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# State Counsellor attends Kayin National New Year Day Ceremony

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor, addressed a celebration of Kayin New Year Day to ask for peace, cooperation and unity.

“Kayin New Year Day is the day for Kayin nationals to eat their first crop of the harvest. And it can be said that it is enjoying the fruits gained from saplings we planted. In Buddhism, it must be said of karma and its Karmic effect. Likewise, in the Holy Bible, it is said that — as you sow, so shall you reap,” Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said at the celebration held at the Myanmar International Convention Center 2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

She added “These are the

kinds of lessons we must take deeply in our minds for the sake of our country and our Union. As good deeds result in good benefits, it is necessary for us to know in our hearts that we must wholeheartedly contribute our labour to the interest of the Union. In the New Year, we can get an opportunity to refresh and revive our hopes. If bad things happened in the past year, the New Year gives us another opportunity for us make sure that these bad things do not happen again and to make sure that whatever good things happened in the past will gain more strength and be consolidated. It will be beneficial for us only if we understand how to use it.”



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addresses the celebration of Kayin New Year Day at the MICC 2 in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Kayin women perform a traditional Kayin dance at a Kayin New Year Day celebration yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

The Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw also used the occasion to appeal for peace and unity in the country.

“You all are urged to get rid of evil deeds in the previous year and concurrently to actively take part in building a peaceful and prosperous Federal Democratic Union with strength and purity in your minds, in the year to come,” said Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw.

He also urged all nationals living in Myanmar to try to “find the solution through the love, friendship and unity by taking lessons from this event. If we all worked hard to find a solution in unity, love and friendship, we are sure to gain the peace we all long for. As for Kayin nationals, it is necessary to continually strive for national development in unity, love and friendship, without forgetting the fact that they were able to successfully celebrate the Kayin National New Year Day in a grand manner by working in unity and friendship.”

If we all worked hard to find a solution in unity, love and friendship, we are sure to gain the peace we all long for.

As part of the celebrations yesterday, the State Counsellor toured the exhibitions of culture at the convention centre in commemoration of the Kayin National New Year Day.

Later in her address, the State Counsellor said the New Year was a chance to start fresh and plant the seeds of growth and unity,

“In building up a Union, we must firstly sow the seeds and nurture our cultivation collectively. Here I want to say that taking part just at the time of enjoying the benefits without contributing any labour to working such as

sowing, cultivating and harvesting is not the Union spirit. So we are required to take part through the whole process of sowing, cultivating and harvesting so that we can enjoy the benefits without fear from being criticized and blamed. I assert that enjoying the benefits without our efforts is the deed of indignity. If we want to enjoy the fruits of our Union we have built with unity and strength, we need to help by performing our duties we are assigned.”

“In our country, there are many national races with their own different new year days. On these New Year Days, their hopes revive and refresh again. It is natural for everyone to have expectations to accomplish their unfulfilled efforts in the New Year. Unless a hope is supplied with work done, fruits will never come. For our hopes to come into existence, we must exert our concerted efforts. I want to claim that it is a good omen for all of us to participate in this Kayin National New Year.

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# Kayin New Year festival held on a grand scale in National Races Village in Thaketa



Kayin nationals are performing to mark Kayin New Year Festival at National Races Village. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

A FESTIVAL marking the Kayin New Year for 2756 Kayin Era was held by the Organizing Committee for East Yangon Kayin New Year at the National Races Village in Thaketa in Yangon yesterday.

In the morning, Kayin nationals raised the flag of Kayin Nationals at the green of the Union Hall of the village before Buddhist Kayins offered meals to Buddhist monks at

their houses and Christian Kayins said New Year prayers and paid respects to elders at their houses at the National Races Village.

At 10 in the morning, the New Year ceremony started with the banging of the Auspicious Drum and water-buffalo horn was played before saluting the State Flag and the Kayin National Flag.

At the new year ceremony,

Phado Saw Tun Aung, member of the Union Peace Dialogues Joint Committee, delivered the opening address and read out the message of Yangon Region Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister Naw Pann Thinza Myo.

Then, the Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister Naw Pann Thinza Myo and Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister U Zaw Aye Maung delivered speeches at the ceremony.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt*

## Carrot growers in capital enjoy handsome profits

CARROT growers in Tatkon Township in Uttarathiri District in the capital Nay Pyi Taw received a good price for their product this season, according to local farmers.

Some carrot plantations which remained unchanged after the recent flood produced a good yield this year, a signifi-

cant increase compared with last year.

Different kinds of winter crops developed in villages located near Hsinthe Creek—Nweyit, Kyartheai, Hsinthe, Chonegyi, Ywaysu, Shweudaung, Paukpintha, Gwaybin, east and west Kinmuntan, Nyaungbintha, Shataw and

Yeaye—were destroyed by flooding that occurred in the second week of December.

Carrots, one of the winter crops, is traditionally cultivated in early November to generate a large and sweet crop which is sold in December.

“We sold five carrots for Ks150,” said grower U Myo Kyaw, who received Ks1.3 million from the sale of around 45,000 carrots this season.

The total expenses for an acre of carrots was around Ks180,000, including labour charges and agricultural costs.

Carrots are well suited for both traditional and container gardens.

Carrots are rich in vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, vitamin B8, pantothenic acid, folate, potassium, iron, copper, and manganese.—*Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)*



Carrot growers are packaging carrots for selling. PHOTO: THE MIRROR

## National objectives for the 69<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Residential land sells well in Ye township

FARMLAND has been converted into residential property in Ye township, Mon state, resulting in brisk sales.

“Previously, local people used to grow seasonal crops. They grew rubber, betel nut and lemon. But the local growers do not get a good price on indigenous crops. So the local people have moved out and changed their business,” said Daw Mee Chit, a realty agent.

Although agriculture is the

main industry in the township, the local people are investing in the banking system, tourism and trading sectors with the result that the residential lands are selling well.

In the downtown area, apartments are being sold for Ks400 million these days. Ten years ago, they were sold for only around Ks10 million. Flats out of town are available at a price of Ks10 million or more.—*The Mirror*



Apartments are seen in Ye township. PHOTO: THE MIRROR

## Myanmar maps distributed free by DPS

MYANMAR tourism maps are being distributed to tourists under the instruction of the Minister of Hotels and Tourism by the Design Printing Services Company (DPS).

The company is distributing the guide maps at Yangon airport, tourism exhibitions, embassies in Myanmar and Myanmar embassies abroad.

The map features popular locations of Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan, Nay Pyi Taw, Hpa-An and beach areas of the

country as well as hotels and restaurants.

The Design Printing Services Company has been printing maps since 1995 and has already distributed over 2.9 million copies.

Tour guides and tourism-related organisations can collect free maps from the Myanmar Travel and Tourism office near Sule Pagoda and Design Printing Service Company on 35th Street in Kyauktada township.—*200*



# Pyithu Hluttaw speaker clarifies parliament experience



Speaker U Win Myint shakes hands with the military representative of the Kayah State Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint clarified the measures for regional development and peace and his parliamentary experience to the representative of the Kayah State Hluttaw yesterday afternoon.

In his clarification, the speaker said that developed countries with high standards of education, health and social norms are those that have adopted democratic rules, but those that are suffering from woes of low economics, social, education and health standards are countries that have experienced dictatorships, and as a result, efforts are being made to build Myanmar into a modern and democratic union in accordance with the State Constitution.

Only when democratic rights

have been put in place can the rule of law be restored, the speaker said. Meanwhile, if the rule of law has been maintained, internal peace be achieved.

The three pillars of the state — legislative, justicial and administrative — are required to exercise their power in accordance with the existing laws to keep balance of power without interference.

He urged representatives to study the laws, rules and regulation related to the Hluttaw as questions and motions submitted at Hluttaw Sessions are necessary to support non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty.

The Hluttaw is ready to ac-

cept any motion and law if they are in the interest of the country, in accordance with international conventions signed by Myanmar and the people accept them regardless of who or which party submits them.

In conclusion, he urged the representatives to nurture magnanimity, forbearance, forgiveness, cooperation, mutual understanding and trust and to work together for the country and future generations.

The speaker also responded to questions raised by the representatives.

Later that day, the speaker inspected the site where the state Hluttaw building and housing for staff are being constructed.—*Myanmar News Agency*

## State Counsellor attends Kayin National New...

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Yet, we cannot rely wholly upon the good omen. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, as the saying goes. Thus, every day of the year will be new favourable ones for us if we contribute our efforts for the peace, stability, development and prosperity of the Union. And our descendants will enjoy the benefits of the seed of peace we planted. We must look forward to our future's benefits whatever we will do. A future is not meant only for a period of one, two or three years. As a political expert said, ultra-opportunist politicians need not think of the election to come, but to think in the interest of future generations. So, we must work hand in hand with each other by taking lessons given to us by the Kayin Nationals' very pleasant New Year occasion for our strengthened and prosperous Union."

Later in the programme, Saw Marble, a Kayin national, read out the message of the central committee for observing Kayin Era 2756 Kayin National New Year Day. Readings were later recited by Saw Thein Lar Yit in Myanmar language, in Poe Kayin (east), by Nan Hla Dewi, in Sakao Kayin, by Naw Tha Wei, in Poe Kayin (west) by Sa Phyo

Wai Kyaw.

Mahn Win Khaing Than, the presiding official, Kayin State Chief Minister and Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister were presented gifts by various organizations.

In a show of solidarity, Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw and responsible officials hoisted the Kayin National Symbol Flag at the ceremony held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre 2 in Nay Pyi Taw.

The ceremony came to a close after several groups provided entertainment for the attendees.

"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 respect and understanding among our brethren nationals. We hope our special wish for our saplings of peace planted this year will bring about the feast of eating the first crop of the harvest — Peace across the nation," said the State Counsellor in her message sent on the occasion of the Kayin New Year Day previous day.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Kayin dancers perform a traditional Kayin dance at a Kayin New Year Day celebration at the MICC 2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Traditional fighters take part in the traditional Letwai challenge fight marking the Kayin National New Year Festival at the Myanma Railway Football Playing Ground in Insein, Yangon. PHOTO: ZAW GYI (PANITA)

## Hoisting of flag in commemoration of Kayin National New Year

Zaw Gyi (Panita)

THE Kayin national flag and the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar were hoisted yesterday in commemoration of 2756 Kayin Era, Kayin National New Year, Sports Competitions and entertainment events were held at Maha Se Wingabar Ar Lein Nga Hsint monastery in Insein Township this morning.

At the monastery, the symbolic flag hoisting ceremony was held at 6 am yesterday, with the pomp and circumstance of Kay-

in traditional music with Phado Mahn Shwe Pyi Aye, chairman of the central committee for observing the ceremony of Maha Yangon Kayin National New Year Day. Those present at the ceremony saluted the Flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Kayin national flag.

Speeches, awarding of prizes to outstanding students, a competition of Kayin traditional ways to collect honey by removing a swarm of bees from hives and sports races were held.

The traditional boxing chal-

lenge fight marking the Kayin National New Year Festival was held at the Myanma Railway Football Playing Ground in Insein Township yesterday afternoon. Out of the nine three-round matches, only one ended in a draw. The audience took pleasure in the other eight matches because of the spirited competition. Prizes for Kayin traditional dances will be presented on December 30.

At the festival, the Kayin nationals' exhibition of culture, and news & information showroom was opened.

## Ammunition seized in Mongko and Mongngaw

WHILE conducting an area clearance operation near Mongko yesterday morning, government troops seized 10 hand grenades, one rocket, four cartridges for an M-22, 120 bullets and a walkie-talkie hidden in

a bush about three miles from Phoungsai Village.

On Wednesday evening, government troops found a motorcycle that was stopped by the road about 7,000 metres from Mongngaw and conducted an

investigation. While conducting the investigation, two men tried to escape from the scene. Government troops seized two improvised land mines and 20 feet of wire in a bush nearby.—*Myanmar News Agency*



# LOCAL Business

## Real Estate Services Law needed

THE formulation of a law concerning real estate services will play an important role in the real estate market to raise its head in 2017 and attract more foreign investments, Daw Moh Moh Aung, the general secretary of Myanmar Real Estate Services Association (Central).

Currently, the rental market is the most active in the Yangon real estate market. In keeping with international norms, granting licenses for real estate services are submitted to the government. The conflicts will be minimised in the presence of a license which can ensure the security of trade, she added.

"There are many undisciplined brokers in Myanmar real estate market. Our association offers real estate service courses to the members," Daw Moh Moh Aung said.

A solid law regarding the real estate market is also required and condominium rules are not yet formulated, although a draft law has been instituted, causing difficulties for foreign investors.

The Myanmar Real Estate Service Association has over 4,800 members across the nation, having been founded on 28th December, 2012.—*Soe Win (MLA)*

## Shan State Investment Fair to be held in February

IN a bid to enhance the economic sector in Shan State, the Myanmar Investment Commission and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will jointly hold a Shan State Investment Fair on 10th February, 2017 in Taunggyi, Southern Shan State, said an official from MIC.

"There will be investment discussions during this fair and both local and foreign businessmen will discuss which businesses are feasible to undertake in Shan State. Additionally, the investors will also conduct the state development activity," he continued.

Businessmen from China and Thailand will come to invest in construction and other businesses in Shan State, it is learnt.—200



Workers load goods onto a car at Bayintnaung Market in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

## Myanmar's economy will continue to grow in 2017

**Win Win Maw, Nandar Win**

MYANMAR's economy continues to boom and the GDP ratio is expected to pick up in 2017, but downside risks are emerging, said economic experts.

Myanmar is roaring ahead with the fast growing economy in Asia in 2016, according to the Asian Development Bank's Asian Development Outlook 2016.

"Myanmar's economy is likely to significantly improve in the coming year. More investments

are expected to quickly enter Myanmar with the new Myanmar Investment Law which will take effect in early 2017. Infrastructural building, especially the electrical supply, is required to be systematically conducted by private and government entities," said U Win Aung, the CEO of Dagon International Company Limited.

The average rate of Myanmar's economic growth was 7.8 per cent a year over the past five years. A long-term plan to drive Myanmar's economy is required

to keep up with the economically developed countries in Southeast Asia. "The government needs to effectuate the development in tourism service since Myanmar is rich in natural scenic beauty," said U Than Lwin, a senior consultant of Kanbawza Bank.

The challenges will surely follow the economic reform. Some laws still need to be amended, he added. "Concerted efforts need to be exerted by all stakeholders from all sectors. The government is implementing better economic

driven policies. What is most important that the economic guideline is needed to be on the right path," said U Ko Ko Htwe from Taw Win family Co., Ltd.

"While the government is making efforts to develop many sectors -- economy, peace movements, education and health -- public participation plays an important role. Myanmar's economy is likely to take off with international assistance in 2017," said U Ye Min Aung, the general secretary of Myanmar Rice Federation.

## CMP garment exports up by over US\$620million

GARMENT exports using the Cutting, Making and Packaging (CMP) method as of mid-December attained US\$1,157.374million, which is up from US\$629.709million in the similar period of last fiscal year, according to the Commerce Ministry.

Japan plays a key role in Myanmar's garment industry. Currently, Japan and countries in Europe are placing the largest number of orders. The value of garment exports to Japan fetched over \$550million last year. The number of orders from European countries is rising significantly. Japan ranked first in the garment export sector with 33 per cent of

exports, followed by Korea and Germany with 25 per cent. Additionally, garment exports also go to Chinese and American markets, it is learnt.

There are currently over 400 garment factories in Myanmar, with over 300,000 in its labour force.

The exported manufacturing goods as of 16th December in this fiscal year fetched US\$3,409.629million, according to the statistics of the Commerce Ministry.

The permitted investments by Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) in this fiscal year mostly flowed into garment man-



Employees work on a production line at a garment factory in Hlaingthaya, in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

ufacturing sector. MIC permitted foreign enterprises to invest in livestock and fisheries, manufacturing, power transport and communication, hotel and tourism, real estate and other services in this fiscal year, according

to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). A total of 78 foreign investment projects and 37 Myanmar citizen investment projects have been approved by MIC. — *Mon Mon*



# Philippines Duterte says no concern about China militarisation, manmade isles

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Thursday said the failure of the United States to thwart China's island-building in the South China Sea showed there was no serious concern about its militarisation or reclamation work.

The firebrand leader reiterated he wanted to avoid confrontation with China and saw no need for urgency in pressing it to abide by a July ruling by an international tribunal on its South China Sea claims that went in favour of the Philippines.

Asked during a television interview when he would address the issue, Duterte said it would happen "during my time" but he was not yet ready to discuss the ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague and neither was China.

He said he had no intention of aggressively pursuing the Philippine maritime claim and taking on China and the only power capable of doing so was the United States.

"I cannot let it pass and be neglected," he told CNN



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte points to photographers during an awarding ceremony for outstanding government workers, at the Malacanang Palace in Manila, Philippines, on 19 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Philippines, referring to the ruling that rejected China's extensive claims in the South China Sea.

"But are you ready to talk with me now? Because if you are not, I am not ready," he said, referring to China.

Duterte made a stunning U-turn in foreign policy a few months ago when he made overtures towards longtime rival China and started berating traditional ally the United States.

He has previously played down the arbitration case, saying it would "take

a back seat" during his talks in China in October.

He has frequently praised China and said he wants it to play a prominent role in his economy.

Duterte also played down concerns that China was militarising the South China Sea and appeared unperturbed by its dredging work and building activity on reefs, several of which were within Manila's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Asked if he was worried, he said. "No. Because if it was really a serious

concern, then the United States should lead the way and stop it.

"I said, right at the beginning, when the first spray of soil was tossed out to the area they (China) reclaimed, why did their (US) think-tank not think?"

Duterte said the one situation where he would take a stand against China was if it were to start exploiting natural resources within Philippine sovereign territory. He likened it to children bickering over inheritance.

The Philippines has within its EEZ deposits of oil and gas but lacks the expertise to exploit them. It has also been complicated by China laying claim to the same waters.

"When the minerals are already being siphoned out," he said when asked under what condition he would challenge China.

"(It's a) question of money. 'Wait a minute, I thought we're friends,'" he said.

"The wealth that comes out there, it is like inheritance when your father and mother dies, that is a mess."—Reuters

# China warns northern provinces to prepare for more heavy smog

SHANGHAI — China's environment ministry on Thursday warned northern regions to get ready for emergency action to tackle another bout of heavy smog expected over the New Year.

Large parts of the north were hit by hazardous smog in mid-December, and authorities ordered hundreds of factories to close and restricted motorists to cut emissions. "Unfavourable weather" was expected to bring more smog to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, as well as the neighbouring provinces of Shandong and Henan, the Ministry of Environmental Protection said in a notice.

Beijing has raised an orange alert for the period from Friday to Monday. An orange alert is the second-highest level in a four-tier pollution warning system.

The ministry said the bad weather was expected to last until 5 January, and it had asked local governments to take appropriate

action to reduce emissions.

It said it would send out 10 inspection teams to make sure emergency measures are implemented and to take action against firms engaging in "illegal behaviour".

Public anger over pollution, and what many see as government talk but little action to stop it, is mounting in China. Worry about pollution has on occasion sparked protests.

A smog red alert in Beijing was cancelled on 22 December. The next day, the ministry admonished more than 20 firms for failing to comply with emergency rules aimed at cutting emissions.

Hebei, regarded as China's most polluted province, said it would learn lessons from last week's smog and draw up more "focused measures".

The province's environment bureau said on Monday it would make adjustments to its emergency system to improve its performance.—Reuters

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# Bangladesh police detail suspicions of inside help in central bank heist

DHAKA — A top investigator into the electronic theft of \$81 million from the Bangladesh central bank is turning his attention to some IT technicians from the bank whom he suspects hooked up its transactions system to the public Internet, giving hackers access.

In a series of interviews this month, Mohammad Shah Alam, a Bangladesh police deputy inspector general who is heading investigations in Dhaka, went into some detail about how insiders at Bangladesh Bank may have helped in the execution of one of the world's biggest cyber-heists last February.

For instance, Alam said he was focusing on why a password token protecting the SWIFT international transactions network at Bangladesh Bank was left inserted in the SWIFT server for months leading up to the heist. It is supposed to be removed and locked in a secure vault after business hours each day.

The failure to remove the token allowed hackers to enter the system when it was not being monitored,



Commuters walk in front of the Bangladesh central bank building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 30 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

first to infect it with malware and then to issue fake transfer orders, he said. Alam's comments follow months of assertions by Bangladesh authorities that central bank officials were guilty of nothing more than negligence in the heist, in which hackers moved money out of the bank's account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and sent it to individual accounts in the Philippines.

Reuters could not independently confirm Alam's

claims. He declined to name any of the suspects.

No one has been arrested and Alam did not provide any further evidence to back up his assertions. Bangladesh Bank spokesman Subhankar Saha declined comment on the investigation. He said the bank has not been told of any plans to detain any of its employees.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation, among the agencies involved, had no comment on Alam's claims.

Interpol was not available for comment.

A spokeswoman for SWIFT declined to comment.

Nearly 11 months since the audacious robbery that undermined confidence in the global SWIFT transactions system and sent tremors through the global financial community, there is no sign if any of the half-a-dozen investigating agencies involved are close to cracking the case.—Reuters



## Philippine leader says once threw man from helicopter, would do it again

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened corrupt government officials with the prospect of being thrown out of a helicopter mid-air, warning he has done it himself before and had no qualms about doing it again.

The fiery-tempered former prosecutor said he once hurled a Chinese man suspected of rape and murder out of a helicopter.

“If you are corrupt, I will fetch you using a helicopter to Manila and I will throw you out. I have done this before, why would I not do it again?” Duterte said during a speech to victims of a typhoon on Tuesday, a clip of which is posted on a video feed of the president’s office.

Duterte’s latest threat comes just a few weeks after he admitted killing people during his 22 years

as a mayor of Davao City, sometimes riding a motorcycle looking for “encounters to kill”. Some senators have warned Duterte he risks impeachment over his comments.

He has repeatedly said those killings were part of legitimate police operations, including a hostage incident, and those killed were criminals, not suspects.

It was not immediately clear when or where the helicopter incident Duterte spoke of took place.

In an interview on Thursday with the ABS-CBN news channel, Duterte was non-committal when asked if the incident really happened.

“Helicopter to throw a person?” he asked. “And if that is true, I will not admit it.”

His spokesman, Ernesto Abella, suggested earlier the story

was an “urban legend”.

Duterte also said six people arrested last week during a seizure of more than half a tonne of methamphetamine, known locally as “shabu”, in the capital were fortunate he was out of town.

“They were lucky I was not in Manila that time. If I had known there were that much shabu inside a house, I would definitely kill you,” he said.

“Let’s not make any drama, I will personally gun you down if nobody else will do it.”

The United Nations’ top human rights envoy has called for an investigation into Duterte’s claims of killing people, to which Duterte last week responded by calling him “stupid”, an “idiot” and a “son of a bitch” who should go back to school.—Reuters



Then-local mayor of Davao city Rodrigo Duterte (R), aboard a helicopter, arrives at the provincial capitol in Tagum city, Davao del Norte, southern Philippines for the Regional Peace and Order Council meeting, on 20 April, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Five killed in attack in China’s restive Xinjiang — state media

BEIJING — Attackers drove a vehicle into a government building in China’s unruly far western region of Xinjiang, setting off an explosive device and using knives to kill two people before all three of the assailants were shot dead, state media said on Thursday.

Hundreds of people have been killed in recent years in resource-rich Xinjiang, on the borders of central Asia, in violence between the Muslim Uighur people who call the region home and ethnic majority Han Chinese.

The government has blamed the unrest on Islamist militants, though rights groups and exiles say anger at Chinese controls on the religion and culture of Uighurs is more to blame for the unrest. China denies any repression in Xinjiang.

The Xinjiang government said in a short statement on its

main news website the incident occurred just before 5 pm (0900 GMT) on Wednesday in Karakax county, deep in southern Xinjiang’s Uighur heartland.

It said “thugs” drove a vehicle into a yard at the county Communist Party offices and detonated an “explosive device”.

The official Xinhua news agency, citing the Ministry of Public Security, later said all three of the attackers were shot dead, but not before they killed a security guard and a government official and wounded three others.

Xinhua described the incident as a “terrorist attack”, and said the attackers also used knives.

The Xinjiang government previously said there were four attackers and that they had only killed one person.

It is difficult for foreign journalists to report in Xinjiang, mak-

ing it almost impossible to reach an independent assessment of security there.

Dilxat Raxit, a spokesman for the exiled group the World Uyghur Congress, said he doubted the official account.

“I strongly doubt the casualty toll and reason for the incident from official reports, which lack transparency,” he said in an emailed statement.

The government has delayed reporting some previous incidents.

An attack on a coal mine in September last year, in which at least 16 died, was not reported by the government until two months later, when it announced its security forces had killed 28 of the “terrorists” involved.

Xinjiang had generally been quiet this year, with no major reported attacks or other violent incidents.—Reuters

## Head of Japan’s largest ad agency resigns over ‘death by overwork’

TOKYO — The president of Dentsu Inc, Japan’s largest advertising agency, will step down over the “death by overwork” of a young employee, a suicide which has prompted official probes and fresh hand-wringing over Japan’s overtime culture.

Matsuri Takahashi, a promising graduate of Japan’s top university, leapt to her death in December 2015, leaving behind a trail of grievances over relentless days. She clocked 105 hours of overtime in October 2015, before becoming depressed.

Her death, deemed by the government to be “karoshi” or death by overwork, has prompted raids on Dentsu offices, but has also been followed by Japan’s first white paper on the issue.

That study found that in a country that imposes few limits on employers regarding overtime hours and pay, more than a fifth of companies had staff that worked more than 80 hours of overtime in a month — the government threshold. “It is extremely regrettable that we could not prevent overwork by a new recruit,” Dentsu President Tadashi Ishii told a news conference.

“In order to take full responsibility, I would like to resign as president at a board meeting in January,” Ishii said Dentsu and a company employee had been referred to prosecutors by the Japanese labour ministry’s Tokyo labour bureau on suspicion of violating labour standards law.

Dentsu said it had not yet decided on a replacement for Ishii.

Ishii’s resignation comes as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing a wide-reaching cam-

paign to reform Japan’s employment laws, which could include tighter overtime regulation.

Hard work and sacrifice have long been synonymous with Japan, and strong social expectations make it difficult for employees and unions to aggressively push for reforms. Workers often feel a debt of gratitude for being hired and are reluctant to quit even if conditions are bad. Others, especially new hires, feel they have to work longer hours than their colleagues to get promoted. “The problem is not with Dentsu alone,” the *Asahi Shimbun*, the country’s second-largest newspaper by circulation, said in an editorial on Thursday.

Noting that the newspaper itself had received an overwork warning from the government this month, the *Asahi* described the matter as “a difficult issue but a theme that relates to raising employees’ morale and productivity and improving companies’ profitability.”

Takahashi’s mother, Yukimi, said in a statement released to media by her lawyers on Sunday, that she wanted to “change the consciousness of every working person in Japan.” The statement was released on the one-year anniversary of her daughter’s death.

In recent years, the government has revised labour laws to encourage shorter working hours, but critics say these steps have relied too much on self-regulation.

Japan officially recognises two types of karoshi: death from cardiovascular illness linked to overwork, and suicide following work-related mental stress.—Reuters

## South Korea prosecutor seeks arrest warrant for pension fund chief

SEOUL — South Korean prosecutors investigating an influence-peddling scandal that has engulfed President Park Geun-hye said on Thursday they are seeking a warrant to arrest the head of the national pension fund, the world’s third-largest.

The special prosecutor’s office said National Pension Service Chairman Moon Hyung-pyo had acknowledged that he had pressured the fund to approve an \$8 billion merger between two Samsung Group [SAGR.UL] units last year while he was head of the health ministry, reversing an earlier public denial.

Moon has been under emergency detention since early on

Wednesday.

He had denied during a parliamentary hearing in November that he had exerted pressure on the NPS, which is run by the health ministry, to back the merger.

The NPS has also denied that Moon, 60, had exerted pressure on it to approve the deal. It declined to comment on Thursday.

The merger last year of Samsung Group affiliates Cheil Industries Inc and Samsung C&T Corp has become central to the investigation of the scandal that led parliament to vote this month to impeach Park.

“What we can say is former

minister Moon initially denied the charge (of pressuring NPS) but acknowledged that he ordered NPS to vote for the merger at the time when he was the minister,” said Lee Kyu-chul, spokesman for the special prosecution team.

Lee declined to provide further details on why Moon had ordered the NPS to support the merger.

The special prosecutor said it had applied to a court for a warrant to arrest Moon on charges of abuse of power and giving false testimony. The Seoul Central District Court would hear the warrant request on Friday, it said.—Reuters



# Asked about Russia sanctions, Trump says 'we ought to get on with our lives'

PALM BEACH, ( Fla.) — US President-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday suggested that the United States and Russia lay to rest the controversy over Moscow's computer hacking of Democratic Party computers, saying, "We ought to get on with our lives."

Trump has cast doubt on the findings of US intelligence agencies that Russian hackers took information from Democratic Party computers and individuals and posted it online to help Trump win the election.

The Obama administration plans to announce on Thursday a series of retaliatory measures against Russia for hacking into US political institutions and individuals and leaking information, two US officials said on Wednesday.

Asked by reporters if the United States should sanction Russia, Trump replied: "I think we ought to get on with our lives. I think that computers have complicated lives very greatly. The whole age of computer has made it where nobody knows exactly what's going on."

Trump made his remarks at Mar-a-Lago, his seaside Florida resort where he is spending the Christmas and New Year's holidays while also interviewing candidates for administration jobs.



US President-elect Donald Trump delivered brief remarks to reporters at the Mar-a-lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida, US, on 28 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump said he was not familiar with remarks earlier on Wednesday by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who said Russia and President Vladimir Putin should expect tough sanctions for the cyber attacks.

"We have speed. We have a lot of other things but I'm not sure you have the kind of security that you need. But I have not spoken with the senators and I certainly will be over a period of time," he said.—Reuters

## EU voters upset but say no inclination to follow Brexit — poll

LONDON — European Union voters in France, Germany, Italy and Greece think their countries are heading in the wrong direction but there is not yet any Europe-wide inclination to follow Britain towards exiting the bloc, according to a poll published on Thursday.

Britain's shock 23 June Brexit vote, which was praised at the time by then US presidential candidate Donald Trump as a "miracle", has raised questions about the future of post-World War II attempts at European integration.

After Brexit and Trump's victory in the United States, investors are watching for any sign that popular discontent is on the rise ahead of 2017 elections in France and Germany, and a likely vote in Italy.

A WIN/Gallup International online survey of 14,969 people showed voters were unhappy across the European Union but that support for the EU remained above 60 per cent in most of the biggest member states.

The poll showed 89 per cent of voters in Greece thought their country was heading in the wrong direction.

In France the figure was 82 per cent, Italy 79 per cent and Germany 62 per cent.

While EU voters are clearly discontented, there was only a small rise in the number of people who would vote for an exit: 36 per cent from 33 per cent across the 15 European countries including Britain that were surveyed.

The percentage of people in Germany, France and Belgium who would vote to leave fell from a year ago.

Finland and Greece saw an increase in support for leaving, up to 40 per cent from 29 per cent and to 46 per cent from 38 per cent respectively.

"2016 saw the EU foundations severely shaken," said Johnny Heald, managing director of ORB International, who did the UK polling. "What stands out is the overwhelming view from EU citizens that their countries are heading in the wrong direction - most noticeable in France and Greece — which makes fertile ground for right-wing populist parties."

Across Europe, 60 per cent said they would like to have fewer migrants and refugees. In Greece, 86 per cent wanted



A cyclist wears a pro-Brexit badge on her Union flag themed helmet outside the Supreme Court on the first day of the challenge against a court ruling that Theresa May's government requires parliamentary approval to start the process of leaving the European Union, in Parliament Square, central London, Britain, on 5 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

fewer while in Italy the figure was 75 per cent and in Germany 64 per cent.

The survey was carried out 25 November to 7 December before the 19 December truck attack on a crowded Christmas market in Berlin.

The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which was created three years ago in opposition to euro zone bailouts, laid the blame on German Chancellor Angela Merkel.—Reuters

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### No joint operation between Russia and Turkey in Syria's al-Bab —Turkey

ISTANBUL — There is no joint operation between Turkey and Russia against Islamic State in Syria's al-Bab, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday.

Cavusoglu also told broadcaster A Haber that the United States was not giving air support to the Turkey-backed operation in Syria due to pressure from the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia.—Reuters

#### Two migrants die in traffic accident in Serbia's south — police

BELGRADE — Two Afghan migrants were killed and another 10 were injured in a traffic accident in southern Serbia on Thursday when a passenger car crammed with people swerved off the road and hit a safety barrier, the interior ministry said.

The driver, a suspected smuggler, fled the scene, while all the injured were transported to the hospital in the nearby city of Nis, 200 kilometres (124 miles) south of Belgrade, the ministry said in a statement.

Serbia was a focal point for migrants last year, when hundreds of thousands fleeing wars and poverty in the Middle East and Asia travelled up through the Balkans to reach wealthy Western Europe.

Although that route was closed off in March, Serbian authorities estimate a further 110,000 migrants have passed through the country, many using smugglers to travel across Serbia and cross its barbed-wire border with Hungary. On Monday, Serbian authorities arrested three men on suspicion of people trafficking after 77 migrants were found hidden in cargo vehicles. According to the UN refugee agency, around 7,000 migrants are stranded in camps in Serbia.—Reuters

#### Floods in Congo kill at least 50: report

NEW YORK — Flooding this week in the Democratic Republic of Congo port city of Boma killed at least 50 people and left another 10,000 homeless, Reuters news agency reported Wednesday.

Torrential rain on Monday night caused the Kalamu River to overflow, flooding two districts of the southwestern city, Therese-Louise Mambu, health minister for Kongo Central province, was quoted as saying. "The damage is very serious," she said. "We continue to look for other bodies."—Kyodo News

#### Parliament concludes regular autumn session

BELGRADE — The Serbian parliament on Wednesday concluded its regular autumn session by passing a series of bills.

It passed bills amending the law on the salary system for public sector employees as well as the laws on public media services and provisional regulation of the method of collecting subscription fees for the public media service. The bills passed also include those amending the capital market law and the laws on takeovers of joint-stock companies, on public property, excise duties, VAT, tax procedures and the tax administration, and bills amending the customs law and the law on real estate appraisers.—Tanjung

#### China says to hold first military drills with Nepal next year

BEIJING — China will hold its first military drills with Nepal next year, China's Defence Ministry said on Thursday, in a move that could unnerve neighbouring India.

China is vying to increase its influence in landlocked Nepal, which serves as a natural buffer between China and India, challenging India's long-held position as the dominant outside power.

While China and India have tried to improve ties, a festering border dispute and deep mutual suspicions remain.

Speaking at a monthly news conference, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun said that China and Nepal's militaries had in recent years had many forms of exchanges.

China and Nepal had been in "initial communication" about joint army exercises, and details would be announced in due time, Yang said without giving details. The ministry said on its website this would be the first joint military exercises between the two countries. Authorities have said that the recently delivered Russian S-300 surface-to-air defence system and locally made missiles, as well as radar and electronic warfare equipment, are among weapons tested in the war games stretching over three southern provinces.—Reuters



# Opinion

## Write for us

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## Aid should aim at easing tensions between the two communities

Aye Min Soe

**H**UMANITARIAN aid is welcome, but it must be provided through proper channel.

The Union Government is making effort to address the Rakhine State issue, including the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Buddhist and Muslim communities in northern Rakhine State in cooperation with UN agencies.

At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' retreat in Yangon on 19 December, the Government of Myanmar reiterated its readiness to grant necessary humanitarian access and to keep ASEAN members informed of developments in

Rakhine State.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers welcomed the steps taken by Myanmar to address the challenges in the Rakhine State and expressed willingness of their countries to help with humanitarian and developmental assistance.

Currently, aid is flowing into the conflict areas in northern Rakhine State, where several border police outposts were attacked by insurgents on 9 October, leading to the deaths of nine border guards and an ensuing series of skirmishes between the Tatmadaw and violent attackers

However, regarding the sending of humanitarian aid to conflict areas, permission should be sought from the Union Government, showing respect for the sovereignty of the country.

For example, aid from the organization Indio-X from Indonesia, a member of the ASEAN group, was sent to the Rakhine State in cooperation with the regional government.

At a time when the government is making concerted effort to promote peaceful co-existence and harmony among the communities, plans to send a "food flotilla" to the

Rakhine State without permission from the Myanmar government are unacceptable.

There are many questions to be asked about the conduct, true nature and objectives of the flotilla organizers.

In fact, religion is not a tool for politics and should not be used as such.

Aid should aim at easing tensions between the two communities in the Rakhine State and aid groups should try to provide aid relief in transparency and in accordance with the law. The issues in the Rakhine State are complex -- there is no reason to make it more complicated.

# Returning the Gratitude to Alma Mater

Dr. Nyan Tun

(Continues from 28-12-2016)

While listening to the admonition, I recalled the historical background of our Sasana University and now it has reached three decades by serving the welfare of the nation. We really pay respect and thank all responsible persons both senior respected Venerable Sirs who are foremost and far sighted for the future of Buddhasasana and leaders of the authority and people who supported and gave their hands.

All orders of Sangha in Myanmar are united together under the organization of State Samghamahanayaka Committee and the committee adopted new education policy for Buddhist monks and formulated major objectives to implement the policy so that the new education system should meet the challenges of the future among international social and religious affairs. Therefore, State Pariyatti Sasana Universities were established for the nation as well as for Buddha Sasana.

Once, A.P.J Abdul Kalam, the late president of the Republic of India said, "Dream, dream, dream; Dreams transform into thought; And thought into action." As mentioned earlier, the

one who had a dream to upgrade the monastic education into modern world was none other than U Kyaw Lwin, the late Director-General of Department for Promotion and Propagation of Sasana (DPPS). He was the one who founded that department and he was really the great reformer for the history of Myanmar Sangha and to carry out his dream, he toured the entire country up and down explaining the project of establishment of Sasana University to the chief monks to big learning centers (Sarthintaik in Myanmar) from door to door for referendum and the consent of high priests of those centers. The high priest of the centers gave divergence views on about his dreams so the university was born under criticisms.

The other one who made the dream do come true is the Late Most Respected Venerable Tipitakadharadhammabandagarika Mingun Sayadawgyis who was second to none in the history of Myanmar Buddhism in the 20th century. The Sate Samghamahanayaka Committee gave the great task to him to build the necessary buildings and fund collecting. Ven.Mingun Sayadawgyi and his Tipitaka Nikaya Mission accepted the great task for the sake of Buddha Sasana

and the welfare of the new generation as well as the people. The mission that the late Ven. Mingun Sayadawgyi performed could not be measured and he was the only one in the history of Theravada Buddhism who acted as Respondent in the Sixth Great Council held in Myanmar in 1952. He was the first ever Vice-Chancellor of the university and General Secretary of State Samghamahanayaka Committee. One of the objectives of the opening Sasana University is 'to bring up morally educated monks who are able to do their missionary work at home and abroad.'

Under the management of Tipitaka Nikayaka Mission the new buildings for Sasana University appeared where it is situated near Kaba-Aya Pagoda within a short time just as created by Visukamma (Vithakyun in Myanmar). The academic year of the University commenced in June, 1986 and it has been running its career for three decades and has been producing many renowned, reliable and morally young monks for Buddha Sasana.

The Universities have conferred graduate monks for 22nd times and according to the record, it had been producing over 1980 graduate monks, 397 post

graduate monks and 10 research scholars who held PhD. All the products over 2300 educated Sasana resources are serving the welfare and happiness of the nation at home and abroad. The jobs that they are carrying out are successful in every sector for they have been trained both theory and practical method at the Universities so they are really reliable and trustworthy persons for the future of Buddha Sasana.

Now, the university campus is like a garden attracting everyone who visits it. We come to know that when the university was opened, some Samgha and people who had orthodox view criticized it but within one decade many learned and educated young monks were produced and those monks who were trained systematically could perform every affairs if they are given the chances and they are warmly welcomed where they go and whatever they do. This is one of the keys for their success due to a practical mission method they have learned at the university.

The monks have to study both theory and practice in the files of meditation at Mahasi meditation Center. In addition, they have to attend an intensive medical training course: western

and traditional medical aid. Information and technology play the most important role in our daily life so IT knowledge also is providing the monk students. Thus, the university provides knowledge what they should know because they have to serve the welfare and happiness of the people at the hill regions and border areas as well as in abroad.

I would like to conclude my article with the message given by Ven. Tilokabhivamsa to his disciples at the function. He kept on saying 'now, we really need the future architects for our country. The future Sasana of the country depends on you, the new generation monks. As one of Zaw Gyi's poems urges the nation especially young people 'be farsighted as well as pursuit knowledge. You are the noble and great sons who are going to lead the country.

To be good and reliable architects you must be farsighted and love wisdom. Only if you have wide knowledge, you can differentiate between the good and bad, true and false, pros and cons. Now, in every corner of the world, it is crucial time for us to protect our nation and religion so finally, I would like to wish you to be good architects for the future.'

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## Three million visitors to Kyaikhtiyo expected in 2017: Hoteliers



Kyaikhtiyo pagoda is seen precariously located on a stone. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

VISITORS to Kyaikhtiyo, the legendary pagoda on the golden rock, are likely to reach about 3 million next year, according to the Myanmar Hoteliers Association.

This year, about 2.7 million travellers from Myanmar and abroad visited the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda in Kyaikhto Township, Mon State.

The Union government prohibited the development of new hotels near the pagoda even though there are insufficient tourist accommodations, a hotel ser-

vice business operator said.

Currently, there are a total of about 320 rooms near the pagoda in the Mountain Top Hotel, Yoe Yoe Lay Hotel and Kyaikto Hotel.

Tour companies have cancelled tour plans because of accommodation problems during the high season. Between 100 and 300 Thai nationals visit the pagoda daily.

The Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda, a well-known Buddhist pilgrimage site and popular tourist attraction

in Mon State, is about 160km from Yangon. It is situated on a rocky mountain over 3,600 ft above sea level.

Tourism in Myanmar is growing rapidly. International tourist arrivals increase significantly every year. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism predicts that tourist arrivals in the country are likely to reach around 7.5 million by 2020, with plans to spend about US\$500 million on tourism development from now until 2020.—200

## All applicants will be sold low-cost apartments

LOW-COST apartments being built by the urban and housing development department in the Mya Yee Nanda ward, Chan Mya Tharzi township, Mandalay will be available to all applicants on a rotational basis, said U Aung Kyaw Oo, director of Urban and Housing Development Department.

A total of 560 apartments have already been constructed in Mandalay. The authorities will sell them according to a lucky draw on 4 January. The authorities plan to build 8,600 additional apartments in the next three years.

"We will build the new apartments to be able to sell them to all applicants. But we will not accept new applications any more. We have kept

the applications in the computer safely," he added.

"There are over 13,000 people who have submitted applications for buying a house. Most of the applicants are public staff, retired service personnel, private company staff and low-income public. I want them to save the money within three years to be able to buy a house," he added.

The authorities will accept new applications only after current applicants have all bought apartments. Starting in 2017-2018, authorities will build new houses depending on the budget.

"I want to buy an apartment as soon as possible because I have to retire after three years," said one applicant.—Aung Thant Khine

## Book fairs to be conducted on a regular basis starting in 2017

SEVERAL book fairs are planned for Yangon on a regular basis starting next year, said U Myint Tun, secretary of Myanmar Publishers and Booksellers Association.

Beginning on 7 January, regular book sales will be held in front of the Central Printing Factory of the Printing and Publishing Department on Yangon's Theinbyu Road and nearby areas every weekend under the leadership of the Ministry of Information.

Not only new books but old books, including rare

ones, will be sold at the events under the new programme, said U Myint Tun who said it was difficult to predict the exact number of participating shops.

Literature organisations and book shops are now negotiating the exact timings, which are not set yet, he added.

Raising the reading habits of the general public, especially among young people, and promoting the country's literacy sector are the aim of the book fairs, according to event organizers.—200

## Yesagyo farmers suffer losses due to poor onion harvest

LOCAL onion growers are facing losses as the prices as well as production of the onion crop dropped dramatically this year in Yesagyo Township in Pakokku District, Magway Region, farmers say.

After a high amount of rain-

fall this year, onion plantations were destroyed. An acre of one onion field produced only 105 visses this year. Last year, an acre of plantation manufactured over 1,700 visses.

Despite low production in the region, the prices of onion

continued to decline. However, growers expected that the prices of onion are likely to increase in the next 10 days.

Currently, a viss of onion was sold for Ks600 at the most, said U San Yu, a local wholesale dealer.—Ei Mon Swe (Yesagyo)

## Crime NEWS

### Vehicle accidents on Yangon-Mandalay Highway

A Probox hit a tree on the road divider because of a flat tire of left front wheel before it reached the opposite lanes of the highway at

2:40 am on 29 December.

The Probox was en route from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon when it hit the road divider be-

tween mileposts 177/5 and 177/6 on Yangon-Mandalay Highway. There were no casualties reported. Thagara Highway Police have filed charges against the reckless driver under section 279 of the Penal Code.

In addition, a Toyota Fielder driven by Hein Htet Aung side-swiped a Yar Zar Tun Express bus driven by Toe Win en route from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw between mileposts 85/3 and 85/4 at 11:40 pm on 28 December. There were no passengers injured but both vehicles were slightly damaged in the accident. Myo Chaung Highway Police filed charges against both drivers under section 279 of the Penal Code.—Than Oo (Lemyethnar)



Police are inspecting scene of accident on Ygn-Mdy highway. PHOTO: MPF

## Stimulants seized in Lashio



Sai Lon together with Ma Nan Aye Lawn. PHOTO: MPF

Members of anti-narcotic suppression squad unit 24 from Lashio searched a motorcycle driven by Sai Lon together with Ma Nan Aye Lawn on board near an old cement plant on the Lashio-Tangyang road on 28 December. The combined team arrested

Sai Lon, 42, and Ma Nan Aye Lawn, 30, as they were found in possession of 5,960 stimulant tablets and Ks13 lakh. Police have filed charges against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force



# Iraqi forces launch second phase of Mosul offensive against Islamic State

MOSUL, (Iraq) — Iraqi security forces on Thursday began the second phase of their offensive against Islamic State militants in Mosul, pushing into some eastern districts where the battle has been in deadlock for nearly a month. Thousands of federal police troops who redeployed from Mosul's southern outskirts two weeks ago also pushed into a handful of southeastern districts, state television reported.

"This is the second phase of the operation to liberate Mosul conducted by the special forces, the federal police and us on this front," General Nejm Jabouri, a senior army commander, told Reuters in a village just north of Mosul.

Since the offensive to capture Mosul began nine weeks ago, counter-terrorism forces have retaken a quarter of the city, the militants' last major stronghold in Iraq, but their advance has been slow and punishing. They entered a planned "operational refit" earlier this month, the first significant pause of the campaign.

An officer from an elite Interior Ministry unit said on Thursday it was advancing



Members of Hashid Shaabi or Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) fire towards Islamic State militant positions in west of Mosul, Iraq, on 28 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

alongside counter-terrorism forces in Mosul's Intisar district, where army troops advised by US forces had made little progress.

"Our troops now are advancing. In the first five or 10 minutes they took 500 me-

tres. Just now they are starting to shoot," the officer said. A plume of white smoke, likely from an air strike, rose from a southeastern district on Thursday morning while at the northern front heavy gunfire was audible and a

suicide car bomb was disabled by the Iraqi army before reaching its target. The battle for Mosul involving 100,000 Iraqi troops, members of the Kurdish security forces and Shi'ite militiamen, is the biggest ground operation

in Iraq since the US-led invasion of 2003 that toppled Saddam Hussein.

US commanders have said in recent weeks that US military advisers, part of an international coalition fighting Islamic State, will embed

more extensively with Iraqi forces.

Some of them were seen behind the front lines on Thursday, watching over the operations. The coalition bombed the last remaining bridge connecting the eastern and western parts of Mosul late on Monday in a bid to make it more difficult for Islamic State to redeploy and resupply its fighters across the Tigris River.

"The enemy is currently isolated inside the left (eastern) bank of Mosul," Yahia Rassol, a military spokesman, said on state TV. "In the coming days, Iraqi forces will liberate the entire left bank of Mosul and after that we will tackle the right."

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.

Mosul, the largest city held by Islamic State anywhere across its once vast territorial holdings in Iraq and neighbouring Syria, has been held by the group since its fighters drove the US-trained Iraqi army out in June 2014.—Reuters

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Dated 30<sup>th</sup> December 2016

## Russia announces ceasefire in Syria from midnight

MOSCOW/ANKARA — Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a ceasefire between Syrian opposition groups and the Syrian government starting at midnight on Thursday.

The Kremlin statement came after Moscow, Iran and Turkey said they were ready to broker a peace deal in the nearly six-year-old Syrian war.

The Syrian army announced a nationwide halt to fighting but said Islamic State and ex-Nusra Front militants and all groups linked to them would be excluded from the deal. It did not say which unnamed groups would be excluded.

Several rebel offi-

cials told Reuters they had agreed to the ceasefire plan, but there was uncertainty over which groups were included in the deal, which was due to come into effect at 2200 GMT on Thursday.

Talks on a ceasefire picked up momentum after Russia, Iran and Turkey last week said they were ready to back a deal and adopted a declaration setting out principles that any agreement should adhere to.

Putin said Syrian opposition groups and the Syrian government had signed a number of documents including the ceasefire that would take effect at midnight on the night of 29-30 December.

"The agreements reached are, of course, fragile, need a special attention and involvement... But after all, this is a notable result of our joint work, efforts by the defence and foreign ministries, our partners in the regions," Putin said. He also said that Russia had agreed to reduce its military deployment in Syria.

The United States has been sidelined in recent negotiations and is not due to attend the next round of peace talks in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan, a key Russian ally.

Its exclusion reflects growing frustration from both Turkey and Russia over Washington's policy

on Syria, officials have said. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the United States could join the peace process once President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Talks towards a ceasefire to end the conflict reflect the complexity of Syria's civil war, with an array of groups and foreign interests involved on all sides.

The deal by Turkey and Russia to act as guarantors in the war comes despite their support of different sides in the civil war. Ankara has insisted on the departure of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is backed by Russia.—Reuters

## Islamic State supporters call for more holiday attacks in Europe

CAIRO — A pro-Islamic State group on Wednesday urged supporters of the jihadists to carry out attacks on targets such as markets and hospitals in Europe over the Christmas holiday period and urged Muslims to stay away from Christian celebrations.

The threat came as European authorities have stepped up security following an attack claimed

by Islamic State in which a truck ploughed into crowds in a Berlin Christmas market and killed 12 people this month.

The Nashir Media Foundation, which backs Islamic State, posted its message online, accompanied by images of fighters with guns and knives, Santa Claus, reindeer and a Christmas tree, according to the US-based SITE Intelligence Group,

which monitors militant groups online.

"Their celebrations, gatherings, clubs, markets, theatres, cinemas, malls and even their hospitals are all perfect targets for you," the online message to Islamist "lone wolves" in Europe said.

It said Islamic State would "replace their fireworks with explosive belts and devices, and turn their

singing and clapping into weeping and wailing".

The message reminded Islamic State supporters of a call earlier this month by the group's new spokesman, Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajer, who said they should also attack Turkish consulates and embassies. Turkey may have been chosen as a target because it has backed rebels in Syria against Islamic State.—Reuters



## After states legalised medical marijuana, traffic deaths fell

NEW YORK — Legalisation of medical marijuana is not linked with increased traffic fatalities, a new study finds. In some states, in fact, the number of people killed in traffic accidents dropped after medical marijuana laws were enacted.

“Instead of seeing an increase in fatalities, we saw a reduction, which was totally unexpected,” said Julian Santaella-Tenorio, the study’s lead author and a doctoral student at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health in New York City.

Since 1996, 28 states have legalised marijuana for medical use.

Deaths dropped 11 per cent on average in states that legalised medical marijuana, researchers discovered after analyzing 1.2 million traffic fatalities nationwide from 1985 through 2014.

The decrease in traffic fatalities was particularly striking — 12 per cent — in 25- to 44-year-olds, an age group with a large percentage of registered medical marijuana users, the authors report in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Though Santaella-Tenorio was surprised by the drop in traffic deaths, the results mirror the findings of another study of data from 19 states published in 2013 in *The Journal of Law and Economics*. It showed an 8 to 11 per cent decrease in traffic fatalities during the first full year after legalisation of medical marijuana.

“Public safety doesn’t decrease with increased access to marijuana, rather it improves,” Benjamin Hansen, one of the authors of the previous study, said in an email. Hansen, an economics



Marijuana plants for sale are displayed at the medical marijuana farmers market at the California Heritage Market in Los Angeles, California, in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

professor at the University of Oregon in Eugene, was not involved in the current study.

He cautioned that both marijuana and alcohol are drugs that can impair driving.

It’s not clear why traffic deaths might drop when medical marijuana becomes legal, and the study can only show an association; it can’t prove cause and effect.

The authors of both studies suggest that marijuana users might be more aware of their impairment as a result of the drug than drinkers. It’s also possible, they say, that patients with access to medical marijuana have substituted weed at home for booze in bars and have

stayed off the roads. Or, they suggest, the drop in traffic fatalities could stem from other factors, such as an increased police presence following enactment of medical marijuana laws.

Law-enforcement authorities have yet to devise a way to test drivers for marijuana intoxication, and have raised concerns about drivers high on cannabis.

Though traffic deaths dropped following legalisation of medical marijuana laws in seven states, fatality rates rose in Rhode Island and Connecticut, the study found.

California immediately cut traffic deaths by 16 per cent following medical marijuana legalization

and then saw a gradual increase, the study found. Researchers saw a similar trend in New Mexico, with an immediate reduction of more than 17 per cent followed by an increase.

The findings highlight differences in various states’ medical marijuana laws and indicate the need for research on the particularities of how localities have implemented them, Santaella-Tenorio said. Voters in Denver, Colorado approved a November ballot measure to allow public consumption of marijuana, Hansen noted. But, he said, “We don’t know the public health consequences of those types of policy changes yet.”—*Reuters*

## Space station astronauts to conduct spacewalks for power update

WASHINGTON — Astronauts on the International Space Station are to conduct two spacewalks in January for a “complex” upgrade to the orbital outpost’s power system, US space agency NASA said Wednesday.

The spacewalks will allow the crew members to install adapter plates and hook up electrical connections on the right side truss of the space station for six new lithium-ion batteries delivered to the orbital laboratory early this month, NASA said. Shane Kimbrough and Flight Engineer Peggy Whitson of NASA will perform the first spacewalk on 6 January, while the work for the second spacewalk on 13 January will be conducted by Kimbrough and Thomas Pesquet of the European Space Agency.

According to NASA, prior to each spacewalk, the new batteries will be robotically extracted from a pallet to replace 12 older nickel-hydrogen batteries through a series of robotic operations.—*Xinhua*

## NASA satellite spots stunning view of northern lights

WASHINGTON — Just hours after the winter solstice, a mass of energetic particles from the Sun smashed into the magnetic field around Earth stirring up a stunning display of northern lights, which was captured by a NASA satellite.

With the “day-night band” (DNB) of the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), the Suomi NPP satellite acquired a view of the aurora borealis on 22 December. The northern lights stretched across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut and Northwest Territories, areas that often fall under the auroral oval. The DNB detects dim light signals such as auroras, airglow, gas flares, and reflected moonlight. The sensor detected the visible light emissions as energetic particles rained down from Earth’s magnetosphere and into the gases of the upper atmosphere. The collision of solar particles and pressure into our planet’s magnetosphere accelerates particles trapped in the space around Earth (such as in the radiation belts).

Those particles are sent crashing down into Earth’s upper atmosphere — at altitudes of 100 to 400 kilometres — where they excite oxygen and nitrogen molecules and release photons of light. The results are rays, sheets, and curtains of dancing light in the sky.—*PTI*

## Fish oil during pregnancy reduces baby’s asthma risk

LONDON — A Danish study of 695 pregnant women is raising the possibility that fish oil supplements begun in the final three months of pregnancy may reduce the risk of asthma or persistent wheezing in offspring.

The supplements brought the risk from 23.7 per cent among mothers in the placebo group who took 2.4 grams of olive oil daily down to 16.9 per cent in the women who got the fish oil capsules. That’s a 30.7 per cent reduction during the first three years of life.

The real benefit seemed to be exclusively among the children whose mothers started out with low levels of the two key ingredients in fish oil — eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). That may make them more vulnerable to the inflammation and heightened immune system response that is a factor in asthma and related conditions.

“If it weren’t for the effects in that subgroup, then the results would have not been statistically significant,” said Kathleen Melanson, a professor of nutrition sciences at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, who was not involved in the research.

Among the Danish women with low EPA and DHA levels, the rate of asthma and wheezing in their children was 17.5 per cent when the women took fish oil during pregnancy versus 34.1 per cent when they took the placebo oil.

One in five young children are affected by asthma and wheezing disorders. In recent decades, the rate has more than doubled in Western countries. Previous research has shown that those conditions are more prevalent among babies whose mothers have low levels of fish oil in their bodies. The new large-scale test, reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, is the first to see if supplements can actually lower the risk.

Women can eat fish to get the same benefit but “you really need to be very fond of fish to get sufficient amounts through your diet” to have the effect seen in the study, chief author Dr. Hans Bisgaard of the University of Copenhagen told Reuters Health in an email.

The findings must be tested in other parts of the world, where fish oil consumption is lower.

That concern is echoed in an editorial in the journal by Dr.

Christopher Ramsden of the National Institute on Aging, who said the 2.4 gram dose “was approximately 15 to 20 times as high as the average US intake from foods.”

“Before these findings can be applied to clinical practice, it is therefore imperative to ensure that this dose had no adverse effects on behavior, cognition, or other long-term outcomes,” he said. “Future work is also needed to determine whether lower doses are effective and whether these results can be replicated in other populations.”

Melanson told Reuters Health by phone that the dose used in the study was very high. The World Health Organization recommends no more than 3 grams per day, in part because excessive amounts can increase the risk of bleeding, lower blood pressure, and interact with medicines or vitamins A, D and E.

“Too much of a good thing is never a good thing,” she said.

“It is possible that a lower dose would have sufficed,” the Bisgaard team said.

Fish oil supplementation also lowered babies’ risk of lower respiratory tract infections, with the

rate going from 39.1 per cent with olive oil placebo to 31.7 per cent with fish oil.

But the supplements didn’t seem to affect the odds of a baby or toddler developing the skin condition eczema, or an allergy such as a reaction to milk or egg products, or a severe asthma attack.

The women began taking the fish oil and olive oil capsules at the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and continued until one week after delivery.

The researchers calculated that 14.6 women would need to be treated to prevent one case of asthma or persistent wheeze. Among women with the lowest levels of EPA and DHA to start with, only 5.6 would need to be treated.

If the findings are confirmed in other populations, doctors could test to see who would most likely benefit from fish oil supplements. “The health care system is currently not geared for such,” Bisgaard said. “But clearly this would be the future.”

In the meantime, Melanson said, it would be premature to widely recommend fish oil during pregnancy.—*Reuters*



# In Venezuela, lynchings kill one person every three days

CARACAS — Roughly one person is being lynched in crisis-ridden Venezuela every three days as frustrated residents take revenge on suspected criminals, a monitoring group said on Wednesday.

The Venezuelan Observatory of Violence (OVV), which monitors crime, said mob killings have become a generalised phenomenon across the country, with 126 deaths reported in 2016 versus 20 last year.

“Due to being repeated victims of crime for more than a decade, and the feeling of not being protected, many people have decided to take justice into their own hands,” the OVV said in its latest annual report.

In the past, it said, lynchings of suspected murderers and rapists were relatively uncommon, but this year angry crowds have increasingly attacked petty criminals too, with police often turning a blind eye.

Venezuelans have long suffered alarming levels of violent crime, in part because of the widespread availability of guns,



A graffiti that reads “Get ready, thief, here we burn you. Regards, Kerdell” is seen at a residential block in Valencia, Venezuela, on 21 August 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

inadequate policing and a bribe-riddled justice system.

A crushing economic crisis has compounded crime.

The OVV, a group of academics who compile data from police sources and the media, said Venezuela, with an estimated

28,479 homicides this year — or more than three killings per hour — was the world’s second most murderous nation after El Salvador

That would represent 91.8 murders per 100,000 inhabitants this year, up from 90 in 2015, it said. The OVV put the homi-

cide rate at more 140 per 100,000 people in Caracas, making it one of the murder capitals of the world.

El Salvador had a rate of 116 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2016, according to the Institute of Legal Medicine in El Salvador.

President Nicolas Maduro’s socialist government

rejects the OVV figures as inflated for political reasons. The last official murder rate it gave was 58 per 100,000 inhabitants for 2015.

Another researcher has also disagreed with the widely cited OVV data, criticizing its methodology and putting the 2015 figure at 70 murders per 100,000 people.

Whatever the right statistics, crime remains an all-pervasive worry for Venezuelans, especially in poor slums that are run by gangs and rife with guns. Numerous state security plans and disarmament drives have failed to curb the problem.

“Violence is killing the future of our country,” opposition leader Henrique Capriles said during a visit on Wednesday to rescue services in the Miranda state, which he governs.

“The government has spent 17 years without resolving the problem,” he added, referring to Maduro and his predecessor Hugo Chavez’s rule since 1999.—Reuters

## Indonesia sees record number of disasters in 2016

JAKARTA — Indonesia was struck by 2,342 natural disasters during 2016, the highest number in the country’s history and up 35 per cent from the previous year, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency said Thursday.

Around 92 per cent of the disasters were either floods, landslides, or cyclones. The remainder included forest fires, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tidal waves.

According to the agency, the disasters in 2016 left 522 people dead or missing. Landslides accounted for the largest part of the death toll at 188, with floods the second deadliest at 147 victims.

Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho attributed the spike in disasters to the absence of a clear dry season.

“There was only a wet dry season, which increased floods, landslides, and cyclones. Even in the peak of the dry season, there were a lot of floods and landslides,” he said.

Conversely, the wet dry season significantly decreased the number of forest fires. According to Sutopo, the number of hotspots fell by 80 per cent.

“There was no area in Sumatra and Kalimantan heavily covered by smoke like what happened in 2015,” he said.—Kyodo News

## Spain arrests two men suspected of Islamist militant propaganda

MADRID — Two men were arrested in Madrid on Wednesday on suspicion of spreading Islamist militant propaganda, the Interior Ministry said.

Police released video footage in connection with the arrests that showed officers uncovering gun magazines and bullets from under rocks in a disused, graffiti-

ti-sprayed building.

El Pais newspaper quoted the Interior Ministry as saying the search, in the outskirts of Madrid, uncovered four Kalashnikov AK-47 magazines and over 30 bullets.

The paper said the men were second generation Spaniards of Moroccan and Gambian origin.

Neither the Interior

Ministry nor the police could confirm those details in their statement or video or when contacted for further information.

Separately, two women who travelled to Syria in 2014 from the Spanish north African enclave of Ceuta were arrested in Turkey as they attempted to return to Europe, the Interior Ministry said in a

statement.

The women travelled to Syria accompanying their Islamist militant partners in order to join Islamic State, the ministry said.

The women were attempting to make the return journey with young children and the arrests were made by Turkish authorities following

tip-offs from the Spanish police, the ministry said. Spain has arrested 177 people in connection with Islamist militancy since 2015, when it raised its security alert level to 4 — the country’s second-highest level — following the gun attacks on French magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris.—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  
Ministry of Electricity and Energy  
No(6) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw

Contact Phone No.  
067-411487/411486/411280

## New York Times surpasses 100 million views on Facebook Live

NEW YORK — Presidential politics and celebrity interviews helped The New York Times Co surpass 100 million views for its Facebook Live videos, the company said on Wednesday.

Facebook launched its livestreaming platform in August of 2015 and it is in its infancy.

The New York Times has used Facebook Live to showcase its journalism, hoping to reach potential subscribers as the newspaper publisher relies more heavily on digital to grow its revenue.

It was not clear how much revenue The New York Times has derived from producing these vide-

os. Multiple media outlets reported that Facebook was paying certain media companies to produce Live videos through a one-year period from March 2016 to March 2017. The Wall Street Journal also reported that The New York Times was being paid around \$3 million for the one-year period.

A New York Times spokeswoman declined to comment on any financials or the Wall Street Journal report. A Facebook spokesperson confirmed the company has been offering “temporary financial support” to a “relatively small number of companies” to produce videos.

The Times said it

reached the 100 million views benchmark earlier this month. Comparative figures were not available for how the New York Times ranks against similar publishers, including The Washington Post.

The Times got more 5 million views on its livestream of the first presidential debate between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton. There were 3.9 million views for a concert by Erykah Badu and another popular Times livestream featured singer-actress Kristin Chenoweth.

Digital is becoming more important for many major US media companies,

particularly the New York Times, where print advertising revenue has been in free-fall. During its most recent quarter, ad revenue from print slid 18.5 per cent from the previous year, accounting for just 22 per cent of its total revenue, said chief executive Mark Thompson during the 2 November earnings call.

Digital ad revenue, which saw a 21.4 per cent rise, now accounts for 35.5 per cent of revenue at the New York Times. During that same earnings call, chief revenue officer Meredith Kopit Levien said video was becoming more of a factor in growing digital ad revenue.—Reuters



## Number of migrants leaving Germany voluntarily rises in 2016

BERLIN — Nearly 55,000 migrants who were not eligible for or were likely to be denied asylum left Germany voluntarily in 2016, up by 20,000 from the number who left of their own volition in 2015, the government said on Wednesday.

“That’s a considerable increase from last year,” Interior Ministry spokesman Harald Neymanns told a news conference, saying the 2016 figure had climbed to 54,123 through 27 December. “The increase is welcome. It’s always preferable when people leave the country voluntarily instead of being deported.” A Finance Ministry spokesman said the government would boost funding slightly to 150 million euros in 2017 to support efforts to encourage people to leave Germany.

Germany has toughened its stance on immigration in recent months, prompted by concerns about security and integration after admitting more than 1.1 million migrants from the Middle East, Africa and

elsewhere since early 2015. Last week a failed asylum seeker who had sworn allegiance to the Islamic State militant group killed 12 people when he rammed a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin, fuelling growing criticism of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s immigration policy.

Most of those leaving in 2016 returned to their homes in Albania, Serbia, Iraq, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iran, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper said earlier. Those leaving are eligible for one-off support of up to 3,000 euros that is supposed to help support finding employment at home. Separately, German security officials told Reuters the number of those deported after their asylum requests were rejected rose to almost 23,800 from January to November — up from almost 20,900 in all of 2015.

There has also been a rise in the number of refugees turned away at the borders. A report by the *Neue Osnabruecker Zeitung* daily

said police had turned back 19,720 refugees through the first 11 months of 2016 — up from 8,913 in all of 2015. Most were from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Nigeria. They had been registered in other EU countries.

As public support for her pro-refugee policies wanes ahead of September’s federal election, Merkel has said it is vital to focus resources on those fleeing war, and to keep public support up by deporting foreigners to countries where there is no persecution. Attacks and security alerts involving refugees and migrants have boosted the popularity of the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, whose rise above 10 per cent in opinion polls could complicate Merkel’s re-election hopes. On Tuesday, seven refugees from Syria and Iraq aged 15 to 21 were detained in Berlin on charges of attempted murder for trying to set fire to a homeless man in an underground station.—*Reuters*

## France’s Hollande pardons woman who killed violent husband

PARIS — French President Francois Hollande on Wednesday made a rare use of his presidential powers to pardon a woman who had been convicted in 2012 of the murder of her violent husband.

Jacqueline Sauvage had been sentenced to 10 years in jail for shooting dead the husband who had beaten her up for decades.

Her three daughters sought a presidential pardon, gathering over 380,000 signatures in an online petition.

“It is a long battle that has just ended ... but our fight continues for all other women,” Sauvage’s lawyer Janine Bonaggiunta told BFM TV.

She confirmed that Sauvage had left prison, accompanied by one of her daughters.

Hollande had already granted Sauvage a sentence reduction in January.

“The President of the Republic judged that the place of Madame Sauvage was no longer in prison, but



French President Francois Hollande listens to explications during his visit to the French elevators company ETNA France in Taverny, near Paris, France, on 26 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

beside her family,” his office said in a statement.

In 2013, Hollande also used his presidential prerogative to allow Philippe El Shennawy, then France’s longest-serving prisoner, to be freed on parole after 38 years in jail.

The French president has the power to reduce judicial penalties, but not to quash the underlying conviction. It was often used in the past to waive minor

sanctions such as traffic fines en masse, but has since 2008 been applied only to individual cases.

Perhaps the most famous French presidential pardon was that accorded to the Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus in 1899, after his treason conviction stirred a huge public controversy.

He was later cleared by an appeal court.—*Reuters*

## China completes high-speed rail links from southwest Yunnan

SHANGHAI — China has completed two new high-speed rail links connecting Kunming, the capital of southwestern Yunnan province, with Shanghai

and Guangzhou on the eastern coast, according to a transport ministry notice.

China is in the middle of an ambitious railway building programme

and aims to criss-cross the country with four north-south and four east-west bullet train connections and expand its total network to 150,000 km (93,200 miles)

by the end of the decade.

Its high-speed rail network will reach a length of 30,000 km (18,640 miles) by 2020, the state planning agency said in its “five-year plan” for the sector published earlier this year.

The new railway connecting Kunming with Shanghai was formally opened on Wednesday, and is China’s longest east-west high-speed link. It stretches 2,252 kilometres (1,400 miles) and will take 11 hours and 15 minutes, less than half the previous traveling time, the notice said.

According to the official *China Daily*, 29 of China’s 31 provinces and regions are now served by high-speed rail, with only the regions of Tibet and Ningxia in the northwest yet to be connected.—*Reuters*



A high-speed railway train linking Shanghai and Kunming, of Yunnan Province, is seen at a station during a partial operation, in Anshun, Guizhou province, China, on 28 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

## M6.3 quake jolts eastern and northeastern Japan, triggers no tsunami

TOKYO — A magnitude-6.3 earthquake struck eastern and northeastern Japan on Wednesday night, briefly disrupting railway operations, and the tremor was felt in Tokyo, but no tsunami warning was issued. The quake occurred at 9:38 pm in northern Ibaraki

Prefecture in eastern Japan and originated at a depth of around 10 kilometers, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

A woman in her 40s sustained a minor injury when she fell in her home in Kitaibaraki, Ibaraki Prefecture, as the quake hit the

area, according to local firefighters. A man in his 60s was also slightly injured by a falling object in Takahagi, Ibaraki. The Japan Atomic Power Co. said no abnormality was found at the Tokai No. 2 nuclear power plant in the prefecture northeast of Tokyo.

No abnormalities were likewise detected at two nuclear power plants — the crippled Fukushima Daiichi and idled Fukushima Daini — in Fukushima Prefecture, north of Ibaraki, according to the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc.—*Kyodo News*

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV UNI AMPLE VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV UNI AMPLE VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAWEI STAR VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT  
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY  
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185



## Debbie Reynolds dies of a stroke, a day after daughter's death

LOS ANGELES — Debbie Reynolds, a leading lady in Hollywood musicals and comedies in the 1950s and 1960s, including "Singin' in the Rain," died on Wednesday, her son said, just one day after the death of her daughter, actress Carrie Fisher.

Reynolds, 84, an Oscar-nominated singer-actress, was rushed to Cedars-Sinai hospital earlier on Wednesday.

"It's true, she's with Carrie," her son, Todd Fisher, told Reuters, adding that shortly before suffering a stroke Reynolds had said she missed her daughter and wanted to be with her.

"She left very shortly after that and those were the last words she spoke," Todd Fisher said.

After the news of Reynolds' death, numerous people took to social media and wrote that "she died of a broken



Actress Debbie Reynolds and her daughter actress Carrie Fisher backstage after accepting her Lifetime Achievement award at the 21st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles, California, on 25 January 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

heart." One of the most enduring and endearing Hollywood stars of her time, Reynolds received a best actress Academy Award nomination for the 1964 musical

"The Unsinkable Molly Brown."

Carrie Fisher, who rose to fame as Princess Leia in the "Star Wars" films and later battled through drug addiction before

going on to tell her story as a best-selling author, died on Tuesday at age 60 after suffering a heart attack last Friday.

After Fisher's death, Reynolds said on Facebook, "Thank you to everyone who has embraced the gifts and talents of my beloved and amazing daughter. I am grateful for your thoughts and prayers that are now guiding her to her next stop." Reynolds had been in frail health in the past year, and she missed a dinner in November 2015 to receive an honorary Oscar. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said at the time that she was unable to attend because of "an unexpectedly long recovery from recent surgery."

The nature of her illness was not disclosed. Fisher told reporters in May 2016 that her mother was "doing really well," but she did not give details.—Reuters

## Alibaba entertainment affiliate to invest over \$7.2 billion over next three years

BEIJING — Alibaba Digital Media and Entertainment Group, the entertainment affiliate of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (BABA.N), plans to invest more than 50 billion yuan (\$7.2 billion) over the next three years, the affiliate's chief executive said.

In an internal email seen by Reuters and confirmed by an Alibaba group spokeswoman, the affiliate's new CEO Yu Yongfu pledged to invest in content, saying "he didn't come to play."

Alibaba's entertainment business underwent a major reorganization in October, marking a total consolidation of the company's media assets.

At the same time, Yu, former CEO of Alibaba unit UCWeb Inc, became the chairman and chief executive of the new operation.—Reuters

## Brother of JonBenet Ramsey sues CBS for \$750 million over documentary

DENVER — The brother of slain Colorado child beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey has filed a \$750 million defamation lawsuit against CBS Corp over a documentary aired by the network theorising that he killed his little sister, court documents showed on Wednesday.

Burke Ramsey has been "exposed to public hatred, contempt and ridicule" over the four-hour show that was broadcast in September in two parts, according to the complaint filed in a state court in Michigan, where he lives. The programme aired amid a flurry of media accounts ahead of the 20th anniversary of the girl's death.

The bludgeoned and strangled body of 6-year-old JonBenet was found in the basement of her parents' Boulder, Colorado,

home on 26 December, 1996.

No one has ever been charged for the murder, but in 1999 a grand jury seated to examine the case voted to indict the parents for child abuse resulting in death.

The district attorney at the time, Alex Hunter, declined to move forward with a prosecution, citing a lack of evidence.

A spokesman for CBS declined to comment on the lawsuit. At the time of the broadcast, the network said it stood by the program and "will do so in court" if sued by Ramsey. At the conclusion of the CBS show, a panel of experts said it was its opinion that Burke Ramsey, who was 9 at the time of the killing, struck JonBenet in the head with a heavy object.—Reuters



Burke Ramsey arrives for the burial service of his mother Patsy Ramsey in Marietta, Georgia on 29 June 2006. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Dr. Seuss company is a grinch, NY playwright says in lawsuit

NEW YORK — A New York playwright has sued the owner of copyrights in Dr. Seuss' works, saying his new play does not infringe the children's author's classic "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!"

In a complaint filed on Tuesday night in the US District Court in Manhattan, Matthew Lombardo said he was forced to scrap performances of "Who's Holiday!" set to begin Off Broadway on 2 November after Dr. Seuss Enterprises LP complained to the theater's owner, The Shubert Organisation. But while "Who's Holiday!" and "Grinch," published by Random House Inc, both feature the character Cindy Lou Who, Lombardo said his 75-minute, one-woman play is "highly transformative," and therefore constitutes fair use.



A Dr. Seuss The Grinch balloon appears in the 84th Annual Hollywood Christmas Parade in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles, California, on 29 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Lombardo wants a court order that his play does not infringe the defendant's copyright in "Grinch," plus more than \$130,000 of damages, including costs for the cancellation.

Dr. Seuss Enterprises and its law firm did not immediately respond on Wednesday to requests for comment. Lombardo's lawyer did not immediately respond to similar requests. Random House and Shubert are not defendants.

"Grinch" tells the story of a grouchy, cave-dwelling monster who decides to end Christmas, and is briefly interrupted by Cindy Lou, a little girl, before having

a change of heart.

In contrast, Lombardo's Cindy Lou is a profane 45-year-old woman housed in a trailer in the snowy hills of Mount Crumpit.

She is depressed because no one will attend her first Christmas party since her release from prison for murdering the Grinch, who was her husband and fathered her daughter, Patti. But Cindy Lou comes to realize the theater audience is still there, and brightens further when Patti, who had abandoned her, shows up at the door, ending the play. "Dr. Seuss this is not," the complaint said.—Reuters

## I like leading a healthy lifestyle: Salman Khan

MUMBAI — perstar Salman Khan says he likes to live a healthy lifestyle and tries to stick to a balanced diet.

The star, who turned a year older Tuesday, launched his personal app to be in touch with his fans and opened up about his workout regime on the same.

"I cycle, swim, go to the gym, eat the right kind of food, and sleep late, as I don't get sleep easily. The kind of food you eat

is as important as your workout. I like leading a healthy lifestyle, and avoid processed and sugary food," says Salman.

The "Sultan" star says his diet is high in protein and yellow dal cooked by his mom is his all-time favourite.

"My all-time favourite will remain the Yellow Dal that my mom cooked. My favourite dishes include rajma, chawal, and roti, very simple food.

"As far as my diet is concerned, for breakfast, I eat four egg whites and some low-fat milk. Pre-workout, I have a protein shake, and two egg whites. Post workout, it is a protein bar, oats, almonds and three egg whites. Lunch is largely meat, and includes mutton, fried fish, salad and lots of fruit. Dinner could be anything - chicken, fish, vegetables, or soup."—PTI



# Slum violence inspires Kenyans to tackle huge housing shortage

ATHI RIVER, (Kenya) — Recently married with a one-year-old child, Joan Moraa Mbogo dreams of escaping Kenya's noisy, dirty, crime-ridden capital and buying a home close to her mother's newly-built apartment overlooking the Lukenya Hills.

Machakos County, which starts 20 kms (12 miles) south-east of Nairobi, is popular with young Kenyans unable to afford decent homes in the city, where most developers are only building houses for the richest 10 per cent of residents.

"I'll get a house here and we'll become neighbours," said 28-year-old Mbogo, dressed in a yellow top and jeans, watching her

son, Nathan, totter across her mother's sitting room.

In July, Mbogo's mother moved into Karibu Homes Riverview, a 19-acre development that is set to include 1,000 apartments, shops, basketball courts, a clinic and a nursery when complete.

"There's fresh air. It's nice and quiet," said Veronica Mbogo, a retired civil servant in her 60s, looking out from her fourth floor balcony at the yellow and grey apartments, dotted with acacia trees.

Nearby labourers dig foundations for the second phase of the development, where dozens of units have already been sold.

"They have been harranguing us to buy," said

Ravi Kohli, managing director of Karibu Homes at his office in a leafy part of Nairobi. "There is such a huge demand for housing."

Karibu Homes, founded in 2012, is one of a handful of developers building affordable homes in Kenya, seen as critical to stemming the spread of slums and improving the quality of life for many in East Africa's biggest economy.

Although millions of quality, affordable homes are needed, few are built due to high land prices, lack of access to finance and government bureaucracy, experts say.

It is a story echoed across Africa which has the fastest growing cities in the world, with 40 per cent of

the continent's one billion people in towns and cities, according to UN-Habitat.

Most new homes in Kenya target the middle and upper classes as it's easier to make a profit from high-end property sales.

"It's a property market that's oriented towards wealthy people," said Britt Gwinner, head of housing finance for the World's Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

"That's where the money is."

Karibu Homes says its cheapest property, a one-bedroom apartment, costs 1.8 million Kenyan shillings (\$17,660), which is 17-times cheaper than the average asking price of a house in Kenya, at

\$306,000, according to real estate firm Hass Consult.

The company was born out of the bloodshed that erupted across Kenya following its contested general elections in 2007.

Many people were killed and burned to death in slums across the East African country, often by young men venting their frustration over economic inequality and lack of opportunities.

"The bulk of the population was desperate, had nothing to lose," said Nick Johnson, one of the company's co-founders, who came up with the idea with Kenyan entrepreneur Irfan Keshavjee during a management course at Oxford University in 2008.

"That was a root cause as to why this violence took place."

The two men decided to set up a social enterprise, aiming not only to make money but to have a positive impact on Kenyans' lives by enabling more people to buy their own homes.

Most Nairobianians live in slums where they must contend with high crime, irregular power and water supplies, and no toilets in their homes. With rapid urbanisation and population growth, Karibu Homes estimates that 14 million people will live in Nairobi's metropolitan region — which encompasses the capital and three neighbouring counties — by 2030, up from 9 million today.—*Reuters*

## