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## Statement issued by Investigation Commission on Rakhine State

FURTHER revelations have been made in the ongoing work of the Investigation Commission on Rakhine State, specifically on Kyetyoepyin Village, the site of alleged rapes and murders of Muslim villagers as reported by The Guardian newspaper, where residents told the commission on Tuesday that they have never heard of the woman who told the British newspaper that government soldiers raped her and her two daughters before shooting to death her children and her husband before burning their house down.

In Saturday's online and print editions of The Guardian, a Muslim woman named Noor Ayesha is profiled and quoted as saying mass atrocities occurred in mid-October in her village. Noor Ayesha claims a group of 20 soldiers came to her home in Kyetyoepyin in mid-October, killed her husband and seven of her children, raped her and set fire to her home. Noor Ayesha told The Guardian that two of her daughters were raped by soldiers before they were killed.

Noor Ayesha is now in Bangladesh, The Guardian reports. The article has also appeared in



The Investigation Commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe, left, seated at table, talks to the Muslim community during at fact-finding mission at Dargyisar Village in northern Rakhine on Monday. PHOTO: MNA

“Regarding Noor Ayesha and her account to The Guardian, (villagers) replied that no incidents of this kind occurred in their village, and said they have never seen or heard of Noor Ayesha”.

the online and print editions of the South China Morning Post, a large-circulation newspaper based in Hong Kong.

The Myanmar government has consistently denied the allegations. The latest revelations were learnt from a statement released yesterday by the commission. The statement in its entirety is as follows:

1. The Investigation Com-

mission on Rakhine State led by Vice-President U Myint Swe, formed to investigate violent armed attacks which took place in Maungtau region, Rakhine State on October 9, November 12 & 13 in 2016, visited sites of armed attacks to perform duties conferred upon it under notification 89/2016 of the President's Office dated 1st December 2016, to make inspections of places of

conflicts and investigations of persons concerned in the region during December 11-13 2016.

2. Having inspected the Ngakhura Border Guard Police Outpost's regional branch, which was violently attacked on October 9, commission members met with the Ngakhura village administrator and elders of local residents who profess Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, asking about their living conditions. During the meeting they disclosed that, “The incidents were caused by violent attackers. Those were not concerned with us. The whole village depends upon the bazaar, which is always crowded with buyers and sellers. It is a meeting place of the villagers. Under the current situations, the bazaar cannot be reopened, causing the stoppage of commodity flows. Thus, our village and nearby ones are finding it difficult for our living.”

After hearing their comments, the chairman of the Investigation Commission consulted with the Chief Minister of Rakhine State to ensure the guarantee of their basic rights and an improvement in their living conditions.

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## Amyotha Hluttaw debates transparency over MICA

AN MP submitted a proposal at the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting yesterday to ensure greater transparency of ways of doing the business and profits of Myanmar International Cooperation Agency, complaining that the agency has not been established in accordance with the law and has managed the state-owned assets and factories since its establishment.

MP Naw Christ Tun (a) Dr Akar Moe of Constituency-7 from Kayin State suggested abolition of MICA, whose stated aim is to

boost fish and meat production and to assist in food sufficiency for the country, as it has not brought benefits to the people.

She also called for transparency in its management of the state-owned factories, firms and lands without permission of the Union Government and urged the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to make the agency's financial management transparent.

The agency was established with 34 officials and 70 strong

staff according to the meeting resolution 13/2014 of the Union Government on 3 July 2014.

According to the debate at the parliament, the MICA had taken over 48 farms owned by the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, 64.54 acres in Danyingon, 17 fisheries-related property and more than 90 acres owned by the Insein Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

The role of livestock and the fishery business, which has been

taken over by the MICA, is disappearing in Myanmar because MICA has carried out businesses such as development which are not related to the livestock and fishery sector, she said.

“There are challenges and needs for the veterinary sector, treatment, food supply, small and medium livestock and fishery businesses and job opportunities, and (due to MICA), the country's economy has been crippled, causing losses of public fund,” she said.—Myanmar News Agency



MP Naw Christ Tun. PHOTO: MNA



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## Pyithu Hluttaw

## Proposal to crack down on illegal gambling documented by Pyithu Hluttaw

MPs of the Pyithu Hluttaw put forward the issue of illegal gambling to the parliament yesterday, urging the Union Government to take action against illegal games that have damaged politics, the rule of law, education and the economy of the people.

MP U Saw Victor Kalaik of Thandaunggyi Constituency pointed out the malpractice of authorities and organisations which are behind the illegal gambling, saying that illegal gambling dens are being opened like legal businesses, in neglect of the law.

Regarding the mushrooming of the illegal businesses, MP U Min Thein of YeU Constituency put the blame on the weaknesses of the police force and the businessmen who take advantage of the weaknesses of the police force.

Another eight MPs also took part in the discussion.

In response to the proposal, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe said the Myanmar Police Force arrested 6,791 gamblers in 3,580 cases in 2013, 5,668 gamblers in 2,561



Pyithu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

cases in 2014, 5,290 gamblers in 2114 cases in 2015 and so far has arrested 6,317 gamblers in 2,768 cases in November this year. In addition, actions was taken

against 124 police officers and 35 law enforcement members of other ranks in 2013, 117 officers and 39 other ranks in 2014, 93 officers and 33 other ranks in 2015

and so far 114 officers and 49 other ranks this year, he added. The proposal was documented by the parliament after the debate. — Myanmar News Agency

## Amyotha Hluttaw

## 2nd Amyotha Hluttaw 3rd Regular Session's 16th Meeting Held



Dr Than Myint, Union Minister for Commerce. PHOTO: MNA



Deputy Minister for Border Affairs, Major-General Than Htut. PHOTO: MNA

UNION Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population replied to the question raised by U Kyaw Ni Naing, constituency 11 of Shan State, "It is impossible to easily issue citizenship scrutiny card in smart certificates form like driving license cards and office staff identification cards with a few facts included.

In making citizenship scrutiny certificates in accord with 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, individually detailed facts on parents, grandparents and all in the lineage were recorded, thus it needs to take time to have Data installed to change from manual system to digital system. As there are over 37 million of people holding citizenship scrutiny certificates in the country, the ministry is making arrangements

to change in smart card form in consultation with IT experts and organisations. Charges to pay for citizenship scrutiny certificates are designated in the procedure of Myanmar Citizenship Law.

To adapt the rates to current situations, amendment board has been formed to modify the changes, having submitted the amendments to the office of Attorney-General.

On receipt of the approval, it will be submitted to Union Government in accord with section 75 of Myanmar Citizenship Law."

Deputy Minister for Border Affairs, Major General Than Htut, Dr Than Myint, Union Minister for Commerce and deputy minister for Education U Win Maw Tun replied to the

questions raised by U Wheat Tin of constituency 11 of Chin State, U Nyi Sein of constituency 5 of Shan State and U Aye Bo of constituency 11 of Yangon Region—concerning suspension bridge spanning villages, land compensation matters and strengthened quality of new school buildings.

Then, Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw announced to enroll the names to table the Draft on Amendment of 1973 law on examination board of the Union of Myanmar sent back by the Pyithu Hluttaw, with amendment attached. As regards 2nd Amendment of Union Election Commission Law, U Aung Thein of constituency 12 of Bago Region and U Hla Oo of constituency 4 of Sagaing Region took part in the discussion.

Afterward, Naw Chris Htun (a) Dr Arr Kar Moe of constituency 7 of Kayin State, submitted the motion to Hluttaw whether there were arrangements to abolish Myanmar International Cooperation Agency or not, supported by Daw Mar Mar Lay of constituency 8 in Shan State.

Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw announced that parliamentarians could enroll names to table the motion in the next meeting. It is learnt that 17th Meeting of 3rd Session of 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw will be held on December 19.— Myanmar News Agency

## Thura U Shwe Mann meets Italian Ambassador

THURA U Shwe Mann, Chairman of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission, met Mr Pier Giorgio Aliberti, Italian Ambassador to Myanmar, at his office in Nay Pyi Taw this morning.

Both sides cordially exchanged views on further strengthening of the existing friendship and cooperation between the two countries, and the commission's support for legislative process of the parliament. — Myanmar News Agency

## KIA/TNLA stronghold captured

WHILE Tamadaw columns were conducting area clearance operations in northeast Shan State, they clashed with the combined troops of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) 16 miles north of Namtu Township at about 7:30 am on Tuesday.

The Tamadaw columns were attacked by KIA and TNLA combined troops num-

bering 140.

The Tamadaw fought back with the support of air raid. The combined insurgent troops retreated to the north at about 5:30 pm. One soldier from the Tamadaw was killed in the clash and several were injured.

The Tamadaw was able to occupy the stronghold of the KIA/TNLA armed groups.— Myanmar News Agency

## Four unexploded bombs and an air bomb discovered in Mongko

WHILE Tatmadaw columns were conducting an area clearance operation within Mongko in north-east Shan State, they unearthed four 60mm unexploded bombs and an air bomb on 13 December.

Out of the unexploded

60mm bombs, one bomb was unearthed in Ward 3 and the remaining three were in Ward 5. These bombs, systematically deactivated by bomb clearance members of the Garrison Engineering Corps.— Myanmar News Agency



## Mine explodes on Namkham-Muse Union Road

A MINE exploded on a hillside beside Namkham-Muse Union Road between mile posts 296/3 and 296/4 near the Oriental toll gate at the entrance to Naungkhan village, Nam-

kham Township in northern Shan State on Wednesday. The mine was planted by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), according to military sources. There were

no immediate reports of casualties, injuries or damages. Security forces are still conducting area clearance operation nearby.— Myanmar News Agency

## President U Htin Kyaw sends message on 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Rakhine State Day

Following is the message sent by the President on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Rakhine State Day.

### Dear esteemed our national brethren in Rakhine State,

I am sending my congratulation wishes to you all on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Rakhine State Day and wishing you all happy, healthy and full of blessings on this auspicious day.

After having designated as Rakhine State in 1974 Constitution, the 1st Rakhine State People's Council decided to designate December 15 as Rakhine State Day, the day on which Referendum commenced for the approval of the Constitution. Starting from 1975, it has been being celebrated, reaching the 42nd anniversary Rakhine State Day today.

Rakhine State, geographically has a long coast with natural beauties. With Rakhine Yoma Range to the east and fertile land to the north, it is rich in food, meat and fish, which are added to natural resources and precious cultural heritages in plenty.

From time immemorial, there lived

in Rakhine State, seven ethnic races of Rakhine Origin and other nationals with friendly terms without any conflicts. With the propagation of Buddha's Sasana, that is Buddha's Teaching throughout Rakhine State, Rakhine nationals always keep their lineage which is regarded to be a characteristic of nobility for Rakhine nationals.

For the socio-economic development of the Rakhine State, the Government of the State formed a central committee for implementing peace, stability and development of Rakhine State with four working committees constituted under it as follows:

Working committee for implementing security, peace, stability and rule of law

Working committee for implementing immigration & citizenship scrutiny

Working committee for implementing resettlement in the area & socio-economic development and

Working committee for co-operating with UN organizations & international institutions.

The committee is trying its best in every way to upgrade the socio-economic development of the State. Especially, there can be seen a relative progress in the sectors of communication, electricity power supply, education and health which are basically needed. Just after detailed study and assessment of local people's attitudes, the potential for harming natural environment and prospects for socio-economic development, concerning the project on building Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone which plays an important role for the development of Rakhine State, arrangements are under way for continuing to successfully implement the standardized project. Special measure is being given to the implementation of all-round development of Kaladan River for transport and communication in Rakhine State that abounds with rivers, streams and creeks geographically.

Due to heavy rain in June and July this year, Rakhine State experienced

disastrous loss. The Government of the State, meanwhile, managed to provide necessary helps at the best of its caliber in many sectors such as sending emergent rescue teams, taking victims under shelter, giving arrangements for resettlement, rehabilitation and protecting from natural disasters in the long term. On the occasion of celebrating 42nd commemoration of Rakhine State, I would like to express my congratulation on unswerving spirit and strong resolution of Rakhine nationals who always stand up to difficulties without yielding to them though facing frequent natural disasters.

I hereby solemnly encourage our brethren Rakhine nationals to maintain the cultural heritages of the land where the Sacred Glamour of Buddha Sasana flourished as well as to make the western area flourish and modernized with your collective concerted effort. *(Unofficial Translation)*

Sd/ Htin Kyaw  
President

## Statement issued by Investigation Commission . . .

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3. In answer to our assurances in meeting with them that we hope they had humanitarian aid provided by international organizations, they replied that they have had humanitarian aid, and they wanted more assistance if possible.

4. Those who are suspected of involvement in the armed attacks are being arrested for investigation. Those who were not involved in the attacks have been released. It has been learnt that there have been 48 freed so far. In meeting with them, they requested that their family members who were arrested also be released if they were found to be innocent. The commission members consulted with the Rakhine State Cabinet and Myanmar Police Force to make prompt investigations.

5. While the commission members were conducting investigations in the Maungtau region, a news article appeared in The Guardian and the South China Morning Post website dated 11th December 2016 which read, in part: "A woman, one Noor Ayesha, fled Kyety-

peyin village in Maungtau, Rakhine State with her daughter named Dilnawaz Begum. Her two daughters were raped and they were killed together with her husband. Though she was also raped, she managed to escape. During the raid of the government into the village of Kyetyoepyin, other women were raped too. There were killings in the village."

In regard to this news article, commission members went to the village of Kyetyoepyin on December 12, taking time to enquire men and women of different age groups about the event of one Noor Ayesha as described in The Guardian website and newspaper. They replied that no incidents of this kind occurred in their village, as described by Noor Ayesha, whom they said they had never seen.

When we interrogated the responsible military officials performing their duties in the region, they also replied that there were no similar cases in the region, asserting that they performed their duties in accord with military rules within the framework of legal procedures.

6. During the investigation from December 11 to 13 December, commission members learnt that authorities were carrying out investigations in accord with the prescribed laws to take action against terrorists, and there were no more armed attacks or arson attacks found during area clearance operations after 22 November. Thus, worries among the local populace lessened and there appeared signs of peace and stability in the region. In some villages, schools were reopened while some villages requested to reopen schools and return of teachers to their schools.

The chairman of the investigation commission consulted with the Chief Minister of Rakhine State to open schools as the region regained peace and stability.

7. Moreover, it is described that the commission managed not only to perform the work of investigation into the violent attacks, but also consulted with authorities to improve the living conditions, business, education, health, and peace and stability of local residents of the area.—*Investigation Commission*

## U Mya Win: Myanmar can erase corruption with cooperation of private sector

MYANMAR can implement anti-corruption measures successfully with the cooperation of government agencies and the private sector, U Mya Win, Chairman of Myanmar Anti-corruption Commission, said at the 12th Meeting of South East Asia Parties against Corruption (SEAPAC) held in the Thingaha Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In addition, the chairman pointed out that measures for prevention of corruption are as important as actions against corruption, and stressed the need to strengthen cooperation among member countries of SEAPAC by founding anti-corruption bodies among themselves to exchange information, provide training, share experts, provide technologies, organise conferences and host workshops.

Representatives of Myanmar held a discussion titled "Prevention of Corruption Through Cooperation".

The meeting was attended by members of the Myanmar Anti-corruption Commission and delegations from member countries of the SEAPAC.—*Myanmar News Agency*

# CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR AT SEDONA

**NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY 2017!**

Usher in the New Year 2017 with Sedona's Nutcracker Themed Party at the Poolside Extravaganza, D'Cuisine Seafood & BBQ, Orzo Romanticism, Exclusive Lobby Lounge Terrace and E-Deck Traditional New Year!

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USD 139 nett per person	(Pool Side)
USD 129 nett per person	(Pool Side)
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## Section 144 of Criminal Procedure imposed on Maungtaw township

FOLLOWING the violent attacks on No (1) Border Guard Police Force (Kyikanpyin), Ngakhuya Police Outpost and Koetankauk Police Outpost, a curfew order to ban gatherings of five or more

people in public places from 7 pm to 6 am has been imposed for two months since 9th December.

Before the violent attacks, a curfew from 11 pm to 4 am was imposed on the area but it was

later extended to “from 6 pm to 6 am” after the attacks.

Those who were found to have breached this order had to pay a fine of Ks. 20,000. — *Zeyar (Mirror)*

## TNLA extorts money from businessmen in Nawngkhio

AN ARMED group of the TNLA extorted money from multiple brokerage houses in Nawngkhio in north-eastern Shan State on Monday and Saturday, according to local sources yesterday.

The armed group phoned businessmen on Saturday and again on Monday, asking for

Ks1.5 million each from the brokerage houses.

The TNLA told them that they will give the date and place for handing over the extortion, said one businessman.

Separately, the TNLA armed group conscripted 21 villagers in Pankwun Village in Kyaukme

Township on Sunday, with the remaining villagers fleeing and taking shelter at a religious building in Kyaukme due to the conscription.

Currently, more than 160 people from 41 households are being sheltered at the building.— *Myanmar News Agency*

## IDPs being scrutinized to resettle in Mongko

MYANMAR Police, township administrators and departmental personnel have been systematically scrutinizing the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who left their native villages since 9th December to avoid the battles waged by the Kachin Independence Army

(KIA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Arakan Army (AA) in northern Shan State.

The combined team has already scrutinized a total of 5,228 persons from 1,254 households

comprising 2,438 males and 2,790 females from various wards and villages in Mongko as of 13 December, including the latest scrutiny of 1,312 persons from 258 households; 644 males and 668 females, it is learnt.— *Myanmar News Agency*

## Tourism industry booming in Mandalay in December

TOURIST arrivals have increased in Mandalay due partly to the addition of more Mandalay-Bangkok-Yangon flights and more direct flights between Mandalay and Hong Kong in December.

Adding to the burgeoning popularity of central Myanmar is the allowance since September for foreign tourists to enter Myanmar through border entrances with an evisa, available online.

Tourists from 40 countries, including ASEAN countries, have been allowed to enter the country using the online visa system since 8 November, 2015. By ground transport, tourists can enter Mandalay by car, motorbike and bicycle via border entrances. Tourist arrivals from January 2015 to November reached 164,520, and from January to November the number rose to 263,145. Foreign tourists come from China, India, Singapore, Viet Nam, Japan, Austria, New Zealand, Britain, USA, France, Italy and Germany.



Tourists seen at the entrance to Kuthodaw pagoda. PHOTO: MAUNG PYI THU (MANDALAY)

The majority of foreign tourists come to Mandalay from neighbouring and regional countries such as China, India, Singapore and Viet Nam. Between January and November, the number of tourists who visited the cultural zones of Mandalay, Bagan, Innwa and Pyin Oo Lwin rose to 318,597.

The Hotels & Transport Su-

pervision Department under The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism estimates the total number of tourist visits will rise to four million in 2016.

The ministry said tourists visiting Mandalay like riding on bicycles, motorbikes and trishaws to explore downtown Mandalay.— *Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)*

## Farmers to be granted to 14,000 acres of alluvial land

FARMERS will be granted 14,000 acres of alluvial land for cultivation, it is learnt from the 2nd Mon State Hluttaw Fourth regular session held on Tuesday.

“Currently, the authorities are measuring the land and compiling a list of landless farmers. Then, the local authorities will allocate the land to the farmers from the villages which are closest to the alluvial land,” said U Tun Htay, minister

for Mon State Agriculture, Livestock and Transport/Communications. There are about 14,000 acres of land in Bilin township, about 1,500 acres in Ayetthima village, 1,700 acres in Winka village, 5,000 acres in Taunggyi village, 800 acres in Pauktaw village and 5,000 acres in Zotekalee village.

“What is the Mon state government plan? What are the terms and conditions for allocation of

land?” asked Dr. Khin Naing Oo, the representative from State Hluttaw Bilin township Constituency 1 on Tuesday at 2nd Mon state Hluttaw Fourth regular session.

Initially, the authorities submitted a proposal to Thaton district land management committee to grant the farm land to 241 landless farmers from Ayetthima village on a first come, first served basis.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

## Four IEDs and ten car pistons found in Maungtaw



SECURITY forces discovered and disarmed four Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), a pack of medicines and a 3K 70 AHC battery in Maungtaw Township in the morning of 13 December. While conducting an area clearance operation between Mayintaung and Myawtaung, they unearthed the four activated IEDs made of car pis-

tons and one 3K 70 AHC battery and a pack of medicines.

Similarly, security forces unearthed two activated IEDs made of car pistons, 13 rolls of bandages and ten car pistons that are commonly used for making IEDs near Kyet Yoe Pyin village in Maungtaw Township. — *Myanmar News Agency*

## Mung bean growers suffering losses due to unscrupulous summer paddy growers

MUNG BEAN growers are suffering because of certain summer paddy growers who borrowed the summer paddy loans that should have been used to plant rice but instead grew the more profitable mung bean in Myan Aung township, Ayeyawady region, it is learnt from growers.

“The summer paddy growers are dishonest. The irrigation department is daily supplying water for 700 acres of paddy fields. But the loan takers for paddies built a dyke, resulting in the water coming into our mung bean fields. Our

fields were destroyed by the water,” said U Htay Hlaing, a mung bean grower from Pyat Sin Kwin village, Myan Aung township.

This year, the government granted summer paddy loans for over 700 acres. But only 47 acres were planted, it is learnt. The rest of the acres have been put under cultivation of mung bean with the use of summer paddy loans. Most of the mung bean fields in Myan Aung -- over 3,000 out of 4,500 acres -- were destroyed by the diverted water, farmers said. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

## Crime NEWS

### Novice commits suicide by hanging in Thaton

A novice hanged himself at Sasasna Kari monastery, Thein Seik ward, Thuwunna Wadi town, Thaton Township, Mon State on Tuesday, according to police in Thein Seik.

When the police arrived at the scene, they found the novice hanged inside the toilet of the monastery. The toilet is 6 feet high and he seemed to have used a girdle as a rope to commit suicide, police said.

“The novices at the monastery said that he was playing together with them. He stopped playing and went to the toi-

let holding the girdle in his hand. He was not seen to come out of the toilet. The other novices checked the toilet and found him dead. At the monastery, there are only three novices and the abbot. We are still investigating the case,” said Inspector of Police Saw Yu Hlaing from the Thein Seik police station.

The novice, Shin Nanda Tharya, alias Hsan Win Min, 15, was from Kwan Hlyar village, Mudon. His body was sent to the local hospital for autopsy.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

# LOCAL Business

## Taxi surveys to be compiled in the third week of December

A survey on taxis currently running in Yangon Region will be conducted starting from the third week of December, according to the Yangon Transport Authority.

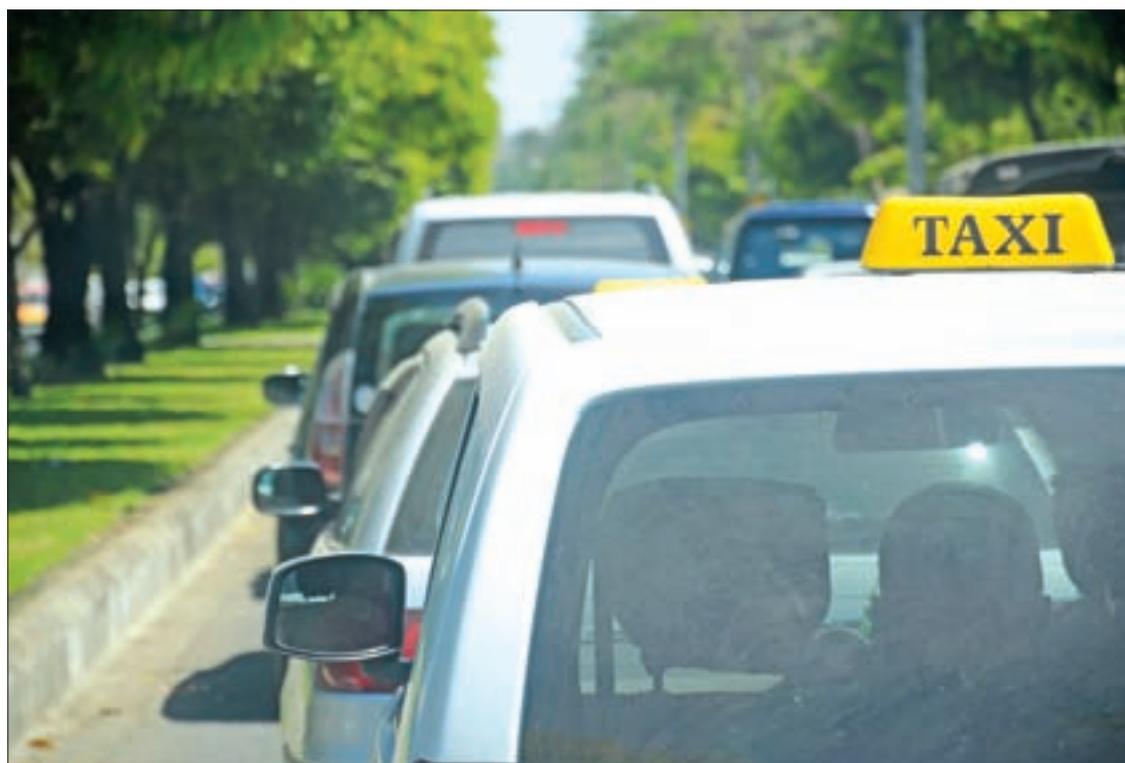
After turning in the survey to City Taxi, the vehicles will be handled by a company and a GPS system will be installed in the taxis so that they are easier to monitor, said Dr. Maung Aung, the secretary of the Yangon Transport Authority.

To collect accurate data on taxis, the forms are already sent to the township and ward admin-

istrative offices and the taxi drivers can be listed at those offices.

Conducting the survey will set a certain period of compliance, and those taxis that fail to be listed will no longer be permitted to operate in the city. Taxis with the licenses outside Yangon are increasing in the city, according to Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

Out of over 500,000 cars registered with Yangon Region Road Transportation Administration Department, over 60,000 licensed cars are running as taxis, it is learnt.—*Ko Htet*



A city taxi runs in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

## Myanmar corn production forecast to increase

MYANMAR'S total corn production is estimated to increase by 6% in the 2016-17 marketing year due to the expansion of rain fed corn growing areas and increased demand from neighboring countries in the region, said the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Services (FAS) said in a Dec. 2 report.

Myanmar's major corn production area is located in the central part of the country, particularly in Shan State, which has about 52% of total production. Most farmers use high-yielding hybrid seeds provided or purchased from foreign entities.

Myanmar corn farmers need about 5,000 to 6,000 tonnes of corn seeds annually to meet domestic demand. An estimated 90% of Myanmar farmers use hybrid seeds that are either purchased from commercial seed producers or the government, the

report said. Other farmers use seeds saved from previous crops. Most of the seed companies in the country are owned by foreign investors from Thailand and China. According to industry sources, the Myanmar CP Livestock Co. (MCPLC), a subsidiary company of the Charoen Pokphand Group (CP) from Thailand, holds about 60% to 70% of the Myanmar corn seed market. The MCPLC produces hybrid corn seeds through contract farming with local growers, primarily in southern Shan State.

The Myanmar Department of Agriculture has developed its own corn seed varieties for research and commercialization. The government holds an estimated 8% share of the corn market. The government seeds are known as Yazin varieties, which are cheaper than the corn seeds sold by private seed companies.—*UkrAgroConsult*



A corn plantation in a village near border with China. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

## Central Bank increases exchange rate to Ks1,330 per US dollar

WITH an even higher exchange rate for the US dollar in the sheet market, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) increased the rate from Ks1,320 to Ks1,330 per dollar on 13th December.

The CBM set the exchange rate per dollar at Ks1,308 from 30th November to 2nd December, Ks1,305 on 5th December, Ks1,310 on 6th December, Ks1,315 on 7th December and Ks1,320 on from 8th to 12th December respectively.

The exchange rate was on the rise from 5th to 7th December and then slipped to Ks1,370 per dollar on 8th December. Then the rate started an upward trend on 9th December.

The rate of hard currency was recorded higher for three consecutive days from 10th to 12th December, according to the sheet currency exchange market.

The dollar price on 13th December in the global market decreased a bit compared to that on 12th December. On 13th December, the US dollar index dropped to 100.93 points and moved up to 101.12. Similarly, the domestic exchange market moved a bit in line with global dollar price on 13th December. The dollar price dropped a bit to Ks1,382 in the morning and then rose back to Ks1,385 in the evening on 13th December.

The week for the highest

exchange rate for the US dollar was when it reached Ks1,376 on 8th December, Ks1,377 on 10th December, Ks1,378 on 11th December and Ks1,386 on 12th December, according to the black market.

The high dollar price affects imported medicines, raw materials and personal goods. The prices of those items have doubled, in some cases. Chemists increase the price of their stocks to keep pace with the increase in the prevailing price, said one chemist.

The dollar exchange rate could possibly reach Ks1,400 per dollar by the end of month, said some banking businessmen.—*Ko Khant*

## Export sector in this FY earns US\$ 203.954million higher than that of last FY

EXPORT value as of 2nd December in this fiscal year 2016-2017 was US\$203.954million higher than that in the similar period of last fiscal year, despite the decrease in income from manufacturing goods, minerals and livestock, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

The value of exports as of 2nd December was US\$7,364.164million, which is up from US\$7,160.21million last year.

Out of seven export groups, the export value of manufacturing goods slumped by US\$680.704million when compared to last fiscal year, whereas income from minerals decreased by US\$185.681million and livestock by US\$0.325million. Meanwhile, other export sectors managed to earn higher than last fiscal year, with an export value of US\$1,776.511million from agricultural goods, US\$339.234million from fishery products, US\$1,54.927million

from forest products and US\$ 1,155.083million from other products.

In the similar period, the import value slumped by US\$ 892.159million compared to that in last fiscal year. Myanmar imports the capital goods, raw industrial materials and consumer goods. The government is trying to reduce the trade deficit by scrutinizing the import items, except essential items, according to the second five-year National Development Plan.—*Mon Mon*

# One dead, eight missing after fishing boat capsizes in western Japan

MATSUE, (Japan) — A man died and eight others are missing after a fishing boat capsized off Matsue, Shimane Prefecture, in western Japan on Wednesday morning while being towed by another fishing boat after developing engine trouble, the Japan Coast Guard said.

The man, believed to be one of the crew members of the 76-ton Daifuku Maru, was rescued but pronounced dead at hospital, according to the coast guard and others. The remaining crew, seven other Japanese and an Indonesian man, remain unaccounted for.

The dead man has been identified by the coast guard as 54-year-old Yoshihiro Sakamoto.

The coast guard has deployed patrol vessels and helicopters to search for the missing crew while the transport ministry has decided to dispatch three investigators to the site to



Members of the Japan Coast Guard look toward the Sea of Japan, where a fishing boat with nine men on board capsized off the city of Matsue, on 14 December 2016. A man believed to be one of the crew of the 76-ton Daifuku Maru was rescued but pronounced dead at hospital, while the eight others remain missing. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

probe the cause of the accident.

Rescuers have yet to locate the capsized vessel, with bad weather hampering their efforts, a coast guard official said.

The coast guard received an emergency call at around 5:20 am Wednes-

day that the Daifuku Maru had capsized in the Sea of Japan 1.6 kilometres north of Matsue. The boat belongs to a fisheries cooperative in the town of Iwami in neighboring Tottori Prefecture.

It was raining at the time and a weather warn-

ing had been issued for strong winds and high waves in the area.

The roughly 30-year-old Daifuku Maru set sail last Thursday night to hunt for crabs and was returning to port, according to the cooperative. —Kyodo News

# China says damage to 'one China' principle would impact peace

BEIJING — China's Taiwan Affairs Office said on Wednesday any interference with or damage to the "one China" principle would have a serious impact on peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

US President-elect Donald Trump said on Sunday the United States did not necessarily have to stick to its long-standing position that Taiwan is part of "one China", further upsetting China which was already angered by Trump's earlier telephone call with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

The issue is highly sensitive for China, which considers Taiwan a renegade province, and Beijing expressed "serious concern" about Trump's remarks.

An Fengshan, a spokesman for China's

policy-making Taiwan Affairs Office, told a regular news conference the Taiwan issue was about China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Upholding the 'one China' principle is the political basis of developing China-US relations, and is the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," he said.

"If this basis is interfered with or damaged then the healthy, stable development of China-US relations is out of the question, and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait will be seriously impacted," An added.

Taiwan's policy-making Mainland Affairs Council said peaceful relations were a mutual responsibility across both sides of the Taiwan Strait.—Reuters

## GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

**Chief Editor** - Khin Maung Aye  
ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**Deputy Chief Editor** - Aye Min Soe  
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**Expatriate Consultant Editor**

Mark Angeles  
markrangeles@gmail.com

**Senior Translators**  
Khin Maung Oo, Myint Win Thein  
editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**Editor**  
Ye Htut Tin (Local News)  
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**International Editors**  
Tun Tun Naing (Editor)  
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor)

**Translators**  
Khaing Thanda Lwin,  
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
Hay Mar Tin Win,  
translator@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
Ei Myat Mon

**Chief Reporter**  
Tun Aung Kyaw,  
reporter2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**Computer Team**  
Tun Zaw (Chief of Computer Team), Thein Ngwe,  
Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,  
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win, Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

**Circulation**  
San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532, Hotline - 09 974424114

**Advertising inquiry**  
01 8604530, Hotline - 09 974424848  
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

# Duterte arrives in Cambodia with Filipino boxing champ Pacquiao

PHNOM PENH — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte arrived in Cambodia on Tuesday for a two-day state visit, with Filipino boxer and senator Manny Pacquiao as a member of his entourage.

During the visit, Duterte's first to Cambo-

dia since he took office on 30 June, the two sides plan to sign two agreements in sports and in combating cross-border crime.

In his pre-departure remarks in Manila, Duterte said he and Hun Sen will discuss how to intensify bilateral cooperation in such

areas as defence and security, trade and investment, law enforcement and counter-narcotics, protection of migrant workers, and cultural and tourism cooperation.

He noted that the Philippines and Cambodia will commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> year of diplomatic

relations in 2017.

Hun Sen is known to be a fan of Pacquiao, having accused judges of being unfair when they declared American boxer Floyd Mayweather the victor in a May 2015 match against the Filipino boxer. —Kyodo News

# Investigators begin final sweep of MH370 search area

SYDNEY — Investigators looking for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 are making their last sweep of the search area in the Indian Ocean, Australian authorities leading the search said on Wednesday.

Flight MH370 disappeared in March 2014 with 239 passengers and crew on board, most of them Chinese, en route to Beijing from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur. Its whereabouts have become one of the world's greatest aviation mysteries.

The search is set to be wrapped up in January, Australia's Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) said in a statement.

Malaysia, Australia and China agreed in July to suspend the search if the plane was not found or new evidence uncovered once the search area had been scoured.

Australia is leading the search for the plane at the



Flight officer Rayan Gharzeddine looks out of a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) AP-3C Orion as it flies over the southern Indian Ocean during the search for missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, on 22 March 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

request of the Malaysian government.

Search vessel Fugro Equator on Monday left Fremantle in Western Australia for its last journey to the 120,000-sq-km (75,000-sq-mile) patch of sea floor that has been the focus of the 1,000-day hunt for the vanished Boeing 777, the JACC said.

The vessel will revisit sites of previous sonar contact to examine them more closely with a submersible drone.

Chinese involvement in the search diminished this week, as that country's sonar-equipped vessel ended its role in the hunt and turned for Shanghai.

The Dong Hai Jiu 101

joined the search in February, initially contributing deep-sea sonar scans before being reconfigured in October to conduct dive missions with its own remotely operated submersible.

China continues to take part in "regular consultation and briefings" regarding MH370, a spokesman for the search team, Dan O'Malley, told Reuters by email.

The undersea search has found no trace of the plane, although three pieces of debris found on the beaches of Mauritius, Tanzania and the French island of Reunion have been confirmed to be from MH370. Investigators are examining several other pieces found in Mozambique and South Africa.

Frustrated relatives of missing passengers have demanded that the search be extended to the coastline of east Africa.—Reuters

# US ready to confront Beijing on South China Sea: admiral

SYDNEY — The United States is ready to confront China should it continue its overreaching maritime claims in the South China Sea, the head of the US Pacific fleet said on Wednesday, comments that threaten to escalate tensions between the two global rivals.

China claims most of the resource-rich South China Sea through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. Neighbours Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also have claims.

The United States has called on China to respect the findings of arbitration court in The Hague earlier this year which invalidated its vast territorial claims in the strategic waterway.

But Beijing continues to act in an “aggressive” manner, to which the United States stands

ready to respond, Admiral Harry Harris, head of the US Pacific Command, said in a speech in Sydney.

“We will not allow a shared domain to be closed down unilaterally no matter how many bases are built on artificial features in the South China Sea,” he said. “We will cooperate when we can but we will be ready to confront when we must.”

The comments threaten to stoke tensions between the United States and China, already heightened by President-elect Donald Trump’s decision to accept a telephone call from Taiwan’s president on 2 December that prompted a diplomatic protest from Beijing.

The United States estimates Beijing has added more than 3,200 acres (1,300 hectares) of land on seven features in the



Guided-missile destroyer USS Decatur (DDG 73) operates in the South China Sea as part of the Bonhomme Richard Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) in the South China Sea, on 13 October 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

South China Sea over the past three years, building runways, ports, aircraft hangars and communications equipment.

In response, the United States has conducted a series of freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea, the latest of which came in October.

The patrols have angered Beijing, with a senior Chinese official in July warning the practice may end in “disaster”.

Harris said it was a decision for the Australian government whether the US ally should undertake its own freedom-of-navigation operations, but said

the United States would continue with the practice.

“The US fought its first war following our independence to ensure freedom of navigation,” said Harris. “This is an enduring principle and one of the reasons our forces stand ready to fight tonight.”—Reuters

# Abe hopes spa summit with Putin opens door for isles row progress

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday at a spa resort in western Japan for the third time this year, with a repeated vow to make progress on the long-standing territorial spat over Russian-held, Japanese-claimed islands and sign a post-World War II peace treaty.

Visiting for two days from Thursday, Putin will be the first Russian president to travel to Japan for a bilateral meeting in 11 years. His visit was initially eyed in 2014 but was postponed as Russia’s ties deteriorated with Group of Seven members and other Western countries following Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in Ukraine.

Abe will first welcome Putin at a Japanese traditional “ryokan” inn in the hot spa resort of Nagato in his home prefecture of Yamaguchi to address the territorial dispute and the postwar peace treaty issues. They will have another round of summit meetings Friday in Tokyo to concentrate on economic cooperation, Japanese officials said.

In Tokyo, Abe and Putin will hold a press conference, attend an economic forum organised by Japanese business lobby Keidanren and visit Kodokan Judo Institute, the officials said. Putin is a well-known judo enthusiast.

Putin’s visit to Japan comes after the Japanese premier proposed an eight-point cooperation plan to Putin at their meeting in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi in May.

Abe hopes the plan, focused on constructing an export base in the Russian Far East, an area Putin is eager to develop, will help move the territorial talks forward.

But the two countries remain apart on the islands — Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai islet group — called the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kurils in Russia.

Japan says the islands are its inherent territory and that Russia illegally seized them after Japan’s surrender in World War II in August 1945. Russia, meanwhile, says the seizure was legitimate and calls on Tokyo to recognise the outcome of the war.

As the dispute over sovereignty of the islands lingers, Russia has stepped up its control over the islands. It reportedly deployed state-of-the-art antiship missile systems on two of the disputed islands, prompting Tokyo to lodge a protest late last month.

Abe has held talks with Putin 15 times during his two terms as premier. Following his first stint from 2006 to 2007, he became premier for the second time in December 2012.

Although Russia, faced with falling commodity prices and sanctions by the West, is interested in economic cooperation with Japan, Putin is not expected to make concessions on the territorial issue, a move likely to undermine his domestic support.

Aside from the territorial issue, Japan is keen on forging closer security, economic and political



A banner at JR Sensaki train station in Nagato, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s home town, on 10 December 2016, reads “a new start from here in Nagato,” ahead of a summit meeting between Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin on 15 December. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ties with Russia amid the rising military assertiveness of China and the heightened nuclear threat from North Korea, analysts say.

Tokyo needs to perform a careful balancing act in dealing with Russia, whose ties with the United States, Japan’s main security ally, have been strained over Ukrainian and Syrian issues, they say.

Japan is also under pressure to maintain economic sanctions on Russia as a member of the G-7 industrialized countries, which have condemned Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

Japanese government sources said Abe and Putin are planning to release a statement following their summit calling for the launch of talks on engaging in joint econom-

ic activities on the disputed islands in such areas as fisheries and seafood processing and expansion of the scope of visa-free exchanges for business purposes.

Concerns in Japan remain strong, however, that such joint economic activities on the islands will not necessarily lead to progress on the territorial negotiations but merely strengthen Moscow’s control of them, the analysts say.

Even if joint economic activities are realized, legal issues remain to be resolved, such as which laws should govern the activities. Japan takes the stance that they need to be conducted in a way that would not lead to recognising Russian sovereignty over the islands, the sources said. —Kyodo News

# Rights groups welcome order to shut Thailand gold mine

BANGKOK — Human rights groups on Wednesday welcomed a decision by Thailand to close the country’s only active gold mine by the end of the year as the mine’s operator said it had laid off the employees.

Thailand’s ruling junta on Tuesday said it is suspending all gold mining operations in the country from 1 January “due to its impact on locals and the environment.” The junta invoked Article 44 of the interim constitution which makes any action it takes final.

No new licenses for mining would be issued, it said.

In May, Thailand said it would shutter the country’s only gold mine after the government said environmental concerns outweighed the economic benefits of the Chatree mine, located 280 km (174 miles) north of the capital Bangkok.

A military government investigation team in January 2015 said more than 300 people tested positive for arsenic and manganese at Chatree, which is run by Akara Resources Public Company Limited, a subsidiary of Australia’s Kingsgate Consolidated Ltd.

Fortify Rights, a Bangkok-based campaign group, welcomed the decision to shutter the mine.—Reuters

# Opinion

## 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 [ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com](mailto:ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.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.

## Leadership training for women in cooperatives important

Htun Tin Htun

**L**EADER is the one who knows the way, who goes the way, who shows the way, who guides the way and who leads the way. Since the World Summit on Social Development and the Beijing Conference, the cooperative movement has increasingly sought to improve the status of women in cooperatives and in society. In 1995, the International Cooperative Alliance ICA, representing over 200 cooperative organizations (with nearly 760 million individual members) in nearly 100 countries passed a resolution on "Gender Equality on Cooperatives" in which the members of the ICA noted that gender equality was a global priority for the cooperative

movement. A series of programmes and projects were undertaken by the ICA at the global and regional levels to raise awareness of the issue as well as collect data to enable measurement of progress made. ICA members also committed themselves to take action. International collaboration between the ICA and the ILO Coop Branch resulted in a series of activities on gender issues and cooperatives. For example, in 1995, a manual for trainers was published on gender issues, "Gender Issues in Cooperatives: An ILO-ICA Perspective".

Also important to note are the activities of the ICA Global Women's Committee which or-

ganizes a series of seminars and meetings on women and cooperatives.

The Committee is an important lobby to the ICA management as well as an important collector of information on the advancement of women in cooperatives. Its latest initiative is to map the participation of women in the cooperative movement and to collect more comprehensive statistics to enable improved monitoring of progress.

In Asia, in 1996 cooperative members agreed to set up a Protem Regional Women's Committee with the support from the national cooperative organization of Malaysia, AN-GKASA. Consultations were

organized and women's fora were held in a number of countries in preparation for a Regional Women's Forum which was held in October 1998. More than 130 women delegates participated at the Forum.

The first meeting of the Regional Women's Committee was also held at that time. During the period and since then, women's participation level in cooperatives has increased considerably. ICA-ILO manual on Cooperative Leadership Training for Women was published. The Regional Women's Committee has also been planning in collaboration with member organizations a study on the legal status of women's participation in their countries.

## Rakhine State affair, don't fan the flames

Aye Kywe

**O**N our march towards democracy, we had to suffer unexpectedly a very powerful blow. This was none other than the fact that some foreign media had criticized and blamed Myanmar using fabricated and false news in relation to the violent attacks that occurred in the Maungtaung region of Rakhine state, in October.

To tell the truth, this incident is not a problem which developed from normal and natural causes. The incident occurred because of causes rooted in history and one that could be called a geo-political problem. If we were to attempt to find the root causes of this problem during a time when people are boiling with anger, we are afraid that instead of creating harmony we would be creating more hatred among the two communities. Because of this line of thinking, in trying to solve this problem, we had waited till the situation become stable and the two communities had cooled down. While praying, we waited for these two communities to solve this problem through discussions and negotiations.

### Origin of this problem

As everyone knows, the problem began not as a very innocent and normal event but one that had very interesting processes and events in the past. Especially, this problem occurred in perfect timing with the UN General Assembly Third Committee meeting which was about to begin its delibera-

tions on human rights issues. We think that they acted in this manner with the aim of drawing the world's attention to affairs in the Rakhine state by attaching human rights and humanitarian labels to these events. To speak truthfully, the Maungtaung problem is not a normal communal problem that began between different communities in Rakhine State. It was rather a violent attack with overwhelming force on border police outposts in the areas of Kyiganyin, Ngakhuya, Koetankauk in Maungtaung and Rathetaung regions. It was also a very ugly and disgusting act of violence in which border police in these outposts were attacked and murdered and their weapons and ammunition were taken away by force. We all believe that behind these violent attacks, there exist many different kinds of hidden aims and agendas.

Regarding these events, the Union Government is trying to respond only in accordance with the law. The Government formed a Union-level Investigation Commission headed by Vice-President (1) U Myint Swe with the task of finding out the root causes of these events and also to determine what measures need to be taken to prevent similar events from happening again in the future. All residents of Maungtaung region were provided with humanitarian assistance in the form of food and supplies. This has been seen by everyone.

### Fanning the flames

At a time when the Union Government is responding to these violent attacks in accord-

ance with the law, some foreign media agencies are trying to cause misunderstanding among the international community by using fabricated and false news. It has been found that especially the news issued by HRW (Human Rights Watch) and copied and referred by the Daily Mail in the UK, the Bangkok Post and some other foreign newspapers are very much different from the real situation. In some instances, even some UN service personnel have spoken out and acted in contravention of their code of conduct and ethical standards. They have been disseminating false news as though the security forces in this area have been burning houses of the villagers, arresting innocent villagers, torturing and killing them, and committing human rights abuses against them. To tell the truth, these violent attackers in this area have been using the villagers as cover and attacking and ambushing the security forces by using various attack tactics. If we reviewed the action taken by the security forces, it would be seen that they were only trying to discover and recover their lost weapons and ammunition; they have also tried to respond by seeking out and arresting these violent attackers and took legal action against them. To put it plainly, it is the duty of every community to root out terrorist activities and terrorists. Terrorist acts and terrorist ideology need to be rooted out from Myanmar society. Only then will we be able to solve the problems that exist among the two communities, problems which are

as old as history itself. Then only can we look forward to a time of peace and friendship.

### Value your professional ethics

Any person who wishes to talk about racial conflicts and religious conflicts should be aware about their emotional and sensitive nature. Especially what the media people present can have a huge impact on public opinion. Therefore, they should be more careful. Sometimes some religious and racial matters could develop into conflicts, so every media agency should understand the "conflict-sensitive" nature of such matters. Foreign media agencies especially, should understand the importance of "conflict-sensitive reporting" and act accordingly with great care. In fact, when they are about to write about these conflicts, they should not flippantly attach labels that come to mind readily. They should not complicate and deepen the conflict even further and make it more difficult to solve. They should understand this. Having a high regard for their professional ethics, we wish to say that they should henceforth refrain from flippantly putting labels and fabricated stories.

### Please do not try to make profit

In this world today, each country is trying each own way to live in peace and friendship while preserving their different cultures, different traditions and religious beliefs. If conflicts arise between communities professing different religious beliefs, it has been observed that it is very difficult to solve this problem. The conflicts in Northern Ireland have given us

a good lesson. With regard to this matter, the Prime Minister of UK Mr. Tony Blair had said this when he visited Myanmar on 15 November 2013, "some people have used these differences for political gain. These situations which are all complicated in the beginning were transformed into situations of grave danger and great concern. This is what has happened all over the world" with regard to people who make use of religion and race for their own ends. Recently, we saw that a leader from a neighboring country tried to use the Maungtaung affair to profit politically. This was very unexpected for us and we felt very sad about it. Myanmar is a country which tries to have friendly relations not only with neighboring countries but with all other countries of the world. Although all of us have tried our best to restrain our anger because we wish to make our long standing friendships endure, we have been hurt and devastated.

We wish to make them understand that Myanmar would never hurt ASEAN. At a time when they should have shown understanding and gathered around Myanmar and to offer assistance, they have used our country for the political gain of their own party. This is really regrettable. We even feel concern that the countries of the world would denounce and blame them. Especially because of unethical behavior and conduct unbecoming of a leader, this event would become recorded in history.

See page 9 >>

## Vice President U Henry Van Thio discusses natural disasters, climate change

VICE PRESIDENT U Henry Van Thio, chairman of natural disaster management committee, addressed the opening ceremony of a workshop on cooperation among high-ranking officials for dealing with climate change in carrying out tasks of lessening the losses and damages in natural disasters, held at the Myanmar International Convention Center 2 in Nay Pyi Taw Wednesday morning.

“There increased occurrences of natural disasters with greater destructive impacts. Remarkably great destructions and unremarkable ones can be found. The consequences of climate change and the destructive powers of natural disasters can cause physical and mental damage. Likewise, provision of international aid will come to the tasks of rehabilitation. The above said help and aid will provide better support for the public, but there also may emerge situations in which safety and security in respective sectors should be included for consideration.

“With global warming, evil effects of natural disasters related to climate change are threatening the safety of our planet, hence the emergence of co-operative finding of solutions among international communities for lessening the damages. In addition, Myanmar is actively taking part in international cooperation, and finding ways in respective sectors of the country. Myanmar has signed the Paris Agreement, which is globally agreed upon, concurrently implemented by laying down national-level tactics and policies.”

“As regards tasks on the management of natural disasters, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction — UNISDR — is leading the activities while Myanmar is taking part in the framework and working process. And Myanmar signed Sendai Framework, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response — AADMER. In addition, Myanmar is implementing the Myanmar Action Plan



Vice-President U Henry Van Thio delivering opening speech. PHOTO: MNA

on Disaster Risk Reduction — MAPDRR. Now we are suffering the consequences of climate change, and it cannot be avoided. We are performing Climate Change Adaptation.”

Afterward, the vice chairman of the committee, Dr Win

Mat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, made an opening address, followed by Union Ministers Dr Aung Thu, U Ohn Win and UNDP’s resident representative Ms Renata Dessallien. Then Vice President posed for the documen-

tary photo with Union Ministers, Chairmen of Hluttaw Affairs Committees, scholars and invited guests.

The workshop will be held at Royal Nay Pyi Taw Hotel, in Nay Pyi Taw until December 15.—Myanmar News Agency

## Electronic ID cards being issued in pilot project areas

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population has started issuing smart identity cards in Mandalay and the capital Nay Pyi Taw as a pilot project.

As part of an e-government development programme, the ministry is now implementing the pilot project in target areas to substitute the current paper national registration card with a smarter digital identification card.

Commencing on 13 December, the authorities issued the electronic IDs to the target population of over 4,000 residing in Patgonpyawbwe Ward in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay Region.

U Tin Chai, head of the regional immigration department, said the department is carrying out the issuance of smart IDs to citizens above the age of 18 with the use of state-of-the-art technology utilized in the United States.

He went on to say that the department does not know the

exact date the project will be implemented nation wide.

Currently, the smart card programme is being implemented in Pobbathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw and Chanayethazan Township in Mandalay Region.

There are more than 1.2 million people in Mandalay Region, according to the department.



Smarter digital identification cards being issued.

PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

The current national registration card, printed on pink paper, includes the holder’s photo, signature, a fingerprint of the left thumb and other personal data. The paper ID card is easily damaged and hard to check for validity. The new system will provide secure technology for users, the head of the department said.—Aung Thant Khaing

## Furniture expos to take place next year locally and abroad

A SERIES of exhibitions to display Myanmar’s furniture products are planned to take place next year at home and abroad for the purpose of seeking new business opportunities for Myanmar’s wood-based furniture products.

Organized by the Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association, value-added furniture will be displayed for sale at trade events not only in Myanmar but in Singapore and China, said Chairman U Kyaw Thu.

In partnership with the Wood-Based Furniture Association, the MRBEA plans to hold the first expo at Tatmadaw Exhibition Hall in Yangon

in mid-February next year, with a focus on showcasing quality products through over 200 booths displaying over 100 different kinds of furniture for sale during the four-day expo starting from February 16.

The association will also take part in Singapore’s furniture expo in March and the China-ASEAN Furniture Expo in May, with plans to feature the country’s valued-added hyacinth and bamboo products.

Those fairs also aim to create networks among entrepreneurs to promote their products and encourage more value-added manufacturers in the furniture industry.—200

## Rakhine State affair, don’t fan the flames

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**We will find the cure to the problem**

At the end of the 20th century, although political extremism has been on the decline, religious and racial extremism is still alive and well. In the world today, we think that taking a position between a “close mind” and an “open mind” is getting much more complicated. Experts believe that only countries which are thriving

with an “open mind” can have sustainable development. Today in Myanmar we are building the country with human values such as Freedom, Development and Prosperity. There should be no doubt that we are solving the problems within the Rakhine state in accordance with legal procedures and internationally accepted codes of conduct and behavior. We have a deep desire to solve our internal problems by our-

selves in the best possible way. However, while waiting for harmonious conditions to return, tempers to cool down and mental stability achieved among the two communities, we are preparing to negotiate and seek a solution for the future.

The affairs of the Rakhine state cannot be considered as normal racial or religious conflicts but with geo-political problems which has deep roots in history.

Therefore, in order to make sure that these conflicts do not grow bigger and become more difficult to solve, we are solving these problems with utmost care. We want the international community to understand and be aware of this fact.

In times like this, we want the foreign media agencies to disseminate news about Myanmar by keeping a high regard for their code of conduct and ethical be-

havior. We also request their help to make sure that the conflicts do not become bigger and more complicated. This is the desire of all the Myanmar people. We have very firmly committed ourselves to solve this internal problem in a peaceful manner. It is all right if you do not wish to help, however, please do not interfere and fan the flames. This is what we wish to request.

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## US judge to review FBI's Clinton emails search warrant

NEW YORK — A US judge on Tuesday directed federal prosecutors to show him the search warrant application used to enable the FBI to access emails related to Hillary Clinton's private server that were discovered shortly before the 8 November presidential election.

US District Judge Kevin Castel in Manhattan ordered prosecutors by Thursday to turn over the application, which investigators obtained shortly after FBI Director James Comey informed Congress of newly discovered emails on 28 October, 11 days before the election won by her Republican opponent Donald Trump.

Castel made the order as he considered whether any portion of the search warrant materials could be made public in response to a lawsuit filed by Randol Schoenberg, a Los Angeles-based lawyer who specializes in cases to recover artwork stolen by the Nazis, seeking to force the release of the documents.

In court papers, Schoenberg said the public had a "strong interest" in the disclosure of the search warrant materials, saying transparency was "crucial" given the potential influence the probe had on the election's outcome.

The search warrant was obtained after Comey issued a letter to top US lawmakers disclosing that emails potentially related to the Clinton server probe had been discovered in an "unrelated case." Comey's 28 October announcement roiled the campaign and



Vice President Joe Biden (L-R), former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) attend a portrait unveiling ceremony for US Senator Harry Reid on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, on 8 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

drew new attention to a damaging issue for Clinton.

Clinton, the Democratic presidential nominee, used the server while she was secretary of state from 2009 to 2013. Comey in July had recommended to the Justice Department that no criminal charges be brought against Clinton over her handling of classified information in the emails.

Only two days before the election, Comey disclosed that the newly reviewed emails did nothing to change his earlier recommendation after all. Clinton days after her loss blamed Comey's letter, so close to the election, as a reason she lost to Trump.

Sources close to the investigation have said the emails were discovered during an unrelated probe into former Democratic US congressman Anthony Weiner,

the estranged husband of top Clinton aide Huma Abedin.

In court, Castel said he would not be surprised if prosecutors, in submitting the materials to him, cited the presence of an ongoing probe in a case unrelated to Clinton as a reason to keep the search warrant application confidential.

"It could be potentially terribly unfair to a person who ultimately winds up not being charged," Castel said, apparently referring to Weiner. Castel said it was possible information unrelated to the Clinton email probe could be redacted, and noted that in Clinton's case, Comey later indicated in a subsequent letter that the server probe was closed. Castel invited prosecutors to propose redactions in case he decides to release the search warrant application.—Reuters

## EU conservatives pick Italy's Tajani as candidate for parliament speaker



European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani gestures during a news conference on the European defence industry in Brussels, in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

STRASBOURG — The European Union's centre-right grouping on Tuesday elected Antonio Tajani as its candidate to replace socialist Martin Schulz as speaker of the European Parliament, a move that could increase calls for a reshuffle of other top EU jobs.

Tajani, a former EU commissioner, is a member of the rightist Forza Italia party and a close ally of former Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi.

The socialists, the second

biggest grouping, have said the election of a conservative president would unsettle the EU's balance of power by giving the conservative European People's Party (EPP) the presidencies of all three major EU bodies.

Luxembourg's Jean-Claude Juncker runs the executive European Commission and Donald Tusk of Poland chairs EU summits as president of the European Council. Both are EPP members.

Tusk's own mandate expires

at the end of May but he is expected to want to stay on, despite opposition from the Polish government controlled by his arch-enemy Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

Juncker has three years left in office, although his position has been weakened by Britain's vote to leave the EU and by a failed plan to manage last year's migrant crisis with mandatory quotas of refugees for EU states.

As the candidate of the largest grouping in the chamber, Tajani looks likely to become the next speaker, although a win is not certain as the EPP has only 215 of 751 seats.

The socialists, ending a decade-long alliance with the EPP, have presented their own candidate for the presidency, Gianni Pittella, an Italian lawmaker close to Italy's most recent ex-prime minister, Matteo Renzi.

Pittella said his aim was to reduce the appeal of growing anti-establishment movements that prosper by depicting moderate parties of all political hues as pursuing the same agenda.—Reuters

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### French lower house of parliament votes to extend state of emergency

PARIS — The French lower house of parliament voted early on Wednesday to extend the country's state of emergency until 15 July, 2017, as France remains on high alert against the threat of terror attacks.

The extension of the state of emergency had already been proposed on 10 December by France's new prime minister, Bernard Cazeneuve. Political parties are keen to show they are getting a grip on the threat of attacks as France prepares for presidential elections in 2017. France's upper house Senate will also review the measures on Thursday. The socialist government imposed the state of emergency — which gives police extended powers to search and arrest — in November last year after attacks by Islamist militants in Paris that killed 130 people.

The state of emergency, which was originally due to end in mid-January, has already been extended four times because the government considers that the risk of armed attacks by Islamist militants remains high.—Reuters

#### Russia says Aleppo rebel resistance to end within three days

MOSCOW — Rebel resistance in the Syrian city of Aleppo is likely to end in the next two to three days, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying on Wednesday.

"I hope that in the next two to three days the situation in Aleppo will be resolved," Interfax news agency quoted Lavrov as saying.

"I expect that the rebels will cease resistance in the next two to three days."—Reuters

#### EU ministers assess Serbia's progress

BRUSSELS — The EU Council of Ministers looks forward to Tuesday's opening of new chapters in Serbia's EU accession talks and to continued joint work on its path toward EU membership, it has been announced in Brussels.

Meeting ahead of the Serbia-EU intergovernmental conference, which has begun in Brussels, the EU ministers of general and European affairs assessed Serbia's progress in the negotiation process.

Welcoming the progress made, they noted this particularly applied to opening Chapters 23 and 24 on the judiciary, fundamental rights, justice, freedom and security. The Council encourages Serbia to continue the positive pace — Serbia should step up its efforts and focus on implementing what has been adopted, particularly as regards rule of law and the judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime, the ministers concluded.—Tanjug

#### China jails former Nanjing city chief for 12 years for graft

BEIJING — A court in eastern China on Wednesday sentenced the former Communist Party chief of the major city of Nanjing to 12-1/2 years in jail, after finding him guilty of corruption.

Yang Weize, Nanjing's top official, was put under investigation early last year by the party's internal anti-graft watchdog.

The court in Ningbo said Yang accepted bribes, either directly or through his wife, worth 16.4 million yuan (\$2.38 million) between 2005 and 2014. Yang admitted his crimes, expressed repentance and cooperated in returning the dirty money, meaning he got a lighter sentence, the court added. It was not possible to reach a legal representative of Yang for comment.—Reuters

#### British tourist sentenced on weapons charge over Trump rally scare

LAS VEGAS — A 20-year-old British tourist who prosecutors say caused a security scare at a Donald Trump campaign rally in Las Vegas by trying to wrestle a gun from a police officer was sentenced on Tuesday to a year and a day in prison.

Michael Sandford, was sentenced by US District Judge James Mahan in Las Vegas after pleading guilty in September under a plea agreement with prosecutors to one count each of illegal weapon possession by an alien and disrupting the orderly conduct of government business or functions. A lawyer for Sandford, federal public defender Brenda Weksler, said she was "happy with the result," calling the sentence a "fair disposition of the case given the unique circumstances." When asked whether Sandford intended to harm Trump, Weksler said: "Our client is not political at all."—Reuters

## Iran to work on nuclear-powered vessels after US 'violation' of deal

BEIRUT/VIENNA — Iran ordered its scientists on Tuesday to start developing systems for nuclear-powered marine vessels in response to what it calls a US violation of its landmark 2015 atomic deal with world powers.

Nuclear experts said that President Hassan Rouhani's move, if carried out, would probably require Iran to enrich uranium to a fissile purity above the maximum level set in the nuclear deal to allay fears of Tehran building an atomic bomb.

Rouhani's announcement marked Tehran's first concrete reaction to a decision by the US Congress last month to extend some sanctions on Tehran that would also make it easier to reimpose others lifted under the nuclear pact.

The White House said it was aware of Iran's order and noted that Rouhani had said any such work on the vessels would be done within the framework of Iran's commitments.

"The announcement from the Iranians today does not run counter to the international agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," White House spokesman Josh Earnest told a news briefing.

US State Department spokesman John Kirby said the United States was confident the International Atomic Energy Agency, which inspects Iran's nuclear sites, would be able to analyze Iran's compliance with the deal.

"There's a lot we don't know



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani takes part in a news conference near the United Nations General Assembly in the Manhattan borough of New York, US, on 22 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

about it, what it means," Kirby said, referring to Rouhani's announcement, at a news briefing on Tuesday. A marine nuclear propulsion programme is a "massive undertaking for any nation" and would likely take decades to realize, he added.

Rouhani described the technology as a "nuclear propeller to be used in marine transportation," but did not say whether that meant just ships or possibly also submarines. Iran said in 2012 that it was working on its first nuclear-powered sub.

Rouhani's words could stoke tensions with Washington, already heightened by US President-elect Donald Trump's vow to scrap the deal, under which Iran curbed its nuclear fuel production activities in exchange for

relief from economic sanctions.

Rouhani also ordered planning for production of fuel for nuclear-powered marine vessels "in line with the development of a peaceful nuclear programme of Iran."

But under the nuclear settlement Iran reached with the United States, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China, it is not allowed to enrich uranium above a 3.67 per cent purity for 15 years, a level unlikely to be enough to run such vessels.

"On the basis of international experience, were Iran to go ahead with such a (nuclear propulsion) project, it would have to increase its enrichment level," said Mark Hibbs, nuclear expert and senior fellow at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.—Reuters

## Islamic State made weapons in Mosul up to military standards: report

ERBIL, (Iraq) — Islamic State militants have been producing weapons on a scale and sophistication which matches national military forces and have standardized production across their self-styled caliphate, an arms monitoring group said on Wednesday.

Conflict Armament Research (CAR) said the jihadist group had a "robust supply chain" of raw materials from Turkey, and the technical precision of its work meant that it could not be described as "improvised" weapons production.

"Although production facilities employ a range of non-standard materials and chemical explosive precursors, the degree of organisation, quality control, and inventory management indicates a complex, centrally controlled industrial production system," it said in a report following visits last month to six facilities once operated by Islamic State in eastern Mosul.

Iraq's military launched a sweeping operation on 17 October to retake the northern city, the jihadists' last major stronghold in the country, more than two years after government forces dropped their weapons and fled.

Elite army troops have retaken a quarter of the city in a grueling US-backed campaign, but their advance has been slow and punishing. Soldiers are constrained by street-by-street

fighting and a built-up urban battlefield.

CAR, which identifies and tracks weapons and ammunitions in conflicts, said the facilities it visited were part of a system producing weapons according to precise guidelines issued by a central authority.

Production included a monitoring system with regular, detailed reports on production rates and quality that helped ensure standardisation — usually to the tenth of a millimeter — across the jihadists' once sprawling territory in Iraq and neighbouring Syria.

"Mortar rounds manufactured in one part of IS forces' territory are calibrated to fit mortar tubes produced in facilities located elsewhere," the report said.

CAR investigators estimated that Islamic State had produced tens of thousands of rockets and mortar rounds in the months leading up to the Mosul offensive.

Standardisation required consistency in the supply of source materials, the report said, achieved through a major acquisition network in neighbouring Turkey and a supply chain extending from that country, through Syria, to Mosul.

In addition to technical advantages of standardisation, CAR said Islamic State sought to mirror the functions of a national military force in a bid to "legitimise the group's capacity and coherence in the eyes of IS fighters".—Reuters

## Aleppo hit by air strikes and shelling as evacuation stalls

ALEPPO, (Syria)/BEIRUT — The planned evacuation of rebel districts of Aleppo stalled on Wednesday as air strikes and heavy shelling hit the city and Iran was said to have imposed new conditions on the deal.

Iran, one of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's main backers in the battle that has all but ended four years of rebel resistance in the city, wanted a simultaneous evacuation of wounded from two villages, Foua and Kefraya, that are besieged by rebel fighters, according to rebel and UN sources.

Rebel groups said that was just an excuse to hold up the evacuation from a shrunken insurgent enclave shattered by a powerful government offensive. A pro-opposition TV station said the operation could now be delayed until Thursday.

A ceasefire brokered on

Tuesday by Russia, Assad's most powerful ally, and Turkey was intended to end years of fighting in the city, giving the Syrian leader his biggest victory in more than five years of war.

But air strikes, shelling and gunfire erupted on Wednesday and Turkey accused government forces of breaking the truce. Syrian state television said rebel shelling had killed six people.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said however that rebel resistance was likely to end in the next two or three days.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan will discuss Aleppo later on Wednesday, the Kremlin was quoted as saying.

Officials in the military alliance backing Assad could not be reached immediately for comment on why the evacuation, ex-



People walk as they flee deeper into the remaining rebel-held areas of Aleppo, Syria, on 13 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

pected to start in the early hours of Wednesday, had stalled.

Nobody had left by dawn under the plan, according to a Reuters witness waiting at the departure point, where 20 buses stood with engines running but showed no sign of moving into rebel districts.

People in eastern Aleppo packed their bags and burned personal belongings, fearing looting by the Syrian army and its Iranian-backed militia allies.

In what appeared to be a separate development from the planned evacuation, the Russian defence ministry said 6,000 ci-

vilians and 366 fighters had left rebel-held districts over the past 24 hours.

A total of 15,000 people, including 4,000 rebel fighters, wanted to leave Aleppo, according to a media unit run by the Syrian government's ally Hezbollah.—Reuters



Passengers queue for a reduced Gatwick Express service during the Southern railway strike at Victoria station in London, Britain, on 13 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

## London commuters face second day of strike disruption

LONDON — London commuters faced a second day of travel chaos as the latest round of train strikes stopped services between London and the south coast in Britain's worst rail disruption for two decades.

Hundreds of thousands of commuters struggled to get to work on Wednesday as drivers working for Southern Rail began the second day of a 48-hour stoppage over a long-running dispute about whose job it should be to open and close

the train doors.

The opposing sides, Southern and the two unions, the RMT and Aslef, were due to meet for talks later in the day at the conciliation service Acas, ahead of further industrial action planned for Friday, next week and in January.

Southern, run by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), a joint venture owned by London-listed Go-Ahead and France's Keolis, told passengers not to try to travel during the strike.

Local media said this week's strikes would have the biggest impact since action by signal workers in the mid-1990s.

It comes after a series of strikes on Southern this year which have caused misery for commuters. Some workers say they lost their jobs because they could not get to work on time. Go-Ahead, which has apologised for the troubles on Southern, is due to provide investors with a trading update on Thursday. —Reuters

## Venezuela frees four jailed opponents of President Maduro

CARACAS — Venezuela freed on Tuesday another four opponents of President Nicolas Maduro, but activists demanded the immediate liberation of more than 100 others they say are also unjustly imprisoned.

"I'm so happy after living through these storms," one of the four, bank messenger Gilberto Sojo, told Reuters ecstatically after his release overnight, surrounded by friends and family.

Sojo and the other three — engineer Vladimir Araque, retired general Romer Mena and lawyer Leopoldo D'Alta — were arrested in 2014 and 2015 on various accusations of fomenting violence and plotting against the socialist government. All deny the charges.

They were among the lesser-known Maduro opponents jailed since he won an election to replace Hugo Chavez in 2013.

The ruling Socialist

Party says its opponents, encouraged by the United States, want to seize power via a coup and denies the existence of political prisoners in Venezuela.

But critics say Maduro has turned the South American OPEC nation into a dictatorship, far surpassing his predecessor Chavez in political repression.

Resuming a more militant stance against Maduro after the collapse of Vatican-mediated talks over the last two months, the opposition-controlled National Assembly restarted a symbolic political trial of the president on Tuesday.

In response to that and further escalating Venezuela's conflict of powers, the government-leaning Supreme Court later issued a ruling saying the legislature remained in "contempt" of the law and all its measures were thus null. —Reuters

## Brazil Senate passes spending cap in win for Temer

BRASILIA — Brazilian senators on Tuesday passed a 20-year public spending ceiling proposed by President Michel Temer to control a ballooning budget deficit, a crucial step in an austerity drive to rescue Brazil's stalled economy.

Approval of the centerpiece of his fiscal plan handed a welcome victory to Temer's scandal-plagued government, which is threatened by corruption accusations and citizens' deep frustration with economic malaise.

The Senate approved the cap by a 53-16 margin, though leftist opponents sought to delay the vote as long as possible.

Temer said the move to limit spending by constitutional amendment was unprecedented and will be followed by an equally unpopular reform of Brazil's generous pension system.

"You need courage to govern and we have courage," he said.

Senators must still vote on some details of the bill,

such as requests to exempt education and health spending from the cap, which are expected to be rejected by lawmakers.

Authorities braced for evening protests outside Brazil's Congress, rallies organised by labor unions and left-wing groups opposed to cutbacks. They say cuts will undermine education and health services and will hurt Brazil's poor.

Police frisked young men and women as they arrived at Brasilia's ministry-lined esplanade and seized pen knives, slings and marbles used by protesters to unbalance police horses.

The unpopular measure limits the growth of federal government spending to the rate of inflation for 20 years, with a presidential review after a decade. It cleared the Senate on a 61-14 vote in the first of two votes on 29 November.

Temer's economic team, headed by Finance Minister Henrique Meirelles, says the spending cap is vital to putting overdrawn

government accounts in order and recovering business confidence and the investment grade credit rating Brazil lost last year.

A Datafolha poll on Tuesday showed that 60 per cent of Brazilians are against the cap. The survey, published by the *Folha de S.Paulo* newspaper, said opposition was strongest among young people, those with higher education and lower-income Brazilians, while the rich tend to sup-

port it. Temer's government has already sent Congress a proposal to reform Brazil's costly pension system, which some economists say is needed to restore fiscal balance. They say the spending cap alone will not fix it. Pension reform is expected to face fierce opposition next year as unemployment rises and the country's worst slump since the 1930s threatens to stretch into a third year. —Reuters



General view of Brazil's Senate during a session of voting on a constitutional amendment, known as PEC 55, that limits public spending, in Brasilia, Brazil, on 13 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

### "NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF THE CITY GOLF RESORT FOR PAYMENT OF MONTHLY FEES"

1. It is found out that some members (Myanmars / Foreigners) of the City Golf Resort, Yangon City Development Committee, have failed to pay their monthly fees for various reasons.
2. According to paragraph (9) of the rules and regulations of the City Golf Resort, those members (Myanmars / Foreigners) who fail to pay their monthly fees for a period of one year and over shall cease to be a member of the Resort, and so they are intimated to come and clear their outstanding dues by 31-1-2017 at the latest.

**General Manager  
City Golf Resort**

## New Italian PM wins first confidence vote, pledges to support banks

ROME — Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni won an initial vote of confidence in the lower house of parliament on Tuesday after laying out a limited programme for his new government, which might only survive a few months.

Gentiloni has taken over from former premier Matteo Renzi, who resigned last week after Italians rejected his proposed

reform of the constitution in a referendum.

Making his maiden speech to parliament in his new role, the softly spoken Gentiloni said he was prepared to support Italy's ailing banks and demanded more help from the European Union in coping with an influx of migrants.

"I want to say very clearly that the government ... is ready to inter-

vene in order to guarantee the stability of banks and the savings of our citizens," he told the Chamber of Deputies, a day after being sworn in by President Sergio Mattarella.

To take office, he needs to win votes of confidence in both houses of parliament and easily won the first in the lower chamber by 368 to 105. —Reuters

# Arctic air chills parts of US Great Plains, Midwest

CHICAGO — A biting cold blast of arctic air gripped the northern Great Plains and parts of the Midwest on Tuesday, bringing dangerous wind chills and the threat of frostbite, weather officials said.

The arctic air mass was expected to create wind chills of lower than minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 29 degrees Celsius) over the coming days in the Northern Plains, a region that includes Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, according to the National Weather Service.

“Ran into a guy at the gas station who thought his journey to Alaska had finally ended...I regrettably informed him that the weather is deceiving and this is only North Dakota,” Facebook user Jason McMillan said in a post on Tuesday.

By the end of the week, the cold air is expected to travel through the Midwest into the mid-Atlantic and

Northeast states, the NWS forecast said.

Forecasters have said the cold weather snap could be similar to the life-threatening lows that afflicted some US regions in 2014 due to the polar vortex. The phenomenon is a spinning mass of cold air over the North Pole that delivers icy air into the mid-latitudes during the winter whenever the vortex weakens and splits up.

In Fargo, North Dakota, which was expected to experience some of the coldest temperatures among US cities from the latest chill, it was 7 degrees F (-14 C) on Tuesday afternoon.

With the wind chill, temperatures in the Fargo area on Tuesday could feel like minus 25 to minus 35 degrees F (minus 32 degrees to minus 37 C), according to the NWS.

“Brutal wind chills this morning with values dropping below -30. Cov-

er up and layer up!” Fargo meteorologist Lisa Green said on Twitter. In those conditions, frostbite — an injury caused by freezing body tissue — can afflict exposed skin within minutes, according to the NWS.

In west central and northwest Minnesota, the NWS warned of a wind chill similar to those in Fargo. It was around 19 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 7 C) on Tuesday morning in Chicago, but the temperature was expected to drop to around 8 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 13 C) on Thursday.

The Detroit and Pontiac, Michigan, office of the NWS said that the air mass would be the coldest to hit the area since February 2015.

The NWS’s national advisory said heavy snow this week could fall in parts of northern Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York state.—*Reuters*

# 600 million yen worth of gold bars stolen by fake police officers

FUKUOKA — Investigative sources said Wednesday that gold bars worth 600 million yen (\$5.2 million) were stolen in broad daylight by men disguised as police officers on a street in Fukuoka city in southwestern Japan sometime around this summer.

According to the sources, several men were approached by the fake police officers near JR Hakata Station as they were taking the ingots to a cash-for-gold store.

The gold bars weighing more than 100 kilograms were in attache cases, and the men disguised as police officers pretended to inspect them as part of an investigation into a smuggling case before escaping with the valuables by car.

As security camera footage near the scene showed the men carrying the cases, the police are analyzing other footage in the wider area to see if any suspicious people can be seen around the time the



Photo taken on 14 December 2016, shows JR Hakata train station in Fukuoka, southwestern Japan. Gold bars worth 600 million yen (\$5 million) were stolen near the station by men disguised as police officers sometime around the spring of 2016, according to investigative sources. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

theft took place, the sources said.

The victims told police that they were making money by reselling precious metals. They also said they had purchased the gold bars “the day before” the incident, according to the sources.

Police suspect that the theft could be an organized crime because the suspects seem to have known beforehand that the gold bars

were going to be sold. The police have also found fake uniforms believed to have been worn by the suspects in neighbouring Yamaguchi Prefecture.

According to the Finance Ministry, the number of unlawful gold import cases has been increasing amid a rise in gold prices. In the year from July 2015, customs authorities in Japan exposed a record 294 smuggling cases.—*Kyodo News*

# Okinawa residents shocked, outraged by Osprey crash-landing

NAHA, (Japan) — Residents of Okinawa voiced shock and outrage Wednesday after a US Marine Corps’ MV-22 Osprey crash-landed in the sea off the southern Japan island prefecture the night before.

The first major accident involving the tilt-rotor transport aircraft in Japan reinforced a view held by many locals that the aircraft is accident-prone.

It also increased their resentment toward the central government for forcing the prefecture to continue bearing the heavy burden of hosting the bulk of US military facilities in Japan.

“Although it occurred at sea, it’s really scary thinking it could have fallen on where we are living,” said Yuri Soma, 39, who has been involved in protests against the relocation of the Marine’s Air Station Futenma in Ginowan, where dozens of the aircraft have been deployed, to Nago, both in Okinawa.

“I only have anger,” a senior official of the city of Nago said.

“This kind of accident

occurs because the Japanese government overloads Okinawa with bases. I wonder how much longer the state will continue to avoid looking at Okinawa’s situation,” the official said.

The relocation plan has been at the heart of political and legal wrangling between the state and the prefectural governments as the latter seeks to relocate the base outside the prefecture.

The accident is “really outrageous,” Okinawa Gov. Takeshi Onaga told reporters.

Takuma Higashionna, a Nago city assembly member and a member of a civic group opposing helicopter base construction in the prefecture, said the Ospreys “should not be flying to begin with” as previous accidents have indicated the Osprey is a “faulty aircraft.”

He said there is no excuse in the fact that it crash-landed at sea, adding he is concerned that if the base is relocated to Nago, it could cause greater problems.—*Kyodo News*

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BANDA VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BANDA VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.12.2016 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MCC HA LONG VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MCC HA LONG VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.12.2016 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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT  
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY  
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO ( 134 )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO ( 134 ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.12.2016 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.

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

Phone No: 2301185

## Big 'Rogue One' box office expected despite mixed reviews, boycott calls

LOS ANGELES — The latest entry in the "Star Wars" franchise divided film critics on Tuesday, but is expected to bring in more than \$300 million (£236.8 million) at the global box office this weekend despite a social media boycott campaign over its perceived political slant.

Reviewers either loved or hated Disney's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story." Rolling Stone magazine praised its "emotional, loopy, let's-put-on-a-show spirit that made us fall in love with the original trilogy," but the New Yorker called it "lobotomised and depersonalised."

"Rogue One" arrives in theaters a year after the main cast of the original 1977 film reunited for "The Force Awakens," which went on to take more than \$2 billion at the box office.

Box office analysts expect "Rogue One," which starts its worldwide rollout on Wednesday, to do smaller business overall but to gross a bumper \$300-\$350 mil-

lion on its opening weekend.

The box office predictions have not changed since a boycott campaign, #DumpStarWars, gained steam on Twitter with claims that "Rogue One" contains scenes that are anti-US President-elect Donald Trump and portray the galactic Empire in "Star Wars" as a white supremacist organisation.

"Rogue One" stars Felicity Jones at the head of a brand new cast and follows a group of rebels who band together to fight the evil Darth Vader's plans for intergalactic domination. It is a standalone prequel to the 1977 film "A New Hope."

Asked about the social media claims, Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger told The Hollywood Reporter last weekend that there



Actors Mads Mikkelsen, Riz Ahmed, Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Alan Tudyk and Donnie Yen (L to R) arrive at the world premiere of the film "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" in Hollywood, California, US, on 10 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

were "no political statements" in the movie.

"Quite frankly, it's silly," Iger said of #DumpStarWars. "I have no reaction to (this) story at all." Trump supporter Jack Posobiec, one of the people behind #DumpStarWars, said in a livestream on Periscope on Monday, "Why would you give your money to people who hate

you?... Why do you want to take your kids to something that will influence them in a way to hate the president?"

"Rogue One" reviews on Tuesday did not mention any political bias and the movie has already grabbed the highest advance ticket sales this year, US online ticket seller Fandango said. Fandango said it had sold "hundreds of thousands of

tickets" in the first few minutes after they went on sale on 28 November. It does not release ticket sale totals.

Variety film critic Peter Debruge said that for stalwart "Star Wars" fans, "Rogue One" is "the prequel they've always wanted," while Peter Bradshaw at Britain's *Guardian* newspaper called it an "exhilarating, good-natured, enjoyable adventure."—Reuters

## Kanye West meets with Trump to discuss 'multicultural issues'

NEW YORK — Kanye West met Republican President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday to discuss what he said were "multicultural issues" including bullying, education and violence.

West's meeting at Manhattan's Trump Tower sent social media into a frenzy and fueled speculation about a possible performance at Trump's 20 January inauguration or an informal administration role for the rapper.

West, 39, said on Twitter he had wanted to meet Trump "to discuss multicultural issues."

"These issues included bullying, supporting teachers, modernizing curriculums, and violence in Chicago," tweeted the singer who was raised in Chicago. "I feel it is important to have a direct line of communication with our future President if we truly want change." The 15-minute meeting was the first major outing by West and generated his first tweets since he was released on 30 November after a week in a Los Angeles psychiatric hospital with an unexplained condition. It quickly became the top trending topic on Twitter.

The "Jesus Walks" singer again teased the prospect of running for president himself, adding a last tweet that said simply #2024. Last year, West declared he was planning to run in 2020, but has given no details.

Asked about the purpose of the meeting, Trump told reporters



afterward: "Friends, just friends. He's a good man. Long time. Friends for a long time."

Trump added that the two had "discussed life."

West, sporting a new blond hairdo, was without his wife, reality television star Kim Kardashian. He made headlines in November when he was booed at a concert for declaring his support for Trump, although he said he had not voted in the 8 November presidential election.

E! News, whose E! network broadcasts reality show "Keeping Up With the Kardashians," said earlier that Trump reached out to West. "Trump thinks he's a great role model when it comes to business," E! quoted a source close to the rapper as saying. Asked by reporters whether he was considering performing at the inau-

guration, West did not respond. Music stars including Beyonce, Katy Perry and Bruce Springsteen backed Democrat Hillary Clinton in the election and no celebrities have yet been announced as taking part in the inauguration, although country singer Garth Brooks is in discussions to perform. West was hospitalised last month following a series of rants and after he abruptly canceled the rest of his US tour. No official explanation has been given about his condition, which was initially attributed to exhaustion.—Reuters

## Beckham proud of son's charity work

NEW YORK — Former England soccer captain David Beckham said he was surprised and proud that his 11-year-old son, Cruz, had taken it upon himself to raise money for charity by releasing a Christmas single.

Cruz Beckham followed in the musical footsteps of his mum, fashion designer and former Spice Girl Victoria, by releasing "If Everyday Was Christmas" last week, with all proceeds from the single going to British children's charity, Make Some Noise. "He's been listening to his dad and his mum and saying how important it is to help others," David Beckham, a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ambassador, said in New York on Monday at a 70th anniversary celebration for the charity. "I was quite amazed by that because he's 11 years old and to realise how important it is to give back at that age is something special."—Reuters



David Beckham. PHOTO: REUTERS

## South American pole dancing champions crowned in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES — Pole dancers from Argentina and Venezuela displayed a skillful blend of poise and athleticism to be crowned South American champions in Buenos Aires on the weekend.

Maria Eugenia Massei

from Argentina and Venezuelan Jose Garcia Lozada won the female and male categories respectively, and will compete in the World Pole Sports Championships in the Netherlands next year.

"I have been working

all year to be able to successfully qualify again for the international championship," Massei said. "And so I am very, very happy to have this opportunity."

About 250 contestants from 11 countries participated in the event, which

aims to promote pole dancing as a serious sport, rather than a pastime associated with nightclubs and strip-tease. The International Pole Sports Federation hopes the event will one day be included in the Olympic Games.—Reuters

## National treasure shamisen player Tsuruzawa dies at 103

OSAKA — Shamisen player Tsuruzawa Tomoji, designated as a human national treasure, died of heart failure Tuesday at her home in Minamiawaji, Hyogo Prefecture, her family said. She was 103.

Tsuruzawa was a maestra shamisen player of Awaji Ningyo Joruri, a traditional Japanese puppet show based in Awaji Island in the prefecture, western Japan. Ningyo joruri, also known as bunraku, combines chanting and shamisen playing with puppetry, and its history goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Born on the island, Tsuruzawa, whose real name was Kimiko Miyazaki, trained under renowned shamisen master Tsuruzawa Tomojiro VI (1984-1951) since before World War II. While occasionally performing



Photo taken in May 1998 shows shamisen player Tsuruzawa Tomoji, designated as a human national treasure. Tsuruzawa died of heart failure at her home in Minamiawaji, Hyogo Prefecture, on 13 December, 2016, at the age of 103. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

abroad, she made efforts to foster many young shamisen players until her last years. Tsuruzawa was designated as a human national treasure in 1998.—Kyodo News

## Democracy sausage' wins Australia's word of the year



A boy looks at a grilling tray with just one sausage remaining after a vendor sold out of 'democracy sausage' sandwiches outside a polling station at Moonee Ponds West Primary School in Melbourne, on 2 July 2016 on Australia's federal election day. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — 'Democracy sausage' was named Australia's word of the year on Wednesday after the term was embraced at this year's national election to describe the tradition of grilling sausages on barbecues for hungry voters at polling booths.

Australia's National Dictionary Centre, which chooses the year's most prominent word, said 'de-

mocracy sausage' emerged victorious after it gained a large exposure on social media during the 2 July election.

"Democracy sausage is, we think, pretty much the best thing to come out of the federal election, we reckon it won the popular vote,"

Australian National Dictionary editor and researcher Julia Robinson told Reuters by

telephone from the nation's capital Canberra. The dictionary defines 'democracy sausage' as "a barbecued sausage served on a slice of bread, bought at a polling booth sausage sizzle on election day".

It beat out shortlisted contenders including "shoey," which is the act of drinking alcohol from a shoe, made popular by

Australian Formula 1 driver Daniel Ricciardo, and "smashed avo", which is short for the popular breakfast of smashed avocado on bread or toast. "Democracy sausage" will be added to the next edition of Australia's national dictionary, which was last published in August and contains 16,000 uniquely Aussie words, Robinson said.—Reuters

## JK Rowling illustrated manuscript sells for \$467,000 at auction



A copy of 'The Tales of Beedle the Bard', handwritten and illustrated by Harry Potter author JK Rowling, is displayed at Sotheby's auction house in London, Britain, on 8 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — A rare book hand-written and illustrated by "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling sold for \$467,000 at auction in London on Tuesday, at the lower end of its estimated price range.

"The Tales of Beedle the Bard" is one of six copies that Rowling made as presents to those who helped bring her magical world of wizards and witches to life.

The copy sold on Tuesday, bound in brown Morocco leather and adorned with silver, was presented to editor Barry Cunningham, who published Rowling's spell-binding debut, "Harry Pot-

ter and the Philosopher's Stone", and carries a personal dedication from her.

The volume of five wizarding fairy tales — left to Hermione Granger by Albus Dumbledore in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" —

had a price estimate of 300,000-500,000 pounds (\$380,000-634,000). Sotheby's auction house said in a statement that it had been sold for 368,750 pounds (\$467,400) to an anonymous telephone bidder. A seventh copy, made for an auction in 2007 to raise money for the author's charity, Lumos, raised 1.95 million pounds.—Reuters

### mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(15-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 16-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Shwe Bo Township Bearing Five Names
08:03	Am	News
08:25	Am	A Life In The Ring
08:41	Am	Development Momentum of Sittway
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	"Myanmar's Traditions and Culture"
		Myanmar's Secret Beautifier
09:49	Am	Amazing: May Phoo Han
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (EP-3)(Part-1)
10:49	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (EP-3) (Part-2)

(11:00 Am~03:00 Pm) -Wednesday 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
07:27	Pm	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea ( Ep- II )
07:41	Pm	International Dances in Myanmar
08:03	Pm	News
08:25	Pm	Innovative Handiworks Based on The Art of Line Drawing
08:43	Pm	Lady Pilot
08:54	Pm	Young Talents: Animator Swan Thura Htun

(11:00Pm ~ 03:00Am) - WednesdayRepeat (07:0Am ~ 11:00Am)  
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

# Williams lifts Everton as Arsenal blow chance

LONDON — Ashley Williams powered home a towering header in the 86<sup>th</sup> minute as Everton fought back to claim a 2-1 win over Arsenal as the title hopefuls blew the chance to return to the Premier League summit on Tuesday.

It was the first league defeat for Arsene Wenger's men since they lost to Liverpool on the opening day of the season and their first on the road since March.

More importantly, it handed Chelsea the chance to go six points clear at the top when they visit bottom club Sunderland on Wednesday.

It looked like business as usual for the visitors, who have been scoring freely in recent weeks, when Alexis Sanchez netted his 12<sup>th</sup> league goal of the season with a deflected free kick after 20 minutes.

Everton though warmed to the task, levelling through Seamus Coleman's header a minute before halftime.

With the seconds ticking away towards the end, Williams rose high to nod Ross Barkley's corner into the net for his first Everton goal, securing the team's first win since the end of October. It moved Everton up to seventh in the table and offered



Arsenal's Petr Cech in action during Premier League at Goodison Park, on 13 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

some cheer to manager Ronald Koeman.

"We showed unbelievable spirit to come back and we deserved the win," the Dutchman told BT Sport.

Everton struggled for confidence in the early stages as they retreated, inviting Arsenal to attack.

Francis Coquelin was brought down on the edge of the area and Sanchez stepped up to hit a tame free kick that looked to be covered by Maarten Stekelenburg until it deflected off Williams and beat the keeper's outstretched hand.

The goal put Sanchez joint top of the league's scoring charts with Chelsea's Diego Costa.

It also seemed to spark life into the hosts who gradually came out of their shells with Aaron Lennon slicing an effort wide before Coleman levelled with a glancing header from Leighton Baines' cross.

Mesut Ozil blasted a good chance over for Arsenal at the start of the second half but Everton were on top and pushing for the winner when Williams sent Goodison Park wild.

In a frenetic finale, Everton defender Phil Jagielka was sent off for a second booking in the fourth minute of stoppage time.

Arsenal also had two efforts cleared off the line and somehow prevented the home team grabbing a third goal when keeper Petr Cech was caught upfield.—Reuters

## Lively Bournemouth send Leicester back into doldrums

LONDON — English champions Leicester City failed to continue their mini-revival after a clinical finish by Bournemouth's Marc Pugh condemned them to a 1-0 away defeat in a scrappy Premier League clash on Tuesday.

The outcome kept 14<sup>th</sup>-placed Leicester close to the relegation zone on 16 points, four above the bottom three who play their games in hand on Wednesday, and was a setback after Saturday's 4-2 home win over fourth-placed Manchester City.

Bournemouth, who kept the visitors on the back foot for much of the contest, grabbed

a 34<sup>th</sup>-minute winner when Pugh swept in a rebound from 13 metres after Leicester keeper Ron-Robert Zieler did well to parry a close range shot by Benik Afobe.

Leicester had missed an early chance in the seventh minute when striker Jamie Vardy, who scored a hat-trick against City, rounded keeper Artur Boruc with a heavy first touch and saw his harmless shot from a tight angle blocked by a defender.

Boruc came to the hosts' rescue in the 90<sup>th</sup> minute when he blocked a close-range shot by substitute Leonardo Ulloa to help seal the points as Bournemouth moved up to eighth on 21 points.—Reuters



Bournemouth's Marc Pugh. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Chelsea and Man City fined for fracas

LONDON — Chelsea and Manchester City have been fined 100,000 pounds and 35,000 pounds respectively for failing to control their players during a Premier League encounter on 3 December, the FA said on Tuesday.

City striker Sergio Agueiro's reckless tackle on Chelsea defender David Luiz in stoppage time sparked a melee at the Etihad Stadium, with players and

coaching staff from both teams involved in ugly scenes.

Aguero and team mate Fernandinho were sent off and are serving four and three-game bans respectively.

"The two clubs were charged for failing to ensure their players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion and/or refrained from provocative behaviour," the FA said in a statement. League leaders Chelsea,

who have claimed nine successive victories to top the table by three points from Arsenal, won the game 3-1.

Their fine is heavier than City's because of previous disciplinary indiscretions.

City have fallen off the pace in recent weeks and are seven points adrift of Chelsea in fourth place following Saturday's 4-2 defeat at champions Leicester City.—Reuters

## Murray, Kerber named ITF players of the year



Great Britain's Andy Murray. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Briton Andy Murray and Germany's Angelique Kerber were named ITF World Champions on Tuesday, capping stellar years for the men's and women's world number ones.

Murray, whose brother Jamie was named doubles World Champion along with Brazil's Bruno Soares, won Wimbledon in July before becoming the first player to win two Olympic singles gold medals when he retained his crown in Rio de Janeiro in August.

He won nine titles in a milestone year that ended with him

beating rival Novak Djokovic to win the ATP Tour Finals and seal the year-end rankings top spot.

"It means a lot to me to be named ITF World Champion. I have had such a memorable year," Murray said in a statement.

Kerber enjoyed an equally impressive season, winning the Australian and U.S. Open titles as well as an Olympic silver medal in Rio.

She becomes the first German to win the award since Steffi Graf claimed the last of her seven in 1996.—Reuters

## Messi meets Afghan boy famed for plastic bag shirt

DOHA — A six-year-old Afghan boy, who shot to Internet fame this year by sporting a Lionel Messi shirt made out of a plastic bag, fulfilled his dreams on Tuesday by meeting the Argentine soccer great.

Murtaza Ahmadi, from Ghazni province in rural eastern Afghanistan, accompanied Messi on to the field in Qatar before a friendly match between Barcelona and Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli in Doha.

Murtaza also joined the Barcelona team photograph and placed the ball on the centre circle before running back to Messi's side, with the referee having to take the grinning boy from the field. Murtaza's picture went viral in January when his family, lacking the money to buy the Argentina shirt he wanted, fashioned a shirt for him from a blue and white plastic bag with "Messi 10" scrawled on the back. In February, he received Argentina and Barcelona shirts in a package, along with a ball, from five-times world player of the year Messi.—Reuters



Murtaza Ahmadi, an Afghan boy, shows a shirt signed by Lionel Messi. PHOTO: REUTERS