

President U Thein Sein, wife Daw Khin Khin Win attend enshrinement of sacred objects, golden umbrella-hoisting ceremonies in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 2 May—President U Thein Sein and wife Daw Khin Khin Win attended ceremonies for enshrinement of sacred objects and hoisting golden umbrella at four holy places in Nay Pyi Taw on Saturday.

First, the congregation led by the President and wife received the Nine Precepts from the vice-chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Meiktila Shwebontha Monastery Abbot and presented offertories to the members of the Sangha and shared merits gained.

Next, the President unveiled a stone plaque to mark the completion of construction of holy places and sprinkled scented on it together with Vice-Presidents Dr Sai Mauk Kham and U Nyan Tun and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.



Then, enshrinement of sacred objects at holy places, hosting golden umbrella atop Tayzaw Datu

Pagoda and pouring water at Maha Bawdhi Bo tree followed.

(See page 3)

President U Thein Sein sprinkles scented water on statue of Buddha-to-be at inauguration ceremony of three holy places in Nay Pyi Taw.—MNA

President sends messages felicitations to Poland

NAY PYI TAW, 3 May—U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland and Her Excellency Ms. Ewa Kopacz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Poland, which falls on 3 May 2015.

MNA

Subdued housing market to bounce back next year, realtors, market experts say

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 2 May — Despite the cooling of the local property market since

last year, realtors and market experts predict that property sales activities will bounce back next year. The once-overheated

housing market has suffered a slump in sales, spurring the view that it will continue to fall this year from its peak. But, hopes are alive among housing agents that the market will return to its previous pace of growth seen in the past few years.

“As a realtor, I see the housing market has been fairly subdued in recent months following the suspension of the 30,000 sq.ft Yangon city expansion project in late September last year,” said U Khin Maung Than, chairman of Myanmar Real Estate Services Association.

As another cooling factor, the upcoming general election set to be held in late October or early November is keeping investors and developers on the sidelines in a wait-and-see mode, he opined.

Despite there being various reasons for the fluctuations in the property market, the market, as usual, will come alive again af-

ter taking a rest for a while, the chairman added.

About five or six months ago, the market started stalling, with home sales muted compared to previous years when prices were on the up and the market was bustling with activity.

But, some economists and the country’s development partners point out that Myanmar’s economy is expected to continue to grow and it is also set to see a vast throng of foreign investors in a range of sectors, including construction and hospitality.

Moreover, the start of the ASEAN Economic Community in late 2015 will have a positive effect on the country’s real estate sector, drawing foreign investors to do business in Southeast Asia’s last frontier for investment, said market experts.

U Tin Aung, another real estate agent, expressed the view that as the country’s economic potential

Pagodas in Yangon crowded with devotees on Vesak Day

YANGON, 2 May—Pagodas and Buddha images in Yangon saw a huge crowd of devotees on the fullmoon day of Kasone (the Buddha Day), a significant day of Buddhists.

Devotees in Yangon offered flowers, lights, water and joss sticks to Buddha images with various form of Mudra on the platform of the Shwedagon Pagoda since the early morning today. Some Buddhists also gathered at monasteries to practice the Buddha’s teachings.

On the fullmoon day of Kasone, some bus lines in Yangon provided their transportation services free of charge to the residents while some wellwishers made charitable donations on their streets.

To mark the birth and the enlightenment of the Buddha at the foot of the Maha-Bodhi tree, Buddhist people celebrates the Kasone festival of watering the Maha-Bodhi tree.

MNA



Photo of partially completed apartment in a suburb of Yangon.—PHOTO: YE MYINT

is yet to be fully realized, there remain many opportunities to fulfill its commercial and tourism infrastructure needs, thereby contributing towards development of the property market.

There are many reasons to expect further expansion in Myanmar’s real estate market as drafting of a condominium law is on track to be enacted soon,

said U Win Aung, leader of the country’s biggest business federation.

Yet, there is a need to strengthen some of the rules and regulations in connection with property rights in order to help Myanmar draw more foreign direct investments into this sector, said a legal and tax advisory firm in its press release last year.

GNLM

Respects paid to faculty members of English Department



YANGON, 2 May — Old students of English major from Dagon University held a ceremony to pay respects to faculty members at Shwe Shan Kan restaurant on Inya Road, here, on 1 May.

The students presented gifts to the faculty members after paying respects. Retired professor Daw Sein Sein Myint and Professor Daw Swe Swe Pwint of English Department of the university gave words of advice to the students.

An old student on behalf of all spoke words of thanks. Later, an Anyeint troupe performed entertainment to the attendees.—GNLM

Kyee Pwar Yay library in Htugyi hopes for President's excellent award 2015

INGAPU, 2 May—Kyee Pwar Yay Library facilitated with Internet in Htugyi, Ingapu Township, Ayeyawady Region, has been chosen in the shortlist of the President's Excellent Award 2015, sources said.

The library was estab-

lished on 18 October 1931. The library launched its e-library and Internet services to the readers on 17 May 2010 and Skype service on 26 October 2011, according to Chairman of the library committee U Tin Win.

The library runs its service six days a week from 7 am to 11 am and from 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm daily, except Sunday. Moreover, it has opened reading rooms in two villages and three schools in Ingapu and Myanaung townships.

Officials conducted basic computer and Internet courses to 131 local residents from 2011 to 2014.

That is why local people hope for securing the President's excellent ward 2015 for the library out of eight facilities across the nation.

Soe Myint (Myanaung)

Departmental officials focus on farmland management



NYAUNGLEBIN, 2 May — Nyaunglebin Township farmland management committee held a coordination meeting at Thiri Yadana Hall in the township on 30 April.

Secretary of the committee U Khin Pe, who is

head of Township Settlement and Land Records Department, explained 2002 farmland law, Head of Township Planning Department U Khin Zaw Oo, proper flow of water, Head of Township Agriculture Department Daw Thet Thet

Nyunt, supply of quality seeds of crops and Head of Township Rural Development Department U Than Lwin, preparations for rural development. Officials reviewed solving farmland problems in the township.

Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)



Thai, Myanmar businessmen exchange views on bilateral trade

MYEIK, 2 May — Businessmen in Myeik region held business talks with a seven-member delegation from DITP Thailand and officials of Thai Embassy at Pearl Thanda Hotel in Lower Yaypone Ward in

Myeik, Taninthayi Region on Friday. Economic Counsellor Mr Boon Intiratana of Thailand Myeik Township Administrator U Thein Win extended greetings.

Myanmar and Thai businessmen exchanged

views on bilateral trade in production of foodstuff, personal goods, marine products, fishery equipment, agricultural machinery, motorcycle and car parts.—Zaw Myo Naing (Myeik District IPRD)



Outstanding students visit farmlands in Nyaungshwe Tsp

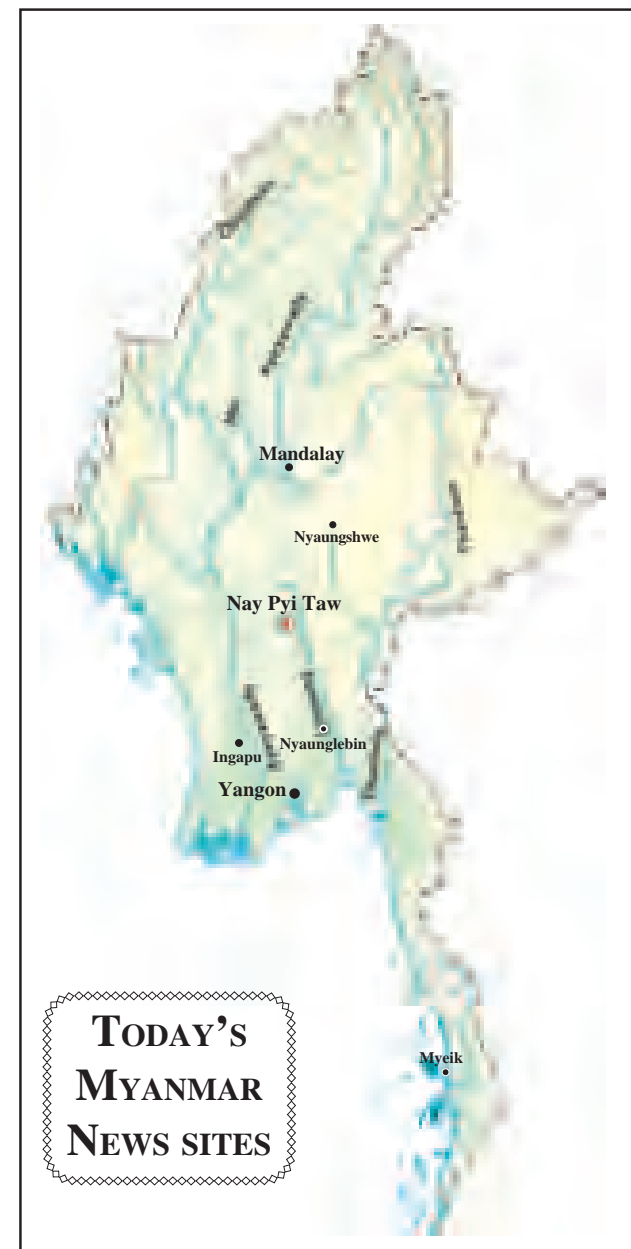
NYAUNGSHWE, 2 May — A total of 176 outstanding students led by supervisor teachers from Recreation Camp (Inlay) made a trip to Paletwe paddy farm, organic vegetable farm and paddy test plot of

farmer U Win Shwe in Tila Village in Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State, on 28 April.

Head of Township Agriculture Department U Zaw Win Tun spoke about development of

agriculture sector, environmental conservation, production of Paletwe hybrid paddy seeds for increasing income of farmers and cultivation of organic crops.

Nay Myo Thurein



NATIONAL



Vice-President U Nyan Tun and wife presents offertories to a Sayadaw. MNA



Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham and wife presents offertories to a Sayadaw.—MNA

President U Thein Sein, wife Daw Khin Khin Win attend...

(from page 1) Afterwards, the President and wife and party offered day meal to the mem-

bers of the Sangha. Also present at the ceremonies were wives of the Vice-Presidents and the Commander-in-Chief, Union Election Commission

Chairman U Tin Aye, Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Oo, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal U Mya Thein, Union ministers and senior military officers.

Construction of Maha Bawdhi Pagoda, one of four holy places, started in 2011 and a ceremony to hoist golden umbrella atop the Pagoda took place on the

Fullmoon Day of Kason in 2013. Construction of three other holy places kicked off in 2013 and the inauguration ceremony was held today. —MNA

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets US business people, congresspersons



Pyiduangs Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets businessmen at US-ASEAN Business Council in Washington DC.—MNA

WASHINGTON DC, 2 May—Pyiduangs Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann met business people at the headquarters of the US-ASEAN Business Council in Washington DC on 1 May. At the meeting, the speaker explained how his country is implementing the multiparty democratic system and the open market economic system, inviting

US businesses to invest in the country. Parliament is amending laws and regulations that restrict foreign investments, he said, adding investments of US business industries will create a new level of relationships between the two countries. Sixteen companies present at the meeting raised queries of investments and business transactions in Myanmar. Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann also met Congressman Matt Salmon, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, at the building of the United States House of Representatives on 30 April, discussing cooperation between the two parliaments and exchanging views on democratic reform. On the same day, the speaker also met Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, and Congressman Joseph Crowley, a member of the Democratic Party. Their discussions focused on development of democratic reform in the country.—MNA

Outstanding students visit Popa region, Scouts' get-together in PyinOoLwin

BAGAN, 2 May – Camp leader U Soe Myint Tun led outstanding students from Recreation Camp (Bagan) to visit Popa region on 2 May. They observed flora and fauna in the region. PyinOoLwin scouts opened their camps in Kandawgyi Gardens on 2 May. At the opening ceremony Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Ye Myint urged the scouts to cultivate themselves to become happy, healthy and helpful youths.—MNA

Union FM sends felicitations to Poland

NAY PYI TAW, 3 May—U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a messages of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Grzegorz Schetyna, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Poland, which falls on 3 May 2015.—MNA

Union Information minister receives foreign delegations



Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut holds talks with Mr David N. Saperstein, the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.—MNA

YANGON, 2 May— Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut received Mr Jorgen Lorentzen, director of Norwegian Hedda Foundation, on Saturday morning at the building of Printing and Publication on Theinbyu Road, here. Both side discussed establishment of the House of Literature, the first of its kind in Myanmar and supported by the Norwegian government.

The meeting was also attended by U Tint Swe, newly appointed permanent secretary, and director generals of the Ministry of Information, as well as members of the Myanmar Writers and Journalists Association, the Myanmar Writers' Union, the Myanmar Poets' Union, the Pen Myanmar Foundation and the Myanmar Literature Development Organization.

In the afternoon, the union minister received Mr David N. Saperstein, the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. During the meeting at the building of Printing and Publication at Theinbyu Road, the minister and the ambassador discussed activities of religious organizations and freedom of religious affairs in Myanmar.—MNA

Monsoons could bring disease, a second crisis, to Nepal

LONDON, 2 May — There is only “a small window of time” for relief workers in Nepal to put in place measures to protect people from deadly disease outbreaks, a senior United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) official said on Saturday.

The dangers posed would be exacerbated by wet and muddy conditions brought on by the upcoming rainy season, said Rownak Khan, UNICEF’s deputy representative in the country. Nepal’s monsoon season normally runs from June to September.

The confirmed death toll from the 7.8 magnitude quake which devastated the densely-populated Kathmandu Valley on 25 April has risen above 6,200, with more than 14,000 injured, according to the Nepali government.

There was no number for the missing, but bodies



A man sits on the rubble of collapsed houses following Saturday’s earthquake at Sankhu, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal on 1 May, 2015. —REUTERS

were still being pulled from the debris of ruined buildings, and rescue workers have not been able to reach some remote areas.

“Hospitals are overflowing, water is scarce,

bodies are still buried under the rubble and people are still sleeping in the open,” UNICEF’s Khan said in a statement. “This is a perfect breeding ground for diseases.”

