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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addresses the meeting of the Joint Coordination Body for Peace Process Funding. PHOTO: MNA

JCB for Peace Process Funding needs to ensure transparency, accountability

THE peace process should not be hindered due to the insufficiency of funds, and allocation of funds is needed to be in line with the priority sectors, said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday.

The State Counsellor made this remark at the meeting of the Joint Coordination Body for Peace Process Funding (JCB) held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon, stressing the importance of ensuring transparency and minimizing loss and wastage when the JCB manages international assistance.

The meeting focused on the formation of working committees and offices based on the

duties and responsibilities of the JCB, and approving directives, rules and regulations for the urgent needs of the JCB.

The JCB is headed by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, with eight representatives, including herself, from the government and eight representatives from both signatories and non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

Regarding the allocation of funds for peace provided by international donors, the JCB selected four sectors: the Ceasefire Sector, the Negotiation and Dialogue Sector, the Peace Supporting Development Sector and Peace making process of the National Reconciliation and Peace



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. PHOTO: MNA

Centre-NPRC Sector.

Yesterday's meeting was attended by Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, Chairman of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win, Lt-Gen Yar Pyai, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Union Minister

Dr Win Myat Aye, Chairperson of the Ethnic Affairs Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw Daw Shilar Nan Taung, Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Saw Tin Win and representatives of the signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, General Secretary of KNU, U Sai Hlyan (RCSS-SSA), Salai Htalar Hay (General Secretary of CNF) and U Myo Win, ABSDF, while representatives of the non-signatories to the NCA include U San Law, Head of the External Relations Department of Wa Special Region-2, U Kham Maung, Peace and Unity Committee of the Special Region-4, Mongla.—*Myanmar News Agency*

By summer, no more power cuts in Yangon: Regional minister

Ko Moe

ELECTRICITY will be fully supplied to the Yangon Region by summer, the Yangon Region Electric Power, Industry and Transportation Minister Daw Nilar Kyaw said.

“We are taking two measures to supply sufficient electricity to Yangon Region during the summer and sufficiently means full voltage and uninterrupted power supply,” she said.

A 300-megawatt power station is being built in Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township in the region and a power station vessel capable of generating 300-megawatts will be docked at Thilawa Terminal to supply electricity to the region.

Being the commercial hub of the country, electricity consumption in the region has increased year by year.

The regional minister was responding to the question raised at the regional legislature on Tuesday.

In addition to power generation, it is also necessary to distribute the electricity supply efficiently, the regional minister added, as the region faces a 13.5 per cent power loss along its power grids.

The regional minister also added that charges for electricity in the region are so cheap that the Ministry of Electric Power and Energy faced losses of Ks470 billion each year. With the two new power generation facilities, the ministry will suffer a loss of Ks900 billion this year.

Although the government has been exerting efforts to supply electricity to the region, there are still many urban and rural areas where electricity is not available.



သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမာန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Vice President and wife attend Christmas festival, give thanks to God and welcomes new year

Vice President U Henry Van Thio and wife attended a Christmas ceremony to give thanks to God and to welcome the New Year in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday organised by the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA).

Priests read the bible and gave prayers of good wishes as the congregation sang hymns.

Afterwards, a Christmas greeting message sent by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was read aloud.

Union Minister for Religious

Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko extended greetings and vocalists sang hymns before a Christmas sermon was delivered by Dr CK No Chum.

Rev U Saw Shwe Lin sent out good wishes to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the people. Vice President U Henry Van Thio, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than, Union ministers and members of the MECA had photos taken together before the dinner.

— Myanmar News Agency



Vice President U Henry Van Thio, Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and dignitaries pose for a group photo at the Christmas festival organized by MECA. PHOTO: MNA

FDA inspects unregistered foodstuff

FOOD and Drug Administration-FDA inspected foodstuff in the markets in Yangon yesterday to verify safety measures.

The safety measures were carried out by officials of the department in Nyung Bin Lay Market, San Pya Market and Insein Market. The operation focused on checking of unregistered drinking water brands and prohibited products including chili powder, medicines, and cosmetics. The officials took sample packages of chili powder from shops at the Nyaung Bin Lay market to check safety practices

of producing the powder. There's no unregistered drinking water brand at the market, according to findings by the FDA. However, for the checking of chili powder, the FDA took sample packs from shops in order to test for safety.

Dr Ohnmar Soe Win, Deputy Director (Food) of the FDA (Yangon) called on producers to carry out good practices in production process. The move is a collaborative effort of Yangon City Development Committee, Myanmar Police Force, as well as experts from the Ministry of Commerce.— Kay Khaing

Luyechun (1964-88) Association holds annual conference



Dr Tin Myo Win addresses the annual conference of Luyechun (1964-88) Association in Yangon. PHOTO: YE HTUT

OUTSTANDING students or Luyechun (1964-88) Association held its annual conference at the University of Medicine-1 in Yangon yesterday, with the opening address by Dr Tin Myo Win, President of the Panel of Chairmen of the conference.

On the occasion, on behalf of Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Sein Win, Maj Zaw Win Naing (Retd) presented donation amounting to K7.2 million for a Luyechun student who won a scholarship of the University of Medicine through Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint.

Afterwards, Dr Tin Tun Oo donated K 2 million for a Luyechun free clinic through Dr Pe Thet Khin, a Pediatrician.

The association hosted its annual dinner on the lawn of the university with greetings by Union Minister for Information Dr

Pe Myint and Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe.

At the dinner, U Nyo Myint, Senior Managing Director of KBZ Group of Companies, and wife handed over K 50 million donated by Kanbawza Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation to the free clinic through Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Zin Maung and wife Dr Khin Than Aye.

Afterwards, Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myo Zaw Thein donated K1 million; U Sein Wan and wife Daw Mizu Tun, an Ultra-Sound Machine worth K 11.4 million; Daw Nyunt Yin Win, K10 million; Aungmyinthu Company, K10 million to the free clinic through the responsible personnel of the association.— Yi Yi Myint

Arms, ammo, stimulants seized at Point 768



Government troops celebrate after conquering Point 768. PHOTO: MNA

Ten assorted guns, including two 60mm long-range guns, ammunition and 10,000 WY-stimulant tablets and corpses of the enemy were discovered yesterday morning at Point 768 (Lai Hpawng)

and surrounding minor camps while Tatmadaw columns were conducting area clearance operations.

When Tatmadaw attacked Point 768 and surrounding minor camps, there were

casualties on the part of officers and other ranks. Seven weapons were also lost in the fights. Tatmadaw columns are still conducting area clearance operations around there.— Myanmar News Agency

Arms, ammunition seized in Mongko



One M21 rifle, one cartridge and twenty-one bullets were seized from inside a roadside bush near Mongko at about 7:30 am when Tatmadaw columns were conducting area clearance operations near Mongko in northern Shan State.

Later in the afternoon, Tatmadaw columns seized one pistol, 533 assorted bullets, two RPG bombs, two medium machine-gun ammunition belts, two hand-grenades and one walkie-talkie inside a deserted house in Ward 6 in Mongko Township while conducting area clearance operations.— Myanmar News Agency



Ammunition seized in Mongko. PHOTO: MNA

Message of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor, on the occasion of the Kayin National New Year Day, 29 December

1. I pray to God for all of you living nationwide and worldwide to be blessed with goodness and virtues on this auspicious day of Kayin New Year which falls on today — 2756 Thalay Htaing Khone Pho 1st Waxing of Pyatho.

2. The most valued tradition of the Union, which consists of

many ethnic peoples, is their respective cultures of lovable variety. Observance and remembrance of these nice cultures and traditions will uplift our Union's Spirit and make our strength greater.

3. Since time immemorial, families have been celebrating the occasion of eating their first

crop of the harvest. The Kayin New Year Festival can be said to have descended from this tradition. Thus, the time of transition into a new year is the one for enjoying the possession of fruits brought about by the efforts in the previous year. That is, it is the festival that makes the hope of getting benefits through our

strenuous efforts and enthusiasm one day, survive.

4. Not only for our hope of extinguishing the flames of our 60-year-long civil war after gaining Independence in the near future in order to survive, but also for our expectations to come into existence. Let us cultivate the practice of mutual re-

spect and understanding among our brethren nationals. We hope the saplings of peace planted this year will bring forth "Peace across the Nation" as the first crop harvest Festival next year. This is the special Kayin National New Year Day Message I send to you today.—(Unofficial translation by GNLM)

70 days since the outbreak of Maungtaw armed attacks

Tim Maung Lwin

THE quiet roads after the 9 October armed attacks are becoming crammed full of cars, motorcycles, tri-shaws and pedestrians again. These days, shops that used to operate half of the day now run their business until the evening. Likewise, government and private banks in town are resuming their daily routine, so the banks are crowded with people who will withdraw and remit money. These were scenes found in Maungtaw in the last week of December.

Preparation for the security of the area

After the armed attacks, forces comprising government troops and border guards were confronted with terrorists while launching area clearance operations. After a series of skirmishes, the attacks became fewer and fewer. Now the combined forces continue their area clearance operations for the peace, stability and security of the area.

It is learnt that border security guards are arresting those suspected of involvement in the armed attacks, mapping villages in order to inhibit travel, checking populations listed in family registration certificates and taking photos for protection from illegal immigration, under the aegis of border guard control forces.

"Data collection is routinely done annually. That is the work of checking as to whether there are those who emigrate and immigrate in the area. Immigration department's personnel prevent illegal immigration by mapping, registration of buildings, collecting population data and taking family photos. For doing so, facts and figures such as deaths, births, households and population will be known in detail," said Police Brigadier General Thura San Lwin,

Agriculture and Business

The main business in the Maungtaw region is agriculture.

Starting from the middle of November, monsoon paddies could be harvested due to the cessation of armed attacks. In some areas, there were some delays for these attacks, and the harvest was being done until now. In some areas, summer crops are being planted in harvested fields, as usual.

As shops in the town of Maungtaw were reopened, some errand workers who were unemployed for over two months are now returning to work without worries. Yet, some people in the town and nearby villages were still worried for their routines of fishing, working in prawn breeding ponds and fetching firewood, it is learnt.

"We found it difficult for our villagers to earn a living, to some extent. That is because we dare not go out for work because of worries," said Daw Khin Hla, a resident of Yemyettaung village.

Border Trade

Due to the situations of border area's security, routine work of border trade in Maungtaw was



Locals walk in a street in the market area in Maungtaw as the situation returns to normalcy in the town. PHOTO: MAUNG HMWE

suspended since November 3, the State suffered a great loss of income from the border trade, as did dealers of border trade, it is learnt.

U Khin Kyaw Myint, in charge of the camp, department of Maungtaw Border Trade said, "On November 1 and 2 after the armed attack border trade was managed to operate. But starting from November 3, trade came to a close because of the border situation. During the period of two opening days, trade worth US\$50,000 was done against its November target \$400,000."

