political deadlock.”

Public unease is growing about the junta led by Prayut. The martial law he imposed just before the coup last May was lifted late on Wednesday.

Prayut wants to replace it with a law that maintains the army's wide-ranging powers, including the ability to detain people for up to seven days without charge.

Potentially the most explosive change in the draft charter is the amnesty covering last May's coup, because it echoes a bill proposed in 2013 by the then-ruling Puea Thai Party designed to clear anyone of offences committed during the upheaval following the 2006 military coup.

Opponents of the earlier amnesty said it was aimed at allowing the then-ousted prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, to return to Thailand from exile without having to serve two years in jail for corruption.

The Senate rejected the bill in November, 2013, but that did not stop deadly protests which dragged on for six months and triggered last year's political crisis.

Reuters



Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha gestures the traditional greeting as he gets in his car after the merit-making ceremony on the occasion of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's birthday at Sanam Luang in Bangkok on 2 April, 2015.—REUTERS

secured by the military then a general election planned for next year could be delayed,” Nipit told Reuters.

The election has already been delayed from 2015, and political opponents of the junta are concerned that it could be put off again should the military want to.

Prayut has appeared increasingly irritable with journalists who question his methods, prompting the News Broadcasting Council of Thailand (NBCT) to issue a statement warning him that he runs the risk of

may be necessary to curb “abuse of power” by unnamed politicians.

“We will have to see, but some of the provisions in the draft charter may be suitable checks-and-balances mechanisms.”

But his colleague Nipit said some politicians felt left out of the military's reform plans.

The Constitution Drafting Committee, which began work in January, has held daily, closed-door, meetings at Parliament House in Bangkok, with only limited public consul-

Russian trawler hit obstacle in Sea of Okhotsk, sank within 15 minutes — investigators

Moscow, 2 April — The Russian trawler sank off the Kamchatka Peninsula within 15 minutes early on Thursday and the most probable cause of the shipwreck is the collision with an obstacle, the official spokesman of Russia's Investigative Committee, Vladimir Markin, has said.

"The investigators are considering all the possible theories of the trawler wreck. At the moment the investigators believe that the most probable cause of the fast submersion of the vessel is the possible collision with an obstacle," the spokesman said.

The collision apparently damaged the hull in the area of machinery compartment, Markin said.

A criminal case has been opened into violation of safety rules and operating water transport that resulted in the death of two or more people. The investigation into the criminal case is under control of the Investigative Committee.



Photo shows a fishing trawler off Kamchatka coast. At least 54 people are dead as a result of a trawler sinking in the Sea of Okhotsk off the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia's Far East.—ITAR TASS

Meanwhile, the chairman of the emergencies commission in the Kamchatka region, Sergey

Khabarov, said one of the causes of the shipwreck was capsizing as a result of lifting the trawl of around

80 tons.

"According to preliminary data, there was keeling over as a result of

lifting the trawl with fish to the deck and then the vessel turned on its side," Khabarov said.

The *Dalnyi Vostok* freezer trawler wrecked in the Sea of Okhotsk 330 kilometres west of Krutogorovsky settlement (Kamchatka region) and 250 kilometres south of the city of Magadan at 04:12 local time on Thursday.

The trawler, owned by Magellan LLC, was built in 1989 and its home port was Nevelsk. A total of 132 people were reportedly on board. Out of them there were 56 passengers and 76 crew members, Markin said. There were 78 Russian nationals, 42 citizens of Myanmar, 5 citizens of Vanuatu, 3 citizens of Latvia and 4 citizens of Ukraine, he said.

According to the latest data coming from the Far East regional centre of the Emergencies Ministry, 63 people have been rescued and 54 have died. A search for 15 others is ongoing.

The search operation involves 26 fishing vessels that have been sent to the shipwreck area.—*Itar Tass*

Suga to meet Okinawa governor Sunday over base relocation

TOKYO, 2 April — Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said on Thursday he plans to hold talks on Sunday with Okinawa Gov Takeshi Onaga in a bid to defuse a confrontation between the central and local governments over the planned relocation of a US air base within the island prefecture.

Suga said he will seek Onaga's approval of the relocation plan, which Tokyo believes is the only option to remove the danger posed by the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station without undermining the deterrence of the Japan-US alliance in the increasingly tense East Asian security environment.

"I'd like to discuss issues such as how the governor thinks he can achieve the removal of the danger posed by the Futenma Air Station," Suga said at a news conference, referring to the 2004 crash of a US Marine Corps helicopter at Okinawa International University, which is adjacent to the base.

It will be the first meeting between Suga,

who doubles as minister in charge of reducing the burden on Okinawa from hosting the bulk of US forces in Japan, and Onaga since he became governor in December. Suga plans to visit Okinawa on Saturday and Sunday.

Onaga won the Okinawa gubernatorial election last November with a pledge to block the relocation plan, beating then Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima who had approved landfill work for the relocation.

"I'd like to have a frank exchange of views" with Onaga, Suga said. "I don't think a single round of talks will solve the problem."

Onaga is expected to tell Suga that relocating the Futenma base within Okinawa Prefecture will not solve the problem, and that he wants Japan as a whole to share the burden of hosting US military installations in the country.

The move comes as the central and Okinawa governments are at odds over the planned transfer of the Futenma base, located in a densely populated area in Ginowan, to the less



Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga announces on 2 April, 2015, at a Press conference in Tokyo that he plans to meet with Okinawa Gov Takeshi Onaga on 5 April for talks over the planned relocation of a US air base within the island prefecture, which has sparked a conflict between the central and local governments.
KYODO NEWS

populated Henoko coastal area in Nago.

Tension has risen after the central government on Monday suspended Onaga's order to a Defence Ministry branch in Okinawa to halt work at the relocation site.

Kyodo News

Pakistan close to buying eight Chinese submarines — FT

ISLAMABAD/BEIJING, 2 April — Pakistan is close to agreeing a multi-billion dollar deal to buy eight submarines from China, the *Financial Times* reported on Thursday, in what would be one of China's largest overseas weapons sales. The decision had been agreed "in principle", the newspaper said, citing a hearing in the Pakistani parliament's defence committee. Pakistani newspaper the *Dawn* said negotiations with China were at an advanced stage.

Pakistani defence officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

China's Ministry of Defence declined to comment.

A former senior Pakistan navy officer with knowledge of the negotiations told the *Financial Times* the contract could be worth \$4 billion to \$5 billion. It was unclear what type of submarine Pakistan was looking to buy but China has poured resources into developing diesel- and nuclear-powered submarines in recent years.

China and Pakistan call each other "all-weather friends" and their close ties have been underpinned by long-standing wariness of

their common neighbour, India, and a desire to hedge against US influence across the region.

President Xi Jinping will travel to Pakistan this month, the government in Islamabad has said. China has said Xi would visit this year but given no time-frame. China is Pakistan's top supplier of weapons, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which tracks global arms sales, selling 51 percent of the weapons Islamabad imported in 2010-2014.

Reuters

US veterans angered by date of Abe's speech to Congress

WASHINGTON, 2 April — A group of US military veterans are "angered" that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will be giving a speech to Congress on 29 April, the birthday of Japan's wartime Emperor Hirohito, posthumously known as Emperor Showa, *The Washington Times* reported on Wednesday.

For many World War

II veterans who suffered torture and imprisonment in Japanese detention camps, "the wounds are still healing — and some may never heal," Jan Thompson, president of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society, was quoted as saying.

"The members of our organization are fully aware of the significance

of the date chosen for Prime Minister Abe's address. The POWs [70 years ago] all had to bow in the prison camps to honour the emperor on that date," Thompson said, according to the newspaper's online edition.

Congress gave no explanation as to why that date was picked, the paper said.—*Kyodo News*

Germanwings co-pilot lied to doctors about sick leave: Bild

BERLIN, 2 April — The Germanwings co-pilot suspected of deliberately crashing a plane in the French Alps allegedly lied to doctors, telling them he was on sick leave rather than flying commercial planes, German daily *Bild* reported on Thursday.

Citing sources from the investigation, the paper said 27-year-old Andreas Lubitz had sought medical attention to try and cure an eye condition.

Although Lubitz gave doctors information about his job as a pilot, and in some cases about his employer Germanwings, he deliberately concealed the fact that he was still working, the paper said.

Bild said that documents available to the investigators had also revealed that Lubitz had said he was involved in a car crash at the end of 2014. He was apparently injured when the airbag opened and had complained of trauma and vision problems since the incident.



A woman kneels in front of candles and flowers as she prays for the victims of Germanwings Flight 4U9525 at Duesseldorf airport on 1 April, 2015. —REUTERS

Investigators are still trying to work out the motive for why Lubitz would take the controls of the Airbus A320, lock the captain out of the cockpit and apparently deliberately steer the aircraft into a mountainside. All 150 people on board were killed in the

crash last week.

According to medical records, Lubitz stated that he was taking medicines to treat depression, anxiety disorders and panic attacks, *Bild* said, adding the drugs were an antidepressant and the tranquilizer Lorazepam.