The earthquake last Saturday has left 3 million people needing food assistance and flattened more than 130,000 homes, meaning 24,000 people are currently staying in 13 camps

in Kathmandu, UNICEF said.

Most urgently needed are medical supplies, clean water, sanitation, and shelter for those whose homes have been destroyed, Chris Tidey, a UNICEF spokesman, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some hospitals in the worst affected areas have been completely destroyed. There is no shortage of staff, but an urgent need for medical supplies, the group said in a statement.

“We must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent and control communicable disease outbreaks, like diarrhoea,” said Dr Roderico Ofrin, head of the WHO’s emergency response, in a statement on Friday.

“When the monsoon rains come, it’s going to be pretty nasty indeed,” Chris

Tidey said, warning of a second crisis later in the year if adequate provisions are not put in place.

The prevalence of diseases such as diarrhoea, respiratory illnesses, measles and even cholera, which has been endemic in Nepal in recent years, “skyrocket” when people are living outdoors in heavy rains, Tidey said.

After an earthquake devastated Haiti in January 2010, killing more than a quarter of a million people, the Caribbean island nation was ravaged by diseases including cholera, which killed thousands in the years following the disaster. A 2011 report from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said the Haiti cholera outbreak was likely caused by UN peacekeepers from Nepal discharging raw sewage near a major river used for drinking water.—Reuters

Thai junta reforms to fail without better charter



Thailand’s opposition leader and former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva

BANGKOK, 2 May — Any achievements by Thailand’s ruling junta while in power will be lost without significant changes to the country’s draft constitution, Democrat Party leader and former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said on Friday.

The military toppled an elected government last May and is engineering wide ranging reforms to heal the country’s deep political divisions.

But both the Democrat Party and its rivals have called the junta’s draft charter undemocratic, saying it could herald more turmoil under a weak coalition government.

“If they don’t come up with a constitution that is accepted, and cannot come up with one that can be sustained, they will have lost everything,” Abhisit, who

was prime minister from 2008 to 2011, told Reuters in an interview.

“Whatever they have achieved will just come to nothing.”

Drafters have worked on the false assumption that weakening political parties would prevent abuse of power and stem corruption, Abhisit said.

But a weakened party system would play into the hands of politicians such as exiled billionaire and former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, he added.

“He’s got the resources to draw politicians away from political parties into groupings that could actually form a new coalition,” he added.

Thailand has been divided for more than a decade between supporters of Thaksin and the Bangkok-based royalist-military establishment, which revived Thaksin’s popularity.

Abhisit said his party had “never had a problem” with Thaksin’s Puea Thai Party but that it should take the opportunity to move away from the “Thaksin agenda”. He added, “I’ve always maintained that the conflict has been between Thaksin and the Thai state. That should give a clue to the people in power, as well that the secret of reconciliation is to get beyond the Thaksin issue.”

Reuters

Abe seeks war anniversary statement showing future of Japan

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Friday he will deliver a statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II this summer that will show the future direction of Japan.

Speaking to Japanese reporters in Los Angeles, the fourth and last destination of his weeklong tour of the United States, Abe reiterated that his statement will be based on the position taken by his predecessors, which he has not elaborated.

“I will compile one using a great amount of our wisdom that can show the rest of the world what kind of a country Japan will aim to be toward the 80th, 90th and 100th anniversaries,” Abe said. He also said, “I will stick to the position adopted by successive Cabinets on perceptions of (wartime) history in its en-

tirety. I’ll compile a statement based on it.”

Abe’s use of language over Japan’s wartime behaviour has been a focus of attention during his trip, which also took him to Boston, Washington and San Francisco, amid speculation his phrasing here would indicate the coming war statement.

Abe was apparently referring to the statements released in 1995 by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama to mark the 50th war anniversary and in 2005 by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, as well as a 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the issue of women who were forced to work at wartime Japanese military brothels.

Murayama and Koizumi expressed their “deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology” over Japan’s aggression and colonial rule

in other Asian countries before and during the world war, while Kono expressed his “sincere apologies and remorse” to the women euphemistically called “comfort women” in Japan.

Abe suggested last month he will refrain from using exactly the same words as seen in the past statements in his own war statement. On the high-profile issue of domestic security legislation that would pave the way for Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defence, Abe dismissed criticism from opposition parties that he made light of the legislature at home by pledging to the US Congress that he would enact related bills by the summer.

“It’s quite reasonable. I meant we will make efforts to that end,” Abe said.

On Wednesday, in the first-ever speech by a Japanese leader at a joint meet-

ing of the US legislature, Abe said Japan will enact the bills “by this coming summer.”

The bills would give legal backing to various activities by the Self-Defence Forces in line with the new security policy by Abe’s government, including revised guidelines on bilateral defence cooperation with the US military, which was released in New York on Monday.

As Japan is slated to host next year’s summit of the Group of Seven major nations, Abe said his government will decide the host city by the upcoming G-7 summit in Germany in early June.

“I haven’t decided yet at this point” which city the government will pick from among the eight candidates of Sendai, Niigata, Karuizawa, Hamamatsu, Nagoya, Shima, Kobe and Hiroshima, he said.—Kyodo News

Cambodia holds Expo to promote local products

PHNOM PENH, 2 May — The 5th edition of One Village One Product Expo kicked off here on Friday afternoon, aiming to promote local products to consumers and tourists, officials said.

More than 80 producers from 13 cities and provinces have their products,

including jewelry, cosmetics, traditional silk, stone and wooden sculptures, food, and fruit, displayed at the three-day event, said Chea Samnang, secretary general of the One Village One Product National Committee.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the expo,

Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly said the event aimed to promote the consumption of local products and to seek markets for producers and farmers.

“This is a good opportunity for producers and farmers to promote their products to local consumers and foreign tourists,” he

said at the event, which was held at a public park in the south of the Royal Palace.

He said the event would also encourage producers and farmers to increase their production and to focus on quality so as to compete with imported goods.

Xinhua

WORLD

ADB meetings to discuss lending boost, cooperation with other bodies

BAKU, 2 May — Financial leaders from Asia-Pacific countries are gathering in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku for the Asian Development Bank's annual meeting and related events from Saturday to discuss ways to promote the region's growth including boosting the institution's financing capacity and enhancing cooperation with other multilateral lenders. Members of the Manila-based bank are expected to further discussions on a proposed merger of its two main financing instruments for an expansion of its lending capacity to meet growing funding needs of the region and reduce poverty. At the seminars and the two-day annual meeting from Monday, the participants are also expected to exchange views on collaboration between the ADB and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a new multilateral body to be set up later this year to help fund infrastructure projects.

Through the AIIB, China pledges to mobilize more resources to respond to financing needs well beyond the capacity of existing lenders, though developed countries see the move as another attempt by Beijing to increase its regional influence. Though not directly motivated by the AIIB, the ADB has been seeking to strengthen its role as the lending body and improve its project screening for faster approval procedures. The ADB estimates the region's infrastructure financing needs at over \$8 trillion between 2010 and 2020. In 2014, it approved \$22.93 billion in lending including co-financing.

ADB members will continue discussions on the proposal floated by the bank to merge by 2017 its Asian Development Fund, which provides concessional loans and grants to developing countries, and Ordinary Capital Resources, focused on middle-income countries, as a way of leveraging available resources. The ADB says the result will be the expanded ADF equity and OCR balance sheet meaning a rise of up to 40 percent in the lender's annual financing.

Japan, the top shareholder of the ADB, is separately considering strengthening its commitment to supporting Asia's development, according to a source close to the matter. Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso will likely brief his counterparts including Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei on an outline of Japan's initiatives in increasing funding for "Asia's medium- and long-term growth," the source said, though details are still being worked out for an official announcement in the future by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Other topics of discussion will also include sustainable development goals beyond 2015, climate change and disaster risk resilience.—*Kyodo News*

Iran stance and regional policy bring French leader Gulf Arab rewards



French President Francois Hollande during a Working Medal of Honour awards ceremony on May Day at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, France, on 1 May, 2015.
REUTERS

PARIS, 2 May — France's tough line in talks with Iran and a similar analysis to Gulf Arab states on regional crises has sealed strategic new links in the Middle East that will be cemented when President Francois Hollande attends a regional leaders' summit next week. Those ties, which Paris has sought to nurture since Hollande came to power in 2012 — were highlighted on Thursday when Qatar agreed to buy French-made Rafale fighter jets in a 6.3-billion-euro (4.60 billion pounds) deal. Hollande

travels to Doha on 4 May to sign the contract before heading to Riyadh at King Salman's invitation to attend a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) heads of state, a first for a Western leader, at which issues from the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen to Syria's civil war will top the agenda. "It's important for us because it shows the appreciation of Gulf countries in our strategic choices with regard to Iran, Syria and the fight against Islamic State," said a senior French diplomat. "We've shown we're a

reliable partner that doesn't shirk its responsibilities in the region." France, a UN Security Council veto-holder, has held out for strict conditions on Iran in any deal to ease sanctions on Teheran in return for monitoring and curbs of its nuclear programme. It also rebuked Washington two years ago for backing down at the last minute on bombing Syria over the use of chemical weapons, a decision that enraged Gulf Arab Sunni states. France is part of a US-led coalition against Islamic State militants in Iraq, has thousands of troops in West Africa fighting al-Qaeda-linked groups and has a naval base in the United Arab Emirates.

Hollande's visit comes 10 days before Gulf leaders travel to the United States for a summit with President Barack Obama.

"France has a reputation of being tougher than the Americans in the Iran negotiations and that can only please the Saudis," said Francois Heisbourg, a former defence official and special adviser at the Paris-based Strategic Research Foundation. "It has

shown that it has a regional vision and the capacity to act where and when it feels it's necessary," he said, adding that the intention was not to sideline the United States but remind Washington it wasn't alone in the world.

Paris' shift to the Gulf states first under former president Nicolas Sarkozy and now Hollande has paid off. Over the last year Paris has sealed more than \$15 billion dollars of military contracts in the region. The Riyadh summit will see further bilateral talks between France and individual states on business ties, officials said.

"Our American friends are aggressive competitors and have a very efficient diplomacy, but France offers an alternative diplomacy," said Eric Trappier, the chief executive of Rafale-maker Dassault AviationPA.

"It has close strategic interests with some countries and so with a good fighter jet product as well then the stars align," Trappier said, adding there were talks with other Gulf states for the sale of combat jets.—*Reuters*

Hundreds protest in LA demanding Abe apologize to "comfort women"

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Hundreds gathered in downtown Los Angeles on Friday to protest against Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese government for failing to deliver an apology over the "comfort women" issue and other war crimes in World War II during Abe's official visit this week to the United States.

The protesters representing a large number of Asian-American and other organizations, mostly of Korean and Chinese descent, held up posters and signs and chanted outside the hotel where Abe is staying in Los Angeles, the final stop of his US stay through Saturday, demanding he apologize and acknowledge the truth.

Many said they are displeased that the Japanese leader did not seize the opportunity to give a formal apology to the women during his address Wednesday to a joint session of Congress, the first ever by a Japanese head of state.

Young Kim, a state assemblywoman representing several cities in Southern California's Orange County and the only Korean-American legislator currently serving in California, said the speech "would have been a great opportunity to extend (Abe's) sincere apology on behalf of the Japanese government, but he didn't."

"He only touched the surface

of the issue, and it's a missed opportunity for Abe to right this historical wrong," she added.

An apology would benefit Japan, said Phyllis Kim, spokeswoman for the Korean American Forum of California, an organization seeking to end wartime crimes against women and children.

"This is how Japan can be accepted and respected by its neighbouring countries," she said. "The current Japanese government has the obligation to look squarely at history and acknowledge what happened, and resolve whatever needs to be resolved because the victims are still waiting for an apology."

At a morning rally in Pershing Square across from the hotel, speakers with several organizations, including some Japanese-Americans, spoke in favour of reparations.

Harold Kameya, president of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Citizens League, said he is sad that Japan's reputation is being damaged.

"Damaged because the prime minister refuses to compensate the comfort women survivors and refuses to clear the issue once and for all...(and) to declare an unconditional apology for the many, many war crimes committed by the Imperial Japanese Army, crimes that were committed in the name of the emperor," he said.—*Kyodo News*

German president says Berlin should be open to Greek war reparations

BERLIN, 2 May — German President Joachim Gauck expressed support on Friday for Athens' demands for reparations for the Nazi occupation of Greece in World War Two, even though the government in Berlin has repeatedly rejected the claims.

Gauck, who has little real power in Germany but a penchant for defying convention, said in an interview to be published in Saturday's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper that Germany should consider its historical responsibility to Greece.

"We are not only people who are living in this day and age but we're also the descendants of those who left behind a trail of destruction in Europe during World War Two — in Greece, among other places, where we shamefully knew little about it for so long," Gauck said.

"It's the right thing to do for a history-conscious country like ours to consider what possibilities there might be for reparations."

Greece's demand for 278.7 billion euros (206.14 billion pounds) in reparations for the brutal Nazi occupation have mostly fallen on deaf ears, but some legal experts say it may have a case.

Many in Greece blame Germany, their biggest creditor, for the tough austerity measures and record unemployment that have followed from two international bailouts totalling 240 billion euros.

Last month, economy minister



German President Joachim Gauck

and vice-chancellor Sigmar Gabriel called the demand "stupid".

Gabriel said Greece wanted to squeeze some leeway out of its euro zone partners as they set conditions for further financial aid to help Greece avoid bankruptcy.

"And this leeway has absolutely nothing to do with World War Two or reparation payments," he said.

German officials have previously argued that Germany has already honoured its obligations, not least with a 115 million deutsche mark payment to Greece in 1960.

Gauck, a former East German pastor, recently caused a stir by condemning the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turkish forces a century ago as "genocide", a term that the Berlin government had long rejected. Turkey denies the charge.—*Reuters*

Kerry says US wants to renew ties with Sri Lanka



US Secretary of State John Kerry (centre L) shakes hands with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena before a meeting at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 2 May, 2015.—REUTERS

COLOMBO, 2 May — US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Saturday the United States wanted to renew ties with Sri Lanka and announced the start of an annual bilateral dialogue after years of tensions with the island nation's former government.

Kerry arrived in the South Asian country earlier on Saturday, the first time in a decade that a US secretary of state has visited Sri Lanka. Washington had years of tensions over human rights with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was unseated by Maithripala Sirisena in a surprise election win in January.

Sri Lanka had also tilted heavily towards China as Rajapaksa fell out with the West over human rights and allegations of war crimes at the end of the government's drawn-out conflict with Tamil separatists, which ended in 2009.

Kerry said Washington wanted to work with Sirisena and lauded the new government's efforts to tackle corruption, build democratic institutions and address the wrongs of the past through a process of national reconciliation.

"I am here today because I want to say to the people of Sri Lanka in this journey to restore democracy the American people will stand with you," Kerry said after meeting Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera.

"We intend to broaden and to deepen our partnership with you," Kerry said while announcing the annual dialogue.

Samaraweera called Kerry's visit a "momentous occasion" and said it "signified the return of our little island nation to the centre

stage of international affairs".

Kerry has been credited in Sri Lanka for his role in pressing for peaceful and inclusive elections, and for calling Rajapaksa on the eve of voting to urge him to respect the outcome.

Kerry was due to meet Sirisena later on Saturday as well as Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Rajavarotheyam Sampanthan, who heads the main ethnic Tamil political party. He will also discuss US interest in expanding trade and investment with Sri Lanka, a senior State Department official said. Sri Lanka exports roughly \$2.5 billion in goods, mostly textiles, to the United States a year.

The State Department official said Washington was "encouraged" by the new government's cooperation with the United Nations over a UN report on possible atrocities committed during the final stages of the civil war.

The United Nations said Rajapaksa's government had failed to properly investigate war crimes. In February, at the request of Sirisena's government, the UN Human Rights Council agreed to delay the release of the UN report until September. Sirisena appears to be more willing to work with the United Nations and his government has said it wants to conduct the war crimes investigation with UN assistance.

"It's a real opening in terms of Sri Lanka's relations with the international community and with the United Nations," the State Department official said. "We'll have to see where this goes with Sri Lanka and its dialogue with the UN"—Reuters

Germany needs to quickly clear up spy charges: Steinmeier

LJUBLJANA, 2 May — The German government needs to quickly clear up accusations that its BND foreign intelligence agency helped the United States spy on government officials and firms in Europe such as Airbus Group, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Friday.

The reports in *Der Spiegel* magazine that the BND helped the US National Security Agency over 10 years embarrassed Germany and upset many in a country where surveillance is a sensitive topic due to abuses by the Nazis and the East German Stasi.

The magazine also reported in its Friday edition that the BND in 2013 ordered staff to delete 12,000 internet "selectors" — IP addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of German government officials — that it had been tracking for the NSA.

"We've got to work to clear this up as quickly as possible to know what hap-

pened — and what didn't happen," Steinmeier said during a visit to the Slovenian capital. He said the focus of the investigation should be in parliament.

Steinmeier, a leader of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) in Chancellor Angela Merkel's right-left grand coalition government, declined to comment when asked whether the scandal was tarnishing Germany's reputation.

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere, a close ally of Merkel and her chief of staff from 2005 to 2009, denied that he lied to parliament about intelligence cooperation with the NSA. Her chancellery has said that since 2008 it was aware of the NSA interest in spying on European defense firms, even though parliament was told in 2014 it had no information about that.

The SPD's deputy leader, general secretary Yasmin Fahimi, joined in the criticism of the chancellery by left-wing opposition



German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier speaks at a news conference upon the second day of G7 foreign ministers meeting in the northern German city of Luebeck, on 15 April, 2015.—REUTERS

and the media on Friday.

"The chancellery's supervision of the BND was a total failure," she told the *Passauer Neue Presse* daily. "It's responsible to make sure the intelligence agency behaves."

German media have also reported that BND officials helped US agencies spy on the French president's office, the foreign ministry in Paris and the European Commission.

Airbus Group said on Thursday it planned to complain to German authorities over reports the BND had helped the United States to spy on it and other European firms.

When allegations emerged in 2013 that the United States had bugged Merkel's mobile phone, she declared: "Spying among friends is not at all acceptable".

Reuters

Expo Milano 2015 kicks off with aim of sustainable development



Photo taken on 1 May, 2015 shows the opening ceremony of the Expo Milano 2015 in Milan, Italy. The Expo Milano 2015 kicked off here on Friday with the aim to give a concrete answer to the vital need for mankind to ensure enough healthy food for all while respecting nature.—XINHUA

MILAN, (Italy), 2 May — The Expo Milano 2015 world exposition kicked off here on Friday with the aim to give a concrete answer to the vital need for mankind to ensure enough healthy food for all while respecting nature.

"Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life," the theme of Expo, will encourage international discussion through the events organized both inside and outside the exhibition space across the entire city, Expo Sole Commissioner of the Italian Gov-

ernment Giuseppe Sala said at the opening ceremony.

"The only way to build the future is embracing the world... Expo means looking at the world and trying to improve it all together," Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said. More than 140 countries and organizations will present solutions at their pavilions, of which a record number of 54 are self-built, and share know-how to meet the challenge of a planet that is experiencing strong contradictions.

"The Expo Milano

2015 will be a platform for building common grounds for present and future cooperation on this global challenge," President of the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) Ferdinand Nagy said.

In fact, Expo Milano 2015 starts from the consideration there are still about 870 million undernourished people in the world but on the other hand there are also those who die from disorders associated with excessive food intake, Milan Mayor Giuliano Pisapia stressed.

Thus at the centre of the Italian six-month event there is the idea that for the first time in its centuries-old history, a world exposition is not simply an exhibition of human progress, but the opportunity to promote collaboration between nations, organizations and businesses to develop strategies to improve the quality of life and support the environment.

The exhibition area, which extends over an area of about one million square meters located northwest of Milan, will be a live stage from morning to night with thousands of performances, concerts, workshops and

exhibitions.

The Expo Site will be open from 10 am to 11 pm local time every day of the week to ensure visitors can experience all the cultural and dining offerings presented by all participants and partners.

Another of the most innovative projects introduced by Expo Milano 2015 are "clusters," or shared exhibition areas which group countries devoid of self-built pavilions around themes that characterize specific regions such as the Bio-Mediterranean, islands and arid areas.

"We came from Venice, around 300 km from here. We decided to buy the tickets for the opening day as we wanted to enjoy this cultural experience from the beginning," a man told *Xinhua* while visiting the site with his wife and three children on Friday.

"Our country of origin is Romania and we also have links with Moldavia," the man, Igor Baranovschi, said. "The issue of a sustainable development is crucial for all countries of the world and we are happy to be here to share our views," he added.

Xinhua

WORLD

Int'l anti-terror coalition kills 17 in northern Syria: activists

DAMASCUS, 2 May — At least 17 civilians were killed and over 40 others wounded on Friday by the airstrikes of the US-led anti-terror coalition on a village in northern Syria, a monitor group reported.

The warplanes of the anti-terror alliance struck the village of Beirmhali in the northwestern countryside of Aleppo Province in northern Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the death toll could rise due to the large number of critically wounded people.

It said the recent killings add to the previous estimates, which indicate that 66 civilians were killed by the international coalition airstrikes against the positions of the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria since the coalition started its strikes in the war-torn country in September 2014.

Separately on Friday, a total of 12 Kurdish fighters of the People's Protection Units (YPG) and 35 IS militants were killed

during clashes that erupted between both sides in the northern province of al-Hasakah, said the Observatory.

The UK-based watchdog group said the YPG advanced against the IS in some areas in al-Hasakah, a predominantly-Kurdish province.

Meanwhile, the Observatory said the Syrian government forces gunned down a rebel commander known as Khadid al-Hayani, who leads the Badr Martyrs brigade in the northern city of Aleppo.

It added that Al-Hayani and his group are the main responsible for shelling the government-controlled areas in Aleppo with mortars and other improvised rocket shelling known as the Hell Canon.

The Observatory said 568 people, including 130 kids, were killed last year alone as a result of the rebel shelling on the government-controlled areas in western Aleppo.

Xinhua

Russian UN envoy — West, Arab states pay 'lip service' on Yemen aid

UNITED NATIONS, 2 May — Russia criticized Western and Arab members of the UN Security Council on Friday for paying "lip service" to humanitarian needs in Yemen after the council was unable to agree on a Russian-drafted statement calling for pauses in fighting to allow delivery of aid.

In the latest sign of increasing tensions between Russia and the West, who are already at odds over Syria and Ukraine, Russian UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said his three-paragraph statement on Yemen was met with a "procrastination reaction."

"I was prepared to drop a reference to (a call for) an immediate ceasefire, just at the very least they need to have periodic humanitarian pauses to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies, they couldn't even agree to that," Churkin said af-

ter closed-door consultations on Yemen.

"If you cannot agree to a motherhood and apple pie statement what can you agree on," he said. "They pay lip service, they say 'things are very bad, but what can we do about it?'"

Churkin said members were consulting with their capitals over the statement but he was sceptical about any agreement.

Violence has been spreading across Yemen since last year when Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa and effectively removed President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The United Nations says about 12 million people need help.

The Iran-allied Houthis and soldiers loyal to former Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh have been fighting alongside each other on the Arabian peninsula. A Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes against the Houthis last month.

The United States said it fully supports the unim-



Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vitaly Churkin addresses members of the UN Security Council during a meeting about the Ukraine situation, at the UN headquarters in New York, on 6 March, 2015.—REUTERS

ped delivery of aid to Yemen, including through humanitarian pauses.

"But let's be clear — it is the ongoing, unilateral actions of Houthis' and forces loyal to former president Saleh that are responsible for the humanitarian crisis," said a US official.

"The Houthis and Saleh forces have sought to undermine the political transition process and have been aggressively expanding and occupying territory

since mid-2014," he said.

Earlier this month the Security Council imposed an arms embargo targeting the Houthis and soldiers loyal to Saleh.

The Russian draft statement also expressed support for the new UN envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, who last week replaced Jamal Benomar and is charged with trying to broker peace in Yemen.

Reuters

57 militants killed in latest operations in Afghanistan

KABUL, 2 May — About 57 Taliban militants have been killed in fresh military operations across Afghanistan, said the country's Interior Ministry on Saturday morning.

"Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) carried out operations in Uruzgan, Zabul, Herat, Ghazni,

Helmand, Logar, Kunduz, Sari Pul, Badakhshan, Faryab, Paktia, Khost and Baghlan provinces over the past 24 hours. As a result 57 armed Taliban members were killed, 35 wounded and two others were arrested by the ANSF," the ministry said in a statement.

The ANSF also re-

covered and defused seven roadside bombs planted by the militants in addition to seizing weapons, according to the statement.

The statement did not disclose if there were any casualties on the side of security forces. The Taliban militant group has yet to make comments.—Xinhua



A vehicle is burned in a street in Guadalajara city, Jalisco state, Mexico, on 1 May, 2015. Three soldiers and a state police officer were killed on Friday in a day of violence, fires and blockades in Guadalajara city, in the western state of Jalisco, said the Secretariat of National Defence.—XINHUA

Over 200,000 South Sudanese have fled to Ethiopia since start of conflict, UN says

UNITED NATIONS, 2 May — The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said on Friday that the number of South Sudanese refugees who have fled to Ethiopia since fighting broke out in South Sudan in mid-December 2013 has passed the 200,000 mark, and more were expected amid fresh conflict across the border, a UN spokesman said.

"UNHCR field staff members have observed a sharp increase in new South Sudanese arrivals, mainly women, children and older people," Farhan Haq, the deputy UN spokesman, said at a daily news briefing here.

"Most are fleeing from renewed fighting in Upper Nile and Jonglei states or as a precautionary measure," he said. "Some young men also say that they are fleeing from alleged forced conscription."

Some 199,000 of the refugees are in western Ethiopia's Gambella region while about 3,000 are in neighbouring Ben-

ishangul-Gumuz region. UNHCR field staff has observed a sharp increase in new South Sudanese arrivals from some 1,000 people a month in the first quarter of this year to more than 4,000 refugees registered in April.

The UN refugee agency is currently registering more than 10,000 new arrivals at various entry points in the Gambella region.

The new arrivals tell stories of "walking for several days through the bush with little or no food and water and carrying few or no belongings," UNHCR has reported. The refugees are being relocated to the Pugnido Refugee Camp, which currently hosts nearly 60,000 South Sudanese refugees, and the Tierki-di Refugee Camp, which hosts about 50,000.

These camps are being enlarged to cope with the new influx, the UN agency said.

A young mother told UNHCR that she fled her

home when nine months pregnant and gave birth on the way. She crossed into Ethiopia with her family at the Pagak entry point, where more than 7,000 new arrivals are being registered before being transferred to camps.

The arrivals since December 2013 add to a refugee population from southern Sudan of about 58,000, most of who have been staying in the country for more than 20 years. Ethiopia is Africa's largest refugee-hosting nation with nearly 700,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, including South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

The new arrivals, who are being provided with high energy biscuits and relief items such as mattresses and plastic sheets for shelter, say more people are on their way to Ethiopia. UNHCR is working with the Ethiopian government and other partners to provide humanitarian assistance.—Xinhua



Sunday, 3 May, 2015

Awareness is ultimate value of life

By Aung Khin

Raising awareness is the highest value of practice in life. If awareness and preparedness cannot be developed, consequences could not be filtered or reduced during bitter experiences.

In many circumstances, knowledge and awareness play roles in prevention of life-threatening incidents. While decreasing the tragic events of violence, awareness should be raised to save lives around the world.

Cyclone Nargis made landfall in Myanmar on May

2, 2008, crossing the south of Myanmar over two days. The severe destructive cyclone in some decades seriously hit Ayeyawady delta, leaving the death toll of more than 80 thousand people and around 50 thousand went mission in accordance with official figures. A total of 37 townships were utterly affected by the cyclone.

The UN estimated that as many as 2.4 million people were affected, including from separation of family members to forcing affected people into domestic or foreign migration. As the current generation has not experienced such powerful disaster, awareness and preparedness measures were not in ready due to the lack of such knowledge.