The December target was \$700,000 but closure from December 1 to December 23 did not make the target attainable.

Resumption of Trade

On December 24, Maungtaw Border Trade resumed operation, and some export commodities started to be exported to Bangladesh. Those who were dealing in trade revived their businesses. It is learnt that prawns and dried fish are being exported, but there are still no imports into Myanmar.

"In consultation with responsible persons, we managed to start the border trade as of December 24. On December 24, prawns and dried fish worth US\$80,000 was exported, and those commodities worth US\$100,000-\$200,000 in total in two days," a responsible official of the Maungtaw border trade zone said.

One-week border pass visas are not issued yet, and thus that there are some in-

convenience for dealers and traders, it is learnt.

Education and Health

Over 300 State Primary, Middle & High Schools were reopened. That teachers assigned to these schools were sent to their respective posts, it is learnt. The Government of the State granted staff's salaries for October, November and December to enjoy two times of their normal pay. It is a kind of tonic for staff, but it was not allowed for temporary staff, so they have found it difficult, it was learnt.

Concerning health care, medical doctors and nurses from hospitals and clinic centres are providing medical treatment regardless of race and religion.

Aid Being Supported:

The main challenge for villages in northern and southern part of Maungtaw township is the problem of eking out a living because of their worries about the situation of the area's security. In most of the villages, national ethnics were found as a sparsely populated group. Most of assistance supported by donors from local and international organizations were pots, pans, soap, rice, cooking oil and clothes. Ethnics have been living here and cannot depart their beloved land. I will not forget the words of one resident who told me: "At the time of the outbreak of armed attacks, some abandoned their locations in fear, but we could not depart, so we continue to live here in fear."



Classroom seen alive at a school in Maungtaw. PHOTO: MAUNG HMWE

Construction of stone retaining wall to be completed soon



The almost completed retaining wall of Kyauk Pyu bridge is seen. PHOTO: MYANMAR ALINN

THE construction of a stone retaining wall to strengthen the Kyauk Pyu reinforced concrete bridge will be completed soon. The bridge is near Maw Han village station hospital, Moe Hnyin township, Kachin state.

“The bridge is located on Union Road of Shwebo-Myit-

kyina across Kyauk Pyu Creek. The bridge is 42 feet long, 30 feet wide and nine and a half feet high. Despite completion of the construction of the bridge in 2015-2016, the retaining wall was weakened by water erosion. So the construction of a stone concrete retaining wall will be

built to strengthen the bridge with the supervision of the district road department,” said U Myo Win, a sub-assistant engineer.

Upon completion of the retaining wall, an 18-foot-wide tar path will be paved on both sides of the bridge.—*Myanmar Alinn*

Displaced persons in Hsipaw need longyis

OVER 3,000 people displaced by the ethnic conflicts that occurred near Pan Lon village, Namtu township are badly in need of the longyi in Hsipaw town.

“When we fled from the scene of the conflict, we didn’t bring anything. We were hiding in a paddy field. Currently, we are staying at a monastery in Hsipaw town. So, we don’t think it suitable to wear the short pants,” said U Thar Lu, an internally displaced person from Pan

Thabyay village.

The villagers near Pan Lon village have been taking refuge in the Man San village in Hsipaw and the villages in Namtu. They said they all badly need the nether garments.

“Most of the people are donating food and clothes. But I cannot find the well-wishers who donate the nether garments for both genders. The displaced people really need the longyi and the htameins,” said U Myo, a

volunteer.

There are 673 displaced people living in the Tu Pok monastery, 523 people in Baw Kyo pagoda, 276 people in Thathana, 2,500 in the Taiktit monastery, 159 in Man Kaung monastery and 356 people in Moe Tay village monastery. There are around 1,200 displaced people from Man San village and 1,400 displaced people from Namtu village, it is learnt.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Crime NEWS

Yaba and marijuana seized in Muse and Shwepyithar



Ko Ye alias Soe Win Aung and Ma Hla Hla Tin seen together with seized yaba tablets. PHOTO: MNA

MEMBERS of Anti Drug Squad Unit 22 based in Muse searched a house owned by Ko Ye alias Soe Win Aung in Honar Ward, Muse on Tuesday 27 December and found Ko Ye together with his wife Ma Hla Hla Tin and seized 1320 yaba tablets.

On the same day, a combined team comprising members of Anti Drug Squad Unit 22 based in East District of Yangon searched a house of Khin Maung Htay alias Battery in Mya Wut Yi 2 Street, 10/33 Ward, Shwepyithar Township. Police seized 2 gram of marijuana, 520 yaba tablets and confiscated ks154000 and two hand phones. Police have filed charges against them under the Anti Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

POEM:

Aged Value

Many things which get old
In an antique shop they are sold
Starting from fanciers books
Up to long and rusty hooks
Dusty all, one’s seen better dates
Disdained by a bygone age
Peeling away for someone
They’ll find treasure already done
So next time such desire one occurs
Give thoughts them seeking to inspire.

Yin Nwe Ko (Linn)

New labour force survey to start next month

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population will conduct a new labour force survey next month, targeting over 14,000 households in 780 enumeration areas, according to the ministry.

U Myo Aung, director-general of the department of labour, said the ministry plans to begin the new survey programme on 1 January next year, planning to implement the scheme through a step-by-step approach.

The ministry will collect data for the new survey in the first three months of 2017 for the first time, with plans to continue the study in the last three months of the year for the second time. The report is likely to be announced in December next year.

This is part of the ministry’s concerted efforts to conduct the labour force survey yearly. The ministry issued the Myanmar Labour Force, Child Labour and School-to-Work Transition Survey last year to

provide information on major labour market trends, labour force participation and unemployment rates.

According to the latest survey, the working age population of Myanmar was 33.9 million in 2015, females of whom constituted 54 per cent and males 46 per cent. Rural areas have 71 per cent of the working age population while urban areas have 29 per cent.

Employment totalled 21.8 million, with females accounting for only 43.1 per cent, 38.5 per cent of all persons in employment were wage employees, 3.8 per cent were employers, 45.9 per cent were account workers and 11.8 per cent were contributing family workers.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors employed 51.7 per cent of the working age population, followed by the wholesale and retail trade, car repair, manufacturing, transportation, construction and other service businesses.—200

Telenor to auction 100 desirable mobile numbers

TELENOR Myanmar will hold a public special numbers auction on 19 January in Yangon, with proceeds from the auction to be donated to a local humanitarian project.

The Norwegian telecom operator plans to entertain bids for 100 special numbers in popular variations like (0)976 6666666, (0)976 9999999 and (0)976 5555555, and others with similar numerical patterns at reserve bidding prices beginning at Ks5 million for seven and eight repeated numbers and Ks3 million for the rest.

“It is our vision to provide the power of digital communication, enabling everyone to improve their lives and build societies and secure a better future for all,” said Joslin E Myrthong, Chief Marketing Officer at Telenor Myanmar.

As part of its Corporate Responsibility initiatives, Telenor

holds special numbers auctions to act as a platform to generate donations for various social organisations, including orphanages and monastic schools.

The profits of this auction will go to Happy Haven Humanitarian Project (Thukhayekmyon Youth Development Center), according to the telecoms operator.

The project also aims to provide HIV-positive orphans with parental love and care in a familiar environment. The project takes care of children from one and half years old to 12 years of age who are HIV positive and whose parents are deceased or with one or both parents still living but in no position to provide necessary care and attention. Special consideration is also given to non-orphan HIV-positive children on a case-by-case basis. The project now has 117 children.—GNLM

LOCAL Business

Value of external trade through normal trade declined by over US\$490million

THE value of external trade through normal trade as of 16th December in this fiscal year was down by US\$490.488263million when compared to the same period last year, according to statistics of the commerce ministry.

The value of external trade through sea trade from 1st April to 16th December amounted to US\$13,742.29974million, whereas that of the last fiscal year was \$14,232.788million. In the similar period, the value of external trade through borders was \$4,971.912million which is up from \$4,824.976749million from the previous fiscal year. The decline in normal trade value resulted from the decreases in imports, it is learnt.

The Myanmar export sector relies on natural resources such as forestry products, agriculture products and fishery products. Out of seven export groups, manufacturing goods and minerals export were down from last year. The export values as of 16th December in this fiscal year were \$1,894.677mil from agriculture, \$5.628mil from animal products, \$365.698mil from fisher-



Trucks seen near 105-mile Muse Trade Zone in Muse, northern Shan State. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

ies products, \$681.026mil from minerals, \$166.527mil from forest products, \$3409.629mil from manufacturing goods and \$1199.164mil from other products respectively.

In the fishery export sec-

tor, efforts are being exerted to produce value-added products to get wider access to the highly competitive international market. Additionally, the livestock sector is also being enhanced to provide sufficient consumption

to the local people and boost the export sector. Similarly, efforts are being made to bolster the volume of the manufacturing goods, according to the second five-year National Development Plan.—*Mon Mon*

Three major carmakers to open factories in Yangon

THREE renowned auto companies — Nissan, Suzuki and Ford — will open car factories in the Yangon Region, said an official from the Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association.

Nissan Car Company is slated to open its factory in May, leasing an acre of land in Hlaingthaya Township in Yangon Region while Suzuki Car Company will manufacture auto parts in an old factory owned by the Ministry of Industry, located in South Dagon. Ford Motor Company, based in the US, is reportedly building a factory in East Dagon slated to open in May.

All these three car companies have already received permits to open factories and manufacture auto parts. They will initially produce auto parts and proceed to the manufacturing of entire cars later on, it is learnt.

These brands are already popular in the Yangon auto market. Car parts were previously imported from abroad at a high price. When car parts can be locally manufactured, customers can purchase them at a reasonable price.—*200*

Over Ks2 billion in taxes earned from import of cement from Thailand

GOVERNMENT earned over Ks2 billion in taxes from import of cement from Thailand over the past 8 months. The import of Thai cement was worth US\$ 20.1493 million between April and November, 2016-2017 FY, it is learnt.

The traders will gain even more benefit if they import the Thailand cement from Kawthaung border camp. The imported cement brands are Elephant, Diamond, Inn See, TPI, Tiger, Eagle, SCG. The shipment costs per bag are: Ks600 from Kawthaung to Dawei, Ks700 from Kawthaung to Yangon and Ks1,000 from Yangon to Rakhine state, it is learnt from a shipping agent. Water vessels can carry the cement weighing over 1,000 to 2,000 tonnes. It will take 10 days to transport cement bags from Kawthaung to Yangon. The Kawthaung border trade import reached only US\$ 37.699 million between April and November 2016-2017 financial year, a decline compared to the same period of last year, when the trade value even only US\$ 86.0 million.—*Min Min*

Mogok gem and jewellery businesses faced with difficulty from changes in two main export market

THOSE engaged in Mogok gem and jewellery businesses are reportedly faced with difficulties from a result of changes in two main export markets; India and Thailand.