Germanwings parent Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) said on Tuesday that when Lubitz resumed pilot training in 2009 he provided the flight school with medical documents showing he had gone through a “previous episode of severe depression”. —Reuters

Turkey detains nine Britons crossing into Syria

ISTANBUL, 2 April — Turkish security forces arrested nine British nationals trying to cross illegally into Syria, the Turkish military said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Britons were arrested near Hatay Province on the Turkish side of the Syrian border. It was not clear why the nine people were trying to cross the frontier.

In London, the Foreign

Office said it was aware of the reports of the arrest.

“We are in contact with the Turkish authorities and stand ready to provide consular assistance,” a spokesman said.

Security services estimate some 600 Britons have gone to Syria or Iraq to join militant groups, including the man known as “Jihadi John,” who has appeared in several Islamic State beheading videos.

About half are thought to have returned.

Last month, three male British teenagers suspected of planning to join Islamic State militants in Syria were arrested by London police after being deported from Turkey.

Their arrest came after three London schoolgirls entered Turkey earlier this year and are thought to have joined Islamic State in Syria.

Thousands of foreigners from various countries have joined the ranks of radical groups in Syria and Iraq, many of them crossing through Turkey.

Turkey has faced criticism for not better controlling its southeastern borders, and in turn has accused European countries of failing to prevent would-be jihadists from travelling in the first place.

Reuters

Cameron set to face six rivals in UK election’s major TV debate

LONDON, 2 April — Prime Minister David Cameron will face off against six political rivals on Thursday in the first and only full TV debate of Britain’s election campaign, hoping the format will allow him to cast himself as a statesman against squabbling pretenders. The contest comes before an unusually close national election on 7 May in which neither Cameron’s Conservatives nor Ed Miliband’s Labour Party have a clear lead, leaving the stewardship of Britain’s \$2.8 trillion economy in the balance.

The debate, to be held in a former pie factory near the northern city of Man-



Britain’s Prime Minister David Cameron

chester, puts leaders of traditionally fringe parties like the anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the left-wing Green Party on an equal footing with the Conservatives and Labour, who have dominated British politics for decades.

Leaders of nationalist parties from Scotland and

Wales and Nick Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the junior party in the country’s coalition, complete the lineup for the event, which starts at 1900 GMT.

Cameron, whose personal ratings are higher than those of his rivals, carries bitter memories of the first televised election debates in 2010. Over the course of three such debates, strong performances by Clegg helped deprive the Conservatives of an outright victory.

“There’s a reason why Cameron was very opposed to having these debates, partly because he thought it distorted the campaign last time, but also because he’s

the man with everything to lose,” said Laurence Janta-Lipinski, associate director at polling firm YouGov. Cameron successfully resisted pressure to take part in a head-to-head debate with Labour leader Miliband, not wanting to hand his main rival a chance to improve his low personal ratings. Nor will he take part in a planned second pre-election debate, dubbed the ‘challengers’ debate’, which will feature the five parties outside the current coalition government.

He and Miliband were last week subjected to separate but back-to-back question and answer sessions on TV. A snap opinion poll af-

Oil platform fire kills four in Gulf of Mexico, 302 evacuated

MEXICO CITY, 2 April — At least four people died after a fire broke out on an oil processing platform in the Gulf of Mexico early on Wednesday, leading to the evacuation of 302 workers, Mexican state-run oil company Pemex said.

The fire, which burned throughout the day, erupted overnight on the Abkatun Permanente platform in the oil-rich Bay of Campeche. Forty-five people were treated for injuries and 16 of them were hospitalized, Pemex said.

Eight firefighting boats were brought in to battle the flames, Pemex said, noting that one of the fatalities was from the state-run giant and another was a contractor for Mexican oil services firm Cotemar.

Two others have yet to be identified. Videos posted on Twitter showed the offshore platform engulfed in flames, lighting up the night sky, as rescue workers looked on from nearby ships.

The fire broke out in the dehydration and pumping area of the platform, and it was not yet clear what caused it, Pemex said. There was no oil spill, it said. Pemex Chief Executive Emilio Lozoya estimated the impact on production would be small because other processing sites nearby would pick up the slack, a company spokesman said.

Part of the Abkatun

Pol Chuc offshore complex, the damaged platform separates crude oil and gas from various wells to process around 40,000 barrels per day (bpd), work which has now been suspended, the Pemex spokesman said. Earlier in the day, the spokesman had said the platform produced oil.

In total, the Abkatun Pol Chuc complex produces around 300,000 bpd. Output at the rest of the site was not affected.

Mexico is the world’s No 10 crude producer at just under 2.3 million bpd, down about a third from a peak of 3.4 million bpd in 2004. Pemex has had a number of accidents in recent years and the latest one comes as Mexico seeks to lure private investors to revive its flagging oil industry.

In 2013, at least 37 people were killed by a blast at Pemex’s Mexico City headquarters, and another 26 people died in a fire at a Pemex natural gas facility in northern Mexico in September 2012.

Last year, Mexico finalized a reform to end Pemex’s 75-year-old oil and gas monopoly, but expectations of a boom in private investment have been tempered by the plunge in global crude prices.

Cotemar is based in Ciudad del Carmen and provides offshore services to Pemex, according to its website.—Reuters

Poland to choose missile defence supplier in April

WARSAW, 2 April — Poland will choose the supplier for its medium-range missile defence system in April, Deputy Defence Minister Czeslaw Mroczek was quoted as saying. Last year, Poland short-listed a consortium of France’s Thales and European group MBDA, as well as US firm Raytheon, in its tender for the missile defence system. “The (defence) minister’s decision on the choice of supplier ... will be (ready) in April” Mroczek told Rzeczpospolita daily in an interview published on Thursday.—Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 3 April, 2015

Disposable politicians pollute like throwaway products

By Myint Win Thein

The use of disposable products has spread very quickly across the world as they are cheap and easy to use. Within a few years, people have come to use disposable needles and sy-

ringes, bags, gloves, bottles, plates and diapers, among other items. Because of their disastrous impact on the environment, many countries have placed restrictions on the sale of disposable products.

Like disposable consumer products, there has also been a proliferation of disposable politicians. They are people who turn up in politics for only a short time, but still manage to cause lasting problems. When politicians become disposable, they do not serve the long-term interests of people, but pollute a society. Everything they propose is against the will of people and serves the interests of a small number. Creating such problems may shorten their political lives, but they never hesitate to do so, in order to please the select few.

Although it is sure that they will serve only a very short term, they will leave a lot of rubbish that will choke society for a long time. It is high time politicians put the long-term interests of the people and the country ahead of the short-term gains of a few.

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

Thinking in Advance for Better Tomorrow

Electric Power is the Main Driving Force for Industrialization

By San Shwe Aung

Modern human cannot survive without energy. We need energy for cooking meals (Sar Yae), producing clothes (Wut Yae), for building and decorating homes (Nay Yae). It is known and well accepted by everybody and doesn't need to elaborate. Apart from 3 basic human needs, energy and electrical power play crucial role in development, social sector, education, health, transportation and industrialization for a nation. We get energy and electric power from various sources; namely (a) from coal (b) fossil fuel and natural gases (c) hydro-power (d) solar-power (e) wind-power (f) geo-thermal-power (g) ocean wave and tidal-power (h) single use & rechargeable batteries (i) fuel cell and (j) nuclear power. Some are clean and absolutely renewable such as solar, hydro power, wind, ocean wave and tidal power. Some are renewable but no so clean such as geo-thermal, rechargeable batteries, and fuel cell. Most powerful yet dangerous to develop, operate and dispose of the waste is power production using atomic reactors.

For comfortable environment lighting of homes, offices and factories is essential. We need to cool down in homes and working places in tropical countries, where the weather is warm in many months of the year. On the other hand, heating of homes and work places are essential for inhabitants to be comfortable and productive in their work in temperate countries. All in all,

constant supply of electricity is needed for different type of industries, where goods, appliances, tools, instruments, machines, modern communication equipments and gadgets, vehicles, aircrafts, ships are manufactured. For instance, steel mills consume huge amount of power to convert pig iron blocks to liquefied iron, mix with ingredients such as carbon, alloys & chemicals to change into different type of steel, alloy, bars, rods, H beams, sheet metals etc. In mining industry, changing the mineral deposit and ores from the mines to concentrate metal blocks also require huge amount of power. Hospitals need uninterrupted electricity supply 24 hours a day, for many health care functions and operation of patients.

Many leading industrialized countries have developed big power sources to feed and satisfy the ever increasing demands for power in many industries and factories. Coal burning produces heat, which in turn boil the water into steam inside a boiler. Steam runs a steam-turbine to generate electricity. Gravity flow of water from a water fall or elevated surface of a dam feeds into a water turbine at a lower point which generates hydro-electricity. Then power from fossil fuel and gases entered into the power generation industry. Other renewable powers such as solar power, wind power, geo-thermal power, tidal power are supplementing the ever increasing power demand. In the mid-1940s country like United States developed nuclear power

and they were able to make nuclear bomb. In addition nuclear power was also used for peaceful purposes such as supplying electric power to the manufacturing industries. As a result consumer goods, machineries, equipment and tools from advanced countries in North America and Europe had flooded into the global consumer markets. Although defeated in the second world war, Japan and West Germany emerged as leading export countries of consumer products including but not limited to industrial equipment, vehicles and modern appliances. Then nuclear energy was entering to the power sector with huge impact. Many nations have opted to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

Currently if one looks at the top 20 economically successful and industrial-

ized countries in the world, there are no countries without nuclear power plant providing power to their advanced industries. On the other hand, there are so-called nuclear free zones in our world. It is nevertheless true that countries with nuclear power plants [for peaceful purposes] are more advantageous in competing economy since they can supply adequate power to their advanced industries. But so-called emerging economies and developing countries lag behind in fulfilling essential power to the industries, economic and social development. Can we ever become industrialized without adequate power supplies? We in Myanmar have abundant rivers to tap hydro-electricity. Gasified turbines can produce power too. On one hand power usage is ever increasing by flourishing industrial estates and ever increasing public utility with abundant end electrical appliances, which are inevitable for a society aspiring for better living standards. In not so distant

POEM:

Progress of the Peace Process

The thirty first of March two thousand and fifteen for Myanmar, indeed a historic day has been. Peace negotiators from the UPWC and NCCT, after almost a year of talking patiently, with the blessings of the Leaders of both side, succeeded in signing the draft of a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement which after approval and signing by the leaders will signal the long awaited crucial event of implementing the Ceasefire Agreement followed by political talks for lasting peace and unity that will further promote Development and Democracy.

Lokethar

future, we will definitely have to use electric trains both in the cities as well as inter-city train transportation. On the other hand the Government has been striving to generate & supply more power, using several power generation technologies, into the national grid. But it is worth looking into alternative power source such as nuclear power, some technocrats argue. Understandably, some areas might criticize and disagree with the idea for soliciting to look into the peaceful utilization of nuclear power. If

so please see the list of current top 20 industrialized countries in the world which have successfully utilized the nuclear power for peaceful purposes so as to make their countries industrialized. We might become "peaceful, modern and developed nation" if we opt, after reviewing all pros & cons, for the above mentioned alternative and supplementary power generation for our light, medium and heavy industries, manufacturing, food processing and public utilities for future generations.

| Rank | Country | Power capacity (Mega Watt) 2014 | Nuclear share of electricity production 2013 | Nuclear Power Plants | |
|------|----------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | Operating | Under construction |
| 1 | United States | 99,081 | 19.4% | 100 | 5 |
| 2 | France | 63,130 | 73.3% | 58 | 1 |
| 3 | Japan | 42,388 | 17.1% | 48 | 2 |
| 4 | Russia | 23,643 | 17.5% | 33 | 10 |
| 5 | South Korea | 20,721 | 27.6% | 23 | 4 |
| 6 | China | 17,978 | 2.1% | 21 | 28 |
| 7 | Canada | 13,538 | 16.0% | 19 | 0 |
| 8 | Ukraine | 13,107 | 43.6% | 15 | 2 |
| 9 | Germany | 12,068 | 15.4% | 9 | 0 |
| 10 | Sweden | 9,474 | 42.7% | 10 | 0 |
| 11 | United Kingdom | 9,234 | 18.3% | 16 | 0 |
| 12 | Spain | 7,121 | 19.7% | 7 | 0 |
| 13 | Belgium | 5,927 | 52.1% | 7 | 0 |
| 14 | India | 5,308 | 3.5% | 21 | 6 |
| 15 | Taiwan | 5,032 | 19.1% | 6 | 2 |
| 16 | Czech Republic | 3,884 | 35.9% | 6 | 2 |
| 17 | Switzerland | 3,308 | 36.4% | 5 | 0 |
| 18 | Finland | 2,752 | 33.3% | 4 | 1 |
| 19 | Bulgaria | 1,906 | 30.7% | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | Hungary | 1,889 | 50.7% | 4 | 0 |

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_power_by_country

1 Mega Watt= 1,000,000 Watt

LOCAL NEWS

Summer literacy campaign covers five townships in Shan State

NYAUNGSHWE, 2 April — A summer literacy campaign is being implemented in 102 villages as of 1 April in Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State, so as to meet the government target of 95.5 percent literacy across the nation.

One volunteer student and one local volunteer youth are assigned at each teaching session for 10 trainees. The volunteers teach 1,481 local people at 169 teaching sessions in the nation. According to the schedule, classes are undertaken over a period of 120 hours. The campaign will run from 1 April to 15 May, covering Nyaungshwe, Maukmai, Namtu, Hsenwi and Tachilek townships in Shan State.

Nay Myo Thurein



Myanmar businessmen attend forum in China (Taipei)

MANDALAY, 2 April — A 15-member delegation led by Chairman of Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Aung Than, Vice Chairman U Kyaw Min, U Aung San Win (Aung Thamadi) and secretary Dr Maung Maung left Mandalay International Airport on 31 March to attend Sourcing Taiwan 2015 at the invitation of the Taiwan Trade Center.

On 1 April, they held discussions at 2015 Sourcing Business Matching in China (Taipei). Myanmar exports foodstuffs, fruits, marine products, finished wood products and jewellery to Taiwan and imports electronic and electrical products, personal goods and textile.—*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*



Modern equipment used in testing vehicles in Mandalay



MANDALAY, 2 April — The Mandalay Region Directorate of Road Administration on 1 April received a new mobile vehicle testing

lane imported from France. The new mobile testing lane was carried from Thilawa port in Yangon on 22 March. The 12-ton mo-

bile lane can be used for a variety of tests including braking and suspension.

Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)

Local farmers learn techniques for using pesticides

MYINGYAN, 2 April — Myingyan District Industrial Crops Development Department conducted a training course on safe use of pesticides at its office on 29 March.

Officials of the department explained identification and use of pesticides, as well as first-aid for patients with pesticide poisoning.

Trainers urged the

27 trainees to share their knowledge with other farmers and to only use necessary volumes of pesticides at farms.

Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

Outstanding staff win prizes in TB control

NAY PYI TAW, 2 April — A ceremony to mark the 2015 World TB Day was held at Kandaw Mingalar Hall in Pyinmana on Thursday, with an address by Nay Pyi Taw Council member Dr Paing Soe.

Head of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area Health Department Dr Daw Hla Hla Kyi outlined tuberculosis infections in eight townships in the council area as well as future plans to combat the disease.

The councillor, director and officials presented prizes to staff members who have done outstanding work combating TB and promoting public health.

The ceremony was also attended by departmental officials, the chairperson of the Nay Pyi Taw Maternal and Child Welfare Supervisory Committee and officials of the Nay Pyi Taw Women's Affairs Organization.

Shwe Kokko

Authorities visit checkpoints, toll gate in Shan State for ASEAN Highway

TACHILEK, 2 April — Under the arrangements of UNODC, a team comprising ONCB general secretary Mr Pempong Chaovalit of Thailand, deputy general secretary of China and joint secretary of Myanmar's central committee for drug abuse control Police Brig-Gen Kyaw Win reviewed the draft pilot project for the ASEAN Highway from 30 March to 4 April.

On 31 March, they viewed the Hweye checkpoint and Loidawkham checkpoint in Tachilek, Wah jetty and Macaokham jetty at Mai Sai Creek and 99 jetty near 1G17 hotel in May Flower Ground.

On 1 April, they visited Meiyang checkpoint on Tachilek-Kengtung road and a toll gate at the entrance to Tahlay.—*Mawgyi (Triangle Region)*

Farmers start cultivation of groundnut, green gram on alluvial lands

KANI, 2 April — Local farmers cultivate pre-monsoon groundnut and green gram irrigated by tube-wells in Thayetbin village, Kani Township, Sagaing Region.

"We grow groundnut and beans including sunflower and maize on alluvial lands at the bank of Chindwin River in the

early April," a local farmer said.

"We use one bag of fertilizer per acre for cultivation of green gram on 121 acres of croplands and 70 acres of groundnut. We have pumped water from Chindwin River to the croplands," said the local farmer.

Than Htay Aung (Kani)



Four dead, scores wounded as gunmen storm Kenyan university

NAIROBI, 2 April — At least four people were killed and scores wounded on Thursday when masked gunmen stormed a university campus near Kenya's border with Somalia, taking students hostage and exchanging fire with security forces over several hours.

Police and soldiers surrounded and sealed off Garissa University College and were attempting to flush out the gunmen, the head of Kenya's police force, Joseph Boinet, said in a statement.

"The attackers shot indiscriminately while inside the university compound," he said.

A policeman at the scene said some students had been taken hostage.

"We can't tell how many but they are many since the college was in session."

No group claimed responsibility for the raid, which took place just before dawn.

Somali Islamist militant group al Shabaab, which has links to al-Qaeda, has in the past carried out attacks in Garissa, which lies around 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the Somali border, and in other parts of Kenya.

Most of the wounded had been hit by gunfire and four were in a critical condition, the country's National Disaster Operation Centre said on its Twitter feed. Four had been airlifted to Nairobi for treatment, it said.

"I can tell you that we

have 49 casualties so far, all with bullet and (shrapnel) wounds. Four people are dead," said a doctor at Garissa hospital.

Grace Kai, a student at the neighbouring Garissa Teachers Training College, said there had been warnings that an attack could be imminent.

"Some strangers had been spotted in Garissa town and were suspected to be terrorists," she told *Reuters*. "Then on Monday our college principal told us ...that strangers had been spotted in our college... On Tuesday we were released to go home, and our college closed, but the campus remained in session, and now they have been attacked."

Al Shabaab, which was responsible for an



Kenya Defence Forces soldiers move behind a thicket in Garissa town in this photograph taken from a mobile phone on 2 April, 2015.—REUTERS

deadly attack in 2013 on the upscale Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi,

has declared it will punish Kenya for sending troops into Somalia alongside Af-

rican Union peacekeepers to fight the group.

Reuters

Houthi forces in Aden pull back after Saudi coalition air strikes

ADEN, 2 April—Houthi forces pulled back from positions in central Aden after air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition at dawn on Thursday, residents of the southern Yemeni port city said.

They said a unit of Houthi and allied fighters, who had advanced in tanks and armored vehicles through Aden's Khor Maksar district 24 hours earlier, pulled back, although they remained in parts of the neighbourhood.

The Houthis' recent gains in Aden, the last major foothold of supporters of Saudi-backed President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, have happened despite a week of air strikes by Saudi Arabia and a coalition of mainly Sunni Arab allies.

Hadi's foreign minis-



A man stands by the wreckage of a van hit by an air strike in Yemen's southern port city of Aden on 31 March, 2015.—REUTERS

ter Reyad Yassin Abdulla appealed on Wednesday for more effective international action to halt the Shi'ite, Iran-allied fighters before they take over the city entirely.

In the Arabian Sea port of Mukalla, 500 km (300 miles) east of Aden, suspected al-Qaeda fighters

stormed the central prison and freed 150 prisoners, some of them al-Qaeda detainees, sources in the local police and administration said.

They named one of them as Khaled Batarfi, whom they described as a prominent figure in al-Qaeda in the Arabian Penin-

sula, a powerful regional wing of the global militant jihadist movement.

Soldiers loyal to Hadi clashed with the suspected al-Qaeda fighters in the city early on Thursday, residents said.

The Houthis, allied to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, took over the Yemeni capital Sanaa six months ago and control much of the country, which also faces a southern secessionist movement, tribal unrest, and a powerful regional wing of al-Qaeda based in the center and east of the country.

Residents also reported air strikes overnight on the coastal town of Shaqra, which is under Houthi control and lies on the coast between Aden and Mukalla.

Reuters

Iraq claims victory over Islamic State in Tikrit

TIKRIT, 2 April—The Iraqi government claimed victory over Islamic State insurgents in Tikrit on Wednesday after a month-long battle for the city supported by Shi'ite militiamen and US-led air strikes, saying that only small pockets of resistance remained.

State television showed Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi, accompanied by leaders of the army and police, the provincial governor and Shi'ite paramilitary leaders, parading through Tikrit and raising an Iraqi flag. The militants captured the city, about 140 km (90 miles) north

of Baghdad, last June as they swept through most of Iraq's Sunni Muslim territories, swatting aside a demoralized and disorganized army that has now required an uneasy combination of Iranian and American support to get back on its feet. With explosions and gunfire still audible, and columns of smoke dotting the horizon, Interior Minister Mohammed al-Ghabban told reporters that security forces were fighting to clear the city's last Islamic State holdout, the northern neighborhood of Qadissiyah.

"Most of Tikrit today

is liberated, only small parts remain (outside our control). We will give you the good news in the next few hours after eliminating the pockets that are still in the city," he said. Speaking in an abandoned cityscape scarred by gunfire, Ghabban said his federal police had fought for every house and road and were now working to de-mine Tikrit, a city with a pre-war population of a quarter of a million, which he said was full of booby traps planted by Islamic State.

Ghabban and Abadi's appearances were an assertion of government

authority after a military campaign bolstered and initially spearheaded by Iranian-backed Shi'ite militiamen, who have outnumbered the army in the fight against Islamic State since the security forces deserted en masse last summer.

When the battle to recapture Tikrit began on 2 March, the defence and interior ministers were largely bypassed by the Shi'ite militias, referred to as Popular Mobilization Committees, according to accounts by two senior officials and a Western diplomat, all speaking on condition of anonymity.—*Reuters*

Islamic State seizes vast Damascus refugee camp

BEIRUT, 2 April—Islamic State fighters seized most of a vast camp for Palestinian refugees on the outskirts of Damascus from other insurgents on Wednesday in a bid to capture a major foothold close to President Bashar al-Assad's seat of power.

In a separate advance, rebel groups that have received backing from Assad's Arab and Western foes captured a border crossing with Jordan, the first time Damascus has lost it since the start of the conflict, sources on both sides said.

The gains by groups at opposite ends of the insurgent spectrum show the pressures still facing Assad, who has sought to shore up his control over western Syria including the border zone with Jordan and Israel—the last notable foothold of the mainstream rebels who have largely been eclipsed by jihadists.

They come just days after an alliance of Islamist groups captured the northwestern city of Idlib from the government. The Nusra Front, al-Qaeda's wing in Syria and one of the groups involved, announced on Wednesday the city would be run according to sharia law. The ultra-hardline Islamic State already controls swathes of eastern Syria and Iraq and is being targeted by a US-led campaign of airstrikes.

Until Wednesday's assault on the Yarmouk refugee camp, the group did not have a major presence in

the area around the capital, where insurgents have mainly been loyal to other groups.

The Yarmouk refugee camp, which was home to half a million Palestinians before the conflict began in 2011, has been held by anti-Assad insurgents and besieged by government troops since the early days of the war. It is a few kilometres from the heart of Damascus, which is still firmly in government control.

Mirroring the way Islamic State has grown elsewhere in Syria, its fighters seized control of areas of the camp from other insurgents, helped by rebels from the rival al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front who switched sides, a political activist in the area said. "They pushed from the Hajar Aswad area and Nusra fighters have joined them, they have pledged loyalty to Daesh (Islamic State)," the activist said, speaking via Skype.

Anwar Abdel Hadi, the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in Damascus, said: "(Islamic State) went into Yarmouk today. There are clashes between the militants at the moment."

The United Nations said it was extremely concerned about the safety and protection of Syrian and Palestinian civilians there. It estimates the population of Yarmouk at about 18,000, with most of its residents having long since fled.

Government officials could not be reached for comment.—*Reuters*

Asian shares rise, US jobs data in focus

Tokyo, 2 April — Asian shares shrugged off weak US data overnight that raised concerns ahead of Friday's key employment figures, and logged gains on Thursday as investors covered positions ahead of the Easter holidays.

European bourses were expected to follow suit, with financial spreadbetters calling Britain's FTSE 100 .FTSE to open flat to 1 point higher, or up 0.01 percent; Germany's DAX .GDAXI to open 27 points higher, or up 0.2 percent; and France's CAC 40 .FCHI to open 12 to 13 points higher, or up 0.3 percent.

"The performance of Europe's markets, which continue to look fairly well-supported, as well as trading at multi-year highs, stands in contrast to the weakness currently being seen in US markets," Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets, said in a note.

Most US markets will be closed on Friday, with some European markets

closed on Friday through Monday and reopening on Tuesday.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS was up about 0.6 percent, ignoring a weak performance overnight on Wall Street.

Australian shares

.AXJO finished up 0.7 percent, on growing expectations that the Reserve Bank of Australia will announce its second rate cut of 2015 when it meets on Tuesday, the first trading day after markets close for the Easter long weekend.

Japan's Nikkei stock average .N225 ended 1.5

percent higher, after skidding to a three-week low in the previous session.

"Hedge funds are seen covering their short positions as the Nikkei fell sharply this week," said Norihiro Fujito, senior investment strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

Friday's non-farm payrolls are expected to show an increase of 245,000 jobs in March, following a gain of 290,000 in February, according to economists polled by Reuters.

But on Wednesday, the ADP National Employment Report showed that US private employers added 189,000 jobs last month, falling well short of economists' expectations for a rise of 225,000 jobs. The figure was the weakest since January 2014.

Separate data on Wednesday showed the pace of US manufacturing growth in March slowed to its slowest in nearly two years.

The dollar slumped after the data as it reinforced concerns that the currency's recent rally has weighed on exports. The data also raised bets the Federal Reserve might not hike interest rates until late 2015.

"Right now the market's worry is the Fed showing concern about a strong dollar, and the data only

compounded such fears," said Masashi Murata, senior currency strategist at Brown Brothers Harriman in Tokyo.

"Even if Friday's non-farm payroll number is decent — it could come in around 250,000 — that might not dispel strong dollar concerns. That is why there isn't much bargain hunting for the dollar," he said.

The greenback was down about 0.2 percent on the day at 119.57 yen JPY=, while the euro added about 0.2 percent to \$1.0787 EUR=.

The euro was bolstered by Wednesday's data showing manufacturing activity across the euro zone is accelerating. Oil prices were off their session lows but still down on the day, giving back some of the sharp gains made in the previous session after US crude output fell for the first time in two months and the government announced a smaller-than-feared rise in weekly stockpiles. —Reuters



A Tokyo businessman looks at an electronic stock quotation board, as cherry blossoms bloom, outside a brokerage in Tokyo on 30 March, 2015.—REUTERS

Massive tea consumption linked to kidney failure

NEW YORK, 2 April — The puzzling case of a 56-year-old US man who suddenly developed weakness, fatigue and body aches is leading doctors to warn that massive consumption of tea may be responsible for some unexplained cases of kidney failure.

It's being called iced-tea nephropathy by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which published a letter describing the case.

The source of the problem was an excessive amount of oxalate, a compound found in many foods. Excessive amounts

can also come from "juicing," having gastric bypass surgery, and by consuming foods with a lot of ascorbic acid such as beets, spinach, nuts and strawberries.

But in this case, the man reported that he was drinking 16 nine-ounce glasses of iced tea each day, giving him more than 1,500 milligrams of oxalate per day.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics advises consuming no more than 40-50 mg of oxalate per day, the authors note.

"If you drink tea once or twice a day, it probably wouldn't exceed what

is the normal range for Americans. But this patient was taking 10 times that amount," said Dr Umbar Ghaffa of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, a coauthor of the letter.

Consuming too much oxalate can lead to kidney stones, which can damage the kidney by blocking the flow of urine. "But in this case there were oxalate crystals inside the kidney, and that generates an inflammatory reaction," Ghaffar told Reuters Health. "If that's not resolved it will cause scarring and loss of the kidney

tissue. So that's what probably was happening in this patient."

He ultimately needed dialysis and remained on it because his kidney damage was so extensive.

"Usually if they're at the stage where they need dialysis, it would be unusual for it to reverse," said Dr Gary Curhan, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School who was not involved with the case.

The irony is that previous research has suggested that "people who take tea in the usual amounts actually have a lower risk of kidney stones," Curhan said.

"But in this case, the person was drinking huge amounts of oxalate," he said. "I would caution people against drinking that much, but drinking a glass or two would not concern me."

Ghaffar and her colleagues speculated that such regular excessive consumption of oxalate "may be an underrecognized cause of renal failure."

"The summer season is coming and a lot of people use a lot of iced tea in this season," she said. "We just want to make patients aware that too much of anything is bad." —Reuters

Shell boosts ethylene production by 20 percent from Singapore plant



A passenger plane flies over a Shell logo at a petrol station in west London, on 29 Jan, 2015. REUTERS

SINGAPORE, 2 April—Royal Dutch Shell (RD-Sa.L) has finished upgrading its Singapore ethylene cracker complex at its integrated-refining-chemicals site, boosting production of ethylene by 20 percent, the company said on Thursday.

The cracker on Bukom Island, which also houses Shell's 500,000 barrels-per-day refinery, originally had a capacity of 800,000 tonnes per year (tpy) of ethylene.

The additional supply of products will support the expansion of intermediate plants on the nearby Jurong Island, including Shell's mono-ethylene glycol plant and third-party facilities, the company said in a statement. —Reuters

Older men who exercise more have better erectile function

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — Men who exercise more have better erectile and sexual function, suggests a small study of older overweight men.

The authors say their results support the idea that exercise might one day be prescribed as a treatment for erectile dysfunction.

While previous research has linked erections to physical activity, the current study is the first to include a high proportion of African-Americans and finds they get the same apparent benefit from exer-

cise as white men.

"Our results confirm previous work, however, no study has ever addressed how a minimal amount of exercise impacts both erectile and sexual function among black men, a population with increased prevalence of erectile dysfunction risk factors including obesity, diabetes, sedentary lifestyle and lower socioeconomic status," senior study author Adriana Vidal, a researcher at the Cedars-Sinai Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute in Los An-

geles, said in an email.

Vidal and colleagues examined exercise habits and sexual function in 295 healthy men who were part of a research project evaluating prostate cancer risk at the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Centre in North Carolina. On average, the men were about 62 years old, and they were all overweight or obese. Roughly one third had diabetes or a history of chest pain or heart attacks. About three quarters were current or former smokers. Ninety-three men, or about a

third of the group, were African-American.

Researchers asked the participants how often they exercised, and how intensely, as well as what types of physical activities they did. Men were scored based on a measure known as metabolic equivalent of task (MET) hours per week and placed in four categories ranging from sedentary, with three or fewer MET hours/week, to highly active, with at least 18 MET hours/week.

Most often, the men were sedentary, with 44

percent reporting little activity. But a substantial proportion, 26 percent, were highly active.

Researchers also questioned the men about their sexual function, focusing on their ability to get erections and have orgasms, as well as the quality and frequency of their erections.

Men rated their functionality on most questions from 1 to 5, with higher numbers equaling more satisfaction. Added up, responses could lead to a total score from 0 to 100.

Reuters

1,200 years since start of monastic settlement on Mt Koya



Monks attend a ceremony on 2 April, 2015, to commemorate the 1,200th anniversary of a monastic settlement started by renowned monk Kukai at Mt. Koya in Wakayama Prefecture, western Japan. Buddhist services will be held daily through on 21 May.—KYODO NEWS

US report urges talk with China to avoid conflict in Asia-Pacific

WASHINGTON, 2 April — A Washington think tank called on the US government on Thursday to enhance strategic dialogue with China to avoid a possible conflict in the Asia-Pacific region in coming decades, and to fully consider suggestions by US allies.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace urged “the development of a genuine US-China strategic dialogue”, involving input from US allies and other key states, in the report entitled “Con-

flict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region.”

The report, which has some 270 pages, was part of a study on the regional security issue led by the US military’s Pacific Command with the participation of the think tank and nine other institutions.

The report presented five case scenarios on what could happen over the next 25 years in the region on the back of a rise in China’s position, saying the continuation of the status quo where economic and

political competition and cooperation will continue is most likely.

The other four included “Asia-Pacific Cold War” that could be caused by bipolarization and militarization “driven by a worsening US-China strategic and economic rivalry” as well as a “Hot War” with frequent military conflict.

To make sure a possible conflict will never happen, the report called on the US and Chinese governments to be involved in bilateral and multilateral

security frameworks.

The report said the United States should seek “a complex mixture” of diplomatic skills and understanding of the region given that overall US capabilities and influence in the region are diminishing in some areas.—Kyodo News

World wind power capacity to nearly double in 2019

WASHINGTON, 2 April — The global capacity of wind power generation at the end of 2019 will be nearly double that of last year, with China’s contribution staying at around 30 percent of the total, an international industrial body said on Wednesday.

The world’s capacity to produce electricity from wind power will reach 666.1 million kilowatts in 2019, up 296.5 million kw from 369.6 million kw in 2014, according to the Global Wind Energy Council based in Brussels.

The installment of new wind power facilities in Asia will increase faster than any other region over the five years through 2019, adding 140 million kw, with China, which is struggling to combat serious air pollution, accounting for 100 million kw.

Japan has lagged behind China in developing renewable energy and the council simply said, “Japan is expected to emerge as a strong wind power market after 2016.”

Steve Sawyer, secretary general of the council, urged governments to “set ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” looking ahead to the UN climate change summit in Paris at the end of the year.

The council forecast the capacity increase in wind power generation from 2014 to 2019 will reach 70 million kw in Europe and 44 million kw in North America.

The figure will grow 25 million kw in Latin America, 13.5 million kw in the Middle East and Africa and 4 million kw in the Pacific region including Australia, according to the council.—Kyodo News

Criminal charges filed against Seselj for flag burning

BELGRADE, 2 April — The Office of the Belgrade Public Prosecutor on Wednesday filed criminal charges against Serbian Radical Party (SRS) leader Vojislav Seselj for burning the Croatian flag.

Seselj set the flag on fire in the centre of Belgrade at around 1 pm CET, and the spokesperson of the Belgrade Prosecutor’s Office Tatjana Sekulic said in a written statement afterwards that criminal charges had been filed against him because of the incident.

Seselj stated he had received the decision by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) requiring his return to their custody, and that the flag burning was a

clear message to Croatia.

He stands accused of war crimes in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serbian Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where there was no armed conflict. He was granted temporary release on 12 November.

Croatia then started a vigorous campaign for his return to ICTY detention and its top officials have welcomed the ICTY decision to take Seselj back into custody made on 30 March.

Serbian Radical Party (SRS) leader Vojislav Seselj commented on the Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office in Belgrade launching criminal proceedings against him for burning the Croatian flag on Wednes-

day saying he could hardly wait for the process to begin.

Seselj set the flag alight in front of the Palace of Justice, explaining that it was “a clear message” to Croatia, whose officials had been attacking him for months.

After receiving the news that the criminal proceedings had been instituted against him, the SRS leader said that he was glad about it.

Asked by reporters why he had lit the flag, Seselj said:

“Because Croatia occupied the Republic of Serbian Krajina, committing genocide against Serbs during World War II and persecuted hundreds of



thousands of Serbs (during the 1991/95 civil war in Croatia).”

A trial of SRS Deputy President Nemanja Sarovic, charged with setting fire to a US flag in November 2012, begun at the Palace of Justice today, and Seselj is a witness in the

proceedings.

On 30 November, 2012, the SRS staged a protest against The Hague Tribunal’s acquitting former commander of the ethnic Albanian paramilitary group KLA Ramus Haradinaj of crimes against Serbs in Kosovo-Metohija.—Tanjug

Hong Kong court adjourns British banker murder case for five weeks

HONG KONG, 2 April — The pre-trial hearing for a British banker, accused of murdering two women in Hong Kong last November, was adjourned for five weeks on Thursday after the prosecution requested for more time to build its case.

Prosecution lawyers asked for the extra time to serve further documents for their case against 30-year-old former Bank of America employee Rurik Jutting.

The grisly murders of the two women, described by local media as prostitutes from Indonesia, shocked Hong Kong, a city with a low homicide rate.

The judge Jason Wan Siu-Ming said the

adjournment was not unusual or unreasonable for complicated cases. Jutting’s lawyers did not object and the hearing will resume on 8 May.

Jutting, a former Cam-



Rurik George Caton Jutting (L), a British banker charged with two counts of murder after police found the bodies of two women in his apartment, sits in the back row of a prison bus as he leaves at the Eastern Law Courts in Hong Kong on 2 April, 2015.—REUTERS

bridge graduate, was accused after police found the bodies of two women in his luxury high rise apartment. One was found lying inside the apartment with wounds to her neck and buttocks,

and the other was discovered in a suitcase on the balcony, authorities have said.

During the hearing Jutting acknowledged an amended charge sheet that was read out to him to include the second victim’s name.

He had the same full beard and wore the same black t-shirt with ‘New York’ emblazoned across the front that he has worn in his last three court appearances, but appeared to have lost weight.

After being charged for the double murder, Jutting was found fit to plea following a psychiatric assessment at the end of 2014, but he has yet to enter any plea.

Bank of America has previously said Jutting was an employee but it has not

said why he left or given any time frame.

A LinkedIn account under Jutting’s name said he had worked in structured equity finance and trading at the bank in Hong Kong since July 2013. Before that, he had worked in the same department but in London.

The profile also said Jutting had worked in structured capital markets at Barclays between June 2008 and July 2010 and had studied at Cambridge University.

According to people who were at Cambridge at the same time, Jutting attended Peterhouse, the oldest college, and was president of the Cambridge University History society. He was also a cross-country runner and a rower. Prior to Cambridge he went to Winchester College, one of Britain’s most renowned and oldest private schools.—Reuters

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Recruit Announcement

Subject: Sandstone blasting work
Location: Hpayonga Island, Sittway City, Rakhine State, Myanmar.
Objective: Production of Sandstone by Blasting.
Product Size and Quantity : Lump Size < 100 mm: 3625 m3 (1282 SUD)
 Big Boulder < 800 mm: 16,037 m3 (5,667 SUD)
 Blasted Rock < 300 mm: 42,173 m3 (14,902 SUD)
Stone Production Period : 2 month (Might need to work during water festival Days)
Production start Time : 7th April 2015.
Work Scope : Blasting, Transportation (to jetty: about 800 m)
Submitted documents : Detail work plan and Quotation.
Contact : Office Telephone (Tel: 04321953)
 Office Email: (hwang1213@hotmail.com)
 Ko Win (edwardwin@gmail.com) Tel : 09 49248429

Japan's Sekimizu to leave UN maritime organization at year-end

LONDON, 2 April — Koji Sekimizu, the first Japanese elected as chief of the International Maritime Organization, is ending his four-year tenure at the end of this year, the UN agency said on Wednesday.

The agency also said it has received nominations for his successor from six countries — South Korea, the Philippines, Russia,

Cyprus, Denmark and Kenya — for an election at an IMO council meeting from 29 June to 3 July.

Sekimizu, 62, earlier indicated that he is leaving the post of secretary general that he assumed in January 2012 to take care of his wife, who has a health issue.

He is known for his focus on environmental measures, such as the pro-

tection of Arctic and Antarctic waters from pollution by oil from ships, at the organization tasked with working out international rules on maritime traffic and shipping.

It is rare for a chief to leave the IMO after one term. A secretary general may stay on up to two terms over eight years under current rules.

Kyodo News

FBI confirms death of militant with DNA from severed finger

WASHINGTON, 2 April — The US Federal Bureau of Investigation said on Wednesday it has confirmed that Zulkifli bin Hir, one of its "most wanted terrorists," was killed in a raid in the Philippines in January.

A person familiar with the investigation

said the FBI was able to confirm bin Hir's death in part through DNA analysis of a severed finger that Philippine authorities collected from the gruesome scene of a raid that left bin Hir dead.

The finger was transported to the United States where FBI agents compared its DNA to one

of bin Hir's siblings and found a link.

Only a finger, and not a full body, was recovered from the scene because of the chaotic aftermath of the raid in which 44 Philippine police commandos were killed when they clashed with Muslim rebels. The raid ended a three-year ceasefire.

The US State Department had offered \$5 million for the arrest of bin Hir, a Malaysian member of the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiah militant group behind numerous bombing attacks in the Philippines.

Three years ago, the Philippine military reported bin Hir died in an

air strike, but he surfaced again last year in Mindanao under protection of a Moro Islamic Liberation Front splinter group.

In a statement, David Bowdich, assistant director in charge at the FBI Los Angeles Field office said the agency has now taken bin Hir off its Most Wanted Terrorist list and

thanked the Philippine police.

"Once again, the men and women of the FBI express sincere condolences to the brave officers of the Special Action Force who lost their lives while attempting to apprehend this dangerous fugitive," Bowdich said.—Reuters

WEATHER REPORT

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 3rd April, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Northern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States and weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in the Upper Myanmar areas.

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Photo taken on 1 April, 2015 shows a general view of the fire in Central London's Holborn area, Britain. More than 2,000 people were evacuated on Wednesday from a number of buildings in London's Holborn area due to an electrical fire among cables under a pavement, London Fire Brigade (LFB) said.—XINHUA

Afghan suicide attack kills 17, wounds dozens

KABUL, 2 April — A suicide attack near the governor's house in the eastern Afghan province of Khost killed 17 people on Thursday and wounded dozens, Tolo TV said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. The Afghan Taliban, ousted from power in 2001 by US-led forces, have been fighting to bring down the US-backed government in Kabul, and stepped up attacks after most foreign forces pulled out at the end of last year.—Reuters

Nothing comfortable about being an actor: Lupita Nyong'o



Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o says life is not easy when you are in showbiz.—PTI

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o says life is not easy when you are in showbiz.

The "12 Years a Slave" actress said she earlier thought life will back to normal post the Academy Awards, reported E!Online. "You know, I thought it would come to an end after the Oscars. I thought the Oscars would come and go and then all of a sudden everything would be back to normal and I'd be back

in my apartment," she said.

The 32-year-old, who graced the cover of the May 2015 issue of Britain's *Harper's Bazaar* magazine.

"You know what kept me sane? Not knowing. Having never really experienced that before... Because this was new territory I had no normal. I had no sense of what was normal in that world. It was all new. I don't think (I would attend that many events again). Not to that extent."—PTI

Madonna to pen autobiography



Madonna: I've got so many tales to tell. If I wrote my book, that would be from start to finish.—PTI

LONDON, 2 April — Pop diva Madonna is "sure" that she will publish an autobiography in the future. Asked by Jo Whiley on BBC Radio 2, the 'Iconic' singer said that there is "a whole lot of ground to cover" in a book about her life and career.

"I've got so many tales to tell. If I wrote my book, that would be from start to finish. And that's a whole lot of ground to cover. "I think I would tell the sto-

ries that I felt were valuable to tell, that were inspiring, that people could relate to. I'm a storyteller, that's what I think of myself as, I would share stories that I think would inspire people," she said.

Meanwhile, the 56-year-old singer also confessed that she has not watched footage of her fall at the 2015 Brit Awards, as she never watches any of her performances back.

PTI

Stephanie Pratt to release tell-all memoir about drugs, rehab

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — Reality TV star Stephanie Pratt says she will bring out her tell-all memoir, which will show her descent into drugs, rehab and arrests.

"It's coming out later in the year, and it's about me growing up. It's got stuff about family, getting everything I've ever

wished for, my descent into drugs and rehab and arrests," she said to a fashion magazine, for which she posed topless.

The 28-year-old "The Hills and British" star featured on the cover of the magazine, wearing only tights, reported *Us* magazine.—PTI



Stephanie Pratt

Hugh Jackman to star in biblical drama

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — Actor Hugh Jackman, who is hanging his 'Wolverine' claws after 2017, has joined a faith-based drama "Apostle Paul" for Warner Bros.

The film will be produced by Matt Damon and

Ben Affleck along with Jennifer Todd and Chris Clarke.

Matt Cook is writing the screenplay about Paul, who had been persecuting Christians as Saul of Tarsus, but became an apostle of Christianity after hear-

ing a divine message, reported *Variety*.

Jackman will be seen next in July as Blackbeard in "Pan" which opens in July for Warner Bros, and stars in the next "Wolverine" film, slated to release on 3 March, 2017.—PTI

Kendrick Lamar's 'Butterfly' keeps afloat at top of Billboard 200

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — Rapper Kendrick Lamar held onto the top spot of the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart on Wednesday, in a week that saw little change among the top-selling records.

Lamar's "To Pimp A Butterfly," his first chart-topping album, sold another 107,000 albums and 49,000 songs and was streamed online 17.9 million times, a cumulative sales total of 123,000 units, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

The Billboard 200 chart tallies album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album), and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one album).

The soundtrack for Fox TV's hit hip-hop drama "Empire" held steady at No 2 for the second week, selling 61,000 units, while the soundtrack to Universal Pictures' steamy film "Fifty Shades of Grey" climbed one spot to No 3 with 54,000 units.

New entries in the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart include New York chef-turned-rapper Action Bronson at No 7 with "Mr Wonderful," and the 28th edition of the "Kidz Bop" album franchise at No 10, featuring child-friendly versions of pop hits by Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez

and Sam Smith.

Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars' upbeat track "Uptown Funk!" held steady at No 1 on the Digital Songs chart, selling 165,000 downloads in its 20th week on the chart.—Reuters



Hip hop recording artist Kendrick Lamar poses backstage during the iHeartRadio Music Awards in Los Angeles, California on 1 May, 2014.

REUTERS

'Furious 7' cast finds beauty and emotion in Paul Walker tribute



US actor Paul Walker at Sao Paulo FashionWeek on 21 March, 2013.—REUTERS

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — When actors from the "Fast & Furious" films gathered recently in the parking lot at Dodger Stadium to promote the seventh installment, they spent a lot of time talking about a cast member who wasn't there: Paul Walker.

The veteran of the action franchise died aged 40 in a car crash before filming finished for "Furious 7," which opens in US theatres on Friday. Director James Wan and Universal Pictures decided to retire Walker's character, Brian O'Conner, in a way that his cast mates found, in their words, beautiful, emotional, joyful and respectful.

Lead actor Vin Diesel, who had worked with Walker since the 2001 de-

but film "The Fast and the Furious," said audiences are likely to think the ending will make them sad.

"It sounds crazy, but you leave the movie with tears of joy," Diesel told *Reuters* in the parking lot that reminded him of Walker, who played a former police officer on the team of street racers led by Diesel's character, Dom Toretto.

"Everything reminds me of Paul," added the actor, who last month named his newborn daughter Pauline in memory of his friend.

Jordana Brewster, who plays Brian's wife, Mia, said she watched the film only with her sister because she knew it would be tough to see. She said she felt proud because Walker's performance is "really,

really good."

"The tribute is also really beautiful and it's such a good representation of the 15 years of work he put into the franchise," said Brewster, who was also in the first film.

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who has been in the last three films, said an important part of the process was taking a break from production after Walker died in November 2013 and figuring out how to make the film work without him. "I loved the movie and the epilogue to it and I felt it was as elegant and respectful as it could possibly have been," said Johnson, who plays the government agent Hobbs.

Tyrese Gibson was wearing a sweatshirt with Walker's face that a fan had given him. "I brought my brother with us," said Gibson, who plays the cocky racer Roman.

When asked how he felt when he saw how the film wraps up Walker's participation, Gibson sighed and said "Oh my, it was emotional."

"I think his brothers and family are going to appreciate it," Gibson added. "At this point, everything we do is on his behalf."

Reuters

GENERAL

Valuable 18th century painting rediscovered in California home

LOS ANGELES, 2 April — An 18th century painting long considered lost has been found in the home of a California lawyer whose family had held the piece for generations but was unaware of its origins, a Los Angeles museum official said on Wednesday.

The painting, lauded as a masterpiece of colonial Mexican art depicting mixed-race families of the era, has been acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, known as LACMA.

Museum curator Ilona Katzew said the painting was one of two missing pieces from a set of 16 painted by Miguel Cabrera, a master portraitist in high

demand in the religious and social elite of New Spain, a Spanish territory that included what is now Mexico.

“It’s one of the most important paintings from colonial Mexico to come up in the market in the past 10 years,” Katzew said, estimating the auction value at \$1 million.

The painting, “From Spaniard and Morisca, Albino,” depicts a Spanish man and a mulatto woman dressed in elegant clothes and jewelry who exchange tender looks while holding a fair-skinned child with light blonde hair. Hung on a scroll, the piece measures more than four feet (1.20 meter) tall and three feet (90 cm) wide.

Painted in 1763, the artwork came to the museum through Christina Jones Janssen, an attorney in Northern California whose family had held the piece for several generations.

According to family lore, Janssen’s great-grandparents received the work in the late 1920s as a gift from David Gray, the son of one of the first Ford Motor Co presidents. Gray had purchased it in Spain.

The painting travelled to various homes in Janssen’s family over the years. When she noticed the canvas coming loose from the scroll, she tucked it under her couch for safekeeping. Last year, to fulfill her late-father’s wish to discov-

er its origins, Janssen began sleuthing.

Art experts quickly identified the work as belonging to Cabrera’s set of castas, a popular 18th century genre depicting the racial mixing of Spaniards, Africans and indigenous people in colonial Mexico.

Janssen has made a partial donation of the piece to LACMA. A trustee is funding the rest of the sum, which the museum declined to disclose.

According to Katzew, Cabrera’s casta is widely considered the best of the genre. Fourteen other pieces of Cabrera’s set reside in museums and private collections, but one is still missing.—Reuters

California governor orders statewide water cutbacks to combat drought

PHILLIPS, (California), 2 April — California Governor Jerry Brown, in his most sweeping action to combat a devastating multi-year drought, ordered residents and businesses on Wednesday to cut water use by 25 percent in the first mandatory statewide reduction in California history.

The cuts mean industrial parks and golf courses must immediately cut a quarter of their water use on ornamental turf, and homeowners will be pressed to replace thirsty lawns with drought-tolerant landscaping. Farmers, already making do with less water for irrigation, will be exempt.

The move comes as California’s snowpack, which generally provides about a third of the state’s water, is at its lowest level on record in a sign the



A boat paddle is shown on the bottom of the nearly dry Almaden Reservoir near San Jose, California on 21 Jan, 2014. — REUTERS

state’s drought, now entering its fourth year, is far from over.

Standing in a field of dry, limp grass at a snow-monitoring station in the Sierra Nevada mountains, the fourth-term Democratic governor said the cutbacks would save some 1.5 million acre-feet of

water over the next nine months.

“We’re standing on dry ground and we should be standing on 5 feet (1.5 metres) of snow,” said Brown, whose two non-consecutive stints in office have coincided with two of the state’s worst droughts. “This is rationing. We’re just doing it

through the different water districts.”

Brown said the state would develop rebate plans to help families and businesses remove a planned 50 million square feet (4.6 million square metres) of lawns, and replace old appliances with newer, more water-efficient models.

The cuts will be implemented by state and local water agencies, and different parts of the state will have to reduce their water use more than others, because some had already cut way back, Brown said.

Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state Water Resources Control Board, said regulators would not hesitate to issue fines of up to \$10,000 a day to water districts that do not succeed in implementing the cutbacks.—Reuters

Murray dumps Austria’s Thiem to reach Miami semis

MIAMI, 2 April — Third-seed Andy Murray recovered from an early setback to beat Austrian Dominic Thiem 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 on Wednesday to reach the semi-finals of the Miami Open where he will face Czech Tomas Berdych.

Eighth seed Berdych defeated Argentine Juan Monaco 6-3, 6-4 in their quarter-final to set up a rematch of their tense and at times acrimonious Australian Open semi-final which Murray won in four sets.

Murray’s 501st career win was far from easy as the 21-year-old Thiem, ranked

52nd in the world, used an impressive backhand and some entertaining tennis to take the first set.

But after Murray, far from his best, forced a deciding set, he took firm control after earning a break at the end of a long fourth game to go up 3-1.

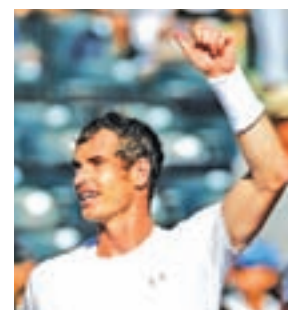
“At the beginning of the match I didn’t return well, especially returning his first serve. That put me in sort of a defensive position a lot when he was serving. I ended up doing quite a lot of running there,” said Murray. “In the second set I went up and I was creating

quite a lot of opportunities, which was good, but I was just not quite finding the right shot.

“I think in the third set the difference was really my returning. I returned his first serve extremely well. I put him on the back foot,” he said. Thiem was philosophical about his loss.

“He won because he was the better player. It’s very simple. I played a very good first set of course but if I could keep at that level of the first set I wouldn’t be ranked 52nd I would be much higher.

Reuters



Andy Murray waves to the crowd after his match against Dominic Thiem on day ten of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre, Key Biscayne, FL, USA on 1 April, 2015. Murray won 3-6, 6-4, 6-1. REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International

- (3-4-2015 07:00 am~ 4-4-2015 07:00 am) MST
- * News
 - * Enchanting Rakhine Land
 - * Image of The Monks
 - * News
 - * Bago: A City of Famous Historic Pagoda
 - * Grow Back for Posterity “The dawn of development”
 - * Thingyan Lover
 - * News
 - * Wedding Planner “Aye Thida Win Aung”
 - * The Richly Blessed Gem Land
 - * News
 - * Ambassador’s View: China — Myanmar Bilateral Ties
 - * Come and Visit, no matter the distance (Pathein)
 - * News
 - * Moe Ne’ Keeps Its Tradition Alive
 - * Today Myanmar “Gold Letter”
 - * News
 - * The Land of Silver Mountains (Kayah State)
 - * Distinguished Myanmar Ladies “Ma Myint Zu”
 - * News
 - * Discovering Tribes (MUUN) EPISODE-2
 - * Kay Tu Mar Lar “The Decision”
 - * News
 - * Myanmar Women Football Champions (Myanmar National Team)
 - * Buddha Image Built of Bamboo Strip
 - * A Cordial Welcome From Pantaung
 - * News
 - * Myanma Pottery
 - * Indian Footsteps
 - * News
 - * Kayin Child Boxer Pa O in the Union

MRTV News Channel in Brief

- (3-4-2015, Friday)
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw <p>6:25 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myitta Pawana by Mingun Sayadaw Phayagyi <p>7:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News/ Weather Report <p>7:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People’s Talks <p>8:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News/ International News <p>8:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Affairs <p>9:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Entertainment <p>10:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRTV’s Youth Programme <p>11:35 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science and Technology Programme <p>12:00 noon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News / Weather Report <p>12:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hluttaw Image | <p>12:50 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clever <p>1:20 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk on Old Film <p>2:15 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Songs of Thingyan Festival <p>2:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Boxing <p>3:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News <p>4:35 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Second Years (Myanmar) <p>6:35pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper Sports <p>7:30pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Line News <p>8:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News / International News / Weather Report <p>9:00 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News • Hluttaw Image • Amazing World • Teleplay |
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MRTV Entertainment Channel

- (3-4-2015, Friday)
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mono Classical Songs <p>6:25 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pyi Thu Ni Ti <p>6:40 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Song and Dance of Thingyan Festival <p>6:55 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Series <p>7:20 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series | <p>8:10 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV Drama Series <p>9:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teleplay <p>9:45 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Song and Dance of Thingyan Festival <p>10:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar Video <p>12:00 noon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close down |
|---|---|

China's drinks king denies plans to buy Italy's AC Milan

SHANGHAI, 2 April — The billionaire chairman of Chinese drinks maker Hangzhou Wahaha Group Co has knocked back reports he is planning a bid for struggling Italian soccer giants AC Milan, currently controlled by Italy's former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

ZongQinghou, worth an estimated \$19 billion according to the latest annual Hurun rich list, said reports in Italian media that he was planning to purchase up to 75 percent of the Italian team were "sheer fiction".

"We have no intention of getting into the soccer sphere, and have not made any contact with AC Milan," Zong said on his official SinaWeibo microblog account on Thursday.

Reuters could not reach Wahaha for further comment.

Speculation has swirled around the Italian club, one of the country's most prestigious teams, but which has struggled since last winning a league title in 2011.

Thai businessman Bee



AC Milan's Jeremy Menez (C) celebrates after scoring against Cagliari during their Italian Serie A soccer match at the San Siro stadium in Milan on 21 March, 2015.

REUTERS

Taechaubol said in February he had held "cordial and private" discussions with the club, prompting Berlusconi to respond that he was not interested in selling his controlling stake.

China's billionaires have been starting to snap up sporting assets outside the country's borders.

In January, property

conglomerate Dalian Wanda Group bought 20 percent of Spanish soccer champions Atletico Madrid for 45 million euros (\$48.45 million), becoming the first Mainland company to invest in a top European club.

Media reports in China had suggested Wanda may also be interested in taking a stake in AC Milan as part

of plans to deepen its push into sports and entertainment.

Zong, however, said Wahaha would prefer to look within China's borders rather than overseas.

"Even if we wanted to buy a soccer club, we would only consider a domestic team," he said.

Reuters

Real Madrid defender Pepe sidelined by thigh injury

MADRID, 2 April — Real Madrid centre back Pepe has returned from international duty with Portugal with a thigh injury, the European champions said on Wednesday.

Real did not say how long the 32-year-old would be out of action but local

media reported he was likely to be sidelined for around 10 days.

He will probably miss the La Liga games at home to Granada on Sunday and at RayoVallecano three days later but should be available for the match at home to Eibar on 11 April.

"Following medical tests carried out on Pepe by the Real Madrid doctors in the Sanitas La Moraleja Hospital, he has been diagnosed with an injury in the vastusinternus muscle in his right thigh," Real said on their website (www.realmadrid.es).

"His progress will be monitored," they added.

Real are second in La Liga with 10 games left, four points behind leaders Barcelona. France defender Raphael Varane is likely to partner Spain's Sergio Ramos in central defence in Pepe's absence.—Reuters

Arsenal and Liverpool focus on points not Cup glory

LONDON, 2 April — The Premier League bursts back into life after the international break this weekend with Arsenal and Liverpool clashing in a potential FA Cup final dress rehearsal in the early kick-off at the Emirates on Saturday.

Although the two teams are the favourites to meet in the Cup final at Wembley at the end of May, of more immediate concern to both will be the three points at stake on Saturday.

Victory for Arsenal would maintain their unlikely late challenge for the title, while a Liverpool win would rekindle their hopes of a top-four finish after their last match before the break ended in a 2-1 home defeat by Manchester United.

Arsenal have won their last six league matches and halved the gap on leaders Chelsea from 14 points on 10 February to seven now and a win for the Gunners would lift them into second place, at least until Manchester City play at Crystal Palace on Monday.

Chelsea, leaders since late August, host Stoke City, managed by the London club's ex-striker Mark Hughes, in Saturday's late match and anything other than a home win would be a major upset.

Chelsea have played 29 matches, one fewer than all of the chasing pack, and are on 67 points, with second-placed City on 61, Arsenal with 60 and Manchester United on 59.

On Saturday, United host Aston Villa, who have looked a better side since Tim Sherwood took over as manager from Paul Lambert six weeks ago but are still involved in the relegation fight. United should chalk up a fifth successive league win.

While Liverpool, who are fifth on 54 points, will be hoping to stay in touch with the leading quartet, both Southampton and Tottenham will look to overtake them if they should slip up.

Saints and Spurs are both a point behind Liverpool with the former travelling to erratic Everton and the latter visiting relegation-threatened Burnley.

Spurs had four players — Harry Kane, Ryan Mason, Kyle Walker and goalscorer Andros Townsend — in the England team that drew 1-1 with Italy on Tuesday.

They will be hoping for a third win in four over Burnley this season after beating them in an FA Cup third round replay in January.

Kane, meanwhile, who has scored 29 goals for Tottenham this season including a hat-trick against Leicester City last time out, needs one more goal to become the first Spurs player since Gary Lineker in 1991-92 to hit 30 goals in a season.—Reuters

Serena's 700th win sets up Halep semi



Serena Williams poses with a cake celebrating her 700th WTA win after her match against Sabine Lisicki on day ten of the Miami Open at Crandon Park Tennis Centre.

Williams won 7-6 (4), 1-6, 6-3.—REUTERS

MIAMI, 2 April — World number one Serena Williams overcame a dreadful second set to beat Germany's Sabine Lisicki 7-6(4), 1-6, 6-3 on Wednesday for her 700th career win and a berth in the Miami Open semi-finals.

Williams will face Romania's Simona Halep for a place in the final after the third-seed beat Sloane Stephens 6-1, 7-5.

The pair were due to meet in the semi-finals at Indian Wells earlier this month but Williams pulled out with a knee injury and Halep went on to beat Jelena Jankovic in the final.

The duo are the two

form players in women's tennis at the moment — Williams is on a 19-match winning streak while Halep has a 24-2 record this season.

Williams, who is seeking an eighth Miami title, made a sluggish start but went on to secure the first set in a tie-break and then broke her 27th-seeded opponent in the opening game of the second set before falling apart.

Lisicki's precise and intelligent play took advantage of a series of unforced errors from Williams as the German won six consecutive games to force a decisive set.

But Williams, the

two-times defending Miami champion, quickly rediscovered her form and broke to get a 3-0 lead and held firm for the win.

Williams is the eighth player in WTA history to record 700 match wins, putting her in an exclusive club that is led by Martina Navratilova (1,442).

"I didn't know I had 700 wins," said Williams, "I just want to keep doing, doing the best that I can. Just staying positive and winning as much as I can," said Williams.

Halep utterly dominated the first set but Stephens recovered well in the second to open up a 5-4 lead only to see the Romanian power back to win the last three games, to the delight of a surprisingly large and

vocal Romanian contingent in the Key Biscayne crowd. Halep is the last player to beat Williams after she recorded a victory over the American in the round robin stage of the WTA Finals in Singapore last October.

Days later Halep was crushed 6-3, 6-0 in the final of that tournament — by Williams. "I won against her just one match. I expect really tough match because she's the best player in the world. She has a lot of experience," said Halep.

"I just have to play aggressive like I did at the beginning this match. I think this is the most important thing to have to a chance against Serena."—Reuters