The affected people hoped for a return to normalcy in the aftermath of Nargis cyclone. As humanitarian assistance could not live up their expectation, these people had to seek jobs away from home, and some of them fell into victims of human trafficking gangs.

Although natural disaster cannot be stopped, knowl-

edge and preparedness are crucial for reduction of bad consequences. The work of recovery and rehabilitation is long-term after a damaging natural disaster as some donors failed to keep their pledges all their pledges for humanitarian assistance.

Awareness programmes should be fully launched as severe disasters could cost many lives, along with many complications impacting on the development of the country.

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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.

The last old Myanmar capital city Ratanapon [Mandalay] Part IV

Special features of the palace and palace city

Western envoys and visitor were struck with wonder at unique features of Mindon's palace "Mya Nan San Kyaw" and palace city "Lay Kyun Aung Myey". The first was the Anauk Wun, the Minister in charge of the affairs of Western Palace, who looked after all female members of the royal family and residents of the buildings in the western group, on the palace platform. The next was the Thabin Wun, the Minister in charge of all entertainments. He had the full authority to act, on behalf of the king, regarding all performances of music, dance, dramatic and puppet shows and the royal theatre house on the palace platform.

The most unique and extraordinary of "Mya Nan San Kyaw" palace was the eight thrones and nine thrones rooms. In following the precedents and procedures in the Jataka stories, there was the conspicuous absence in Myanmar palaces of three palaces Yama, Thuba and Thuyama, Summer, Rain and Winter, three seasons' palaces in the capital of Kapilavathu for Prince Siddhartha [Bodisatha] to reside before he renounced his mundane life at the age of 29. But there were eight thrones in Myanmar palaces, which were placed in different throne halls. Each throne was used for specific function and ceremony.

They were (1) Sihasana Throne the most important and the largest of all eight thrones. Wooden gilt stylized figures of male lion were placed in the niches of this throne. It was made of Yamanay wood [Gemelia arborea]. This throne was placed in the Myey Nan

Pyathat Saung [The great Spired Audience Hall] on which the king sat in full regalia to receive homage and to hold daily assembly. Also on this throne the king received the rite of Yazabetheik [crowning ceremony and swearing coronation oath. Lion is the symbol of sovereignty, bravery, integrity and faithfulness. There was another lion throne of the same design and size in the Hluttaw [the king's privy council] where the king held daily conference with his Hluttaw members on matters of importance. In the absence of the king, either the crown prince or the chief minister presided on behalf of the king. They did not sit on the throne, only put their hands on it.

Next was Bamayasana Throne [Bumble Bee Throne]. With guilt and stylized figures of bumble bee in the niches. This throne was made of Karaway wood [cinna monum spp] and was placed in the Hman Nan Saung [Crystal or Glass palace]. Bumble bee symbolizes unity, perseverance and wealth. The king sat on it when he discussed privately with his interior ministers.

The third throne was the Elephant Throne [Gazasana] placed in the Bye Taik [Council chamber]. Gilt and stylized figures of male elephants were placed in the niches. It was made of Saga wood [Champaca]. Male elephant symbolizes majesty, might and longevity. The king sat on it when he issued promotion or demotion orders and gave award and reward.

The fourth throne was Peacock Throne [Mayura Sana] made of Pauk tree wood [Butea monosperma]. Gilt stylized figures of peacock

were placed in the throne's niches. This throne was placed in the North Smote Hall. The king sat on it when he received gifts such as horses and elephants of exceptional breed and quality presented him by his vassals or nobilities. Peacock symbolizes national pride, glory and auspiciousness.

The fifth throne was the Deer Throne [Minga Sana] made of Yeythaphan wood [Ficus glomerata] with gilt stylized figures of male deer in the niches of the throne. It was placed in the South Smote Saung Hall. The king sat on it when he discussed with his most trusted ministers regarding the affairs of national importance. Deer symbolizes swiftness, compassion and magnanimity.

The sixth throne was Conch Shell Throne [Sankha Sana] made of Taung Peinhne wood [Jack fruit tree]. Gilt stylized figures of conch shell were placed in the niches of the throne. It was placed in the Laytha Saung [Promenade Hall]. The king sat on it to receive religious sermons from the Buddhist monks. Originally conch shell was one of the regalia of Hindu deity Vishnu. Conch shell symbolizes purity, peace and prosperity.

The seventh throne was Hintha Throne [Hamsa Sana] made of Thinganet wood [Rock dammar tree]. Gilt stylized figures of Hintha [Brahminy duck] were placed in the niches of throne, which was placed in the East Zeytawun Saung Hall. The king sat on it to pay homage to Three Gems [the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha] and to receive the credentials of foreign envoys and to grant audience with them. Hintha bird symbolizes grace, dig-

nity and faithfulness.

Lotus Throne [Paduma Sana] was the eight throne made of Thayet wood [Mango, mangifera indica]. Gilt stylized figures of lotus bloom were placed in the niches of the throne. It was placed in the west Zeytawun Saung Hall. In this hall homage paying ceremony by dames and wives of ministers, commanders, high officials and all female residents of the palace to the chief queen who sat on this throne. When the king sometimes appeared there, he and the chief queen on his right sat on the throne. Lotus bloom is the symbol of sacredness, purity and peace.

The most unique and unusual of the palace city Lay Kyun Aung Myey was one extra bridge on the west side. It was named Alawi Bridge with wood draw bridge in the middle. When funeral procession came out of the palace city or when a criminal was to be executed, the west gate was flung open and Alawi Bridge was used for crossing the moat. Royal cemetery and the execution ground lay on the west outside the palace city at some distance. When not in use the wooden part of the bridge was lifted.

Beautification and greening of the palace city and the capital city

King Mindon wanted to create his new capital city like Rajagraha in India of Buddha's life time. Just as Rajagraha was surrounded by pleasant forested hills, so also was Ratanapon Mandalay with many offshoots of Shan Plateau, extensions of Mogok Ruby Mine area in the north, especially the Sagyin marble hill ranges and individual clusters of hill coming out from the plains nearby. They gave Manda-

Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

lay the image of a second Rajagraha in Myanmar. So the king began beautifying his palace city with artificial rock hills, lakes, and fountains and falls. Nearby the palace platform on the west was a complex of recreation centre for royal children and their playmates. It was named after the lake of the celestial kingdom Tavatimsa. It was called Pon-ta-lot Kan. The plan and design revealed those of the Versailles and Rome. For the king's relaxation there were two typical Myanmar garden - Taung U-yin taw and Myauk U Yin taw to the south and north of the palace platform. There either the king with his family or alone repaired for rest or for keeping Sabbath on full moon days. Here were wooden buildings of Myanmar traditional architecture with bamboo groves around.

Twenty royal parks outside the palace city

On the east side of the dug-up Ratana Nadi River were founded twenty royal parks. They were (1) Maha Haymazala Park (2) Maha Asoka Park (3) Insana Keythi Park (4) Maha Thiri Thumana Park (5) Mahabonzayika Park (6) Mahagirimalika Park (7) Maha Thiri Theikdi bala Park (8) Maha Zeya patha Park (9) Maha Thiri Mandawara Park (10) Mangala U Yin Taw (11) Maha Thiri haymawun Park (12) Maha Thiri Manaw ratha Park (13) Maha paduma Park (14) Maha Maygawun Park (15) Maha Thiri mahithara (16) Maha Thiri Mudeika Park (17) Maha devata Park (18) Maha Thiri Tala Park (19) Maha Thiri Manaw Rama

Park and (20) Maha Giri Sitara Wun Park.

The proceeds of these parks, fruits, flowers, vegetables etc., were donated to the pagodas and monasteries.

Founding of sanctuaries [Abaya thana or No danger lands]

In Buddha jataka stories, there were four stories of creating sanctuaries, namely Nijorda jataka (2) Nandiya jataka (3) Maha Ka Ka jataka and (4) Thupatha jataka and the Deer Park of Migara Wuna in which Lord Buddha delivered his first sermons to the five recluse disciples. These jatakas inspired King Mindon to establish sanctuary in the surrounding of his capital city. He issued royal order demarcating sanctuary covering vast areas of green lands around his capital city. His orders were inscribed on stone pillars, set up at many strategic points for public notice, strictly prohibiting capturing, killing persecuting of all living creatures both fauna and flora within the sanctuaries. Even collecting of eggs, shells, feathers was prohibited. Even if a criminal escaped into the sanctuary was to be captured peacefully and not to be treated violently. Violators of the royal order were subject to punishment.

Monks were encouraged to preach the public the importance and merit of respecting and sparing living beings for the happiness of mundane and spiritual life. The sanctuary stone pillars were found in the sand of Aungpinle Lake and around Thayet Tabin village to the north east of the capital city.

(To be continued)

Accounting: a driver of corporate growth and then of national economic growth

Tin Shein; CEO, MICPA

(Continued from 1-5-2015)

Then, in 1972, the Burma Accountancy Act was passed, under which the Burma Accountancy Council—later renamed Myanmar Accountancy Council (MAC) under the Myanmar Accountancy Law of 1994—which repealed the 1972 Law was formed. That Law was revised in 1994 by the then State Law and Order Restoration Council, which repealed the 1972 Burma Accountancy Act. The Auditor-General was appointed as the Chairman of the Council. Under that Law, the 2-year CPA courses were opened. At the initial stage, only the cream of the yearly crop of commerce graduates of Yangon University were admitted to those CPA courses that were run under the direction and control of MAC. That was meant to say that of all the commerce graduates of each year, only about 100 who had scored the level of high marks in the final exam that was determined by MIC were singled out for admission to the CPA course. Those who have successfully completed the CPA courses and the prescribed 2-year apprenticeship were recognized as full-fledged CPAs and allowed to practice accounting and auditing, after being registered as such with MAC. Old RAs were also absorbed into the ranks of CPAs after their fulfilling the requirements prescribed by MAC.

However, strictly speaking, MAC is a national policy-making body that is tasked to promote and regulate professional accounting and education in Myanmar and also one of the organs of the Government, with the Auditor-General acting as its Chairman and its members drawn from other Government Departments and the Institute of Economics. Until now, it is being funded from the state budget. Therefore, there are certain

limitations on its ability to directly deal or co-operate on accounting matters with international professional accounting bodies that are functioning freely with their privately funded budgets of their own, quite independent of any form of Government control. Such being the case, the need was felt by the senior members of the accounting profession for a non-profit professional accounting institute to be established on the model of international professional accounting bodies, with its own budget to run its operations independently. The aim is to enable it to stand on its own feet financially and without direct funding from the Government budget.

Thus, efforts have been made over the years to set up such an institute modeled on other international accounting institutions, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Singapore, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, etc. that operate as professional bodies quite independent of any control of their Governments. Now their hopes have been fulfilled. Much to our great delight, such an institute has recently come into existence, thanks to the relentless efforts of the senior members of the Myanmar Accountancy Council.

The Myanmar Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MICPA) was established on 30, January 2014 as a non-profit corporate entity, complete with its own memorandum of association, under the Registration Certificate No. 5167/ The Institute operates under the umbrella of the Myanmar Accountancy Council. The executive committee of the Institute has 30 members, of whom U Kyaw Tint, MD of SGS (Myanmar) is the Chairman and U Tin Win and U Wan Tin are Deputy Chairmen, while U Win

Htut Aung is the Secretary and the rest are CPAs.

The objectives of the Institute are:—

- (a) To promote and develop the accounting profession and education to the international standards;
- (b) To educate and require the members to maintain high standards of professionalism in the performance of their accounting and auditing assignments;
- (c) To ensure that our members strictly observe both the letter and spirit of the code of professional conduct and ethics, as prescribed by MAC and Myanmar Accounting Standards;
- (d) To ensure that our members practice their profession with impartiality, integrity and independence, thereby rendering high-quality professional services to their clientele;
- (e) To widen the horizons of our members on accounting, auditing and related subjects by regularly conducting continuing professional education programs; and
- (f) To contact and communicate with professional accounting institutes of not only ASEAN member countries, but also other advanced countries for exchange of the latest developments in accounting, auditing and other related fields.

In the past, it has been the policy of MAC to allow only commerce graduates who obtain high marks in the final B. Com. Exam to attend the CPA course. Until recent years the CPA course has been the preserve of those who have graduated with B Com degrees only. However, starting in the academic year

2011, as a departure from its previous policy, MAC has decided to open its doors to access higher professional accounting education not only for all graduates of the Institute of Economics but also for other graduates, who have fully passed the final D.A. Exam. As a matter of fact, MAC has taken this measure as a way to broaden the base of CPA recruitment to include other graduates who have passed DA (Part II) Exam so they can to pursue higher accounting education. It also serves as a bridge for non-commerce graduates to cross over to the CPA courses, once they have passed DA (part II) Exams. These 2-year DA courses had been conducted by MAC for non-commerce graduates. Over the years a total of over 3,000 DAs have been produced. In the coming academic year, not only B.Com, but B.B.A and also B. Act graduates will be allowed to attend the CPA course.

Of course, this is the right step that MAC has taken to open up opportunities for all aspiring graduates of the Institute of Economics as well as other graduates holding DA certificates to pursue the highest professional post-graduate accounting education in the country. It is also aimed to produce sufficient numbers of CPAs to meet the growing needs of the corporate bodies as our economy takes off into sustained growth under the current pro-free-market economic reforms of the Government. No doubt, diversity in the educational backgrounds of its members will contribute much towards the advancement of our accounting profession beyond all our expectations.

Over 4,000 CPAs have been produced by the MAC since the CPA courses were first introduced way back in 1972. Now the majority of them are serving in their various capacities as high-ranking Chief Accountants, Finance Managers, Profes-

sional Accountants, etc. in both the private and public sectors, thereby contributing much towards the development of the market-oriented economy of the Union of Myanmar, which has already opened up to private investment, both local and foreign. It is, of course, no exaggeration to say that more CPAs will need to be trained to cope with the growing needs of the ever-expanding business community with the acceleration of our country's economic development in the not distant future. Towards that end, when the new MAC Law has been passed by the Pyithuhluttaw, and come into force in the near future, private schools will be allowed to open the CPA courses to train more CPAs, using the syllabus approved by MAC under the supervision of MICPA.