India withdrew 500 and 1,000 rupee notes in an effort to fight corruption, and Thailand

suspended gem trading after the loss of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. As a result, the market has cooled significantly, said the gem and jewellery merchants.

Currently, new marketable gems flowing into the market have become rare despite many gem mining blocks.

There are over 600 legally permitted mining blocks in Mogok town, with over 600 acres of block. About 160 varieties of gems consisting of rubies, sapphires and precious jewellery are extracted from the mining blocks, it is learnt.

Although the Mandalay gem

market is cool, raw jade stones are selling well in Phakant jade market.

The export value of minerals as of 16th December in this fiscal year slumped by US\$176.983million compared to that of the last fiscal year.—*Ko Khant*

Part of tourism profits should be spent on environment

TOURISM and the environment have a very complex and interdependent relationship. Since the number of tourists has increased, the Taninthayi region's islands are likely to be suffering from the negative impacts by the waste disposal and the sand extraction, according to Fauna & Flora International (FFI).

"Marine tourism needs to be carried out in such a way as not to adversely affect the ecosystem. Some of the income from the tourism businesses should be spent on environmental conservation," said Fauna & Flora International's Myanmar Programme Director, Frank

Momberg.

Local and foreign investors are interested in investing in the Taninthayi region because of the many beautiful natural beaches, famous underwater reefs and interesting culture of the Salon ethnic people. Currently, there are 39 resorts and 47 hotels in Taninthayi region, it is learnt.

The Ministry of Resources and Environmental Conservation has held workshops jointly sponsored by FFI and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) with the aim of effectuating the sustainable development of tourism in Taninthayi region.—*200*



Tourists visit archipelago in Myeik, Taninthayi. PHOTO: HOTEL AND TOURISM

Japanese hail Abe's Pearl Harbour visit, some question lack of apology

TOKYO — Japanese war survivors on Wednesday welcomed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Pearl Harbour to offer condolences for those who died in the 1941 Japanese surprise attack there, although some questioned why the premier did not apologise or mention the state's responsibility for pursuing war.

"Pearl Harbour had been a symbol of the two countries' hatred, but the visit changed it to that of reconciliation and peace," said Shigeaki Mori, 79, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima who researched the fate of 12 American soldiers killed in the US attack.

Mori was hugged by US President Barack Obama during his historic visit to Hiroshima in August ahead of Abe's reciprocal trip to the site in Hawaii on Tuesday local time. "I think Prime Minister Abe must have felt what I felt over the sunken battleship Arizona — that we must never start a war," said Kikuyo



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe give remarks as US President Barack Obama listens at Kilo Pier overlooking the USS Arizona Memorial at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Honolulu, Hawaii, US on 27 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Nakamura, a 92-year-old survivor of the US atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Nakamura has visited the memorial at Pearl Harbour in the past.

Hiroya Sugano, an 83-year-old doctor from Shizuoka among the over 100 people invited to attend the ceremony in Hawaii, said he had long

awaited this moment.

"Only after the repose of souls can we start talks on peace," said Sugano, who has been holding ceremonies for commemorating war dead for years.

"The visit's impact and diplomatic significance was smaller than that of US President Obama visiting Hiroshima,

but it was good that Japan and the United States were able to reaffirm the importance of reconciliation," said Nobuko Kosuge, a modern history professor at Yamanashi Gakuin University, adding it can be used as a guide in pursuing reconciliation within Asia as well. —*Kyodo News*

North Korea's Kim determined to develop nuclear capability by 2017: defector

SEOUL — A high-profile North Korean defector said Tuesday that top leader Kim Jong Un is determined to develop a nuclear weapons capability by next year and would not be dissuaded by economic incentives, South Korean media reported.

Kim is "racing ahead with nuclear development after setting up a plan to develop it at all costs by the end of 2017," Thae Yong Ho told a group of South Korean journalists who cover their country's Unification Ministry, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Thae, 55, who was the No. 2 at the North Korean Embassy in London when he defected with his wife and two sons in July, was appearing before the media for the first time since then. Kim "would never abandon nuclear weapons even with \$1 trillion or \$10 trillion," he said, adding, "It's not a matter of incentives."

Thae suggested that for North Korea, next year is "an opportune time" to push nuclear weapons de-

velopment, considering that South Korea and the United States will have new presidents.

"Due to domestic political procedures, North Korea calculates that South Korea and the US will not be able to take physical or military actions to deter North Korea's nuclear development," he said. In the meantime, he said, North Korea will try to open dialogue with the new administrations in Seoul and Washington with a view to getting them to recognise it as a nuclear state. Thae said Pyongyang intends to continue military provocations and nuclear tests to pressure the South Korean and US governments to shift their sanctions-focused policy lines "into more stability-focused ones." Regarding the role of China, it has "no other option but following what North Korea says" considering the neighboring country's value as a buffer zone between it and US forces stationed on the Korean Peninsula.—*Kyodo News*

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Train derails near Kanpur injuring 61; latest crash to raise concerns

NEW DELHI — A train derailed in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday injuring 61 people, police and rail officials said, the third significant accident in recent months that have raised concern about the safety of the ageing rail network.

The train came off the tracks and crashed near Kanpur early in the morning.

"Our latest assessment is that 61 people got injured in the accident and two sustained grievous injuries," said Anil Kumar Saxena, spokesman for Indian Railways.

The train had just pulled out of the station and its speed was "rather slow", he said.

Television footage from the scene showed mangled, toppled carriages. Two coaches had fallen off a bridge into a small canal while some passengers were seen picking up their luggage from near the tracks.

India's creaking railway system is the world's fourth largest. It runs 11,000 trains a day, including 7,000 passenger trains carrying more than 20 million people.



Rescuers and railway officials stand next to damaged coaches of a passenger train after it derailed near Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, India, on 28 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

But it has a poor safety record, with thousands of people dying every year in derailments, collisions and other accidents.

This was the third accident significant in recent months.

On 20 November, at least 146 people were killed when a train derailed near the same city.

A train rammed into a van taking children to school at a level crossing in north India in July, killing eight of them.

Railways minister Suresh Prabhu has promised to replace old tracks and upgrade safety systems. The government spends more than 90 per cent of the railways' revenues on opera-

tional costs, leaving little for upgrades of the colonial-era system.

Some analysts estimate the railways need 20 trillion rupees (\$293.21 billion) of investment by 2020, and India is turning to partnerships with private companies and seeking loans from other countries to upgrade the network.—*Reuters*

Protest staged in Seoul on anniversary of 'comfort women' deal

SEOUL — Several hundred people took part in a protest here against an agreement between South Korea and Japan to resolve the longstanding issue of women who were forced into wartime Japanese military brothels on Wednesday, the first anniversary of the deal.

The protest in front of the Japanese Embassy was organised by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan, a civic group helping former comfort women.

On the same day in the southern port city of Busan, a civic group set up a statue of a girl symbolising the victims of Japan's wartime sexual slavery on the sidewalk in front of the Japanese Consulate.

According to Yonhap News Agency, members of the group staged a sit-in after police were mobilised to remove the statue with a forklift.

During the stand-off, a college student was detained on charges of obstructing official duties, police said.

Among the high-profile participants of the Seoul protest was Choo Mi Ae of the main opposition Minjoo Party of Korea and Seoul Mayor Park Won Soon.

Park declared his intention to continue efforts to have comfort women-related documents listed as a Memory of the World by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Yoon Mee Hyang, co-representative of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan, said opposition to the agreement is escalating, and more statues



Hundreds of people join a rally, together with a big statue of a girl symbolising comfort women, in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, on 28 December 2016. The rally was organised on the first anniversary of a Japan-South Korea agreement to settle the comfort women issue "finally and irreversibly." PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

symbolising "comfort women" are being installed around the world.

"The agreement has already been invalidated," she said.

The deal reached on 28 December last year marked a milestone in Japan-South Korea ties, which have often been marred by disagreements over history. Under the agreement, the two countries agreed to resolve the issue "finally and irreversibly."

In the agreement, Japan offered to provide 1 billion yen (\$8.3 million) for a new South Korean fund aimed at helping aging former comfort women and admitted to involvement by the Japanese military in the issue.

In October this year, a foundation launched in July by the South Korean government began paying money disbursed by the Japanese government

to the victims.

Out of a total of 46 former comfort women who were still alive as of 28 December last year, 34 have said they would accept the project and the money as of Friday last week.

Some South Korean civic groups that have supported former comfort women have criticized the bilateral agreement as ignoring the victims' voices. —*Kyodo News*

New births bring hope for Mekong dolphins in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH — Conservation group WWF announced Tuesday that 10 new Irrawaddy dolphin calves were sighted this year in the section of Mekong River that runs through Cambodia, raising hope of saving the species from local extinction.

It said the birth of the calves — seven in Kratie province and three in Stung Treng province — are a "great encouragement and reward" of its decade-long collaborative efforts with Cambodia's Fisheries Administration to protect the critically endangered species.

Irrawaddy dolphins are confined to a few isolated populations in South and Southeast Asia, all of them at risk of extinction.

Conservationists believed that no more than 80 survive in the Cambodian section of the Mekong River. Last year, the species was declared functionally extinct in neighbouring Laos.

The dolphins are primarily threatened by rampant illegal and destructive fishing practices such as gill nets, poisoning, electroshock and explosive fishing devices. Other threats include hydropower dam construction, decreasing water levels and collisions with boats. —*Kyodo News*

Russia, Pakistan, China warn of increased Islamic State threat in Afghanistan

MOSCOW — Russia, China and Pakistan warned on Tuesday that the influence of Islamic State (IS) was growing in Afghanistan and that the security situation there was deteriorating.

Representatives from the three countries, meeting in Moscow, also agreed to invite the Afghan government to such talks in the future, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"(The three countries) expressed particular concern about the rising activity in the country of extremist groups including the Afghan branch of IS," ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters after the meeting.

The United States, which still has nearly 10,000 troops in Afghanistan more than 15 years after the Islamist Taliban were toppled by US-backed Afghan forces, was not invited to the Moscow talks.

The gathering, the third in a

series of consultations between Russia, China and Pakistan that has so far excluded Kabul, is likely to deepen worries in Washington that it is being sidelined in negotiations over Afghanistan's future.

Officials in Kabul and Washington have said that Russia is deepening its ties with Taliban militants fighting the government, though Moscow has denied providing aid to the insurgents.

Zakharova said Russia, China and Pakistan had "noted the deterioration of the security situation (in Afghanistan)".

The three countries agreed a "flexible approach to remove certain figures from sanctions lists as part of efforts to foster a peaceful dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban movement," she added.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani last month asked the United Nations to add the Taliban's

new leader to its sanctions list, further undermining a stalled peace process.

Earlier on Tuesday, Afghan Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ahmad Shekib Mostaghni said Kabul had not been properly briefed about the Moscow meeting.

"Discussion about the situation in Afghanistan, even if well-intentioned, in the absence of Afghans cannot help the real situation and also raises serious questions about the purpose of such meetings," he said.

A number of Afghan provincial capitals have come under pressure from the Taliban this year while Afghan forces have been suffering high casualty rates, with more than 5,500 killed in the first eight months of 2016.

An offshoot of Islamic State has claimed responsibility for several attacks in the last year. —*Reuters*

Bangladesh arrests five suspected Islamists 'plotting New Year attack'

DHAKA — Police in Bangladesh have arrested five suspected Islamist militants believed to be plotting to attack New Year celebrations, a counter-terrorism police chief said on Wednesday.

The five were believed to be members of a faction of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) group, which was blamed for an attack on a cafe in Dhaka in July in which 22 people were killed, most of them foreigners.

"They planned to attack on New Year's Eve," Monirul Islam, head of the counter-terrorism police unit, told a news conference.

Islam declined to elaborate when asked about the militants' target and how they planned to attack but said police had also seized 60 kg (132 lb) of explosives, when the five were detained in overnight raids in the capital.

The five were paraded before the media but did not speak to reporters.

Authorities have already banned all outdoor gatherings in Dhaka from dusk on 31 December to dawn on 1 January on security grounds.

Militant attacks have increased in mostly Muslim Bangladesh, a country of 160 million people, over the past few years with several prominent liberal writers and members of religious minorities killed.

The JMB has pledged allegiance to Islamic State, which police believe was involved in organising the attack on the cafe in Dhaka's diplomatic quarter on 1 July. Islamic State claimed responsibility for what was the worst militant attack in Bangladesh.

Police have killed more than 40 suspected militants in raids since the cafe attack, including the man police said was the mastermind, Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury. —*Reuters*

Opinion

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Myanmar is no longer a leaderless country

Khin Maung Oo

A group or a society has different kinds of people. Accordingly, their minds and wishes differ from each other. Uniformity can bring about dual effects—good and bad. Saying thus, this statement can tantamount to be a pessimistic view. It needs explaining. Let's assume that two men are given a mango and an apple, and both want to have the apple. It can be called a problem of uniformity. In this regard, I suddenly remembered a paragraph which appeared in the introduction of the reader 9, titled "Looking at the children of other lands" when I was in the standard 8. It reads: *Can you imagine what it would be like if the climate were the same all over the world? All the flowers and the trees would be the same. Then, the animals might be the same, and the same crops would be grown in the ground. This would mean that the people would all be alike. They would look alike and dress alike and they would all eat the same food. What a world that would be!*

Here is another example with an opposite meaning—a benefit of uniformity. Supposing that we have different views either on building a school in the village or on constructing a bridge spanning the river, what will we do then? First of all, we need to consider which matter is to be prioritized to reach a uniform decision. Suffice it to say that uniformity can bring about sometimes good effects, sometimes bad ones. But it is not an insoluble problem. Had we faced such a case that we could not solve ourselves, we are required to find a person who can solve it for us. He or she is none other than a leader that will lead us to the right solution.

We all know the meaning of the word, "leader," very well. "Oxford Advanced American Dictionary" defines that a leader is a person who leads a group of people, especially the head of a country, an organization, etc. Around us, we are seeing leaders, called in different names—

class-monitor, team leader, team captain, head, chair-person, president, political leader, national leader, world leader and so on. A leader needs to be endowed with qualifications to lead a group, an institution or a country they will lead. Our parents are also leaders of our families—the most familiar and lowest level leaders. A house-holder takes responsibilities of management for all. In our environment we see some find it difficult to manage their families' affairs. By assessing difficulties and hardships experienced by a simple family at the basic level, we can easily guess a nation that can be likened to an enormously great extended family which has tremendously big problems.

As known to all, our country was left with a legacy of problems—bribery and corruption, increasing volume of unemployment, skyrocketing commodity prices, enforcing rule of law, public failure to abide by rules and laws, subversive activities of destructive elements from home

and abroad, moral bankruptcy and so on. In fact, these are deep-rooted and chronic diseases which our country has been suffering for several decades. These cannot be cured in a moment just by saying a magic word like "Abracadabra". It will take time to remove these problems. Now the incumbent government is trying its best by marching towards a modernized Federal Democratic Republic, hand in hand with the Tatmataw. For healing diseases, the government will never administer any palliatives. We need not grope in the dark any longer on one condition—that we are supposed to follow the leadership of our leader. We now have a globally recognized leader, who can be said to be like a Godsend leader, the type of leader who can give inspiration, courage and valuable guidance to the younger inexperienced generation of Myanmar youths. We now have a leader capable of leading us to our desired goal. Myanmar is no longer a leaderless country.

The problem to be assessed in the dilemma—truth & fallacy

Written By Aye Chan

ON October 9, terrorists made a surprise armed attacks on Koetangauk and Ngakhura police outposts of No 1/ border guard control police in Kyikanpyin, Maungtau Township, Rakhine State, killing some policemen and looting firearms and ammunition. Tatmataw and Myanmar Police Force are combined to investigate and arrest those involved in the armed attacks, to recapture the looted firearms and concurrently to restore the area to peaceful and stable state, in accord with rules and laws.

In doing so, there were further armed attacks, claiming some government troops in the attacks. Security forces are still investigating the attackers under the provisions of laws with those involved in committing crimes have action taken, and investigation of suspects underway. Simultaneously, those found innocent were released. As for the government of the State, investigation committee was formed with the intention of reporting to the government after enquiring on the ground as to whether there were violations of human rights in the region as alleged by some organizations from home and abroad, to find out actual situations in Rakhine State and for similar occurrences not to take place in the region in future. It is

being found that the so-called teams and committee went to the conflict area to meet and interview persons in question and those involved in the incidents, and they released information about their finding, made press conferences and replied to the questions raised by the media.

While making efforts to peacefully solve the problem from the government side, terrorists and their supportive organisations from abroad posted false news and information on social website and internet by spreading rumors and instigative propaganda. Some media are spreading invented stories and rumors full of one-sided allegations by violating media ethics. As the false news are likely to make conflicts prolonged and increased, it is necessary to make known to all, about the exaggerated and instigative stories, being created by destructive elements. It is incumbent upon us to protect from the danger of destructive elements.

The State Counsellor's Information Committee is releasing news and information about the actual situations, and concurrently informing that alleged information was false. Similarly, it was found that Tatmataw News Release Committee was informing the true news as well. Yet, public including foreign media were not accessible to the conflict areas freely as the time was a period of launching operations.

Organizations and media groups from home and abroad demanded for the permission to go there freely for news coverage and to have an access to publicize the true news. They may have not been given permission to go to the conflict areas as they may have experienced dangers in time of fighting and launching operations. On the other hand, the Tatmataw has the responsibility to defend the security of individuals including media. For these restrictions, media groups did not have an access to visit the conflict areas, but

"It is evident that false news and rumors are being fabricated intentionally. It was found that these are being made as directed by those of influence behind locked doors. Obviously, they are attempting to put pressure on the government, by instigating armed conflicts in the country, so that the government will be criticized by international community".

they could manage to go any places where public were allowed to go.

From December 19 to December 23, a news media group comprising journalists from home and abroad, was allowed to go there for news coverage by the government. It is learnt that some were not included in the group because of the situation of security. Whatever it is, the trip can be optimistically said to be a beneficial

one as it can share actual situations on the ground to the public and the world.

According to the disclosure and statements made by correspondents from local and foreign news media that took information in the conflict areas, they had been in those areas to ask freely locals whom they wanted to question and they had no restrictions to their interrogations whereas locals answered freely. They disclosed that situations on the ground were found to have been totally different from public sayings being

heard outside. They said they would describe the news as found in reality.

As per the statements made by some responsible officials and both sides from local communities, allegations of some media from abroad were false, and some were exaggerated as they wished, thus the fact led to misunderstanding of international organizations. They also said, "There urgently needs to be rule of law and securi-

ty in the area. Abiding by law and stability of the area can bring about understanding between each other and peaceful co-existence. Investigation processes are underway in accord with rules and laws. Hospitals are also giving treatment and care regardless of race and religion. We do not want any terrorist attacks and we want to live in peace. There are no restrictions to international organizations' donations. We want to live in peace and stability with all different believers."

It is hoped that the media groups that went to the places where the armed attacks took place for news coverage will make true information known to our people and overseas organizations so that they will be well convinced of the truth by distinguishing true news from rumors. This is a responsibility for a journalist to conduct as the media ethic. There were two remarkable facts noticed during this trip.

The first one is that a voluntary librarian of the village library who disclosed media men that the government troops and police forces did not commit any offences of rapes, arsons and forced arrests was killed. On their way to Ngakhura village, a place of conflicts, in the evening of December 21 for news coverage on the ground, media men interrogated the voluntary librarian named "Duz Mamad (a) Shunarmyar

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National policy needed to ensure appropriate environment for people with disabilities



A press conference concerning the latest developments of the people with disabilities.

PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

THE government needs a national-level policy to set up an appropriate environment for people with disabilities, said an official from the Myanmar Disabled Association.

There should be appropriate transportation for people with disabilities to be able to participate in education and in the economic sector, said U Nay Lin Soe, Director of Myanmar Disabled Association.

The Yangon City Development Committee needs to find appropriate ways for the people with disabilities to conveniently travel in its future town development projects, he added.

"The regional and the City Development Committee are needed to build a special path for the disabled to travel in their wheelchairs," said U Myo Set Aung, Yangon region director of Ministry of Social Welfare, Re-

lief and Resettlement.

"But there are some difficulties for the arrangement because there are electric lamp posts on both sides of the road.

There are over 2.4 million people with disabilities in Myanmar, two per cent of them, are graduates and most are not educated, it is learnt from the Myanmar Disabled Association.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Local brickmakers get good price due to high demand

BRICK manufacturers received a good price for their products because of growing local demand this season, according to those in the construction industry.

Some commercial brick companies came to a halt as production declined due to the regional government tightening its rules on the construction sector,

said Daw Ni Ni Win, a supervisor of 555, a brick company.

Construction work usually stops during the rainy season.

"The price of a brick during the rainy season was Ks45 at the most. The price has increased to Ks20 per brick this winter," said Daw Ni Ni Win.

To meet increasing local de-

mand, both earthen and concrete bricks are mainly produced from popular brick wholesale yards including 555, 777 and Danyingon Brick Factory.

Handmade brickmakers are mostly found in Hlawga, Hmawbi, Taikkyi and Shwepyitha townships in Yangon and Yes- ayo Township.—200

The problem to be assessed in the dilemma—truth & fallacy

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about his knowledge about events, at the office of village administrator and on the street of Ngakhura (middle) village. He asserted that there were no offences of rapes, arsons and forced arrests committed by Tatmataw troops and police forces, apart from Rohingya agitation activities.

