



President U Thein Sein's State of the Union Address to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

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Workers put up houses for homeless Yangonites in Dagon Myothit at a site called The Mahabandoola Housing Complex. PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG HTWAY

A ROOF OVER OUR HEADS

Yangonites with no homes invited to apply for rental apartments

Thein Ko Lwin

THE Yangon Region government has invited Yangonites to apply for rental apartments at a housing complex in Dagon Myothit (South) Township.

According to the regional government, those who live in Yangon with no homes, but have household list certificate (66/6),

are qualified for submission of their applications to rent an apartment at the rate of K30, 000 a month at Mahabandoola Housing Complex for the long term.

Only applicants who own no home in Yangon and want to rent an apartment for the long term will be chosen," said U Myat Kyaw Kyaw, secretary of the Yangon Region government.

Application forms are being issued at township administrator's offices across Yangon, and the forms are to be sent to Yangon Region government from 1 to 15 February.

"I am interested in applying for rental apartments as the rent price is pretty fair," said U Nyi Phyo Lin who lives in a rented house in Hlinethaya Township.

According to the Yangon Re-

gion government, it can revoke a lease if anyone who was allowed to rent an apartment there fail to follow its instructions in which re-renting or selling the apartment is banned.

The Mahabandoola Housing Complex designated for people with no homes in Yangon has 1,200 apartments. Each apartment is 569 sq.ft.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes successfully

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw came to a successful conclusion yesterday, following the discussions and suggestions by MPs in connection with the undertakings throughout its tenure.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint praised the two Houses for their engagement in the exercise of checks and balances despite some disagreements, stressing that a majority decision is not a universal truth.

The speaker also commended the representatives for their unbiased and selfless commitments to national interests during the five-year parliament.

MPs, including Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swar and Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyein, expressed their suggestions.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann pointed out the need for the parliament and other institutions to abide by the law in the accomplishment of their objectives, urging the incoming Houses to continue with new legislation in conformity with the time and the system.

The speaker declared the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session had successfully come to a close.

The second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sessions will start on 1 February.

Following the end of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, a luncheon in honour of the outgoing MPs and incoming MPs was held at the parliamentary building with attendance by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann gives a press conference. PHOTO: MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker gives local, foreign media press conference

PYIDAUNGsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann gave a press conference to local and foreign media persons totaling 119 at Zambuthiri Hall in Parliament Complex, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Speaker answered questions raised by media at the conference.

Present also at the press conference were Deputy Pyidaungsu

Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Chair of Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee U Ti Khun Myat and Secretary U Saw Hla Tun, members of Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission and officials from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Offices.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw postpones its session to 2 Feb

THE first regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw has been postponed from 1 February to 2 February 2016, the Amyotha Hluttaw's office announced yesterday.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Myanmar's UDE wants to be included in OU5

A PROFESSOR from the University of Distance Education will participate in a meeting on Five Open University-OU5 to be held in Surabaya, Indonesia, from 30 January to 1 February.

Dr Thazin Lwin, Professor of the UDE, left Yangon yesterday for Indonesia to attend the

meeting. Five Open University-OU5 includes five university of distance education each from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand.

Myanmar's UDE is expected to be included in the open university system of the group.—*GNLM*

Myanmar Scouts concludes strategy development workshop

The Myanmar Scouts Federation yesterday concluded a workshop in Lanmadaw township, Yangon Region, with an address by Union Minister at President's Office U Soe Thane.

The country introduced its scouting in 1916 and stopped it in 1964, with the union minister saying that it was resumed in 2012 after the gap of 48 years.

The Myanmar Boy Scouts and the Myanmar Girl Scouts have adopted their own organisational setups alongside their

own rules and regulations, he said, calling for continued support for the country's scouts to become a member to the World Scouts in the World Scouts Conference in 2017.

The 25th Asia-Pacific Regional Scout Conference in South Korea in November 2015 unanimously approved the country's membership to the World Scout.

The workshop drew 50 scouts, including former scouts, from six regions and states.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Myanmar scouts are seen at the concluding ceremony of strategy development workshop. PHOTO: TIN MAUNG LAT (MNA)

Pathein gets more electricity



Newly opened power stations in Pathein. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

TWO power stations in Pathein in the delta region were opened yesterday, as part of the equal access to electricity in Ayeyawady Region.

The newly opened stations can now provide electricity to over 40,000 houses in 129 villages in the region, thereby helping develop human resources in edu-

cation, health and economy.

The construction of the projects started in March and were completed in November last year.—*Than Oo (Lay Hmyat Hnar)*

Weather radar station in Mandalay sees completion of piling work

PILING work for the construction of a radar station near TadaU Airport in Mandalay was completed, according to an official from the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (Upper Myanmar).

The radar station is being built with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA starting last December and is slated for completion in the middle of the year 2017, said U Kyaw Lwin Oo, director of the department.

Of three set to be established in Myanmar, the first weather radar station was opened in Kyaukpyu last October while construction of the two facilities are in progress in Mandalay and Yangon.

Upon completion of three radar stations in Myanmar, weather forecast will be more accurate than before as the three stations will be able to exchange information with one another, added the director.—*Aung Thet Khaing*



A scale model of a radar station in Mandalay.

Myanmar Dental Conference 2016 held

THE 36th Myanmar Dental Conference, set to last for five days, continued in Yangon yesterday with a paper-reading session and public exposition of dental care

and equipment as of last Thursday. According to the conference, 47 local and foreign resource persons are set to read out their papers at the conference attended

by 400 delegates from across the country.

A sport event is scheduled to be held on the final day of the conference.—*Aung Thura*

VP Dr Sai Mauk Kham attends luncheon in honour of incoming, outgoing MPs

VICE-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham attended a luncheon in honour of representatives to the first and second Parliament at Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The event was also attended by Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) U Khin Aung Myint, deputy speakers, Union ministers, deputy ministers and representatives including regional representatives.

The Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chair of the National League for Democracy, spoke at the occasion.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham poses for photo together with speakers, MPs and artistes at luncheon in honour of MPs. PHOTO: MNA

Ayeyawady Region on track to get 24-hour electricity coverage

Than Oo (MNA) & Khin Yadanar

AMONG states and regions of the country, Ayeyawady keeps abreast of the high potential of development compared to Yangon and Mandalay as the region has an abundant stock of rice and opportunities for job seekers.

The development of a certain region can be determined by its physical and social infrastructure such as electricity, roads and bridges, water supply, education, health, telecommunication, etc.

Among the fundamental facilities and systems, electrical grids play an important role in implementation of tasks for ensuring better living standards of the people.

During the period from 2011 to 2016, rural electrification reached 33 townships that include 739 villages in Ayeyawady Region, thereby contributing towards better livelihoods of Ayeyawady dwellers.

Compared to the situation before 2011 when only 27 townships that include 180 villages had access to electricity, more six townships that include 559 villages have enjoyed electricity following the five-

year period of rural electrification program in the region.

It was due to the establishment of sub-power stations and extended installation of power line including 230KV Athoke-Pathein power line and the 66KV Pathein-Ngayekekaung-Ngapyayma power line, electric power was brought to 739 villages. Moreover, 5,938 villages are expected to have access to electricity through other sources.

The Ministry of Electricity implemented many programs for electrification of the whole Ayeyawady Region, using all forms of sources to supply electricity to the region apart from the country's national grid, said an official from the ministry, adding that only a few townships out of 39 remain to gain access to electricity.

According to the ministry, there are 5,240 villages in the region where electricity is yet to reach.

During the five-year period, five main projects were implemented to supply power to the region. First of all, a project for installation of 30.25-mile long 230KV Athoke-Pathein power line began in 2013 with the help of a Chinese loan, and the region was electrified

as of 1 November 2015.

The second project was setting up of a switch bay at Athoke sub-power station and Pathein main power station which was started last February were put into service last November.

Next, the installation of the 76.5-mile 66KV Pathein-Ngayekekaung-Ngapyayma power line and construction of sub-power stations followed. At present, arrangements are underway to provide electricity to townships and villages in the western part of the region following the completion of 230KV sub-power station in Pathein (Kangyidaunk) and related power lines in October, 2015.

The sub-power station will benefit Shwe Thaukyan, Ngwehsaung and Chaungtha which are beach resorts, and Ngapyayma, Htichaik, Okkashitkwin and Kyonku in the region.

One of hoteliers from Chaungtha expressed his view that beach resorts and Ngayekekaung which has the potential to become an industrial zone are expecting to see more development.

According to the ministry the construction of the 66KV 10 MVA Pathein (Myato) sub-power station, Hlinethaya-Kyaiklat 230 KV power line and 230 KV Kyaiklat sub-power station are underway.

Upon completion, a total of 286 villages in Bogale, Kyaiklat, Dedaye, Pyapon and Mawlamyinegyun will benefit from the facilities.

The ministry official said that the China Three Gorges Corporation is planning to generate 30 megawatts of wind power in Chaungtha, 112 megawatts from Yaynaukaing wind power plant, 70 megawatts from Htanpinkwin wind power facility and 80 megawatts from the Kangyidaunk wind power farm.

Energy Ministry holds press briefing

MYANMAR will host the 34th Senior Officials Meeting on 12-15 July, the Ministerial Level Meeting on 19-23 September and High-Level Officials Meeting on 6-7 December, the Ministry of Energy said in a press briefing yesterday.

The ministry said that it would conduct feasibility studies on the import of liquefied gas in partnership with the World Bank as part of satisfying the rising demand in the industrial sector.

Regarding the soaring fuel prices, the ministry said that it

would intensify its supervision on the illegal import and distribution of fuel oil. The ministry spoke of the extractive industries with foreign investments, saying that the Southeast Asian oil and gas pipeline project was started in 2009 by the International Environment Management company of Thailand in line with the criteria set by the World Bank.

U Phay Zin Tun, permanent secretary of the ministry, responded to queries raised by correspondents at the press briefing.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MPT to provide 3G coverage to over 95% of Myanmar by end of March

MYANMAR Post and Telecommunications (MPT) has made it known that it will begin to roll out its 3G network to over 90% of the country during February, with over 95% of country to receive coverage by the end of March.

Currently only 60% of Myanmar is covered by the 3G network, but this will be increased to nearly the whole country during the next couple of months.

"We are always prioritising the extension of our networks. We are about to provide 3G network coverage for over 90% of the country's population, with 96% to be connected at the end of March," said Mr. Koichi Kawase, chief commercial officer of MPT-KSGM.

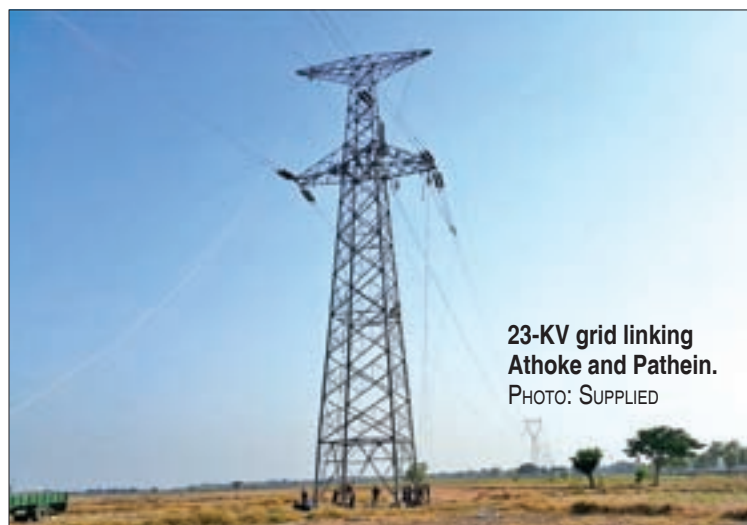
Furthermore, as part of MPT's special 3G9+ promotion, those who top-up their phone balance between January 29 – February 9 with a sum of 1,000 kyats will receive a 20% bonus; a sum of 3,000 kyats, a 30% bo-

nus; 5,000 kyats, a 40% bonus, while any top-up of an amount over 10,000 kyats will receive a 100% bonus added to their balance, it is known from MPT.

"We're slowly making changes. We are also working towards expanding our network of phone towers to provide for the coming 4G network," said U Thein Hote, deputy chief of MPT's business department.

As well as offers on pre-paid phone cards, bonus also apply to those who pay monthly phone bills, with a bonus of 500 kyats received for those who's bill is between 1,000-2,999 kyats; 1,500 kyats for bills between 3,000-4,999 kyats; a 5,000 kyats bonus received for bills incurred between 5,000-9,999 kyats and a 10,000 kyats bonus added to all those bills 10,000 kyats or over.

It is known that the Japanese KDDI and Sumitomo company have bought stakes in MPT worth \$2 billion.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



23-KV grid linking Athoke and Pathein. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Cattle breeders earn more than K1 million per year



RURAL people in Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, are mainly engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding tasks.

After harvesting crops, local farmers focus on breeding of cows on a manageable scale as rural areas in the township have much room for cattle breeding.

Due to climate change, Tatkon, which is one of the dry regions of Myanmar, is seeing less rainfall yearly. Local farmers

have begun to invest in sank tube-wells for irrigating various crops.

A partnership breeder said that he tends cows at the reed-mace grove and harvested green gram plantations at Hsinthe creek in the monsoon and cold season. But he takes care that his cows do not enter the thriving crop plantations.

"I have 10 cows and oxen being bred with a partnership breeder. Cows can become pregnant

once a year. I can sell K300,000 per one-year cow and K350,000 per one-year ox. The excrement of cows can be sold for K5,000 per bullock-cart. We can produce one viss (approx. 1.6 litres) of milk per cow daily. As such, I can earn more than K1 million yearly from the selling of young bulls, milk and cow excrement," said U Hla Aung, owner of cow herd from Thayawhan village.—*Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)*

Mobile clinics offer social security services nationwide

THE Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has offered medical care through mobile clinics to social security policy holders and plans to expand its services to staff of government ministries and to hotel zones in Nay Pyi Taw.

The mobile clinic programme aims to promote understanding about the ministry's social security services to programme members, especially in remote areas.

The mobile clinics are equipped to treat chronic diseases such as diabetes and blood diseases.

"People suffering from sickness, senior citizens and patients with chronic diseases are high on the ministry's list of priorities," said Daw Lwin Lwin Khaing, head of the So-

cial Security Department in Nay Pyi Taw.

Mobile healthcare services were launched nationwide in February 2014 by the ministry in cooperation with the Thukha Mingala Medical and Diagnostic Center.

"We have collected 5 per cent of the total income of our members," said Daw Lwin Lwin Khaing. "Employees are liable to pay 2 per cent of their total income, while their employers will have to pay the rest."

U Phyo Sithu, manager of the mobile medical team, said: "We are scheduled to go to the upper regions, including Mandalay, Kalay, Katha, Kachin and Myitkyina to provide people there with quality care and medical check-ups."—*Min Min Zaw*

Extreme weather hampers regional development in Kachin State

EXTREME weather is thwarting regional development tasks in Kachin State, according to local residents.

Projects in three regions in Sawlaw Township have temporarily ceased due to the cold weather this month.

Mimaw, Lansal and Lakin regions are covered with snow, and the temperature there has reached minus five degree centigrade. The people performing regional development tasks have moved to safer places.—*Simikhon-Nan Yi*

Crime News

Cargo vessel sank in Twantay



Cargo vessel sinking in Twantay Canal. PHOTO: AUNG MIN (DALA)

A CARGO vessel heading for Bayintnaung jetty, driven by one U Khin Maung Myint, 57, with eight crew members sank in Twantay Canal, near Tharsi village, Twantay township, Yangon on Wednesday.

The accident was caused by permeation of water into the vessel. Total loss amounted to K257,000.

The vessel, called Shwe

Thandar, was owned by one U Zayyar, 27. It was 91 feet long, 21 feet wide. The police have filed charges against U Khin Maung Myint.—*Aung Min (Dala)*

CCTV footage leads to murder arrest

POLICE were alerted to a murder with the help of CCTV installed at railway station ward, Taikkyi township on Wednesday. According to an investigation, police found a corpse in

a bush near milepost 41/8 and 41/9. On Tuesday police found three men drunk at the Yes restaurant as shown by the restaurant CCTV. When interrogated, Thura Win alias Hassan, 32,

admitted to having killed Soe Soe alias Ye Tun Soe, 32. Local police are holding the man while searching for the second suspect who managed to escape.—*Tun Hlaing (Myain)*

Fire engulfs 18 houses in Mandalay

A FIRE that broke out in Maha Aungmyay Township, Mandalay, yesterday, destroyed 18 houses, according to the Mandalay Region Fire Department.

This is the second such incident this week, following a fire outbreak in Tagundaing Yannar Ward on Tuesday.

According to an investigation, an individual filling fuel into a bucket near a cooking fire inside a house in Ngan Pyar Yi Su Ward caused the fire, according to the department.

It took firefighters 40 min-

utes to put out the fire with the use of 76 fire engines accompanied by more than 200 firefighters, including auxiliary fire brigade members, according to the department.

Action is being taken against one Daw Khin Htay Yi, the owner of the house, for negligence. More than 220 fires occurred from January to December, 2015 in Mandalay Region, with 81 in Mandalay itself. Fires caused by negligence topped the list.—*Aung Thant Khaing*



Firefighters putting out the fire. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

Not Top Gun yet: China struggles with warplane engine technology

SINGAPORE — China has built a potent military machine over the past 30 years but is struggling to develop advanced engines that would allow its warplanes to match Western fighters in combat, foreign and Chinese industry sources said.

The country's engine technology lags that of United Technologies unit Pratt & Whitney, General Electric and Rolls-Royce, said Douglas Barrie, senior fellow for military aerospace at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

China's Defence Ministry, in a brief statement to Reuters, said there was a "definite gap" between Chinese military technology and some developed countries, adding Beijing would continue to strengthen its armed forces.

Western restrictions on arms exports to China prohibit the sale of Western engines for military use, forcing China to rely on homegrown designs or engines Russia has agreed to sell.

"Chinese engine-makers face a multitude of problems," said Michael Raska, assistant professor in the Military Transformations Programme at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.



Foreign visitors stand next to a model of the J-31 stealth fighter at the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) booth at the Aviation Expo China 2015 in Beijing, China, in September 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Among the issues, China's J-20 and J-31 stealth fighters cannot super-cruise, or fly at supersonic speeds like their closest rivals, Lockheed Martin's F-22 and F-35 stealth planes, without using after-burners, said two industry sources who follow Beijing's military programmes closely.

After-burners remove a warplane's stealthiness, a capability that allows them to escape radar

detection. Even the warplane engine that experts consider to be China's best has reliability issues, said the sources, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter.

A Chinese military expert, who has knowledge of the government's defence policy but who declined to be identified, said Chinese fighter jets could not perform as well as American warplanes because of inferior

engine technology.

That puts China at a disadvantage should its warplanes be pitted against US jet fighters or those from security ally Japan in Asia's disputed waters, the industry sources and security experts said.

Chinese warplanes are likely to come into increasing contact with US fighters over the South China Sea in the years ahead after Beijing conducted its first test

flights this month to one of three island runways it is building in the contested Spratly archipelago, security experts said.

In any conflict, China would likely rely on sheer numbers of fighters as well as a growing arsenal of sophisticated missiles that can be launched from warships or land, they added.

To be sure, China has made warplane engine development a priority in recent years, sources said.

The Shanghai-based Galleon group, which provides consulting services to the aerospace industry, estimates Beijing will spend \$300 billion over the next 20 years on civil and military aircraft engine programmes.

Some sources said China had hired several foreign engineers and former air force personnel to work on engine development, although this could not be independently confirmed. The Chinese Defence Ministry declined to comment.

"In 20 to 30 years time, given the amount of work they have done and the effort they are putting into it, they should have a viable military engine," said Greg Waldron, Asia Managing Editor at Flightglobal, an industry publication. —Reuters

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Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter

Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors

Jacob Goldberg
jgold.news@gmail.com

Alec Wilmot
alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin
mryehtuttin@gmail.com
Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news

Tun Tun Naing
tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin
juniorlwin25@gmail.com

Tun Aung Kyaw
tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators

Hay Mar Tin Win
haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

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

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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North Korea activity points to possible space launch: US officials

WASHINGTON — The United States has seen increased activity around a North Korean missile site, suggesting preparations for a possible space launch in the near future, US officials told Reuters on Thursday.

The finding was revealed as Washington shows growing concern that Pyongyang could use space technology to enhance its missile capability and while United Nations Security Council members discuss fresh sanctions against North Korea after it conducted its fourth nuclear test on 6 January.

The officials cited intelligence suggesting movement of components and propellant at North Korea's Sohae satellite launch facility. A test could take place within a couple of weeks, they said.

"Our concern though is ... it's the same technology to develop ICBMs" (inter-continental ballistic missiles), one of the officials said.

"We are keeping a close eye on these activities by the North Koreans. We're watching 24/7," a second official said.

Joe Bermudez, chief analytics officer at commercial intelligence firm AllSource Analysis, said open source imagery showed increased activity at the site in northwestern North Korea.

Movement of vehicles, construction and other activities

suggested test preparations for a rocket engine test soon, Bermudez said. Activities were also noted at the launch pad, however, but it was not clear whether a rocket had already been delivered to the site.

North Korea was concealing activities on the site through construction of new buildings and a cover that obscures satellite views of the gantry tower next to the launch pad.

"This is the first time leading up to a potential launch that all the concealment shelters are in place," said Stephen Wood, chief executive officer of AllSource.

An analysis by 38 North, a North Korea monitoring project at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, said the cover near the gantry tower could conceal a rocket, and a rail-mounted shelter has been moved adjacent to the engine-test stand on the site.

The shelter could allow for rocket stages to be assembled and moved to the tower under cover of darkness of heavy clouds, 38 North found. It is large enough to conceal the first stage of North Korea's Musudan intermediate range ballistic missile, its Unha space-launch vehicle, or a new rocket engine.

The analysis said commercial satellite images, taken as a series of "snapshots" from 28 December to 25 January, showed



Airbus Defence & Space and 38 North satellite imagery dated 25 January, 2016 shows three objects at the base of the gantry tower that are either vehicles or equipment at Sohae Satellite Launching Station in North Korea in this image released on 28 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

"low-level activities" throughout the Sohae Rocket Launch Facility. North Korea last conducted a long-range rocket launch in late 2012, sending an object it described as a communications satellite into orbit. Western and Asian experts said it was part of an effort to build an ICBM.

South Korean Defence Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok declined to comment on possible pre-launch activities by North Korea, citing a policy of not discussing intelligence matters.

North Korea has not yet warned about potential interference with navigation, a step it

has taken ahead of previous launches, he said.

US Secretary of State John Kerry during a trip to China this week warned against North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's declared intention to develop an ICBM with the capacity to carry a nuclear warhead.

"It is a threat the United States must take extremely seriously," Kerry told reporters in Beijing on Wednesday.

"The United States will do what is necessary to protect people in our country and our friends and allies in the world," Kerry said.—Reuters

Chinese sonar vessel to join search for missing Malaysian jet

SYDNEY — China is set to join the underwater search for a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet missing for almost two years by providing a sonar-equipped vessel by the end of February, Australia's deputy prime minister Warren Truss said yesterday.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 disappeared with 239 people on board during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in March 2014, sparking one of the greatest mysteries in aviation history.

The Chinese vessel Dong Hai Jiu 101 was offered to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in November and will be deployed to join search operations in the southern Indian Ocean, where the plane is believed to have gone down in March 2014.

At the time, China valued its contribution to the search at A\$20 million (\$14.2 million).

The Australian-led underwater search is one of the most expensive ever conducted. An initial hunt along a rugged 60,000-sq km (23,000 sq miles) patch of sea floor off the coast of Perth cost A\$120 million but yielded no sign of the plane.

The presence of Dong Hai Jiu will take to four the number of vessels scouring a search area that has been expanded



Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss speaks during a media conference next to a map displaying the search area for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, in December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

to 120,000 square km (46,330 square miles) of ocean floor.

The vessel is expected to leave Singapore for Australia on 31 January and commence operations towards the end of February.

The sonar system onboard Dong Hai Jiu 101 will be operated by Phoenix International

Holdings and Hydrospheric Solutions. Both companies have previous experience in the search for MH370.

Earlier this week, Australian authorities said they had lost a deep-water sonar detector that was being used in the search.

A piece of the plane washed up on the French island of Reun-

ion in the Indian Ocean in July 2015 but no further trace has been found.

On Saturday, a piece of suspected plane wreckage was found off the east coast of southern Thailand but aviation experts and Thai officials said it was unlikely to belong to MH370.—*Reuters*

Singapore slaps S\$180,000 fine on North Korea-linked shipper

SINGAPORE — Singapore-based Chinpo Shipping Company (Private) Ltd was fined S\$180,000 (\$125,698) yesterday for facilitating a shipment of arms to North Korea in violation of UN sanctions.

The Singapore District Court had found Chinpo guilty in December of transferring financial assets or resources that could have been used to contribute to North Korea's weapon programmes. It also found Chinpo guilty for carrying out a remittance business without a license between 2009 and 2013.

Chinpo Shipping was named by a 2014 UN report as helping arrange the shipment of Cuban fighter jets and missile parts that were bound for North Korea when they were seized in Panama in 2013.

It was the largest amount of arms and related materiel interdicted to or from North Korea since the UN first began imposing economic and commercial sanctions on North Korea in 2006, according to the Singapore District Court.—*Reuters*

Senior North Korean diplomat leaves for Russia amid nuclear tensions

BEIJING — North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Guk left for Russia yesterday, official media said, as the international community discusses how best to penalise Pyongyang for its fourth nuclear test earlier this month.

It is the first foreign visit by a senior North Korean official reported by the country's official media since it conducted what it claimed was a successful test of a hydrogen bomb on 6 January.

A one-sentence report by the state-run Korean Central

News Agency provided no information on the purpose of the visit or any other details.

On Thursday, Choe Son Hui, a North Korean diplomat who has been in charge of talks with the United States for many years, was seen arriving at Beijing's international airport. Choe, deputy director general of the Foreign Ministry's North American affairs bureau, ignored questions from reporters and her final destination is unknown.

The two visits come as UN Security Council members are

discussing additional sanctions against North Korea, which, Japanese and US government officials say, is now showing signs of preparing for a possible long-range missile launch.

China and Russia, two of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN council, have been reluctant to take stiffer measures to punish North Korea for its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons, while the United States and its allies, including Japan and South Korea, have been pushing for tougher sanctions.—*Kyodo News*

Taiwan air crash investigators blame culture of irresponsibility

TAIPEI — Taiwan investigators yesterday blamed individual pilots and the airline for the deadly crash of a TransAsia Airways aircraft on an outlying island that left 48 people dead in 2014.

Capping a year-long investigation, the final report of the crash concluded that human error and pilot fatigue stemming from poor management by the airline were among the main causes of the crash.

The ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop aircraft with 58 people on board crashed on 23 July 2014 in bad weather during its second landing attempt at Magong Airport on Penghu, a popular island resort destination off western Taiwan.

The accident left 48 people dead and 10 passengers injured. Five more people on the ground were also hurt.

Thomas Wang, chief investigator and spokesman of the Aviation Safety Council, told a press conference that the chief pilot, who appeared to be "overconfident" of his flying skills, did not follow standard operating procedures while landing and the co-pilot failed to question him and remind

him of possible risks.

Further investigation showed that the chief pilot was overworked in the days preceding the crash.

Investigators also discovered that TransAsia has bred a culture that allowed its pilots to ignore safety procedures during training and flying.

Wang said the ASC first notified TransAsia of a similar problem following an incident in May 2012. As the airline and the Civil Aeronautics Administration both assured the council that improvements would be made, the case was closed. Investigators also held the CAA responsible, saying it did a poor job supervising the domestic airline. While the CAA was supposed to make sure that TransAsia followed the ASC's suggestions on improving flight safety following the crash, it allowed the airline to ignore them and resume normal operations.

In addition to bad weather, the report blamed the Defence Ministry, which operates Magong Airport, for providing inconsistent weather and runway visual range data to the civil air traffic tower on the day of the crash.—*Kyodo News*

Date for Indian, Pakistan foreign secretary-level talks yet to be finalised

NEW DELHI — The date for the forthcoming foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan is yet to be finalised, India's External Ministry Affairs Ministry said Thursday.

"There is no mutually con-

venient date for Indo-Pak foreign secretary-level talks so far," India's External Ministry Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Vikas Swarup said.

The talks between two sides were cancelled on 14 Jan-

uary, a day ahead of its schedule in wake of the attack on Indian airspace in Punjab.

Swarup then said both sides agreed to reschedule their talks in the "very near future."—*Xinhua*

Dutch suggest EU send migrants straight back to Turkey as more arrive without case for asylum



Migrants cross the railway tracks as they wait to cross the Greek-Macedonian border near the village of Idomeni, Greece, on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS/THE HAGUE — The Netherlands floated an idea on Thursday to ferry migrants reaching Greece straight back to Turkey to stop a relentless influx into the European Union as EU officials cited a rise in the numbers of those who would not qualify for asylum.

The 28-nation bloc has all but failed to curb or control the influx of asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa, more than one million of whom arrived in Europe last year, mainly via Greece and heading towards the EU's biggest economy, Germany.

More than 54,500 people have already reached Europe by sea this year, including 50,668 through Greece, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

They keep flowing in despite stormy winter weather making the journey ever more perilous, a fact highlighted by a UNHCR report that 235 migrants were dead or missing already in 2016. On Thursday, 24 drowned when their boat sank off a Greek island close to the Turkish coast.

Much of the EU debate on how to handle the influx has focused on distinguishing people fleeing war, and thus eligible for international protection, from "economic" migrants seeking better lives without being under immediate threat.

"Indeed we have seen that the numbers of people arriving in Europe who don't have a genuine claim to asylum have been rising slightly," a spokeswoman for the European Commission told a regular news briefing on Thursday.

EU nations have grown unnerved by the continent's worst migration crisis since World War Two, one that has jeopardised the bloc's Schengen zone of passport-free travel over national borders that has contributed greatly to its vaunted prosperity.

In the latest idea for discouraging migrants from flooding into Europe, the head of a party in the Dutch ruling coalition said it was drafting a plan under which those arriving in Greece by sea could be dispatched straight back to Turkey.

Diederik Samsom said Eu-

ropean countries would have to agree in exchange to take several hundred thousand refugees each year out of nearly 2 million currently in Turkey. The Netherlands now holds the EU's rotating presidency and Samsom said it would seek to push for Europe-wide agreement on the plan.

Samsom also said improving conditions for Syrian refugees in Turkey meant it could soon be regarded as a safe country to which asylum-seekers could be returned.

Amnesty International quickly denounced the idea as "fundamentally flawed", saying it would deny those arriving the right to have their asylum claims properly considered.

"Any resettlement proposal that is conditional on effectively sealing off borders and illegally pushing back tens of thousands of people while denying them access to asylum procedures is morally bankrupt," said Amnesty's John Dalhuisen.

"There is no excuse for breaking the law and flouting international obligations in the process."—Reuters

Ethiopia drought relief needs \$500 million for support beyond April: WFP

ADDIS ABABA — The drought relief effort in Ethiopia needs about \$500 million to fund programmes beyond the end of April to support 10.2 million people facing critical food shortages this year, the UN World Food Programme said on Thursday.

Ethiopia is battling one of its worst droughts in decades that in parts of the country eclipses the 1984 crisis, when rain failures and conflict caused famine that killed an estimated 1 million people.

This time, the Horn of Africa nation is at peace and has an economy that has grown rapidly

for more than a decade, helping the government put in place agriculture, health and social programmes to build resilience against lean periods.

But the scale of this drought, blamed on the El Niño weather phenomenon, is even overwhelming those measures.

"We are really on the cliff's edge as we speak," WFP Country Director John Aylieff told Reuters, saying the \$500 million had to be raised by the end of February so resources could be in place by the end of April.

"It's a really tall order for donors to suddenly mobilise the immense amount of resources

needed for the Ethiopian crisis this year. I would also say it is a tall order for the mother in the highlands of Ethiopia to watch her children waste away."

The government, WFP and a group of charities such as Save the Children are working on the relief effort. The government is already spending about \$300 million and other funds have come from the United States, Canada, European states and others. About \$38 million was committed this week, the WFP said.

But more is needed when international aid budgets are stretched by crises such as the Syria conflict.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Forty pct of Germans want Merkel to resign over refugee policy

BERLIN — Forty per cent of Germans want Chancellor Angela Merkel to resign due to her refugee policy, which saw the country take in 1.1 million asylum seekers last year, an Insa poll for *Focus* magazine showed yesterday.

The poll of 2,047 Germans, which Insa conducted from 22 January to 25 January, showed 45.2 per cent believed Merkel's refugee policy was not a reason for her to resign.—Reuters

US, Russian defence officials discuss air safety over Syria: Pentagon

WASHINGTON — Senior US and Russian defence officials held a video conference on Thursday to discuss military air safety over Syria as the two sides carry out separate air strikes targeting rebel forces in the country, the Pentagon said.

"The two sides discussed measures to enhance operational safety ... including the means to avoid accidents and unintended confrontation between coalition and Russian forces whenever the two sides operate in close proximity," Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in a statement.

The two countries approved a memorandum of understanding on flight safety over Syrian airspace last year. They discussed implementation issues in a video conference in October.—Reuters

Turkey detains 25 suspected IS militants along Syrian border

ANKARA — Turkey on Wednesday captured 25 suspected Islamic State (IS) militants in two separate operations along its border with Syria, the Turkish General Staff said Thursday.

Border units detained 21 suspected IS members in the southeastern province of Kilis as the group, along with 22 children, tried to illegally enter Turkey from Syria, the General Staff said in a statement.

Also on Wednesday, authorities captured four others who were trying to enter Syria from Turkey and believed to have been set to join the IS. Turkey has stepped up efforts against extremist militants following persistent criticism of what was described as slack control of the flow of jihadist fighters across its border with Syria.—Xinhua

Man arrested with handguns at Disneyland Paris

PARIS — A man was arrested carrying two handguns and a copy of the Koran at the Disneyland Paris amusement park outside Paris on Thursday, French officials said.

France remains in a state of emergency after Islamist gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people in a series of jihadist attacks in and near Paris in November last year. A police source said the 28-year-old man of European origin arrested at Disneyland had been carrying the guns, one of them an automatic handgun, concealed in a bag with the religious text. The Interior Ministry said police were also searching for a woman who may have been with the man, correcting a previous statement that she had been arrested.

"Firearms were discovered in the bags of a man as he went through the metal detector during a routine security check at one of our hotels," Disneyland Paris spokesman Francois Banon said.

Euro Disney (EDLP.PA), whose main shareholder is US-based Walt Disney Co (DIS.N), runs the amusement park. The man was unknown to police before the incident at the park's New York Hotel, the source said.—Reuters

American gets 20-year imprisonment in South Korea for 1997 murder

SEOUL — An American received a 20-year jail term, the longest prison sentence under the South Korea law, on Friday for murdering a South Korean student about two decades ago.

The Seoul Central District Court sentenced Arthur Patterson, 37, to 20 years in prison for stabbing a South Korean college student to death in April 1997. The student was 22 years old at that time.

Patterson was with Edward Lee when the South Korean college student was killed 19 years ago at a Burger King restaurant in the popular foreign district of Itaewon. Lee was acquitted in 1998 due to lack of evidence. Patterson, who fled to the United States in August 1999 while under investigation, was arrested in May 2011 and was extradited to South Korea in September 2015.

The ruling said Lee's confession of witnessing Patterson stabbing the victim was reliable.—Xinhua

OPINION

Ask yourselves

Kyaw Thura

THE incumbent government is leaving on 30 March this year, passing over the baton to the incoming government to be constitutionally formed by the winning party, the National League for Democracy. The handover is praised as the first of its kind throughout the history of the country since independence.

In retrospect, our country saw its first free and fair election in 2010, which gave birth to a democratically elected government for the first time. It is safe to describe that transition to de-

mocracy as the first move to strike a balance between the government and the parliament. These two bodies of decision makers have done everything in their capacity to establish a democratic system that values responsibility, accountability and harmony.

One of the remarkable achievements in the government's commitment to democratic reform is none but the successful holding of the elections in 2015. In his address to the parliament two days ago, President U Thein Sein regarded that success as the second move of the country's democratic reform. Another achievement is concerned with the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement between the government and the eight ethnic armed organisations. Accordingly, the Union Peace Conference is now being convened in Nay Pyi Taw, with the participation of both signatories and non-signatories of ethnic armed organisations, except three or four.

Given the realities of the political situation in the country, the onus is on any incoming government to make continuous efforts to bring about stability and prosperity. More importantly, all political parties should ask themselves why they entered political life. To serve the interests of the people and the country as a whole, right?

Write for us

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

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

President U Thein Sein's State of the Union Address to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

The following is the full text of the State of the Union Address delivered by the President at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 28 January, 2016.



President U Thein Sein delivers an address at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

I would like to extend well wishes and good health to respected Chairman of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Chairman of the Amyotha Hluttaw and members of the Hluttaw.

I delivered a speech as a new president at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw five years ago on March 30, 2011. Starting from that day, all of us have worked hard to build a new, disciplined and modern democratic nation after drifting away from a multi-party democracy system for over five decades. Starting from that day, we began implementing a very different political system and governance principles. Just as our country embarked on democratic transition, many countries in the Mid-

dle East started their "Arab Spring" of democratic transition.

After five years, Middle Eastern countries that are in the nascent stage of democratic transition are further away from their original goal of democracy because of instability arising from armed conflicts, the situation of millions of refugees having to flee from conflict and the surge of anarchism and extremism across the region. However, our country has been able to incrementally implement democratic transition in a peaceful and stable manner even though some difficulties and challenges remain. This is a unique success of Myanmar's democratic transition and it will serve as a model for the global

community. This is also a success for the people of Myanmar.

Members of the Hluttaw:

In my 2011 inauguration speech, I promised to implement policies and processes that reflect the prevailing conditions in order to build a more stable and developed nation. As promised, we have carried out political, economic, administrative and private sector development reforms in order to fulfill the wishes of the people to have peace, stability and development.

Political stability is most important for the ongoing political reforms. Even though there may be individuals and organizations inside and outside the country who are not yet ready to accept

the Seven-Step Roadmap and the Constitution, I have urged in my speech for all of us to work together—despite our differences in conviction and opinion—on issues of common concern in the interests of the country as well as encouraged everyone to get into positions of authority fairly and legitimately by contesting in the democratic elections. Likewise, I have also emphasized that our government is opening the door and extending a hand for peace.

Because of these convictions, our government released prisoners of conscience so that all citizens can participate in the political process. Our government also amended necessary laws and held the 2012 interim elections so that the political parties that didn't contest in the 2010 general elections can participate in the political and legislative activities in the Hluttaw. Because of these actions, individuals and organizations that didn't or weren't able to contest in the 2010 elections were able to contest in the 2012 interim and 2015 general elections and as a result were able to assume executive and legislative duties in accordance with the Constitution.

In order to promote peace as I have promised, we officially invited the Ethnic Armed Organizations to the peace table in August 2011. Without setting any preconditions, we were able to hold state and union level peace talks on free and equal terms. We were able to incrementally build mutual trust through these negotiations and our government was able to sign 39 state and union level peace agreements with 15 Ethnic Armed Organizations. We were also able to reduce the number and scope of

the conflict to some extent. As a next step, we were able to sign a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement on October 15, 2015 after negotiating for over one year so that we can begin to hold political dialogues participated by the government, Hluttaw, Tatmadaw and Ethnic Armed Organizations. The door for peace is always open for the Ethnic Armed Organizations who are not yet ready to sign the agreement.

To launch the political dialogue process, we held the Union Peace Conference on January 12, 2016 based on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and in accordance with the timeframe contained in it. The holding of the Union Peace Conference represents one of the most important functions our government needed to do in transferring power to the incoming new government based on the results of the 2015 election results. The issues discussed in the Union Peace Conference will serve as good foundations for the future peace dialogues held under the new government.

Members of the Hluttaw:

I also promised in 2011 to establish a market economy; reform and implement suitable fiscal and monetary policies as well as tax and revenue policies; and reduce the gap between the rich and the poor as well as the differences in the standard of living between the urban and rural areas.

As a result, we began developing and implementing people-centered development plan starting from the 2011-2012 fiscal year. To improve socioeconomic conditions, our government placed a priority on 7 sectors

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such as access to electricity, access to drinking water, agriculture and livestock, job creation, tourism, and development of trade and investment. In order to promote sustainable development, our government developed a Long-Term (20 years) National All-Round Development Plan, 2011-2031; Myanmar All-Round Development Vision; 2010-2035 Industrial Development Vision; and other related conceptual plans, master plans and land use policies with the help of international organizations. These plans were submitted to the Hluttaw as well as shared with the general public. In order to ensure the accuracy of the statistical data needed to develop and implement these plans, our government also carried out the Nationwide Census Project for the first time in over 30 years. This Nationwide Census Project is a success because it will not only aid our government but also successive governments in developing sound economic plans.

The main difficulty our government encountered in promoting economic development is the continued impact of the two-decades-long economic sanctions imposed against our country. In order to remove these sanctions, our government has proved to certain countries that did not initially view our democratic reforms positively the fact that we are trying to institute a genuine democratic system. Our government has also encouraged these countries to acknowledge the positive changes and to render support to our efforts. I have traveled to the United States, European Union member countries and other friendly countries and explained our reforms to their political and legislative leaders in person. Because of these efforts, our new government was able to gain the support of the international community within a short time, which allowed for the normalization of relations with the international community. After Australia and Norway lifted economic sanctions, the European Union and other countries followed suit. We have also regained the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) benefits for our domestic goods exported to the European Union. The United States have lifted many of the sanctions as well as suspended some others.

The lifting of the economic sanctions has positively contributed to our country. Because of the lifting of the economic sanctions, enactment of suitable foreign direct investment laws and implementation of special economic zone projects, domestic investment in our country increased from MMK 241.57 billion in 2011 to MMK 5179.91 in 2015. Likewise, foreign investment increased from US\$ 4.64 billion in 2011 to US\$ 22.12 bil-

lion in 2015. According to an IMF report, the per capita income increased from a little over US\$ 800 in 2011 to US\$ 1,270 in 2015.

Members of the Hluttaw:

I would like to share some of the successes from our economic reforms. Our government was able to abolish multiple exchange rates inside the country, which has been impeding foreign trade and investment, and replaced it with a unified exchange rate based on the foreign exchange market. While there were initial worries on this undertaking, our government was able to successfully carry it out with the assistance from the International Monetary Fund. Furthermore, our government was able to promulgate legislation establishing an independent Central Bank, which is critical for financial sector reforms. With regards to debts incurred by previous governments, our government was able to negotiate debt forgiveness amounting to 6 billion dollars with Paris Club member countries as well as consolidate and refinance remaining old debts with new low-interest rates.

Because we were able to accomplish these things, our government was able to receive loans and technical assistance from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB and ODA to aid in the development of the country. Furthermore, we were able to start the process of becoming an EITI member country as well as removal from being classified as one of the Least Developed Countries (LDC).

In the education sector, spending increased from MMK 300 billion in 2011 to MMK 1692 billion in 2015. Whereas tuition was free up to middle school previously, free schooling was expanded to secondary schools. In addition to scholarship programs, outstanding scholars programs and awards, many students under the Presidential Scholarship program studied at universities abroad. Spending was also increased on school buildings, furniture, teaching equipment, and other essentials.

As a result, the number of basic education schools increased from 41,000 schools in 2011 to 45,000 schools in 2015. In the same period, the number of students grew from 8,070,000 to over 8,800,000, and the number of teachers from 270,000 to over 330,000. Over 11,000 new schools were built and over 11,100 were renovated.

In addition, to raise our future leaders, youth social organizations including boy and girl scouts, outstanding student programs, and youth Red Cross were revived and supported.

At the same time, I welcome the instruction of Buddha's teachings and activities of Dhamma schools. The activities of other

religions for greater social good must also be welcomed. Related to school education, there are also plans to include in the curriculum civic education and practices, behaviors and attitudes that promote social good. We did all this with the vision of building a nation with peaceful, calm, and pleasant people where goodwill, compassion, unselfish joy flourishes.

In the health sector, spending increased from MMK 86.58 billion in 2011 to MMK 814.17 billion in 2015. To enable better access to healthcare, 225 hospitals were opened and 100 hospitals were upgraded within the last five years. Similarly, 421 ward and township clinics, 225 village-level health, maternal, child departments, and regional departments, 44 state-level hospitals, and 9 nursing and midwifery schools were opened.

Additionally, to improve access to high-level healthcare close to where people live, 15 state/regional hospitals were upgraded to 500-bed hospitals. The Yangon General Hospital was also upgraded to a 2000-bed facility. At the same time that hospitals were upgraded, free healthcare programs were also expanded.

Members of the Hluttaw:

The telecommunications sector is an important component of a developing economy. Therefore, during our government's term in office, we focused on increasing mobile and Internet usage. Not only did this enable better communications, but it also increased the public's access to information and general knowledge. People living in the rural areas can now access the latest market and weather updates thereby narrowing the information gap between city and rural dwellers, and contributing to the development of the rural areas. Since the government permitted the participation of international operators, mobile usage has increased from previous 4-5% to about 80% today. SIM cards became more affordable with the price of each card falling from MMK 1.5 million to about MMK 1500. Soon, Mobile Banking will be expanded further, opening more opportunities for people in the rural areas.

The one weakness in our country's development is access to electricity. Therefore, our government drafted a National Power Policy and a long-term master implementation plan in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Additionally, the National Electrification Plan was developed in cooperation with the World Bank.

During the past 5 years, power generation grew to 1822 MW enabling 422 towns and villages access to electricity. Due to these improvements, Chin and Rakhine States are now connected to the national grid for the first time since independence. Furthermore,

rural electrification is now bringing power to 10421 villages. Under the master implementation plan, 1.7 million households will have access to electricity between 2015-2019.

Members of the Hluttaw:

For citizens to enjoy the benefits of the political and economic reforms, our government also implemented administrative reforms. Since the success of the democratic system is tied to a good administrative system, we are promoting responsibility, accountability, and working fairly for the benefit of the public, in accordance with laws, regulations, and procedures.

We also initiated bottom up—from citizens to the government—administrative approach in place of the top down approach. We enabled direct election of neighborhood, village, and township development support groups, and municipalities. These entities will work with members of Hluttaws and planning committees for the development of their regions.

To foster better collaboration between the Union government and the State/Regional governments, Delivery Units headed by deputy ministers were opened. Two hundred and sixty seven One Stop Shops were also opened to promote transparency and delivery of governance services.

Civil servants are the most important components of administrative reforms. Therefore, our government has placed a priority on capacity building and education programs. We have also increased salaries and pensions. As with other democratic nations, governments may change. However, to ensure stability during transitions, permanent secretaries were appointed and the necessary structural reforms were implemented. Over the past 5 years, over 1 million civil servants have strived to nurture a new administrative system from the old and completely different system. I use this opportunity to recognize their efforts.

Members of the Hluttaw:

Another important area of reforms is the reform of the media sector. Under our government, laws no longer compatible with the times were repealed and new ones were signed into law. To foster media ethics and standards, capacity-building programs were held, and foreign media was allowed to freely report from inside the country.

As well as establishing an independent press council to further develop the media sector, an independent television and radio council will also need to be formed. Additionally, a Right to Information bill has been drafted to assist in independent news-gathering, and will be transferred to the new government. Because of the emergence of these organizations and laws, the difficulties media face today with ethics and

existing laws will soon be diminished.

The Human Rights Commission is also actively carrying out its tasks. In parallel with the government's Anti-Corruption Committee, an independent Anti-Corruption Commission has been formed. According to Transparency International, the country is moving in the right direction, having moved up the Corruption Perceptions Index from 183 in 2010 to 147 in 2015. Long time practices cannot be changed immediately but we are making progress.

With the aim of making Myanmar a middle-income country by 2020, our government worked to develop the private sector—the main driver of the economy—by increasing output, trade and investment. As a result, private sector participation in manufacturing increased to 72.8%, in agriculture to 97.2%, and 83% in services. In international trade, private sector participation grew from 53.16% in 2010-2011 to 65.81% in 2014-2015.

Members of the Hluttaw:

The 2010 general elections were the first steps in the country's democratization process. The government and Hluttaw that were elected worked hand in hand to nurture a democratic system grounded on responsibility and freedom. Since our government initiated democratic reforms, we recognized that the 2015 general elections would be an opportunity to take another step forward.

Therefore, the objective of our government over the last 5 years has been to achieve peace, political stability, emergence of inclusive politics, and improvement of citizens' livelihoods and skills. In other words, regardless of which party wins the 2015 elections, our aim was to lay the groundwork to enable the country to be in a better place politically, economically and socially than when we first initiated reforms in 2010. Our goals were much more expansive and ambitious than winning re-election for the USDP or myself. They are greater than one individual or organization. In fact, these objectives are crucial for the strength of the democratic system in Myanmar.

In implementing these objectives, while we had successes we also faced many difficulties, constraints and challenges. There were also confrontations and disputes. However, by harmonizing what is possible and what is not, and depending on the practical political situation permitted, I addressed these issues in order to prevent the reforms from stalling or backsliding. Ignoring my own personal feelings, I carried out my duties for the benefit of the citizens of this country. Instead of acting as an authoritarian, I sought consensus from all stakeholders.

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Consequently, no one can deny that in Myanmar today, political forces with diverse viewpoints and convictions now participate in politics, and a culture of resolving differences through dialogue has taken root. Furthermore, democratic practice has flourished among citizens, and political institutions that align with democratic practices are stronger. For this reason, Myanmar's democratic transition has gained local and international confidence. Therefore, the stature of Myanmar citizens around the globe has been raised, and the country has enjoyed success in foreign relations including normalizing relations with countries that had once imposed sanctions, serving the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014, hosting

the 2013 South East Asian Games and actively participating in the affairs of the Asia region.

Members of the Hluttaw:

As a result of the reform process and our hard work these past 5 years, the 2015 general elections—an important milestone in our democratic transition process—was held freely and peacefully. In accordance with the election results, the National League for Democracy will soon assume legislative and executive duties. As pledged by our government before the elections, power will be systematically transferred to the new government in accordance with existing laws, regulations, procedures and directives. This will mark the first time since independence that a sitting head of

state and government will peacefully transfer power to a newly elected head of state and government. I repeat my pledge that this essential and important political process of power transfer will be carried out systematically and successfully.

Members of the Hluttaw:

Holding regular elections is a feature of a democratic system. And depending on the decisions made by the people, there will be winners and losers. While the winning majority parties will have to work for the benefit of the country and citizens, the minority parties will have to cooperate for the nation's benefit, and when necessary, provide constructive criticism. In this way, political parties will operate according to democratic principles and practices and in ways to gain

the public trust and confidence for their policies in future elections.

In Myanmar today, whichever political party assuming office will need to continue implementing peace and development. Members of our government and I personally will cooperate with the new government on this effort. I urge those members of the Hluttaw who will not be part of the future Hluttaw to work together outside the Hluttaw for peace, stability and development of the country.

Members of the Hluttaw:

On March 30th, our government's term in office will end. Over the past 5 years, our government has strived for a stable and successful implementation of peace, stability, development and democratic transition to the

best of our abilities. I would like to thank everyone from the branches of government, civil society, civil servants, international community, international organizations, academics, experts, media, and all the citizens of Myanmar for working together on the successful implementation of reforms initiated during our government's term in office.

I hope the new government and Hluttaw will bring about more peace and development to Myanmar.

I wish you all good health, and my sincere hope that all our ethnic brothers and sisters will join and work together to build our Union.

I bid you all good luck and farewell.

Asia stocks jump, yen weakens as BOJ stuns with negative rates

TOKYO/SYDNEY — Asian shares jumped and the yen swooned after the Bank of Japan stunned markets yesterday by adopting negative interest rates in its boldest step yet to reflate the economy.

Spreadbetters predicted the cheer would spread to European markets, with Britain's FTSE 100 .FTSE seen opening 0.4 per cent higher, Germany's DAX .GDAXI expected to rise 0.5 per cent and France's CAC 40 .FCHI seen gaining 0.6 per cent.

The yen fell across the board and the yield on the benchmark Japanese government bond plunged to a record low after Japan's central bank said it would charge 0.1 per cent for excess reserves parked with the institution, an aggressive policy pioneered by the European Central Bank.

"The BOJ will cut the interest rate further into negative territory if judged as necessary," the bank said in a statement announcing the decision.

The move surprised investors, most of whom had believed policymakers were too cautious to ever adopt such a radical measure. Their reaction sent the dollar surging about three yen to a ses-

sion high of 121.495 JPY=. It was last up 1.7 per cent at 120.92 yen.

The dollar was last up 0.4 per cent against a basket of currencies at 98.885 .DXY, though still down about 0.7 per cent for the week.

The euro EUR= slipped about 0.2 per cent to \$1.0913 EUR=, on track to gain about 1.1 per cent for the week.

Japan's Nikkei share index .N225 whipsawed after the announcement before ending up 2.8 per cent, to mark a 3.3 per cent weekly gain, while the benchmark 10-year JGB yield JP10YT=N=JBTC touched an all-time low of 0.090 per cent.

"The yen could weaken further and stocks could gain after the BOJ eased today, so long-term government bond yields will face both downward and upward pressure after today's move," said Akito Fukunaga, chief fixed income strategist at Barclays in Tokyo.

The BOJ's move gave a lift to bourses across the region, even though economists at HSBC and elsewhere doubted it would give a boost to Japan's real economy or inflation.

MSCI's broadest index of



A man walks past an electronic board showing Japan's Nikkei average outside a brokerage in Tokyo, Japan on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS added 1.8 per cent, up 2.7 per cent for the week.

The Shanghai Composite Index .SSEC rose 2.9 per cent, while the CSI300 index .CSI300 of the largest listed companies in Shanghai and Shenzhen added 3.2 per cent, bouncing from steep losses early in the week.

The buying spread to US debt markets as investors wagered the BOJ decision and a stronger dollar would make it even harder for the Federal Reserve to hike rates four times this year, as originally envisioned by its policy board.

Fed fund futures <0#FF:>

rose to imply a rate of 51 basis points by year end, compared to 90 basis points a month ago. Futures for US 10-year bonds <0#TZY:> rose 5 ticks.

The promise of extra global stimulus gave an added fillip to oil, which had already risen for three sessions on talk of a possible deal to pare back excess supply.

US crude CLc1 added about 2.2 per cent to \$33.95 per barrel, while Brent futures LCOc1 firmed 2.6 per cent to \$34.76.

S&P 500 e-mini futures ESc1 were up 0.9 per cent in late Asian trade, portending possible gains ahead for Wall Street. On

Thursday, the semblance of stability in oil combined with some solid company results and lifted the Dow .DJI 0.79 per cent, while the S&P 500 .SPX added 0.55 per cent and the Nasdaq Composite .IXIC rose 0.86 per cent.

Facebook (FB.O) surged 15.5 per cent in its biggest one-day leap since 2013 after smashing expectations, while Alphabet (GOOGL.O) climbed 4.28 per cent. Microsoft (MSFT.O) rose 4.5 per cent in late trading after beating forecasts, but Amazon (AMZN.O) slumped 12 per cent as profits missed analysts' estimates by a wide margin. —Reuters

France to expand growth in 2016 but joblessness still challenges: PM

PARIS — Growth of gross domestic product (GDP) in France, the eurozone's second largest economy, would accelerate this year, but it is still "insufficient"

to digest the growing slice of unemployed people, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said on Thursday.

"(Growth) recovery will ac-

celerate in 2016 despite a global context tainted by a number of concerns," Valls was quoted as saying by local media.

France eyes achieving a

GDP growth of 1.5 per cent this year, up from an expected 1.1 per cent in 2015, according to the French premier.

On Thursday, fresh unem-

ployment data showed a 0.4 per cent rise in monthly unemployment in December 2015. On yearly basis, the figure grew by 2.6 per cent.—Xinhua

Protesters march, France eyes business deals as Iran's Rouhani visits



Chief Executive of Suez Environment, Jean-Louis Chaussade (R), Iranian Energy Vice-Minister, Alireza Daemi (L), Iran's President Hassan Rouhani (L Rear) and the French President Francois Hollande (hidden) attend a bilateral political, cultural and economic agreements signing ceremony at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France on 28 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — France and Iran hailed the sale of Airbus planes and the renewal of a decades-old carmaking venture as symbols of thawing relations on Thursday while protesters in Paris tried to get human rights onto the agenda.

President Hassan Rou-

hani was accompanied on his official visit to Paris, the first by an Iranian president since 1999, by ministers and business leaders who announced deals including a joint venture between car-makers PSA Peugeot Citroen (PEUP.PA) and Iran Khodro and plans for Iran

to buy 118 Airbus (AIR.PA) passenger planes to update its ageing fleet.

His visit after a stop-off in Rome for more deals follows an agreement between Iran and the west on Iran's nuclear programme, allowing the lifting of sanctions this month.

The deals were signed at a ceremony attended by Rouhani and French President Francois Hollande.

Construction group Bouygues (BOUY.PA) and airport operator ADP (ADP.PA) are set to build an extension for Tehran airport, while Vinci (SGEF.PA), another building firm, is lined up to design, build and operate new terminals for the Mashhad and Ispahan airports.

French oil company Total said it would buy some 200,000 barrels of Iranian crude from the OPEC producer.

There were also deals in shipping, health, agriculture and water provision, all signed despite continued diplomatic tensions.

The Airbus deal alone is worth \$27 billion at list prices and French government sources put a 15 billion euro (\$16 billion) overall tag on the agreements.

But most have yet to be finalised or are subject

to conditions. Senior French bankers have expressed wariness.

Iran's industry minister Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh said an agreement between French export-credit group Coface (COFA.PA) and the Iranian central bank signed this week was an important step in the right direction.

But he said French banks must support a corporate push into post-sanctions Iran. "If they don't get active, there will be no increase in business," he warned.

For Peugeot, the Iranian factory tie up is critical. When it suspended sales in Iran in 2012 it lost nearly 10 percent of global deliveries and interrupted a relationship dating back more than 50 years.

Under Thursday's deal, set to be finalised in the middle of this year, Peugeot and Iran Khodro plan to modernise a factory near Tehran and be producing cars by mid 2017.—Reuters

Rivalries, squabbles hinder Libya's unity government

TUNIS — A month after it was agreed in Morocco, a UN-backed plan for a united Libyan government is struggling to take off.

Efforts to push the hard-fought compromise through show the enduring regional rivalries and power struggles that have bedevilled Libya since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi.

While foreign pressure builds to tackle a threat from Islamic State militants, Libya's internationally recognised parliament, based in the east, has rejected a main article in the UN accord as well as a proposed list of ministers.

It is not yet clear whether a rival parliament in Tripoli will participate and its chief said on Thursday that separate negotiations without UN involvement were the "only solution".

A new government would need to move to Tripoli in order to exercise power effectively but armed groups hold sway there and brigades of former anti-Gaddafi fighters still settle feuds in the streets with anti-aircraft cannon.

The conflict between the armed groups who loosely back both political sides has left room for Islamic State to take control over Sirte, Gaddafi's home city, and parts of the coast.

This month they attacked Libya's biggest oil terminals and made the most deadly single raid since Gaddafi's fall.

"This government has to fill the vacuum" UN envoy Martin Kobler said. "If the politicians are discussing problems day and night and they do not act on the ground, those like Daesh (Islamic State) will use the political vacuum to expand their power." Any progress was expected to be bumpy. Hardliners in both camps rejected the agreement at the outset. Divisions emerged last week in the Presidential Council, whose nine members were drawn from different regions to steer through the UN plan.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PERLA VOY NO (005W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PERLA VOY NO (005W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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CONTAINER LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV TU SON VOY NO (08/15)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV TU SON VOY NO (08/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-1 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING
PTE LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

Syria peace talks derailed as opposition stays away

AMMAN/BEIRUT/GENEVA — The Syrian opposition said it will not attend peace talks due to begin in Geneva yesterday, derailing the first attempt in two years to hold negotiations aimed at ending the five-year-long war. An opposition council convening in Riyadh said its delegation would "certainly" not be in Geneva on Friday, saying it had not received convincing answers to its demands for goodwill steps including an end to air strikes and blockades.

The failure to get talks off the ground on time reflects the challenges facing

peace-making as the conflict rages unabated on the ground.

The Syrian government is clawing back territory from rebels with military help from Iran and Russia. It has said it is ready to attend the negotiations, which UN envoy Staffan de Mistura plans to hold in an indirect format.

Another opposition representative said the delegation might turn up if their demands were met in a day or two, but the chances of that appeared vanishingly slim.

The turn of events is a bitter blow to De Mistura,

whose office had issued a video message that he had sent to the Syrian people, in which he said the talks were expected to happen "in the next few days".

A spokeswoman for his office, speaking before the opposition statement, said the talks would begin on Friday as scheduled.

George Sabra, a member of the opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC), said: "For certain we will not head to Geneva and there will not be a delegation from the High Negotiations Committee tomorrow in Geneva."—Reuters



An image of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad is seen on a car parked in front of damaged buildings in the town of Rabiya, after pro-government forces recaptured the rebel-held town in coastal Latakia Province, Syria, on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump debate flap throws US Republican party into deeper chaos

DES MOINES — As seven Republican presidential contenders squared off here for the final debate before voters begin winnowing the field, Donald Trump presided over his own, separate rally a mile away in front of a packed house of cheering supporters.

It would be hard to find a more ideal metaphor for the forces tearing asunder the Republican Party.

For months, Trump has chosen to operate in his own political universe, violating the conventional wisdom that governs presidential campaigns, thumbing his nose at conservative institutions ranging from the Fox News Channel to the National Review and advocating policies at odds with party orthodoxy.

And whether he wins the Iowa caucuses on Monday, Trump's candidacy promises to continue to upend the established political order as the presidential race intensifies ahead of the 8 November election.

Most national opinion polls have him with more than 30 per cent of the Republican primary electorate — and those voters are showing little sign of

switching to anyone else.

"I think he will have made a permanent impact on the process," Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the US House of Representatives and a 2012 presidential candidate, told Reuters. Trump's campaign, he said, "is one of those great disruptions that reshapes everything."

Tensions within the Republican Party between grassroots conservatives and the Washington establishment have been simmering since the Tea Party movement arose during President Barack Obama's first term, catapulting presidential contenders Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Rand Paul to office, among others.

But Trump's insurgent candidacy has carved new fissures into the party, splitting conservative talk-radio hosts, religious leaders, and Washington pundits, with some sounding the alarm while others implore the party to respond to the anger toward Republican incumbents among voters who are fueling Trump's rise.

The billionaire businessman has mounted his



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump (R) introduces his Republican presidential candidate rivals Mike Huckabee (L) and Rick Santorum (C) at his veteran's rally in Des Moines, Iowa, on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

campaign on the notion of the fading American working-class, arguing they are under threat by both free trade deals favored by Republicans that encourage companies to send jobs overseas and by waves of illegal immigrants that work for low wages.

"People are upset. People believe that promises made have not been promises kept. There comes a point when you've had it," said Iowa Republican Party Chairman Jeff Kaufmann, who has appeared at Trump

rallies. Trump's candidacy threatens to scramble the Republican coalition built since the presidency of Ronald Reagan, one that worked to unite evangelical Christians and other social conservatives, economic conservatives, and military hawks behind a standard-bearer.

The New York real estate tycoon and former reality TV star does not check many of those boxes.

He shocked evangelicals here when he told them he has never asked God for

forgiveness and spends little time on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage.

He has threatened to slap tariffs on imported goods to protect American jobs and raise taxes on hedge-fund managers. He has decried the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and has sounded reluctant to deeply involve US forces in the conflict in Syria.

"He is attracting people of all kinds of backgrounds who have never thought of themselves as Repub-

licans," Gingrich said. "I think it's very hard for traditional political observers to understand (what's happening)."

Early during Thursday's debate in Des Moines, it seemed that the seven Republicans on the stage worked collectively to try and wean voters in Iowa and elsewhere off of Trump, with some dismissing him as an entertainer and others blasting his policy stances. His absence loomed over the entire event.

And Trump demonstrated the sway he holds over the race when it was revealed that Fox News executives had made an 11th-hour pitch to woo him back onto the debate stage, handing him a rhetorical victory of sorts even as his rivals seemed to relish his absence.

He also was joined at his event in Des Moines by two other Republican presidential candidates, Mike Huckabee and Rick Santorum — perhaps an acknowledgement that Trump's campaign may be a juggernaut now that may not be able to be stopped and that it might be time to climb aboard.—Reuters

Tremors in US Northeast caused by sonic boom, not quake

NEW YORK — Two fighter jets from a US Navy base in Maryland may have caused a series of sonic booms on Thursday near the New Jersey coast that prompted hundreds of residents to report earthquake-like tremors.

A spokeswoman for Naval Air Station Patuxent River said an F-35C and an F-18 were conducting routine flight testing over the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday afternoon, which may have caused sonic booms.

People from New Jersey to Connecticut posted on social media and called local police departments to report a series of tremors starting just before 1:30pm.

The US Geological Survey, which monitors earthquake activity, said no quake had struck. The agency reported at least nine sonic booms had been recorded over 90 minutes starting at 1:24pm near Hammonton, New Jersey, about 35 miles (56 km) southeast of Phil-

adelphia. A sonic boom is produced when an airplane travels faster than the speed of sound, or 768 miles per hour (1,236 kph). The sound waves can hit the Earth and cause shaking, which is sometimes mistaken for an earthquake, according to the USGS. Two days ago, residents in Charleston, South Carolina, also reported feeling tremors, likely caused by sonic booms from F-18 fighter jets on a training run from a nearby military base,

according to media reports.

In New York, seismologists at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University confirmed no earthquake had occurred in the region on Thursday. The observatory measured vibrations and low-frequency sound waves consistent with about eight sonic booms from approximately 1:20pm to 2:40pm, said Won-Young Kim, a research professor there.

He said residents on

the ground likely would not have heard the booms but would have experienced 15 to 20 seconds of shaking during each one.

The tremors produced numerous emergency calls to local police departments, some of which took to Twitter to ask residents not to flood their lines with more reports.

No serious damage was immediately reported.

Test aircraft from the naval air station fly almost

daily along the same route, according to the base's spokeswoman, but most sonic booms are never heard on land. Certain atmospheric conditions, however, can make the sound travel.

Some Twitter users offered a lighthearted response. One person using the handle @VixenRogue quipped: "Aliens are invading New Jersey. What's the best way to let them know the other 49 states are just fine with this?"—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BATAM VOY NO (008S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BATAM VOY NO (008S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV LIMCO ACE VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV LIMCO ACE VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of O.E.A where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING
PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ABLE VOY NO (432N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ABLE VOY NO (432N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING
LINE

Phone No: 2301185

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon South Dagon Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of South Dagon KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (595xxx) of South Dagon Exchange will be replaced with the numbers which start with (234-8xxx) of Ahlone ZXSS10SS1B (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 19th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of South Dagon KY Exchange Area will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Auto Telephone numbers of Yangon Htauk Kyant Exchange Area will be changed

To provide better quality and upgraded services for its auto telephone numbers, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications will substitute IP System NGN (Next Generation Network) with MSAN (Multi Service Access Node) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange. Hence, the numbers which start with (600xxxx) of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be replaced with the numbers which start with (943-7xxx) of Mayangone Soft-X3000 (SoftSwitch) Exchange on 12th February, 2016. Those new numbers will have both voice call and ADSL internet access. Current ADSL users do not need to register again. New ADSL users will need to register to Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications for internet access.

Static IP of Htauk Kyant KY Exchange in Yangon will be changed into Static IP Range (172.x.x.x) Network. For further information and preparation for changes, Current ADSL Static IP users are requested to contact telephone numbers (01-650870 and 01-662707) of ADSL office at the Information Technology Department of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications.

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Leonardo DiCaprio meets pope to talk about environment

VATICAN CITY — There have been 13 popes named Leo in the history of the Roman Catholic Church but perhaps none of them was as famous as the Leo who entered the Vatican on Thursday — Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio.

DiCaprio, who is known as Leo, was received by Pope Francis, the Vatican said, without giving details.

But the one-line announcement was enough to send photographers and television crews scrambling to stake out the Vatican's gates to try to catch him coming out.

Footage issued later from Vatican television showed that the audience was connected to their mutual concern about the

environment and climate change.

DiCaprio, speaking Italian, thanked the pope for receiving him and then, switching to English, gave him a book of paintings by 16th century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch.

Pointing to one painting, DiCaprio told the pope it had hung over his bed as a boy and said "through my child's eyes it represented our planet."

"It represents to me the promise of the future and enlightenment and it is representational of your view here as well," he said. He later gave the pope a check for an undisclosed sum which appeared to be a donation for papal charities.

Last week, the 41-year-old Oscar nominee was honoured at



Pope Francis meets actor Leonardo DiCaprio at the Vatican, on 28 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

the 22nd Annual Crystal Awards held at the World Economic Forum in Davos for his foundation's support of conservation and sustainability projects.

The pope wrote a ma-

ior Catholic Church document known as an encyclical last year in defence of the environment and has often said that time was running out for mankind to save the planet from the potential-

ly devastating effects of global warming.

The pope gave DiCaprio a copy of his encyclical and asked the actor to pray for him.—Reuters

Warren Buffett, Schwarzenegger reunite on 'Celebrity Apprentice'



Arnold Schwarzenegger and Warren Buffett. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Billionaire investor Warren Buffett has signed on as an advisor on the eighth season of NBC's "The Celebrity Apprentice," more than a decade after advising new host Arnold Schwarzenegger during his successful 2003 run to become California's governor.

Buffett will join Jessica Alba, Tyra Banks, Los Angeles Clippers owner and former Microsoft Corp chief Steve Ballmer, and Patrick Knapp Schwarzenegger, an entertainment lawyer and Arnold Schwarzenegger's nephew, to offer guidance to the 16 contenders in the reality competition.

Among the celebrities competing to become Schwarzenegger's apprentice are Laila Ali, the

boxing champion and wellness expert who is a daughter of Muhammad Ali; football stars Eric Dickerson and Ricky Williams; retired basketball star Lisa Leslie; singers Boy George and Mötley Crüe's Vince Neil; actor Jon Lovitz, and reality TV stars Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi and Kyle Richards.

The winner will receive a \$250,000 check to give to charity. Scheduling has not been announced.

Buffett, 85, has run Berkshire Hathaway Inc since 1965 and owns nearly one-fifth of the insurance and investment conglomerate.

He is worth about \$59 billion, making him the world's third

richest person according to Forbes magazine, despite having donated more than \$21 billion of Berkshire stock since 2006.

Many investors revere Buffett for his plain talk on investing, the economy and life generally, as well as his investing track record. He has appeared regularly on TV in recent years as his fame and fortune have grown.

Schwarzenegger is taking over "Celebrity Apprentice" from Donald Trump, the Republican presidential candidate who also hosted the NBC show "The Apprentice." NBC is part of Comcast Corp.

Buffett did not immediately respond to a request for comment through his assistant.—Reuters

Canadians cry foul as Sting, not Drake, to perform at All-Star Game

TORONTO — Canadian sports fans cried foul yesterday after the National Basketball Association snubbed local rap star Drake in favor of the British singer Sting to headline the halftime show at its upcoming All-Star Game in Toronto.

Within minutes of the announcement, Twitter posts mocking the league's decision to go with Sting, a 64-year-old, Grammy Award-winner, since Drake, 29, is the Toronto Raptors' global ambassador, and will be in his hometown for All-Star Weekend, from 12-14 February.

"Canadians have six of the top 10 songs on the Billboard charts right now — and the NBA hires Sting to perform halftime. Brutal,"

read a tweet by local sportscaster Jim Lang. "Does anyone under the age of 35 even know who Sting is?" Drake, a fixture in his courtside seats at Raptors' games, will nonetheless be involved as the coach of Team Canada, which will include Australian Open semifinalist Milos Raonic and former NBA champion Rick Fox, in the 12 February celebrity game. Comedian Kevin Hart will coach Team USA, which includes actors Michael B. Jordan and Jason Sudeikis.

"Really @Toronto2016? Sting? What were your backup options, Cher and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra? How about some TORONTO talent!" wrote former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford on his Twitter page.—Reuters

Jennifer Aniston to lead 'The Fixer'

LOS ANGELES — Actress Jennifer Aniston will star in the "The Fixer" by Fox 2000 pictures.

The 46-year-old actress will also produce along with Steve Barnett, Bernie Goldmann and Kristin Hahn, said The Hollywood Reporter.

Aniston will play sports manager Denise White in the movie, for which Fox has bought the pitch from "Dallas Buyers Club" screenwriter Melisa Wallack. The story revolves around White, a former Miss USA contestant who went on to found a sports firm for high-end athletes.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Clockwork lion unveiled in London to highlight big cat plight

LONDON — The four bronze lions of London's central Trafalgar Square got a temporary addition on Thursday, with a clockwork sculpture of the animal unveiled to highlight the plight of big cats.

The statue, made of clockwork mechanics, will stand in the square for just a day before being auctioned off to raise money for National Geographic's Big Cats Initiative, which says it aims to halt the decline of big cats in the wild.

According to the initiative's website, there are likely some 30,000 lions in the wild. Among their threats are poaching and loss of both prey and habitat.

"I think most people don't believe actually lions are in danger," said Jeff Ford of television channel



A pedestrian photographs a lion sculpture installed by National Geographic Wild to highlight the threat to endangered big cats, in Trafalgar Square in London, on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Nat Geo Wild, which during 1-7 February hosts its "Big Cat Week".

"I think they think there's a lot of them about. But just last month they

were put on the endangered species list."

Sculptor Iain Prendergast, whose works have appeared on television show "Game of Thrones"

as well as in artist Banksy's "Dismaland" theme park, said the statue's body was made to look like "the inner workings of a clock". —Reuters

Spain looks beyond record visitor numbers to boost tourist spend

MAGALUF (Spain) — Set back from the white sand beach which first attracted tourists to Magaluf in the 1960s, a smart new development is rising — part of the Mallorcan resort's plan to transform itself from an alcohol-fueled fleshpot awash with young Britons to a high-end holiday destination for families and couples.

Old buildings are being torn down and pedestrian streets laid in one project which forms part of a 187 million euro (\$204 million) turnaround campaign.

Magaluf's vision shows how Spain's tourist industry is looking beyond record visitor numbers and aiming to boost spending

per head in a sector that accounts for 11 per cent of Spain's economic output and employs two million people.

That means improving the quality and offering a wider range of activities than just drinking and soaking up the sun.

"A tourism model based on sun and sand and competing on the lowest price is all very well, but it's not sustainable in the long term," said Ricard Santoma, dean of Barcelona-based Sant Ignasi School of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

"The challenge is to attract tourists who want to spend a little more."

The success of the sec-

tor is vital for Spain to ensure its economy can grow again this year and further shrink a 20.9 per cent unemployment rate at a time of political instability.

The country has yet to appoint a prime minister after inconclusive elections more than one month ago.

More foreigners visited Spain than ever before in 2015, official figures showed on Friday, as militant violence in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia encouraged European holidaymakers to seek sun nearer to home.

The country hosted over 68 million international tourists last year, its third consecutive year of record-beating numbers.

Spain's popularity as a holiday destination looks set to continue, with 2016 bookings to Spain by Britons up more than a third at the end of December, according to the Association of British Travel Agents. The British are the most numerous tourists to Spain by nationality.

However, data on how much tourists are spending is muddled. Government statistics show spending per tourist rose 2.4 per cent from January to September, the latest data available, while industry association Exceltur calculated a 1 per cent fall in spend per head in 2015, the 15th year in a row of declines. —Reuters

Barbie gets curvy in real-world body makeover

NEW YORK — Barbie, the world's most famous doll, has a new body. In fact, she has three new bodies — petite, tall and curvy.

Some 57 years after the impossibly busty and narrow-waisted blue-eyed Barbie doll was first introduced, California-based toy maker Mattel on Thursday released the new models, which it says better reflect a changing world.

Parents and feminists have long criticised Barbie's original shape as setting an unrealistic body image for girls, despite modifications over the years.

The new dolls have seven skin tones, 22 eye colours, 24 hairstyles and new clothes and accessories. They are available for order on website shop.mattel.com starting Thursday and will reach stores later.

"We are excited to literally be changing the face of the brand," Evelyn Mazzocco, senior vice president and global general manager of the Barbie brand, said in a statement.

"These new dolls represent a line that is more reflective of the world

girls see around them — the variety in body type, skin tones and style allows girls to find a doll that speaks to them.

"We believe we have a responsibility to girls and parents to reflect a broader view of beauty," she said.

The new curvy Barbie has a bigger bust, behind, thicker thighs and a protruding tummy. She landed on the cover of Time magazine on Thursday with the headline "Now can we stop talking about my body?"

The classic Barbie doll, which was launched in 1959 as a doe-eyed teen in a zebra-striped swimsuit, will remain as part of the Mattel line.

The launch of the new range follows two years of declining sales of Barbie dolls around the world as girls increasingly turn to other dolls, electronic toys and tablets.

On her way to becoming a global pop culture icon, Barbie has tried out more than 180 careers, ranging from teacher to astronaut and US president.

African-American Barbies and other ethnic versions were introduced starting in the late 1960s. —Reuters



New Barbie doll body shapes of tall (L), curvy (2nd L) and petite (R) are seen next to the traditional Barbie (2nd R) in this image released by Mattel on 28 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International

(30-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 31-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon- The Prayer Halls And Buddha Images (Part-1)
07:53	Am	Temple Stalls
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Sagaing: Pe Kwe Kone Nat Festival
08:36	Am	MONASTERY (Bargayar Kyaung)
08:50	Am	Sai Ye Kwan
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Today Myanmar & ICT "Economic Sector and ICT"

09:43	Am	Kyaikkasan Pagoda
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Climate Context: El Nino Phenomenon

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Moe Ne' Keeps Its Tradition Alive
07:51	Pm	Today Myanmar "Development for Child Literature"
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Writer: Chit Oo Nyo (Part - I)
08:53	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: Fantastic Art

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

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

ARTV Entertainment Channel

(30-1-2016, Saturday)

6:00 pm	8:35 pm
• Classical Songs	• Dramatic Arts
6:15 pm	9:50 pm
• Real Story, Real Movie	• Pyi Thu Ni Ti
6:40 pm	10:15 pm
• Myanmar Series	• Myanmar Video
6:55 pm	Midnight
• Cassette Drama	• Close Down

From 30.1.2016 (Saturday) 06:00 Pm
To 31.1.2016 (Sunday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Martina Hingis and Sania Mirza win Australian Open doubles title

WORLD number one doubles pairing Martina Hingis and Sania Mirza clinched their first Australian Open doubles title together with a 7-6(1), 6-3 victory over Czech pair Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka yesterday.

It was the 12th grand slam women's doubles title for Hingis while the third for India's Mirza, all of which have come with the Swiss in the last year.

The pair, who have now won 36 successive doubles matches, are also the reigning Wimbledon and US Open champions.

"Thanks to my partner, we have had an incredible year," Mirza said in a courtside interview. "We keep going and it's great to have all these records with you."

Both pairs were broken four times each in the first set before Mirza sealed it in the tiebreak after 62 minutes when Hradecka sent a forehand service return long over the baseline.

Hingis, who was knocked out by Mirza and Croatia's Ivan Dodig in the mixed doubles quarter-finals, took a medical time out at the end of the first set to have treatment to her right shoulder, but did not appear troubled.



Switzerland's Martina Hingis (L) and India's Sania Mirza pose with the trophy after winning their doubles final match at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 29 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Hradecka dropped serve in the first and fifth games of the second set, to give the top seeds a 4-1 lead, and while Mirza lost her next service game they never looked like relinquishing control with Hingis dominant at the net.

The Swiss was then broken while serving for the title, though they sealed it on their fourth championship point when Hradecka's running forehand sailed over the baseline, the third time she was broken in the set.

"You have won two grand slam doubles so you were very tough," Hingis said of the Czech pair. "I know everyone will say break, break, break but you guys have the best returns in doubles."—Reuters

Coquelin, Rosicky fit for Burnley clash, says Wenger

LONDON — Arsenal midfielder Francis Coquelin has recovered from a knee injury a month ahead of schedule and is fit to take part in Saturday's fourth round FA Cup clash against Burnley, manager Arsene Wenger said.

The midfielder hurt himself in Arsenal's Premier League defeat by West Bromwich Albion in November and was originally expected to be back in first-team action early March.

Attacking midfielder Tomas Rosicky is also in line to make his first appearance of the season against the second tier side on Saturday.

"Francis is available to play now because he has passed two weeks of full training. Tomas is also available for selection," Wenger told the club's website (www.arsenal.com).

Influential midfield duo Jack Wilshere and Santi Cazorla are still on the sidelines but striker Danny Welbeck, who has not featured for the Gunners since April 2015, is close to returning to action.

"Jack and Santi are progressing well but they are at least a few weeks away. But these two apart, it is just about competitiveness and match fitness," Wenger said.—Reuters

A matter of time before Spurs compete for trophies — Lloris

LONDON — It is just a matter of time before a steadily improving Tottenham Hotspur start challenging for the biggest honours in club football, captain Hugo Lloris said.

Mauricio Pochettino's charges sit fourth in the Premier League table, five points behind surprise leaders Leicester City, and many have tipped them to be involved in the title race.

"We have to push ourselves together. Spirit is so important in football because it's a collective sport," Lloris told the club website (www.tottenhamhotspur.com).

"The team is young but we are nearly at the level to be ready to compete (for trophies). It's just a matter of time but, with this mentality and this atmosphere, things are improving quicker than normal.

"We always want to improve and to develop our mentality to become a winning team. The road is still long but we feel we are improving all together and we are starting to be very hungry for the next few months



Tottenham's Hugo Lloris.

PHOTO: REUTERS

and next few years."

Spurs are just back from a training camp and team-bonding session in Barcelona and Lloris said he enjoyed the trip ahead of their FA Cup fourth round test against third tier side Colchester United on Saturday.

"It's been great and exactly what the staff and manager expected from these few days. We've spent time all together breaking up the routine and it was perfect," the France skipper said.

"Now we have Colchester and everyone knows about cup competitions — to keep going you need to be great and be lucky with the draw."—Reuters

Williams seeking to join Graf with Australian Open win

MELBOURNE — Serena Williams is on course to match Steffi Graf's major haul in the Australian Open on Saturday, but German seventh seed Angelique Kerber will be hoping she can prevent the American from emulating her idol while carving her own piece of history.

The 34-year-old world number one is a raging hot favourite to beat the first-time finalist on Rod Laver Arena, a victory that would move the American to 22 grand slam singles titles, the same as Graf and a record for the Open era.

Australia's Margaret Court holds the overall record with 24.

Williams had the opportunity to join Graf last year at the US Open, victory at which would have also given her a calendar year grand slam, the first since Graf in 1988.

Italy's Roberta Vinci, however, knocked out the world number one in the semi-finals, which also ended the American's year as she took a few months off to

recover from injuries and deal with the mental anguish of having missed the calendar grand slam.

That loss in New York has obviously resonated in her preparations for Melbourne Park, where she has appeared completely focussed since a testing first round clash with Italy's Camila Giorgi.

She has not dropped a set at all and conceded just 17 games since the Giorgi clash and battered the five-times grand slam champion Maria Sharapova 6-4, 6-1 in the quarter-finals and fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska 6-0, 6-4 in the semi-finals.

Both Sharapova and Radwanska said afterwards they felt that Williams was playing at a level above everyone else.

"I would say this is probably the best slam I've played in a year, and I've won a lot in a year," Williams told reporters on Friday. "Even if I don't win, I really can take away that I've been really consistent and I want to continue that."

Williams and Kerber have

met six times, with the American winning five, though Kerber's 6-4, 6-4 victory in Cincinnati in 2012 was one she would not forget.

"I thought she played unbelievable in that match," Williams said. "I think from then on out I've been really focused that she's someone that I, and everyone, has to take very seriously."

Kerber, who saved a match point in her first round clash with Japan's Misaki Doi, will enter her first grand slam final with immense confidence, believing a 'nothing to lose' attitude had got her this far.

It was that attitude that helped her overturn a 2-5 second set deficit in her quarter-final against Victoria Azarenka and gave her a first win over the Belarussian in their seventh match.

"Nothing to lose" means I can go out there and try to play like I'm playing, without pressure," the 28-year-old said. "I think most will say, 'okay, Serena will win'.—Reuters