As part of its efforts to disseminate knowledge of accounting standards among members of the accounting profession, over the years a series of seminars has been held by the MICPA on accounting and auditing standards, professional ethics, company law, taxation, etc. since the program of "continuing professional education (CPE)" was launched for its members who are required to complete the CPE hours prescribed by the MICPA within a 3-year period for annual registration as CPAs and as practicing accountants with the MAC. These seminars are geared to enhancing the professional competency and efficiency of all MICPA members in all aspects.

Moreover, in an effort to further disseminate knowledge of the IFRS for SMEs not only among the professional accountants, but also among the community of the business leaders, a series of IFRS for SMEs training for trainers workshops has been conducted under the auspices of MICPA. The aim was to enable the CPA trainees, who had been trained at the workshop, to

hold similar workshops locally in order to impart the knowledge of IFRS for SMEs that they had gained from the MICPA-hosted workshops to those members of the accounting profession and leaders of the business community, who had not had the chance to attend it for some reason or other. They will come to realize that it is their responsibility to practically apply those FRS in the preparation of their financial statements with the assistance of CPAs. Only then will the financial statements become standardized, thereby facilitating the comparison of their financial performance across the whole spectrum of different industries for the benefit of not only stakeholders, but prospective investors, as well.

Moreover, it has forged ties with professional accountancy bodies in Asian countries by seeking membership in the Asian Federation of Accountants, thereby harmonizing the Myanmar accounting and financial reporting standards with theirs across all types of industries. Moreover, MICPA has been co-operating very closely with international professional bodies, such as ACCA, ICAEW, and ICMA, UK and also GIZ of Germany that have been giving MICPA technical support for its all-round structural and professional development and capacity building. Moreover, steps are being taken to conclude the Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) among the Asian member countries, under which professional accountants recognized by each country shall be allowed to practice accounting in any Asian country, after having fulfilled the requirements prescribed by the respective countries. Last, but not least, on-going measures are under way to fulfill the requirements for admission to the membership in the International Federation of Accountants in the near future.

Japanese automakers, except Honda, post gains in US sales in April

NEW YORK, 2 May — Japanese automakers, except Honda Motor Co, registered solid increases in new-car sales in the United States in April along with the overall market's expansion on the back of strong replacement demand, steady sales of sport utility vehicles and widely available low-cost loans, data by research company Autodata Corp showed on Friday.

Overall sales totaled 1,454,951 vehicles, up 4.6 percent from a year earlier. The figure represented the strongest April result since 2005 and extended the US market's upward trend for 14 months in a row. The monthly result translates into annualized sales of 16.5 million units after seasonal adjustments.

Skeptics in the industry fear that the market may face a setback if gasoline prices start rising again or the US central bank raises interest rates, but a Toyota Motor Corp official was optimistic about the outlook.

"The auto industry remains one of the economy's bright spots," Bill Fay, Toyota group vice president, said in a monthly sales call. "And while there have been some mixed economic signals, we believe the industry is well positioned for a very good summer selling season."

Toyota marked a 1.8

percent increase to 203,329 units, making it the third largest player in the US market. Nissan Motor Co sold 109,848 units, up 5.7 percent, making it the sixth biggest-selling automaker.

Toyota's RAV4 and Nissan's Rogue were among those SUVs that registered strong sales in the month.

Honda was the only loser among major carmakers from Japan and the United States, posting a 1.8 percent drop to 130,068 units, due to slow sales of its key model Accord. Honda was the fifth biggest-selling automaker.

Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd, the maker of Subaru brand cars, enjoyed a particularly brisk 17.9 percent gain to 47,241 units, while Mazda Motor Corp also expanded sales by 7.5 percent to 24,123 units.

All three of the Detroit automakers also fared better than last year, thanks to brisk sales of SUVs and pickup trucks.

General Motors Co, the biggest carmaker in the market, sold 269,056 units, up 5.9 percent.

Ford Motor Co increased sales by 5.4 percent to 221,652, making it the second largest.

FCA US LLC, which builds Chrysler cars, posted a 6.2 percent gain to 185,233 units, the fourth largest number of sales.

Kyodo News

Reducing daily serving of sweetened drinks helps lower type 2 diabetes risk

LONDON, 2 May — Replacing a habitual daily serving of soft drinks and sweetened milk beverage with water or unsweetened tea or coffee can help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, according to a research report released on Friday by the University of Cambridge.

The conclusion was based on a previous study which included more than 25,000 men and women aged 40-79 years living in Norfolk, UK.

Study participants recorded everything that they ate and drank for seven consecutive days covering weekdays and weekend days, with particular attention to type, amount and frequency of consumption, and whether sugar was added by the participants,

the researchers said.

They found that if study participants had replaced a habitual daily serving of soft drinks with a serving of water or unsweetened tea or coffee, the risk of diabetes could have been cut by 14 percent, and by replacing a habitual serving of sweetened milk beverage with the same unsweetened drinks, that reduction could have been 20 percent to 25 percent.

Dr Nita Forouhi, of the Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge led the study. Forouhi said it adds further important evidence to the recommendation from the World Health Organization to limit the intake of free sugars in our diet.

This new research



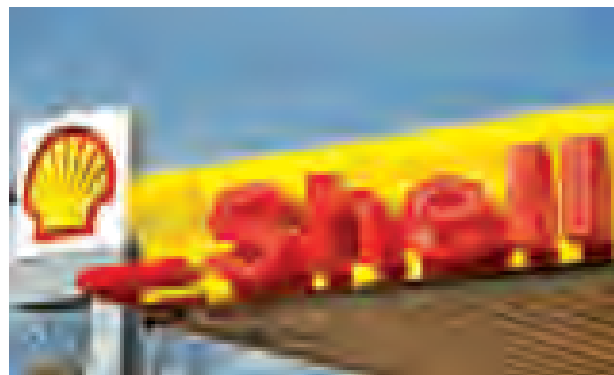
adds to previous research published in *Diabetologia*, which collected information from food frequency questionnaires across eight European countries. That previous work indicated that habitual daily consumption of sugar sweetened beverages was linked with higher risk of type 2 diabetes, consistent with the new findings.

Forouhi acknowledges

the limitations of dietary research which relies on asking people what they eat, but their sample size was large with long follow-up and had detailed assessment of diet that was collected in real-time as people consumed the food/drinks, rather than relying on memory.

The research paper has been published in the journal *Diabetologia*.—Xinhua

Shell signs 10 billion pound bridge loan



Shell's company logo is pictured at a gas station in Zurich on 8 April, 2015.—REUTERS

LONDON, 2 May — Royal Dutch Shell (RDSA.L) has agreed a 10.07 billion pound bridge loan from a group of relationship banks backing its 47 billion pound takeover of

smaller rival BG Group (BG.L), the company announced on Friday.

The two-year loan replaces a 3.025 billion pound interim bridge loan that was provided in early

April by Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

The bridge loan will be used, along with existing cash, to cover the 13.2 billion pound cash portion of the cash and share deal.

Mandated lead arrangers on the financing are Banco Santander, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Barclays Bank, BNP Paribas, CIBC, Citigroup, Credit Agricole CIB, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, HSBC Bank, JP Morgan, Lloyds Bank, Morgan Stanley, Royal Bank of Canada, Royal Bank of Scotland, Societe Generale, Standard Chartered

and SMBC.

Each bank has committed 530 million pounds to the deal.

Barclays is facility agent on the transaction.

The financing pays an initial margin of 15bp over Libor, rising to 20bp after three months, to 25bp after six months, to 30bp after nine months, to 40bp after 12 months, to 50bp after 15 months, to 60bp after 18 months and to 70bp after 21 months.

There are also ticking fees of 20 percent of the applicable margin on undrawn, uncanceled amounts.

Reuters

As youth vaping rises, teens cite the allure of tricks

NEW YORK, 2 May — On a recent morning, Roger Tarazon and several friends gathered a few blocks from their Queens, New York high school. Some smoked traditional cigarettes, but Tarazon and a few others puffed on electronic vaping devices.

"Sometimes I use it to relax," the 18-year-old senior said of the device. He also uses it to perform tricks with the vapor, blowing smoke rings or creating funnels of smoke that look like miniature tornadoes.

"I don't do it to show off," he said. "I just do them because I'm bored."

Tarazon's embrace of such tricks reflects a grow-

ing trend among US teenagers, whose use of e-cigarettes tripled in the last year alone. New research provided to *Reuters* has found that performing tricks is one of the top two reasons young users say they consider the devices cool.

Public health officials have warned for several years of the attraction of flavored nicotine liquid to teens and tweens, and have urged regulators to ban them. Consumers have a wide range of flavor choices, including menthol, single-malt scotch, cappuccino and pomegranate.

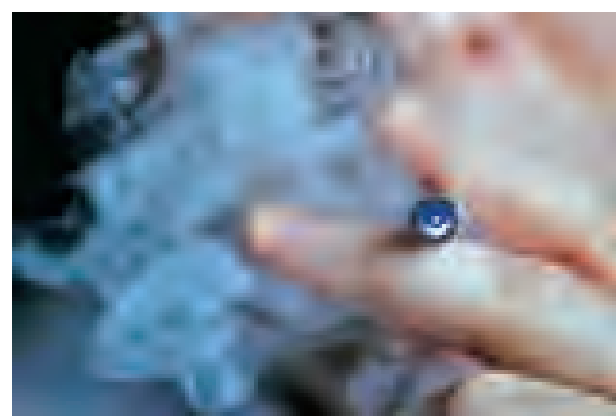
But the role of tricks in enticing young people to use e-cigarettes has not

previously been explored. Now researchers are asking whether they could help hook a new generation who otherwise would not have used nicotine.

"We expected the flavors were attractive," said Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin, a psychiatry professor at the Yale School of Medicine. "But smoke tricks were a surprise to us."

Krishnan-Sarin and her team, with funding from the National Institutes of Health, asked 5,400 Connecticut teens to identify what they found "cool about e-cigarettes?"

The top two answers were: the flavors of the vaping liquids, and the



A man uses an E-cigarette, an electronic substitute in the form of a rod, slightly longer than a normal cigarette, in this illustration picture taken in Paris on 5 March, 2013.—REUTERS

"ability to do tricks."

Electronic devices produce much more vapor, especially when adjusted to operate at high temper-

atures, than conventional cigarettes, which helps facilitate the vapor tricks. Teen interest in performing them comes as "cloud com-

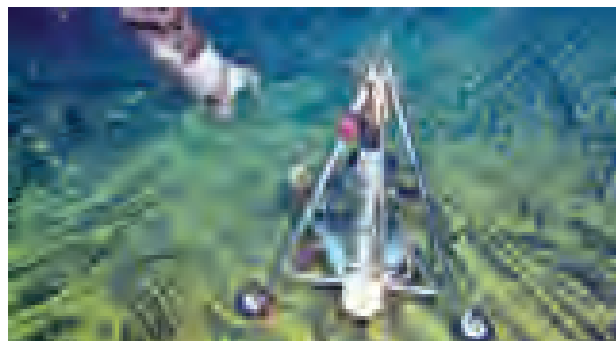
petitions," are increasing in popularity.

The contests, in which adult vapers, as they call themselves, compete to perform the best tricks and create the biggest and densest vapor clouds, are becoming a regular feature at local vape shops. Some regional competitions offer thousands of dollars in prize money.

Thousands of videos demonstrating expert vaping and how to perform tricks have been posted on YouTube and Instagram. "Even if (teenagers) don't attend these events they are exposed to a lot of these issues," Krishnan-Sarin said.

Reuters

Scientists monitor undersea volcanic eruption off Oregon coast



One of three bottom-pressure/tilt instruments in the summit caldera that is connected to the OOI Cabled Array network at an undersea volcano dubbed "Axial Seamount", located off the Oregon coast, is seen in this undated handout photo provided by National Science Foundation/Ocean Observatories Initiative. — REUTERS

PORTLAND, 2 May — An undersea volcano about 300 miles (480 km) off Oregon's coast has been spewing lava for the past seven days, confirming forecasts made last fall and giving researchers unique insight into a hidden ocean hot spot, a scientist said on Friday.

Researchers know of two previous eruptions by the volcano, dubbed "Axial Seamount" for its location along the axis of an underwater mountain ridge, Oregon State University geologist Bill Chadwick said on Friday. But those 1998 and 2011 eruptions were detected months or years afterward, Chadwick added.

Last year, researchers

connected monitoring gear to an undersea cable that, for the first time, allowed them to gather live data on the volcano, whose peak is about 4,900 feet (1,500 metres) below the ocean surface. "The cable allows us to have more sensors and monitoring instruments than ever before, and it's happening in real time," said Chadwick, who also is affiliated with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In the past, researchers left battery-operated monitoring stations in place for several years, but were able to analyze the data only by retrieving those devices.

Pressure sensors detected that an eruption was underway on 23 April. Af-

ter monitoring hundreds then thousands of small earthquakes each day near Axial Seamount, they detected more than 8,000 tiny quakes over a 24-hour span on 23 April, Chadwick said.

As midnight approached, pressure sensors detected the seafloor dropping — a sign that magma was erupting — and the swollen volcano was deflating like an emptying balloon. In total, the seafloor has dropped 8 feet (2.4 metres) in the past week.

Though the eruption has slowed, the volcano still seemed to be expelling magma as of Friday, he said, leaving Chadwick and scientists working with him wondering where the lava was going.

"We know it didn't erupt in the caldera, or crater, because that's where most of our sensors are, and they all survived," Chadwick said.

Temperature fluctuations and seismic readings are consistent with an eruption north of the volcano's crater, he said. "But we probably won't know until this summer, when we get out there with a ship and are able to look around."

Reuters

A space odyssey: cosmic rays may damage the brains of astronauts

WASHINGTON, 2 May — It may not be space debris, errant asteroids, supply shortages, thruster malfunctions or even the malevolent aliens envisioned in so many Hollywood films that thwart astronauts on any mission to Mars. It may be the ubiquitous galactic cosmic rays.

Researchers said on Friday long-term exposure to these rays that permeate space may cause dementia-like cognitive impairments in astronauts during any future round-trip Mars journey, expected to take at least 2-1/2 years.

In a NASA-funded study, mice exposed to highly energetic charged particles like those in galactic cosmic rays experienced declines in cognition and changes in the structure and integrity of brain nerve cells and the synapses where nerve impulses are sent and received.

The irradiated particles in galactic cosmic rays, remnants of star explosions called supernovas, can penetrate spacecraft and astronauts' bodies. Earth itself is protected by its magnetosphere.

University of California, Irvine radiation oncology professor Charles Limoli said "without a doubt"

people would face the same issues as the mice.

"Astronauts may incur cognitive impairments that lead to performance decrements, confusion, increased anxiety and longer-term problems with cognitive health," said Limoli, whose study appears in the journal *Science Advances*.

This could compromise mission critical activities, especially if unanticipated situations arise during deep spaceflight, Limoli said. The mice, genetically altered to have green fluorescent neurons to help structural analysis, were exposed to the rays at the NASA Space Radiation Laboratory at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York and then analyzed six weeks

later. In addition to the brain neuron and synapse changes, the mice exhibited decreased performance on learning and memory tests. They also lacked curiosity and were sluggish in experiments involving objects placed in a box with them.

"Previous studies show synaptic impairment or loss of synapses is an early and invariant feature of Alzheimer's disease, and there is a strong correlation between the extent of synapse loss and the severity of dementia," said University of California, Irvine neuroscientist Vipin Kumar Parihar.

NASA says it is developing the capabilities needed to send humans to an asteroid by 2025 and Mars in the 2030s.—Reuters



This computer-generated view depicts part of Mars at the boundary between darkness and daylight, with an area including Gale Crater beginning to catch morning light, in this handout image provided by NASA.

REUTERS

Tesla moves into batteries that store energy for homes, businesses

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Tesla Motors Inc (TSLA.O) on Thursday unveiled Tesla Energy - storage systems or batteries for homes, companies and utilities that will expand its business beyond electric vehicles and tap into a fast-growing area of the energy industry.

Chief Executive Elon Musk said the company's goal was to "fundamentally change the way the world uses energy on an extreme scale." He introduced the products to a crowd of business partners and journalists at a Tesla facility near Los Angeles.

In Tesla's view, such storage systems could become part of a fossil-fuel-free lifestyle in which people can have solar panels on their roof generating electricity to power their home and recharge their electric car batteries.

The smallest battery unveiled on Thursday, known as Powerwall, is housed in a six-inch-

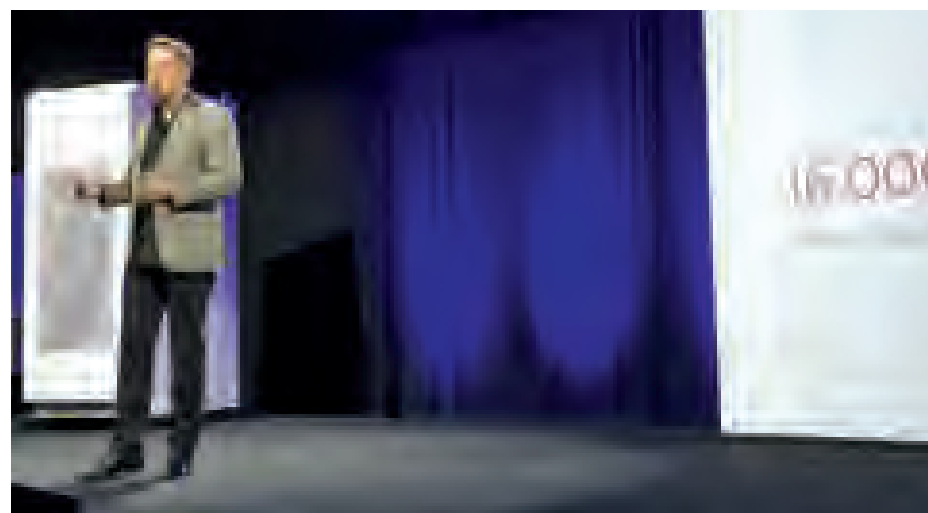
wide container that is meant to be hung inside a garage or on the outside wall of a house. At \$3,500 for a 10kWh model, excluding inverter and installation prices, the Powerwall can be used for backup power or to store solar energy.

Tesla's lead installation partner for the home battery will be SolarCity Corp (SCTY.O), the solar installer backed by Musk. The company will also partner with many others, Musk said.

Tesla has several hundred batteries installed with SolarCity systems in California already.

The growth of those projects has been helped by a subsidy from California's public utility regulator.

Utilities have also been seeking out energy storage to help manage increasing amounts of renewable energy on the grid. To address that market, Musk unveiled what he called the "power



Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, unveils a suit of batteries for homes, businesses, and utilities at Tesla Design Studio in Hawthorne, California, the United States on 30 April, 2015. — XINHUA

pack," a 100 kWh battery block that is meant to help smooth out power from intermittent solar and wind energy production or add energy to the grid quickly when demand levels are high.

Tesla already has several utility-scale batteries deployed on the grid in California, which requires its biggest utilities to source large amounts of

energy storage.

Musk told reporters Tesla expected to have a low but growing gross margin in battery products in the fourth quarter of this year and added that battery products would be "materially profitable" some time next year.

"A cost effective home energy storage system it could prove far more valuable, and prof-

itable, than anything the company is doing with automobiles," Karl Brauer, a senior analyst with auto industry research firm Kelley Blue Book, said.

Tesla will initially manufacture the batteries at its automobile factory in California but will move production to its planned "gigafactory" in Nevada next year.

Deutsche Bank esti-

ated sales of stationary battery storage systems for homes and commercial uses could yield as much as \$4.5 billion in revenue for Tesla. Analysts expect Tesla will build stationary storage systems around the same basic batteries it will produce for its vehicles at the large factory the company is building in Nevada.

Though valued at just \$200 million in 2012, the energy storage industry is expected to grow to \$19 billion by 2017, according to research firm IHS CERA.

Tesla is not the only player in energy storage. Coda Energy, which rose from the ashes of a failed EV maker and is now owned by Fortress Investment and startups backed by the likes of Total (TOTF.PA), GE (GE.N) and Siemens (SIEGn.DE) are among the many companies going after shares of the stationary storage market.

Reuters



Xin Baozhong sorts out the train platform tickets he collected at home in Tangshan, north China's Hebei Province, on 2 May, 2105. Xin has collected over 1,800 train platform tickets from about 100 train stations all over China since 1999.—XINHUA

TPP countries to hold ministerial talks 26-28 May: US

WASHINGTON, 2 May — Twelve countries negotiating for a Pacific free trade pact will hold ministerial talks from 26 to 28 May in the Philippines to seek ways to conclude a deal as soon as possible, a US government official said on Thursday.

The United States announced the schedule as Congress is deliberating a bill to help speed up the marathon negotiations for the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership deal that also involves Japan, Australia and nine other nations.

The TPP ministers last held talks in November in Beijing.

The high-level meeting on the TPP will follow trade ministerial talks of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum on 23 and 24 May in the Southeast Asian country, Catherine Novelli, undersecretary of state, said at a press conference. The Philippines is not taking part in the trade talks.

Remaining thorny issues include how to handle intellectual property, including data on new drugs, and reforms of state-owned organizations, according to negotiation sources.

Japan and the United States, the two largest economies in the envisioned

pact, have remained at odds over bilateral issues such as Japan's exceptional tariffs on some agricultural produce and automotive trades.

To prepare for the ministerial talks, chief TPP negotiators from the 12 countries involved will meet from 15 to 25 May on Guam, the Japanese government said.

In addition to the United States, Japan and Australia, the other countries taking part in the talks are Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Kyodo News

Experts assess why some buildings collapsed, others withstood Nepal quake

KATHMANDU, 2 May — Most buildings that collapsed during last Saturday's devastating earthquake in Nepal were either hundreds-of-years-old heritage structures or recently built guesthouses, even as private residential buildings stood strong, bearing the tremors.

Much loss of life and property could have been averted had some basic precautions been taken, both by the government and the local people, say construction experts here. According to them, despite witnessing a similar destructive quake in 1934, the government woke up to the need of spreading quake awareness among the residents only a decade ago by enacting building codes and other regulations. Unfortunately, however, they were not followed sincerely by the people at large. They feel the government should have restricted entry of people into the hundreds-of-years-old heritage structures, while people should have carefully followed by laws and regulations before building structures, besides using better construction materials and modern technology. The

heritage buildings that collapsed included over 80-year-old Dhara-hara tower and temples more than 300 years old. Admitting laxity on the part of the government, Department of Archaeology spokesman Ram Bahadur Kumwar, 42, said all those buildings were too weak to withstand such a strong earthquake, so entry should be restricted. He said peoples' entry into Dhara-hara tower was banned for more than 10 years, but it was re-opened around six years ago after a safety study concluded it could withstand a magnitude 7 quake. "Unfortunately, this earthquake was of more intensity, and hence it fell, causing so much loss of life and property," he said.

Kumwar said Kathmandu Valley had hundreds of buildings that were more than 100 years old, and the wear-and-tear of most of them, particularly old temples, was apparent before the quake hit. "We were taking all possible care to upkeep their maintenance. We were still in the process of banning entry of public into such structures, but this tragedy struck before we could

take a final decision," he said. His department's priority now is to repair those structures that are partially damaged, and then use modern construction technology to reconstruct those that collapsed. Amrit Sidhi, 54, an architect in the Department of Urban Development, is of the view that no solid structure on the planet can be fully and completely quake-proof. "But yes, we can make strong structures which give enough time to people to run out to safety before they collapse. It's high time we took to modern construction technology in rebuilding the damaged buildings and the new ones too," he said.

"The foundation of a building should be strong, and weight should go on decreasing as its height rises in terms of floors, whereas currently it's the other way round, particularly in commercial buildings. Then, we should use columns stronger than beams and adopt the technology of interlocking columns and beams. Square and rectangle shaped buildings are safer than L-shaped structures." Sidhi lamented that when

people erect buildings to be used as guesthouses or let out for other business purposes, they tend to use inferior materials, as compared with structures they would build for their own residence.

Dhruba Thapa, 56, president of the Nepal Engineers Association, said some buildings in areas like Gangabu and Balaju caved in because they were built on once low-lying land that was subsequently filled with soft garbage.

"These areas had loose soil underneath which could not bear the quake, and the result was that the structures caved in," he said.

Thapa's association is now organizing orientation programs for civil and other engineers to carry out rapid visual building assessments of standing structures that have cracks, in order to ascertain the extent of damage done.

"Once we do a thorough assessment, we would advise the people whether the buildings are liveable or not, or how much repair is required to make them safe. We're seeking foreign experts too on this," he added.—*Kyodo News*

Thailand lifts controls on Japanese food imports

TOKYO, 2 May — The Thai government has eliminated in principle its controls on imports of Japan-produced foods imposed after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, the farm ministry said on Friday.

The lifting of the controls, which still apply to bush meats, may spur Japan's exports to Thailand, a major importer of Japan's food products, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Thailand's imported 34.8 billion yen (\$290 million) worth of Japanese farm and other food products in 2014.

Thailand had forced Japan to provide documentation for food products from the three prefectures of Miyagi, Fukushima and Gunma proving they were radiation free, and certificates of origin for products from the other 44 prefectures.—*Kyodo News*

Britain's Duchess Kate gives birth to daughter, both well, palace says



LONDON, 2 May — Britain's Duchess of Cambridge, the wife of Prince William, gave birth to a daughter on Saturday, the couple's Kensington Palace residence announced.

The baby, their second child, weighed 8 lbs 3 oz and William was present at the birth, it said in a Twitter statement.

"Her Royal Highness

Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, carries her son Prince George alongside her husband Prince William as they visit the Sensational Butterflies exhibition at the Natural History Museum in London, on 2 July, 2014.

REUTERS

and her child are both doing well," the palace added.

She gave birth at 8:34 am (3.34 am ET), some 2-1/2 hours after having been admitted in the early stages of labour to the private Lindo wing of St Mary's Hospital, West London, the palace said.

Both families of the couple had been informed, it said, including the new baby's great-grandmother Queen Elizabeth, her grandfather Prince Charles and William's brother Prince Harry.

A ceremonial town crier announced the birth of the new baby, who will be fourth in line to the throne after Charles, William and her older brother George.

No name for the newborn has yet been announced.

William, 32, was born at the same hospital to the late Princess Diana in 1982.

He and Kate, 33, met as students at St Andrews University in Scotland, married in a spectacular ceremony at Westminster Abbey in April 2011 and have since become global stars.

When Kate leaves hospital, the couple will initially return to Kensington Palace for a couple of days before heading to Anmer Hall, their country mansion on the queen's Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England.

Reuters

WORLD



Rescuers work at the blocked section on the highway linking Tibet and Nepal in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on 1 May, 2015. The Chinese side of a key highway linking Tibet and Nepal was cleared of obstructions on Friday morning, six days after an 8.1-magnitude earthquake in Nepal caused landslides that blocked the major trade and tourist route.—XINHUA

Flash floods kill five as torrential rains hit Australia's east coast

PERTH, 2 May — Flash floods killed five people in south-east Queensland when their cars were swept away following a rain storm on Australia's east coast, police said on Saturday. The dead included three men, one woman and a eight-year-old boy, while more than 30 other people were rescued from cars stranded on flooded roads in and around Caboolture, 44 kilometres (27 miles) north of Brisbane.

"The tragedy is that people are still taking risks in order to try and get through," Queensland police inspector Lee Jeffries told local media.

More than 360 mm (14 inches) of rain fell when the storm hit on Friday evening, most of it falling in a three hour period.

The Bureau of Meteorology said that the low pressure system was contracting as it moved south into northern New South Wales early

on Saturday but forecast damaging winds, heavy rainfall and large swells for the mid north coast and Central Hunter region of the state.

The low follows last week's cyclone-strength storm that battered Australia's east coast over three days, killing eight, cutting road and rail links, closing shipping ports and causing millions of dollars of damage to Sydney and other cities.—Reuters

Three die in grenade attacks in Burundi capital, more than 10 hurt

BUJUMBURA, 2 May — Two Burundi police officers and a civilian were killed in two separate grenade attacks in the capital late on Friday, a police spokesman said, after the president warned of tough measures against those behind street protests.

More than 10 people were wounded, deputy police spokesman Pierre Nkurikiye said in a phone message. The three were killed in the Kamenge district of Bujumbura but another area was also hit, he said. One of the dead policemen was a senior officer. Bujumbura has been rocked by six consecutive days of demonstrations against President Pierre Nkurunziza, who on Friday warned of "severe sanctions" against those pro-

testing over his decision to seek a third term in office.

The protests have sparked the biggest political crisis since an ethnically fueled civil war ended in 2005. The presidency has called the demonstrations an "insurrection".

Opponents say Nkurunziza is violating the constitution and the Arusha peace deal by seeking a third five-year mandate at elections on 26 June.

Pre-vote fears have driven more than 26,000 Burundians to neighboring Congo and Rwanda, officials say.

The United Nations, which has voiced concerns intelligence and security services are using live ammunition at protests, said there are "credible" reports of detained protesters being

beaten and held in overcrowded conditions.

Nkurunziza's supporters say he can run again because his first term, when he was picked by lawmakers and not elected, does not count. The United States, however, disagrees and has said his candidacy is a violation of the Arusha accords.

The crisis is being closely watched in a region still scarred by the 1994 genocide that killed more than 800,000 people in neighbouring Rwanda which, like Burundi, is divided between ethnic Tutsis and Hutus.

Diplomats say the unrest is a political disagreement but fear violence could lead to bloodshed along ethnic lines.

Reuters

Seven found dead after fire guts home in northeastern Japan

AKITA, (Japan), 2 May — Seven bodies have been recovered after a fire burned down a house and spread to two nearby structures in Yuzawa, Akita Prefecture in northeastern Japan on Friday night, police and firefighters said. The authorities are trying to identify the bodies, assuming that they are the seven members of the three-generation family who were living at the home of Yoshizo Ito, 78.

The firefighters received a call that Ito's home, surrounded by farmland, was in flames at around 9 pm and dispatched five fire engines. The fire was extinguished around two and a half hours later. The cause of the fire is being investigated. The local weather observatory said a dry air advisory was issued for Yuzawa at that time.

The Yuzawa police say they have been unable to locate Ito, his wife Tomi, 80, his son Mitsuhiro, 41, Mitsuhiro's wife Anna, 27, or any of the young couple's three daughters — Airi, 6, Yuna, 5, and Fuka, 3.

Kyodo News

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Malaysia Airlines mulls potential fleet trimming

KUALA LUMPUR, 2 May — Malaysia Airlines on Friday hinted a potential fleet trimming plan after reports that the flagship carrier was seeking to sell some of planes to recover from recent air disasters and bad performance.

Aviation industrial websites reported that airlines might sell or lease some of its planes, including Airbus A380, A330-200 and Boeing 777-200ER.

Malaysia Airlines later tried to "clarify" the reports without an outright denial.

"Malaysia Airlines seeks to clarify the speculation on it's fleet. We are currently still working to finalize the Business Plan," the company said on its Twitter

account.

"Exploring fleet options to enhance viability of long-haul sectors is one area being looked into," it added.

Malaysia Airlines is undergoing a restructuring after suffering two major air disasters in 2014. Flight MH370 went missing on 8 March last year en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board while Flight MH17 crashed in eastern Ukraine on 17 July on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. All 298 people aboard were killed. Christoph Mueller, former head of Ireland's national airline Aer Lingus, will become the airlines first foreign CEO on Friday.

Xinhua

24 climbers trapped in suburban Beijing rescued

BEIJING, 2 May — Fire fighters rescued 24 climbers trapped on a mountain for five hours in suburban Beijing early Friday morning, the municipal fire department said on Saturday.

The trapped were 22 students and 2 teachers. They were lost and trapped at the Fenghuangling scenic area in the northwest

of Beijing. The fire department received a call at 7:09 p.m. Thursday and sent 21 fire fighters and three fire fighting trucks to the scene.

All 24 climbers were found safe and brought down the mountain at 1 am Friday. No casualties have been reported.—Xinhua

New direct Beijing-Budapest air route opens with Friday landing

BUDAPEST, 2 May — Air China's Beijing-Budapest route was officially inaugurated on Friday evening, when its Airbus 330-200 landed at Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport.

Airport officials were on hand to greet the first flight, welcoming it with an archway of water as the craft glided into its slot on the tarmac. Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto, Chinese Ambassador to Hungary Xiao Qian attended the welcoming ceremony. The Airbus 330-200 can carry 207 economy and 30 business class passengers, and will be com-

muting between the Chinese and Hungarian capitals four times weekly.

On the way to Budapest the flight stops once, in Minsk, Belarus, but the return trip from Budapest to Beijing is non-stop.

Budapest Airport CEO Jost Lammers called the new route a historical moment for Hungarian air transport and the Hungarian economy, too.

"I'm sure the new flight will be very popular with tourists and business travellers," he said, adding that the air bridge between the two countries had great potential.—Xinhua

WEATHER REPORT

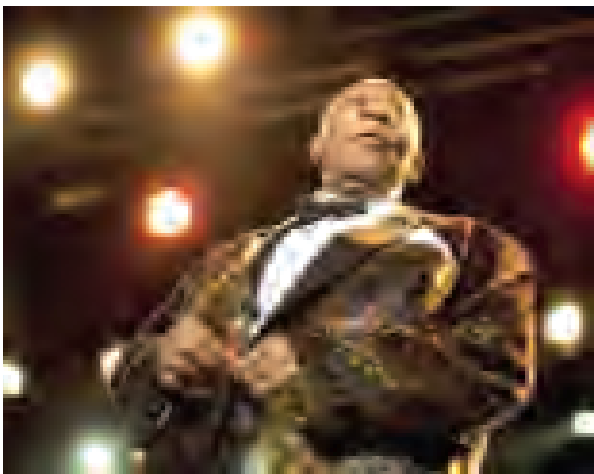
BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 3rd May, 2015: Weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing, Magway and Bago Regions and rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of rain or thundershowers in the Southern Myanmar areas.

BB King in hospice care at his Las Vegas home



US blues legend BB King performs onstage during the 45th Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux on 2 July, 2011.—REUTERS

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Veteran blues guitarist BB King said on Friday he was in hospice care at his home, less than a month after he was hospitalized for diabetes-related issues.

In a message posted on his official Facebook page, the 89-year-old singer said he was receiving care at his Las Vegas residence.

“Thanks to all for your well wishes and prayers,” he said in the post.

King was taken to a hospital in April after suffering from dehydration as a complication of diabe-

tes. He left shortly after and said he was “feeling much better” at the time.

Born in Mississippi, the singer is known as the “King of the Blues” and is considered one of the greatest guitarists of all time, with artists such as Eric Clapton citing him as an influence.

Last October, King was forced to cancel eight live performances after falling ill on stage in Chicago. He was diagnosed with dehydration and suffering from exhaustion.—Reuters

Witherspoon, Vergara team up in female-driven ‘Hot Pursuit’



LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Hollywood actress Reese Witherspoon teams up with “Modern Family” star Sofia Vergara in “Hot Pursuit”, a female-driven comedy directed, produced and led by a strong presence of women on set.

Academy Award winner Witherspoon, also one of the film’s producers, plays an uptight police officer who has to protect the more outgoing widow of a drug boss, played by Colombian-born Vergara.

“It’s not just that it’s better, you know? It’s just that it’s comfortable,” Vergara said at the film’s premiere on Thursday night, when asked about having more women involved in a production.

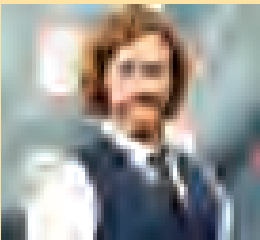
“We all were taking care of each other like ‘Oh

you need to sit straight because your dress is not looking good’. You know (with) things like that that (as) girls we’re always like watching (out) for each other.”

Witherspoon has been vocal about the empowerment of women in Hollywood. She has been quoted as saying she began her production company after she saw “six of my favourite actresses fighting over a really crappy role”.

“It’s an easier kind of communication working with just women,” Witherspoon said at the premiere. “We have just a kind of a short hand. We think the same things are funny. It’s also we just enjoy the process, it’s fun.” “Hot Pursuit” is scheduled for US release on 8 May.—Reuters

TJ Miller to host Golden Trailer awards



“Silicon Valley” star TJ Miller will celebrate the very best in Hollywood teasers as host of the Golden Trailer Awards.

REUTERS

LONDON, 2 May — “Silicon Valley” star TJ Miller will celebrate the very best in Hollywood teasers as host of the Golden Trailer Awards.

Awards including Trashiest Trailer, Summer Blockbuster 2015 and Most Romantic Trailer will be decided at the Saban Theater in Beverly Hills on 6 May, reported Digital Spy.

The Golden Fleece Award will be given to the trailer judged to be better than the actual film it advertises.

A panel of Hollywood filmmakers and actors will take part in this year’s gala, including “Scandal” star Tony Goldwyn, “Jurassic World” director Colin Trevorrow and “Game of Thrones” producer David Benioff.

“Furious 7”, “Jurassic World”, “Ted 2”, “John Wick” and “The Interview” are among the films nominated in multiple categories this year.

The Golden Trailer Awards have been held annually dating back to 1999.—PTI

Hilary Swank, Tom Wilkinson to star in Holocaust denial drama

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Oscar-winning actress Hilary Swank will face off with a man accused of Holocaust denial in an adaptation of Deborah Lipstadt’s book “History On Trial”.

“Denial” dramatises historian Lipstadt and her lawyers’ efforts to prove that the events of the Holocaust were real in a legal battle against David Irving, reported Deadline.

British author Irving filed suit against Lipstadt for libel after she described some of his work as Holocaust denial.

“Denial” will be adapted for the big screen by two-time Academy Award-nominated writer David Hare (“The Hours”

and ‘The Reader’) and “The Bodyguard” director Mick Jackson.

Swank is starring in the historical drama opposite Emmy Award winner Tom Wilkinson.

Prior to returning to the big screen for “Denial”, Swank will star on television in the family drama “The One Percent” with Ed Helms and Ed Harris.—PTI



Oscar-winning actress Hilary Swank will face off with a man accused of Holocaust denial in an adaptation of Deborah Lipstadt’s book “History On Trial”.

REUTERS

Nina Dobrev’s exit from “The Vampire Diaries” is tasteful

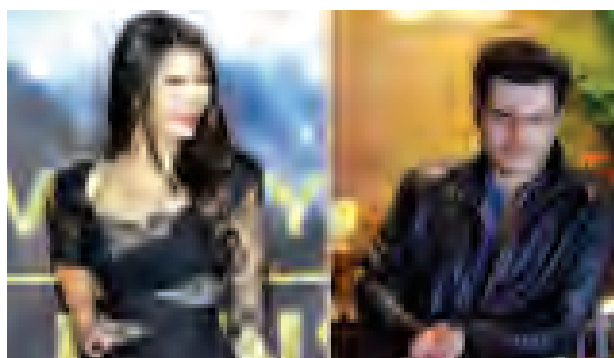
LONDON, 2 May — “Vampire Diaries” star Michael Malarkey has teased Nina Dobrev’s “tasteful” exit from the show.

Malarkey, who plays Enzo in the CW supernatural drama, suggested that fans who have been watching from the start will appreciate Elena’s goodbye scenes, reported Digital Spy.

“It’s pretty under

wraps. I think it’s a really tasteful way to do it. She gets to say goodbye to everybody, in a certain way,” Malarkey said.

“You get to see some scenes with her and a lot of other characters. It’s going to be a chance for the fans to recall a lot of those relationships and how they’ve progressed over the years.”—PTI



“Vampire Diaries” star Michael Malarkey has teased Nina Dobrev’s “tasteful” exit from the show.—REUTERS

Laura Linney joins ‘Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2’



Actress Laura Linney

LOS ANGELES, 2 May — Actress Laura Linney is the latest addition to “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2”.

“The Big C” actress is joined by returning cast members Megan Fox and Will Arnett who will get on-screen love interests played by Stephen Amell and Alessandra Ambrosio respectively, reported Ace Showbiz.

Michael Bay returns as a producer, while Dave Green (“Earth to Echo”) is attached to direct the second chapter scheduled for a 3 June, 2016 release.

The movie is currently in production. Fox who reprises her role as April O’Neil is seen channeling her inner Britney Spears on the set.

Josh Applebaum and Andre Nemec from the first film return to write the script.—PTI

GENERAL

Martial artists gather in Vancouver for CAN-AM championships

VANCOUVER, 2 May — The 36th annual Canada-American International Championships opened Friday evening in the Olympic Oval in Vancouver's suburb city of Richmond, with hundreds of international martial artists attending the grand opening ceremony. The three-day event is the longest-running martial arts competition in Canada and attracted more than 600 athletes from around Canada, China the US and other

countries. Competitors of all ages compete in a variety of styles such as Chinese Kong Fu, Karate, Jiu-jitsu and Muay Thai events, and a dozen other styles. While it includes some professional athletes, it's a friendly spirit that rules among the martial artists, said young Kung Fu competitor Fanny Wang from Vancouver. She is making her second appearance this year at the CAN-AM championships.

“Even though you're competing with one another you still want everyone of them to do like their great job,” she said. Event organizer Ken Low said the tournament first started in 1979 and has brought together athletes from around the world to build goodwill and to share techniques. “It's a community event. We try to encourage practitioners of all styles of martial arts to come and

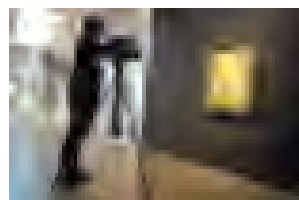
enjoy each other's company and to compete in the friendly, fair manner,” Low said. The event is a major draw for Chinese athletes who come to Vancouver to compete in several of the disciplines. China's deputy consul general in Vancouver, Fan Xiaodong, welcomed the Chinese athletes during the opening ceremony, and lauded martial arts as a good way to keep a healthy mind and fit body.—Xinhua

mitv Myanmar International

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- * News * We'll Leave After 12 Passengers are on Board
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Record prices for paintings, sculpture eyed at NY auctions



A person films Van Gogh's 'L'Allée des Alyscamps', estimated in excess of \$40 million, ahead of a preview event to Sotheby's upcoming evening's of impressionist, modern and contemporary art in the Manhattan borough of New York City on 1 May, 2015. —REUTERS

NEW YORK, 2 May — With prices for top-tier works of art at an all-time high, records for paintings and sculpture appear certain to fall at upcoming spring auctions in New York by Christie's and Sotheby's.

Christie's scored a one-two punch this season, landing a Pablo Picasso painting

and a Alberto Giacometti sculpture, with each expected to sell for \$130 million (85.82 million pounds) or more, before a commission of just over 12 percent is tacked on. The \$140 million estimate for Picasso's “Les femmes d'Alger (Version ‘O’),” a cubist work last auctioned in 1997 when it nearly tripled expectations, is the highest pre-sale price ever accorded an auction offering.

Close behind, Giacometti's 1947, 70-inch (180-cm) bronze, “Man Pointing,” is set to sell for \$130 million, which would easily eclipse his record for sculpture of \$104.3 million held by “L'Homme qui marche I.”

Both will be sold at Christie's on 11 May, a sale billed as “Looking Forward to the Past,” which augments its Impressionist/modern and contemporary auctions. The 35 lots are expected to fetch

half a billion dollars. “The high prices we see are a reflection of both rarity and surging demand,” said Jussi Pyllkanen, Christie's global president. “Asian collectors have been increasingly active lately, bringing a new competitive dynamic, especially when it comes to top-quality masterpieces.”

Sotheby's top offering is Mark Rothko's untitled yellow and blue 1954 oil, which is expected to sell for as much as \$60 million. It is also featuring six Monets expected to total more than \$78 million, led by “Nymphéas,” estimated at \$30 million to \$45 million. In all, some \$2 billion worth of art will be offered to well-heeled, increasingly global collectors competing for an ever-shrinking supply of so-called trophy works, ranging from van Goghs and Picassos to Rothkos and Warhols. Reuters

“The supply of strong examples remaining in private hands is shrinking fast,” said Simon Shaw, worldwide co-head of Impressionist art at Sotheby's, speaking in particular of the auction house's Monet offerings. “The result is fierce competition that leads to the results we have witnessed recently,” he added.

Other highlights include van Gogh's “L'Allée des Alyscamps,” (in excess of \$40 million) and Roy Lichtenstein's 1962 pop art “The Ring (Engagement),” which Sotheby's expects will sell for about \$50 million.

The auctions kick off at Sotheby's on Tuesday with the Impressionist and modern sale, expected to take in between \$270 million and \$365 million. Four sales spanning collecting categories will be held the following week.

Reuters

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(3-5-2015, Sunday)

- 6:00 am**
 - Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw
- 6:25 am**
 - Physics Exercise
- 7:00 am**
 - News / Weather Report
- 7:35 am**
 - Business News
- 8:30 am**
 - Head Line News
- 9:00 am**
 - News / International News
- 9:35 am**
 - Weekly Entertainment
- 10:35 am**
 - Documentary
- 11:35 am**
 - Amazing World
- 12:00 noon**
 - News / International News / Weather Report
- 12:35 pm**
 - Round Up of The Week's Local International News
- 2:40 pm**
 - Myanmar Movies
- 3:30 pm**
 - Head Line News
- 4:35 pm**
 - University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — First Year (Botany)
- 4:50 pm**
 - Myanmar Traditional Performing Arts Competition
- 5:35 pm**
 - People Talks
- 6:00 pm**
 - News / Weather Report
- 7:35 pm**
 - Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society)
- 8:35 pm**
 - Documentary
- 9:00 pm**
 - News / International News / Weather Report
- Tasty Trip
- Sing & Enjoy

Xu, Yang end six decade drought for cross border pairs

SUZHOU, (China), 2 May — China's Xu Xin and Yang Ha-eun of South Korea have teamed up to become the first cross-border partnership to win the world mixed doubles table tennis championship for 61 years.

The pair beat Japan's Kasumi Ishikawa and Maharu Yoshimura 4-0 at the world championships on Friday, becoming the first mixed nationality winners of the title since Czechoslovakia's Ivan Andreadis and Hungarian Gizella Gervai at Wembley in 1954. Xu played through a shoulder injury he

sustained in his men's singles match earlier in the day but was quick to deflect Yang's assertion that his performance had been heroic.

“The injury definitely affected my play,” the 25-year-old lefthander said. “I am glad that our partnership worked out well despite my injury. “I am neither a hero, nor a warrior, but I made sure that I give my best. As long as that is the case, I think the outcome matters less compared to the process and efforts.”

The world championships in Suzhou, China conclude on Sunday. —Reuters



China's Xu Xin and South Korea's Yang Haeun play against Hong Kong's Wong Chun Ting and Doo Hoi Kem in their mixed doubles semi-final match at the World Table Tennis Championships in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on 30 April, 2015.—REUTERS

England star Rio Ferdinand mourns death of wife at 34

LONDON, 2 May — The 34-years-old wife of former Manchester United player and England captain Rio Ferdinand has died, the player announced on Saturday.

Ferdinand now plays for London club QPR and later today the club's team will be wearing black arm bands in their Premiership game

against Liverpool at Anfield. Ferdinand said his wife died at a London Hospital after battling breast cancer. In a brief statement, issued on QPR's website, the player, describing his wife as his soul mate, said: “Rebecca, my wonderful wife, passed away peacefully after a short battle with cancer at the Royal

Marsden Hospital in London.” She leaves behind three children, Lorenz, nine, Tate, six, and four-year-old Tia. Ferdinand added: “She was a fantastic loving mother to our three beautiful children. She will be missed as a wife, sister, aunt, daughter and granddaughter. She will live on in our memory, as a guide and

inspiration. “Myself, my parents Janice and Julian, along with Rebecca's parents Lesley and Stephen, would like to thank our families, friends and my club colleagues who have rallied around in these desperate days, weeks and months.” Ferdinand also thanked the staff who treated his wife at the hospital,

adding: “I would also like to express my gratitude for the dedication and expertise of the staff led by Professors Johnstone and Clarke at the Royal Marsden. Their valiant efforts to prolong Rebecca's all-too-short life will not be forgotten. Our grief, as a family, is total. We would appreciate being allowed to mourn

privately.” Ferdinand, one of England's most popular and respected players, was born and brought up in London and won more than 80 caps as an England player. He made more than 300 appearances with Manchester United between 2002 and last year when he signed with QPR. Xinhua

Drogba can't wait for 'crazy' Chelsea Sunday



Chelsea's Didier Drogba in action during their Barclays Premier League at King Power Stadium on 29 April, 2015.—REUTERS

LONDON, 2 May — Veteran striker Didier Drogba is expecting a "crazy" Stamford Bridge atmosphere when Chelsea attempt to clinch the Premier League title for the first time in five years with a win at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday.

The 37-year-old former Ivory Coast international is dreaming of an avalanche of goals against London rivals Palace, just like 2010 when Chelsea

wrapped up the championship with an 8-0 home drubbing of Wigan Athletic.

"I remember when we had to play Wigan to win the title, the atmosphere was crazy," Drogba told the club's in-house television channel. "I think Sunday is going to be the same and I hope we are going to score a lot of goals for the fans."

"It's a derby as well. Crystal Palace are going to come and show what they can do and try to disturb us but really I think Sunday has to be a blue day."

Drogba was on the bench for much of this sea-

son until top scorer Diego Costa suffered a hamstring injury in a 3-2 victory at Hull City on 22 March and since then the Ivorian has featured regularly in the starting lineup.

"I can't wait for Sunday," he said. "We just want to win the league now, that's the most important thing."

"Everybody is focused, everybody is waiting for Sunday to happen and to come quick because we really want to play that game." Jose Mourinho's Chelsea have a 13-point lead at the top of the table with five matches left to play.—Reuters

Wenger accuses Mourinho of lacking respect

LONDON, 2 May — Arsene Wenger hit back at Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho's thinly-veiled criticism of his Arsenal record on Friday, accusing his old adversary of a lack of respect. Arsenal fans chanted "boring, boring Chelsea" after Sunday's 0-0 draw with Mourinho's men at the Emirates, a result that virtually sealed the Premier League title for Chelsea.

The Portuguese responded by saying "boring is not winning the title for 11 years", referring to Wenger's failure to finish top with his north London club since 2004.

Asked about Mourinho's comments ahead of third-placed Arsenal's clash with Hull City on Monday, Wenger told reporters: "The biggest thing for a manager is to respect other managers. Some people have to improve on that". The Frenchman has never beaten the Chelsea boss in 13 attempts and the pair have often clashed. Last year Mourinho labelled Wenger a "specialist in failure" while at Stamford Bridge this season the duo were involved in pushing and shoving in the technical area. Arsenal have not lost in the league since a 2-1 defeat to north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur

in February but despite their fine run of form they are 13 points behind champions-elect Chelsea. Wenger said it could have been a different story but for injuries at the start of the season.

"We have made progress so I look at it in a positive way," he added. "What you want to show during the season is that you are getting better. We were faced with a big challenge especially with Chelsea out in front."

"We had injuries to key players after the World Cup. We needed to find balance in the team. Looking back we dropped big points ... and that was a big disappointment." Chelsea can seal the title with a win against Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge on Sunday and Wenger believes their ability to grind out results is what sets them apart. "Once you are fighting for the championship you win some games because you smell you can do it, games that you don't necessarily win if you are fourth or fifth. That doesn't always represent the value of the team," Wenger said.

"Manchester City had ups and downs and started stronger than us and were in front for a long time. Manchester United had a slow start and became stronger."

Reuters



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger

Federer reaches last four in Istanbul

ISTANBUL, 2 May — Roger Federer was given a fright before reaching the semi-final of the inaugural Istanbul Open on Friday, eventually beating Spain's Daniel Gimeno-Traver 7-6(3), 6-7(5), 6-3.

The Swiss world number two, the top draw at the new claycourt event, needed two hours 28 minutes to set up a semi-final against eighth seed Diego Schwartzman.

Argentine Schwartzman won only seven points

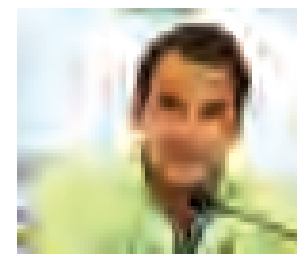
in a dreadful opening set against Colombia's fourth seed Santiago Giraldo but triumphed 0-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Second seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov eased into the semis with a straightforward defeat of Croatian Ivan Dodig and will face Pablo Cuevas on Saturday. Organizers will no doubt be hoping for a Federer/Dimitrov showdown on Sunday as the tournament tries to establish itself on the ATP Tour. Federer, who was photographed on the

ATP website visiting some of the city's many attractions, is clearly a fan, even if he was not completely happy with his form.

"They were perfect playing conditions today," the 17-times grand slam champion said. "Almost no wind, beautiful sunshine; not too hot, not too cold."

"Just because it's nice weather doesn't mean you're going to play nice. I wish it was like that, but it's not as simple as that. It was a good fight today."—Reuters



Roger Federer of Switzerland attends a news conference before the ATP World Tour Istanbul tennis tournament in Istanbul on 27 April, 2015.

REUTERS

Rory survives, Spieth knocked out at Match Play

SAN FRANCISCO, 2 May — World number one Rory McIlroy fought back from two holes down with two to play to beat Billy Horschel at the WGC-Match Play Championship on Friday, while Masters champion Jordan Spieth was knocked out after losing to Lee Westwood.

McIlroy buried a 24-footer for birdie to win the 17th then birdied the last to square the match with FedEx Cup champion Horschel, who faltered with a bogey at the second extra hole to send his opponent into the last 16.

McIlroy, who will play Japan's Hideki Matsuyama in the next round, said he picked the perfect time to hit his best putt of the day on 17.

"Obviously you make the putt or you are going home," he said. "Hit the best putt that I hit all day, thankfully."

"When I got him up to 18, I knew just try and keep the pressure on him and somehow I was able to turn it around."

England's Westwood



Rory McIlroy tees off at the seventh hole during day three of the World Golf Championships-Cadillac Match Play at TPC Harding Park, San Francisco, CA, USA on 1 May, 2015.—REUTERS

beat Spieth 2 up, fighting back from an early deficit and ramming home an important 12-foot birdie putt on the 17th to wrestle a lead he would not relinquish.

After missing an 11-foot birdie putt on the first and then making bogey on the second hole, Westwood was two down out of the blocks. A Spieth bogey on six and a 13-foot birdie putt for Westwood on the ninth squared the match at the turn. Westwood took the lead a hole later when the 21-year-old American failed to get up and down from just

off the green. After the 11th hole they were square again when Spieth made a birdie from 14 feet. The pair then traded clutch pars for three holes. Spieth appeared in trouble when he missed the 15th green but chipped in for birdie. Westwood did not flinch and made his six-foot birdie putt to match. A hole later it was Westwood with the heroics. After sending a green-side bunker shot over the green and leaving his next chip short in the rough, the Englishman chipped in for

par and Spieth missed his 14-foot birdie chance to stay tied. Westwood birdied the penultimate hole, leaving Spieth needing to win the 18th, which he was unable to do. Westwood will play compatriot Danny Willett next up. Hunter Mahan, the 2012 champion and 2013 runner-up, advanced to the final 16 for the fifth straight year with a crushing 5&4 win over fellow American Matt Kuchar. Mahan has destroyed his group, winning 7&6 over Stephen Gallacher and 5&3 over Ben Martin over the opening two days.

He will face Australian John Senden, who finished off his group play 3-0 with a 1 up win over Brendon Todd, knocking out world number three Henrik Stenson and former FedEx Cup champion Bill Haas in the process. In other last 16 ties, Marc Leishman takes on Gary Woodland, Branden Grace faces Tommy Fleetwood, Jim Furyk is up against JB Holmes, Louis Oosthuizen faces Rickie Fowler and Charl Schwartzel plays Paul Casey.

Reuters