It was reported to authorities concerned that Duz Mamad (a) Shunarmyar did not arrive back home from going outside in the same evening after replying to the questions raised by correspondents. On the afternoon of 23 December, his decapitated body was found in the creek of Sabeibinyin, with two stabbed wounds each on both of the thighs, it is learnt.

Whatever it is, this incident highlights that there are still dangers of destructive elements in carrying out works for security, peace and stability in the area. It is as if warning that attempts were made to get news and information on one side, and simultaneously

there existed dangers for disclosing the truth on the other side. The victim was reported to be an Islam believer. Terrorists seemed to get rid of him for saying what they did not want. It is tantamount to threatening others that they will also be subject to such a brutal killing if they dare do like Duz Mamad. From this happening, media men wanting to get news as well as those who want to disclose the truth may have lessons to take. This may be assumed to be a challenge of making rights to get news & information difficult.

The second noticeable one is that it was found the only woman created rumors about rapes, telling a story now and saying another the next time.

Investigation commission on Rakhine State led by Vice-President U Myit Swe went to Maung-taw region to investigate incidents from December 11 to 13 December. During the trip, Dr Thet Thet Zin, member of the commission and chairwoman of Women Af-

fairs Organization, and members met with villagers including children to inquire whether there were rape cases to women in the village.

On the afternoon of December 11, commission members separately met with a woman named Ma Jamarlihar in the village of Pyaungpaik to ask her in detail as to whether she herself and other women in the village were raped. She replied that she herself was not raped and others were neither raped nor learnt to have been raped.

Yet, on the arrival of the media group at the village of Pyaungpaik, during the interview with Ma Jamarlihar residing in Pyaungpaik and Daw Than Than (a) Ma Norjan of Ngarsarkyu village, Ma Jamarlihar said that she was raped by security forces.

Due to the statement, authorities concerned went to Pyaungpaik village on December 22 to discover the truth, to take action against those who commit-

ted crimes, if ever and to defend the victim. According to village elders and responsible persons, the above said Ma Jamarlihar and Daw Than Than did not live in Pyaungpaik. Upon receipt of the information that they lived in Ngarsarkyu village, they were summoned to be questioned. Instead, they were learnt to have avoided meeting with authorities. Ma Jamarlihar's neighbors—Abu Bawsho, Manulnat and head of hundred households were interrogated about their knowledge, they replied that news of rapes was false and they had never heard about such cases. And they said they knew nothing why she told reporters she had been raped.

It is evident that false news and rumors are being fabricated intentionally. It was found that these are being made as directed by those of influence behind locked doors. Obviously, they are attempting to put pressure on the government, by instigating armed conflicts in the country, so that the

government will be criticized by international community.

In conclusion, Rakhine Affairs is a politically sensitive issue, thus to be dealt with sobriety. Yet, it is necessary to solve carefully for similar occurrences not to take place in future. As it is, it is clear that there are still control, manipulation and support from behind. It may be difficult to hinder destructive activities of sparking riots. But foreign countries and international organizations should not conduct activities of ignition over the current incidents any longer. Likewise, as for residents co-existing peacefully with each other on the same land and devout believers need to be careful about instigative activities of destructive elements. We hereby call for all to avoid writing invented stories and spreading rumors, and to cooperate in unity for the revival of peace, stability and development of Rakhine State.

(Translated by Khin Maung Oo)

National objectives for the 69th anniversary Independence Day, 2017

1. To build a genuine Union in the future, making use of the common agreement which will emerge from the negotiations and discussions to be reached at the Union Peace Conference – 21st century Panglong.
2. For all nationalities to collectively preserve and protect non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national unity; and perpetuation of sovereignty.
3. To strive hard to draw up a constitution suitable for the union and in accord with democratic principles and norms for the emergence of a democratic federal union.
4. To endeavour to create good economic conditions that ensure equitable development between the regions and the states and that will be in conformity with the national economic policy and goals.

Mon State FDA to seize tainted chili powder from markets

THE MON STATE branch of the Food and Drug Administration will seize chili powder contaminated with toxic levels of Aflatoxin B1, a potent carcinogen, according to the state FDA.

Starting from 28 December, local authorities will confiscate some brands of chili powder being sold at the markets across the state which have been deemed unsuitable for consumption. The tainted chili powder will be destroyed by fire within four days, said Dr Soe Naing, assistant director of the FDA (Mon State).

Bags of chili powder produced by firms including Ngwe Soe, Shwekyee, Shwewaddy,

Myawady, Sein Kung Kaung, Karaweik and Nyunthnakaung were deemed unfit for human consumption.

After the laboratory experiments, the FDA only allows some chili production firms such as Number One, Ko Hla Tun, Wint Htel and Phyo Mauk, according to the local FDA.

The FDA under the Ministry of Health and Sports recently released lists of tainted chili powders including well-known brands of Myo Ma Sin Phyu Taw, KSS, Bote Sone Ma and Daw Htwe, which were found to be contaminated with Aflatoxin B1 that can cause lung cancer, and other lung related diseases.—200



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves a EU Summit at the European Council headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, on 15 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Brexit — We're making a mess of it': mashup artists lampoon Britain's leaders

LONDON — In a satire of the 2016 Brexit vote, mashup artists lampoon Britain's leaders in a video which re-edits their words to say the European Union referendum was dumb and Prime Minister Theresa May is making a mess of Brexit.

The 23 June vote took many investors and chief executives by surprise, triggering the deepest political and financial turmoil in Britain since World War Two and the biggest ever one-day fall in sterling against the dollar.

The Cassette Boy artists, who parody politicians by editing their words to form sentences they never said, dissect the referendum

campaign, making then Prime Minister David Cameron appear to say he turned the United Kingdom upside down.

"Now this is a story all about how the UK got flipped, got turned upside down," Cameron, who announced his resignation the day after the referendum, is shown as saying to a hip-hop music theme from Will Smith's *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. "I started this farce. I was the one who did something dumb: I promised an EU in/out referendum," Cameron, who called the referendum in 2013 but who campaigned to stay in the EU, is made to say.

Boris Johnson, who cam-

aigned for Brexit but dropped out of the race to replace Cameron after his running mate Michael Gove withdrew his support, is edited to say: "I have the most gross charisma and I want to be the next prime minister." "So I say: Let's leave the EU not because I believe it's the right thing to do but because I see an amazing future for me," Johnson is edited to say. After the result is announced, Cameron tells Boris: "I'm running away. The rest of my life is one big holiday."

May, Cameron's interior minister who did not take an active role in the campaign, says: "Yes you can forget the economy. This policy wrecks it."—*Reuters*

Cuba passes law that bans naming sites after Fidel Castro

HAVANA — Cuba's National Assembly approved a law on Tuesday that bans commemorative statues of Fidel Castro and naming public places after him, in accordance with the wishes of the revolutionary leader, who died last month.

Castro always said he did not want a cult of personality, although critics point out that the cult was everywhere. His words are posted on billboards nationwide and his name is invoked at

every public event.

"His fighting spirit will remain in the conscience of all Cuban revolutionaries, today, tomorrow and always," President Raul Castro, Fidel's younger brother, told the Assembly, according to excerpts of his speech published by official media.

The best way to pay homage to "El Comandante" — the commander — is to follow his concept of revolution, the president said.

The new law does not ban

artists from using Fidel Castro's figure in music, literature, dance, cinema or other visual arts, official media specified. Photos of him hanging in offices, places of study or public institutions also may be kept.

Every since his death, a large photo of a young Castro dressed in military fatigues, with a rifle and pack slung over his back, has hung from a building in Havana's Revolution Square.

Castro, a leading Cold War figure who built a communist state on the doorstep of the United States and defied US attempts to topple him, died on 25 November at the age of 90, eight years after handing the presidency over to Raul.

Cuba commemorated his death with nine official days of mourning and two mass memorial services.

Hundreds of thousands of Cubans also turned out to greet a funeral cortege carrying Castro's ashes 600 miles (1,000 km) east to Santiago, retracing the route that his rebels took when they overthrew the US-backed Fulgencio Batista in 1959.—*Reuters*



A supporter holds an image of former Cuban leader Fidel Castro at a tribute in Malaga, southern Spain, on 4 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump Tower lobby briefly evacuated over suspicious package

NEW YORK — Police briefly evacuated the lobby of Trump Tower in New York City, home to US President-elect Donald Trump, on Tuesday after a suspicious package was discovered, authorities said.

A spokesman for New York City's Police said the department's bomb squad responded to the scene, and the authorities issued an all-clear message shortly afterward.

Trump is spending the holidays at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida and was not at the 58-story skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan. The lobby is often thronged with tourists.—*Reuters*

Blast in Afghan capital wounds member of parliament

KABUL — A bomb attack targeted a member of Afghanistan's parliament in the capital, Kabul, on Wednesday, wounding him and several other people, officials said.

Fakori Behishti, a member of parliament from Bamyan province, and his son were wounded in the blast, an official with the parliament's security department said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which destroyed the vehicle in which Behishti was traveling, badly damaged other vehicles and shattered the windows of nearby shops.

Last week, another member of parliament was targeted by a suicide bomber who killed seven people. The member of parliament survived.—*Reuters*

Putin to Nikolic: Strategic partnership with Serbia confirmed

BELGRADE — The year that is about to end confirmed the strategic character of the Russian-Serbian partnership, Russian President Vladimir Putin wrote in a letter handed to Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic on Tuesday by Russian Ambassador to Belgrade Alexander Chepurin.

"The political dialogue was developing and agreements were reached that opened up good possibilities for implementing bilateral projects of mutual interest," read the letter, as quoted in a statement from Nikolic's presidential press office.

"I wish health and success to you, your family and your friends, and peace, well-being and prosperity to the brotherly Serbian nation," Putin wrote. Chepurin told Nikolic stability in the development of the bilateral relations was significant for the Russian Federation. Nikolic expressed great gratitude for Russia's support for Serbia and Republika Srpska.—*Tanjug*

German authorities detain man for possible link to Berlin attack

BERLIN — German authorities detained a Tunisian man who may have been involved in last week's attack on a Berlin Christmas market in which 12 people died, prosecutors said on Wednesday. The suspected attacker, Anis Amri, a rejected asylum seeker from Tunisia, had the mobile phone number of the 40-year old Tunisian, whom they did not name, stored in his telephone, prosecutors said. Officials raided his home and business premises, they said. "Further investigations indicated that he could have been involved in the attack," said prosecutors, adding that he was arrested.

"To what extent suspicions against the arrested person will be hardened up remains to be seen after further investigation," said the prosecutors, adding they would decide by the end of Thursday whether to issue an arrest warrant for him.—*Reuters*

Iran says it warns off foreign planes near war games

DUBAI — Iran has warned off foreign surveillance planes that have tried to approach its forces during air defence exercises on the Gulf coast, an Iranian military spokesman said on Wednesday.

"In the past three days, more than 12 warnings have been issued to aircraft from outside the region to refrain from approaching the airspace of the manoeuvre area," said Brigadier-General Abbas Farajpour Alamdari, quoted by the official news agency IRNA.

The semi-official news agency Tasnim said the warnings were given to US Navy planes and drones that had approached the annual air drills.

There was no immediate US reaction to the report.—*Reuters*

Iraqi PM says three months needed to rout Islamic State

BAGHDAD — Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday it would take three months to remove Islamic State from Iraq, as US-backed forces battle to dislodge the militants from Mosul, their last major stronghold in the country.

Abadi had previously pledged the northern city would be retaken by the end of this year. But the operation has been slowed by concern to avoid casualties among civilians, who have mostly stayed in their homes rather than fleeing as was initially expected.

Asked to respond to comments by the commander of a US-led coalition supporting Iraqi forces that it would take as long as two years to eliminate Islamic State and its cells in Iraq and neighbouring Syria, Abadi said:

“The Americans were very pessimistic. They used to talk about a really long period, but the remarkable successes achieved by our brave and heroic fighters reduced that. I foresee that in Iraq it



Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is seen on a screen as he speaks via a videoconference during a ministerial summit to hold discussion on the future of Mosul city, post-Islamic State, in Paris, France, on 20 October 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

will take three months.”

Overnight the coalition bombed the last remaining bridge connecting the eastern and western parts of Mosul “to reduce enemy freedom of movement”, a spokesman said on Tuesday.

A statement published by Amaq, a news agency supporting Islamic State, said the bridge was now completely out of service, and an unconfirmed video

circulated online showed a segment of the span had fallen into the river.

The United Nations has previously expressed concern that the destruction of Mosul’s bridges could obstruct the evacuation of civilians. Up to 1.5 million are thought to remain inside.

More than two months into the Mosul operation, elite Iraqi soldiers have retaken a quarter of the city,

but entered a planned “operational refit” this month.

A US battlefield commander told Reuters on Monday that Iraqi forces would resume their offensive in the coming days, in a new phase of the operation that will see American troops deployed closer to the front line inside the city.

Mosul, the largest city seized by Islamic State anywhere across the once vast territory it controlled in Iraq and neighbouring Syria, has been held by the group since its fighters drove the US-trained army out in June 2014.

Besides Mosul, Islamic State still controls the towns of Tel Afar and Qaim as well as Hawija and the surrounding area.

The city’s fall would probably end Islamic State’s ambition to create a self-styled caliphate, but the fighters could still mount a more traditional insurgency in Iraq, and plot or inspire attacks on the West.—Reuters

Syrian opposition urges rebels to cooperate in ceasefire efforts

BEIRUT — The Syrian opposition’s main political body on Tuesday urged rebel groups to cooperate with “sincere regional efforts” to reach a ceasefire but said it had not been invited to any conference, referring to a meeting in Kazakhstan proposed by Russia.

Riad Hijab, general coordinator for the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), said confidence-building measures were needed to create an atmosphere for political transition talks which should be held in Geneva and sponsored by the United Nations. “We support the shifts in positions of some international powers and the positive, sincere efforts that could represent a starting point for realising the Syrian people’s aspirations, by reaching an agreement that brings security and stability,” Hijab said in a written statement distributed to the press.

The HNC said it wants to see a truce that covers all of Syria, in line with previous UN resolu-

tions which forbid the use of banned weapons such as barrel bombs and chemical agents. Other resolutions call for all sieges to be lifted, humanitarian aid access, a halt in air strikes and no more forced displacement.

Iran and Russia support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the nearly six-year Syrian conflict. Turkey and the United States support opposition groups. Peace talks in Geneva broke down earlier this year because of a surge in violence. Russia, Iran and Turkey said last week they were ready to help broker a peace deal after holding talks in Moscow where they adopted a declaration setting out principles for an agreement.

Arrangements for the talks, which would not include the United States and would be distinct from separate intermittent UN-brokered negotiations, remain hazy. But Moscow has said they would take place in Kazakhstan, a close ally.—Reuters

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Dated: 29.Dec.2016

Turkey and Russia agree on proposal toward Syrian ceasefire, Anadolu says

ANKARA — Turkey and Russia have agreed on a proposal toward a general ceasefire in Syria, Turkey’s state-run Anadolu Agency said on Wednesday, and will aim to put it into effect by midnight.

Anadolu, citing sources, said the two countries have reached a consensus that will be presented to participants in the conflict on expanding the ceasefire that was established in Aleppo earlier this month

in order to allow civilians and rebels to evacuate the town.

Russia, Iran and Turkey said last week they were ready to help broker a peace deal after holding talks in Moscow where they adopted a declaration setting out the principles any agreement should adhere to.

No one was immediately available for comment at Turkey’s foreign ministry in Ankara.—Reuters



A boy walks his bike near stacked sandbags in al-Rai town, northern Aleppo Province, Syria, on 27 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

First trial opens of alleged Turkey coup participants

SILIVRI, (Turkey) — The first criminal trial related to a summer coup in Turkey started on Tuesday as 29 police officers faced sentences of up to life in prison on charges of involvement in the failed attempt to overthrow the government.

Some 40,000 people have been arrested since the 15 July putsch, which killed around 240 people,

in a crackdown targeting the military, police, civil service and private sector. More than 100,000 have been sacked or suspended.

The officers face a range of charges, according to a copy of the indictment obtained by Reuters. Some are accused of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order, and others of membership of a terrorist organisation.

They include three police helicopter pilots accused of disobeying an order to take special forces to defend President Tayyip Erdogan’s mansion in Istanbul.

Two defendants who testified during the morning session both denied the charges against them. Lawyers for the other 27 defendants could not immediately be reached

to say how their clients would plead.

“Everyone involved in the coup attempt must have a fair trial,” Orhan Cagri Bekar, a lawyer who represents an association for coup victims, told reporters. “Those who are guilty must be sentenced to the heaviest punishment because this is a betrayal of the country.”

Prosecutors are seek-

ing life sentences for 21 of the policemen and sentences of between 7-1/2 to 15 years for the other eight, state-run Anadolu Agency said.

Security was tight at the courthouse in Silivri, west of Istanbul. Attendees were not allowed to bring recording devices into the building and the gallery was only partly full.—Reuters



Flowers in memory of passengers and crew members of Russian military Tu-154, which crashed into the Black Sea on its way to Syria on Sunday, are placed at an embankment in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi, Russia, on 26 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Wing flap fault main theory behind Black Sea Russian jet crash

MOSCOW — Russian investigators looking into the crash of a military plane that crashed, killing all 92 on board, believe a fault with its wing flaps was the reason it plunged into the Black Sea, an investigative source told the Interfax news agency on Tuesday.

The plane, a Tupolev-154 belonging to the Defence Ministry, disappeared from radar screens two minutes after taking off on Sunday from Sochi in southern Russia, killing dozens of Red Army Choir singers and dancers en route to Syria to entertain Russian troops in the run-up to the New Year.

The three black box flight recorders from the aircraft were found on Tues-

day, Russian news agencies said, amid unconfirmed reports that authorities had grounded all aircraft of the same type. The Defence Ministry confirmed one box had been found.

The Life.ru news portal, which has close contacts to law enforcement agencies, said it had obtained a readout of one of the pilot's last words, indicating a problem with the wing flaps: "Commander, we are going down," the pilot was reported to have said.

There was no official confirmation of the readout.

The Interfax news agency separately cited an unnamed investigative source as saying preliminary data showed the wing flaps had failed and not worked in

tandem. As a result, the aging Soviet-era plane had not been able to gather enough speed and had dropped into the sea, breaking up on impact.

If confirmed, the technical failure will raise questions about the future of the TU-154, which is still actively used by Russian government ministries but not by major Russian commercial airlines.

Interfax cited an unnamed source as saying Russia had grounded all TU-154 planes until the cause of Sunday's crash became clear. There was no official confirmation of that.

The Defence Ministry says the jet, a Soviet-era plane built in 1983, had last been serviced in September

and underwent more major repairs in December 2014.

Russian pilots say the TU-154 is still flightworthy, though major Russian commercial airlines have long since replaced it with Western-built planes. Experts say only two are registered with Russian passenger airlines with the rest registered to various government ministries. The last big TU-154 crash was in 2010 when a Polish jet carrying then-president Lech Kaczynski and much of Poland's political elite went down in western Russia killing everyone on board.

The Defence Ministry said search and rescue teams had so far recovered 12 bodies and 156 body fragments.—Reuters

Ex-Argentine leader Fernandez indicted, tied to nuns and guns scandal

BUENOS AIRES — Former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez was indicted on Tuesday on charges she ran a corruption scheme with a public works secretary who was arrested in June while trying to stash millions of dollars in a convent.

A federal judge accused them and other officials of the Fernandez administration of crimes "including the deliberate seizure of funds principally meant for public road works."

Corruption charges have long swirled around Fernandez and her husband and predecessor, the late Nestor Kirchner. She denies wrongdoing and accuses Argentina's current leader, Mauricio Macri, of using the courts to persecute her.

The country was riveted in June when Fernandez's former public works secretary, Jose Lopez, was arrested while tossing bags stuffed with millions of dollars over the walls of a Catholic convent on the outskirts of Buenos Aires.

A gun-toting Lopez started hurling the money into the Our Lady of Fatima convent when the elderly nuns inside were slow to answer the door in the early morning hours of 14 June, according to a neighbour who witnessed what happened and called 911. A surveillance video shows the nuns finally welcoming Lopez and accepting the cash while paying little attention to the automatic rifle he had placed by the convent door.

Lopez and his direct boss, former Planning Minister Julio De Vido, were indicted along with Fernandez on Tuesday.

The alleged skimming of road projects took place in the Patagonian province of Santa Cruz, where Fernandez lives.

The ruling said the offences took place until 9 December, 2015, Fernandez's last day as president after eight years in office. No arrest warrant has been issued for Fernandez, and Lopez is already in jail on money laundering charges.—Reuters



Former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner waves to supporters as she leaves a Justice building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 13 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER (5/2016) [TENDER NO. MPPE/HSD/T/3(2016-2017)]

1. Open Tender is invited for the Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise, Ministry of Electricity and Energy for the supply of High Speed Diesel (470,000 ± 10% Barrels)
2. Tender Closing Date & Time - 5-1-2017, 12:00 Hrs
3. Tender Opening Date & Time - 5-1-2017, 13:00 Hrs
4. Delivery Time - January 2017 to February 2017
5. Tender documents and details information are available at the Department of Finance, Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise, Nay Pyi Taw, during our office hours commencing 26-12-2016 on payment of Myanmar Kyat One Hundred Thousand (Kyats 100,000) per set.
6. Only bid from tenderer who has purchased tender document officially from Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise will be accepted for evaluation.

Managing Director
Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise
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Polish truck driver shot long before Berlin attack

BERLIN — A Polish truck driver whose hijacked vehicle was used to crash into a Berlin Christmas market was shot in the head several

hours before the attack and could not have attempted to foil it as previously thought, Bild newspaper reported on Tuesday.



A general view shows the site where a truck ploughed through a crowd at a Christmas market on Breitscheidplatz square near the fashionable Kurfuerstendamm avenue in the west of Berlin, Germany, on 19 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

The newspaper quoted a confidential coroners report that said driver Lukasz Urban, 37, had suffered not only knife wounds in a battle in the truck cabin but also a gun shot wound to the head some 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 hours before the 8 pm attack.

There was no confirmation to the Bild report available. A total of 12 people were killed in the attack last Monday. The Tunisian assailant, 24-year-old Anis Amri, was shot dead by Italian police in shootout on Friday after a European-wide manhunt.

In a video released after his death, he is seen pledging his allegiance to militant group Islamic State leader

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

The Berlin state interior minister Andreas Geisel had said on Friday that Urban had "quite probably" tried to disrupt the attack by seizing control of the steering wheel before being shot in the head after the truck veered to the left. It came to a halt after driving for just 60 meters into the market that extended more than 400 meters, averting further deaths.

This helped start a crowdfunding campaign that raised over \$170,000 for the family of Urban. The campaign was started by British truck driver Dave Duncan a day after the assailant attacked Lukasz and hijacked his truck.—Reuters

Cuba says economy shrank this year in tandem with Venezuela crisis

HAVANA — Cuba's economy shrank 0.9 per cent this year in tandem with the crisis in key trading partner Venezuela, President Raul Castro told the National Assembly on Tuesday in a closed-door speech, predicting a slightly brighter outlook for 2017.

The figure suggests sharp economic contraction in the second half after the cash-strapped government slashed imports, investment and fuel in response to lower exports and a drop in cheap oil deliveries from Venezuela. It had reported 1 per cent growth for the first half.

"Restrictions in cash and in the provision of fuel worsened in the second half," Castro said, according to excerpts published by official media outlet Cubadebate.

"Financial tensions and challenges that might intensify again in certain circumstances will persist, but we hope that gross domestic product (GDP) will grow



Containers are seen at the Mariel port in Artemisa Province, Cuba, on 5 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

moderately, by around 2 per cent (in 2017)."

Cuba's centrally planned economy has struggled for decades with the US economic embargo and mismanagement at home.

Market-style reforms and, more recently, a de-

tente with the United States that has boosted remittances and the tourism sector, helped the economy grow on average at close to 3 percent each year between 2011 and 2015.

Still, the long slump in global fuel prices is hurting many of Cuba's

top trading partners such as Angola, Venezuela and Brazil, and revenue from the sale of professional services to those countries has dropped.

Key ally Venezuela has slashed its provision of cheap oil and the drop in global commodities prices

is punishing Cuban exports of nickel, refined oil products and sugar.

Some experts fear that future growth from thawing relations with the United States may also be at risk since Republican Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election.

Trump, who takes office 20 January, has vowed to "terminate" President Barack Obama's engagement with Cuba unless Havana gives the United States what he calls a "better deal."

According to published excerpts of his speech, Castro did not comment on the future of Cuban-US relations, except to recall the negative impact of the embargo.

The president, who has promised economic reforms, did say foreign investment is one area that could improve.

Since approving a law to bolster foreign investment more than two years ago, Cuba has approved

just \$1.3 billion worth of projects. It aims to take in \$2 billion annually, making investment an important growth driver.

Castro said it was necessary to "overcome the obsolete mentality, full of prejudices toward foreign investment."

"We are not going toward capitalism, but we cannot be afraid of, or put obstacles in the way of, that which we can do within our laws," he said, adding that investment in the energy sector was key.

A fiscal boost to production and investment should help fuel growth next year, according to the assembly's Economic Commission. The fiscal deficit will rise to 12 per cent of GDP.

"If the expansive fiscal policy is well deployed, it could help manage the crisis," said ex-Cuban central bank official Pavel Vidal, now a professor at Universidad Javeriana Cali in Colombia.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV CHINDWIN STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV CHINDWIN STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.12.2016 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.

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

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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 ADVANCE CONTAINER
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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV GIANG HAI VOY. NO (12/16)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV GIANG HAI VOY. NO (12/16) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MSTL-1 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

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

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Carrie Fisher, 'Star Wars' Princess Leia, dies at 60



Carrie Fisher poses for cameras as she arrives at the European Premiere of "Star Wars, The Force Awakens" in Leicester Square, London in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Carrie Fisher, who rose to fame as Princess Leia in the "Star Wars" films and later endured drug addiction before going on to tell her story as a best-selling author, died on Tuesday aged 60, her family said. Fisher, a mental health advocate who spoke about her own struggles with bipolar disorder and cocaine addiction, had suffered a heart attack on Friday as she flew into Los Angeles.

The daughter of actor Debbie Reynolds and the late singer Eddie Fisher had been returning from England where she was shooting the third season of the British sitcom "Catastrophe."

"Thank you to everyone who has embraced the gifts and

talents of my beloved and amazing daughter," Reynolds said on Facebook. "I am grateful for your thoughts and prayers that are now guiding her to her next stop." Fisher's friend and former Star Wars' co-star Mark Hamill, who played Leia's brother Luke Skywalker, said in a tweet: "No words. #Devastated"

Fisher was met by paramedics and rushed to the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Centre after suffering the heart attack during the flight on Friday. She made headlines last month when she disclosed that she had a three-month love affair with her "Star Wars" co-star Harrison Ford 40 years ago. —Reuters

Scarlett Johansson is 2016 top-grossing movie star



Actor and honouree Scarlett Johansson poses at Variety's Power of Women Luncheon in Beverly Hills, California, on 14 October 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Scarlett Johansson was named the top-grossing actor of 2016 on Tuesday thanks to her roles in superhero movie "Captain America: Civil War" and Hollywood satire "Hail Caesar."

Forbes said Johansson just edged out her "Captain America" co-stars Chris Evans and Robert Downey with box-office earnings of her second 2016 movie, "Hail Caesar." Johansson's movies grossed a leading \$1.2 billion at the worldwide box office this year, compared with \$1.15 billion for "Captain America: Civil War."

Released in May and featuring a conflict between Marvel comic book heroes like Iron Man, Spider-Man, Black Widow and Ant Man, Walt Disney Co's "Captain America" was the biggest earner worldwide in 2016, according to data from Boxoffice Mojo.com.

Australian actress Margot Robbie, who enjoyed a breakout year, placed fourth with \$1.1 billion thanks to roles in two Warner Bros movies "Suicide Squad" and "The Legend of Tarzan."

The Forbes list was dominated by superhero and comic book movies, including "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice" and "Deadpool."

Britain's Felicity Jones entered the Forbes list for the first time, with roles in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," thriller "Inferno" and magical children's story "A Monster Calls." Jones came in ninth place with \$805 million. Forbes made its calculations based on global ticket sales from the films of top Hollywood actors, but it did not count animated movies such as Disney's "Finding Dory," the second biggest release of 2016 with \$1.02 billion. —Reuters

George Michael's partner tells of sadness at finding musician dead

LONDON — George Michael's partner has spoken of his sadness at discovering the 53-year-old musician, a multi-million selling idol of 1980s and 1990s pop, dead at his Oxfordshire home on Christmas morning.

British police said the death of Michael, who had a turbulent private life and problems with drugs, was "unexplained but not suspicious". His manager, Michael Lippman, said the singer had died of heart failure, according to the

BBC. "It's a Xmas I will never forget finding your partner dead peacefully in bed first thing in the morning," Fadi Fawas, 43, said in a Tweet posted late on Monday. "I will never stop missing you xxx." Michael's fans continued to pay tribute at his homes in north London and at the riverside mansion where he died, leaving flowers, cards and candles. Musicians such as Madonna, Paul McCartney and Elton John praised his talent and warm sense of humour. —Reuters



Candlelit tributes are seen outside the house of singer George Michael, where he died on Christmas Day, in Goring, southern England, Britain, on 26 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Priyanka Chopra to celebrate New Year in Goa



MUMBAI — Priyanka Chopra is in India right now and the actress is set to ring in the New Year in Goa with her family and friends.

The 34-year-old star, who has been busy filming the season two of her TV show "Quantico" in New York, is looking forward to spend quality time with her loved ones, according to The

wee hours of the night," Priyanka said. The "Bajirao Mastani" star says she rarely makes New Year resolutions as it is tough for her to stick to them, but plans to have a healthier lifestyle in 2017. "I usually don't make New Year's resolutions because I end up breaking them by the third of January. But this year I decided I'm going to get a lot healthier. "I've always been dependent on my metabolism for my body and my weight, but I want to quit coffee, I want to

sleep well, I want to be able to go to the gym. Those are my resolutions — I'm pretty sure I won't be able to keep up with them but I'm going to try," she said. On work front Priyan-

ka will next be seen in the role of antagonist Victoria Leeds in "Baywatch" movie along with Dwayne Johnson and Zac Efron. —PTI

Hollywood Reporter.

"My plan for New Year's Eve is to hang out with my friends and family. I'm going to be in Goa, India because I have a home there.

side

Antenna shops struggling to attract foreigners to their regions

TOKYO — There are places in central Tokyo where you can taste various foods from regions around Japan and buy rare souvenirs without ever having to leave the capital, but they remain largely unknown to foreign tourists.

Prefectures across Japan have been struggling to attract more and more foreigners to their specialty stores, so-called “antenna shops” in Japan, aimed at promoting their respective regions to people in the Tokyo metropolitan area and encouraging them to visit.

Antenna shops, which are typically owned by local prefectural governments but managed by private companies or other entities, deal with such items as confectionery, vegetables and handicrafts. Many of them have restaurants serving local cuisine.

Besides selling products, antenna shops also aim to encourage their customers to visit their prefectures, and provide informa-



Female staff, known by the term “conciierge,” welcome customers in Nihonbashi Toyama, Tokyo’s second “antenna shop” specialty store of the Sea of Japan coastal prefecture of Toyama, on 6 December 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

tion to encourage people to relocate or return to their regions. As of July, there were 61 such shops in Tokyo, according to the Japan Center for Regional Development, which is engaged

in supporting local governments to open and manage antenna shops.

Having first emerged in the 1990s, antenna shops are currently centered on three areas in Tokyo —

Ginza, Yurakucho and Nihonbashi.

Chizuru Hatada, public relations manager of the JCRD, said antenna shops started shifting their attention to foreign visitors

around 2013, when Tokyo was chosen as the venue for the 2020 Olympics, by gradually setting up websites in foreign languages and introducing tax-free shopping, among other

steps. Before then, officials of many such shops said, “We are targeting relatively rich middle-aged and elderly people,” according to Hatada. But on the back of increasing numbers of foreign visitors, there are no choices but to bring in them as elder customers are not expected to come in times of bad weather and increase in the future.

“The problem is that antenna shops themselves are not well known yet among foreign people, including those who live in Tokyo,” Hatada said.

The Toyama prefectural government has increased its efforts to promote the prefecture of about 1 million people on the Sea of Japan coast by opening a second antenna shop in Nihonbashi district in June. The area is known for long-established department stores that tend to attract foreign visitors, especially now that they can benefit from the yen’s depreciation.—Kyodo News

13th Elephant Festival celebrated in Nepal



Players participate in the Elephant Polo during the 13th Elephant Festival in Sauraha, a tourism hub in southwest Nepal’s Chitwan district, on 26 December 2016. The five-day Elephant Festival was organised by the Regional Hotel Association of Sauraha to promote tourism and raise awareness about wildlife protection. PHOTO: XINHUA

Viet Nam’s largest underground shopping centre to be built

HO CHI MINH CITY, — The Vietnamese government has agreed in principle to build an underground shopping centre in downtown Ho Chi Minh City alongside the city’s first metro line, with estimated investment of some 314 million US dollars.

With an area of 45,000 square meters, the shopping center with 90 metres in width and 500 metres in length, the largest of its kind in Viet Nam, will run from Ben Thanh Market to the Ho Chi Minh City

Opera House at a depth of three meters under Le Loi Street, Viet Nam News Agency reported Monday.

The underground shopping centre will require investment of around 7 trillion Vietnamese dong (some 314 million US dollars). The project has so far attracted only one interested investor from Japan, which has suggested funding 30 per cent of the project, while the remaining would be covered by the Vietnamese government.—Xinhua

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(29-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 30-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

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07:52	Am	Attractions around Hopong Hill Station
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09:26	Am	Products of Myanmar — Craft Blacksmithing
09:52	Am	Myanmar Harpist
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10:52	Am	Sweet Delicacy of Pathein

(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
07:26	Pm	Cruising to Precious Islands (Part-2)
07:48	Pm	Betel Nut Farmer
08:03	Pm	News
08:25	Pm	Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP-4) Tumbling Doll,Pyit Tine Htaung
08:38	Pm	Now in Yangon
07:47	Pm	Chef Life: Thit Htoo

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

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

MRTV (29-12-2016, Thursday)

6:00 am	• Paritta by Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw	3:15 pm	• MRTV 70 th Anniversary Mono Songs
7:35 am	• NRC Programme	4:35 pm	• People’s Talks
8:35 am	• Documentary	5:15 pm	• Football Magazine
9:35 am	• Beautiful ASEAN	5:35 pm	• Applied Financial Knowledge
9:45 am	• ASEAN Spotlight	6:35 pm	• Current Affairs
10:35 am	• MRTV Work’s Programme	7:15 pm	• Teleplay (Part-4)
11:35 am	• Documentary	8:00 pm	• News/International News/Weather Report
12:35 pm	• Song in Myanmar Movies	9:00 pm	• News/ Weather Report
1:20 pm	• TV Drama Series	2:35 pm	• TV Drama Series
2:15 pm	• Real Story Real Movies	• Weeks Sport Info	• Talk on Old Film (Part-2)

Note/Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Nishikori keen for masters breakthrough in 2017



Japan's Kei Nishikori.
PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

BRADENTON, (Florida) — Two days before turning 27, Kei Nishikori's thoughts turned to the upcoming 2017, where he has set his sights on winning an elusive title at a masters event.

"Winning that first masters title is my No. 1 target," Nishikori told reporters Wednesday at the IMG Academy training base. "I want to get solid results in the Grand Slams and be a fixture in the semifinals."

"My backhand has become more solid than it was when I turned pro, and mentally, I am completely different from the old me."

As he usually does, Nishikori spent time this month in the Los Angeles area, training with coach Michael Chang. Nishikori leaves the United States on Wednesday to prepare for his first

event of the new year, the Brisbane International, starting on Sunday in Australia.

Next up will be the season's first Grand Slam, the Australian Open, in Melbourne, starting from 16 January.

"It's my second tournament of the season, and every year I'm anxious about it," Nishikori said of the Open. "I want to head into that having gotten as many matches as I can in my first tournament."

This year, however, will see a new route for the Japanese world No. 5, who will play on clay courts in South America this year instead of aiming for a fifth straight Memphis Open championship.

"I feel sad since I've had such good results in Memphis," Nishikori said. "But I've come to like clay courts and so that's something to enjoy."—*Kyodo News*

Patient Giroud hopes goal can lead to first team return

LONDON — Olivier Giroud is hoping for a run of starts for Arsenal after the French striker scored the late winner in Monday's 1-0 win over West Bromwich Albion at the Emirates Stadium.

Giroud has scored six goals in 16 appearances but has become a regular fixture on the Arsenal bench this season, with manager Arsene Wenger opting to deploy winger Alexis Sanchez as the focal point of attack.

"It is all about keeping the focus high. Always keep working hard at training. I was speaking with the boss, we had a couple of discussions together and he explained to me why I hadn't played too much," Giroud told British media.

The 30-year-old, who has handed his first Premier League start of the season on Monday, gave a timely reminder of his



Arsenal's Olivier Giroud.
PHOTO: REUTERS

goal-scoring prowess when he broke the deadlock in the vital victory over West Brom.

"But football is an everlasting new beginning, as I used to say, and you always have to keep focused and wait for your time," he added.

"Hopefully things will change for me but as long as the team is getting better I am happy."

Defender Laurent Koscielny heaped praise on Giroud and advised players vying to break into Wenger's starting line-up to adopt his compatriot's attitude.

"We are not 11 or 18 players, we are 25 players. All the players who play for Arsenal have a big part to play during the season because of injuries and suspensions," Koscielny told the club's website (www.arsenal.com).

"Everyone needs to be ready to fight for this club. Olivier started and he tried to give his best on the pitch. It was so important because last week we lost two games in seven days and we wanted to get back to winning three points."

Arsenal, who are fourth in the table, nine points behind leaders Chelsea after 18 games, host 17th-placed Crystal Palace on Sunday.—*Reuters*

Toure excited to rejoin Man City's title challenge

LONDON — Yaya Toure has said the excitement of being part of Manchester City's assault on the Premier League title has made him feel like a child again.

Toure has been in fine form since returning to Pep Guardiola's side after a row between the manager and his agent and scored three goals in seven Premier League appearances, including the opener in Monday's 3-0 win at Hull City.

"I look like a kid, just enjoy-

ing playing football and helping my team mates and the fans," the midfielder told British media.

"It's very important to me. I'm used to winning Premier Leagues, and I think it's second two times, and I want to win another.

"I know it's going to be tough but we have to keep going because Chelsea are very good this year."

City are third in the league, seven points behind leaders

Chelsea after 18 games, and travel to take on second-placed Liverpool on Saturday.

Four-times African player of the Year Toure said he was looking forward to a frenzied atmosphere at Anfield.

"For me it's almost a 'final' of the Premier League because I think it's going to be a similar kind of football," the 33-year-old Ivorian added.

"I think for the fans it's going to be fantastic."—*Reuters*

Mourinho urges Martial to follow Mkhitarian lead

JOSE Mourinho has urged Anthony Martial to follow midfielder Henrikh Mkhitarian's example and force his way into Manchester United's starting line up.

Martial has found himself on the fringes of Mourinho's first-team plans, having made four of his 11 Premier League appearances from the bench this season, but the manager said he had no plans to sell the 21-year-old French striker.

"Anthony is very, very young — people forget — and last season Manchester United played completely differ-

ently. He was basically playing up front," Mourinho told British media.

"The team had lots of passive ball possession, just waiting to put it into space for Anthony to go and score a goal. This season is more difficult. He needs a little bit of time to improve."

Armenian Mkhitarian also struggled to get into the side in the early part of the season but made his breakthrough with a fine display in the Europa League against Zorya Luhansk earlier this month.

"Every player is different. I had this season a situation that was more difficult than Anthony — Mkhitarian," Mourinho added.

"Mkhitarian was completely open and understood the difference between me and other

coaches he had.

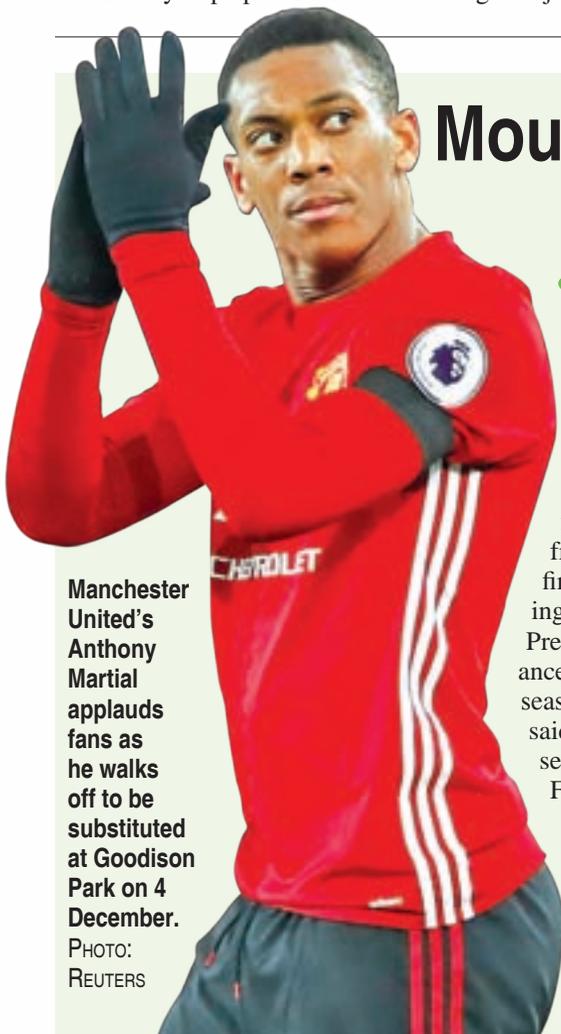
"The difference between the demands of the Premier League and the Ukrainian league, or even Bundesliga: complete different philosophy of play. And he worked a lot

without playing, but he worked a lot to try to reach the level."

United, who are sixth in the league, 13 points behind leaders Chelsea after 18 games, host 15th-placed Middlesbrough on Saturday.—*Reuters*



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho gestures after the Manchester United v Sunderland Premier League game at Old Trafford, on 26 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Manchester United's Anthony Martial applauds fans as he walks off to be substituted at Goodison Park on 4 December.

PHOTO: REUTERS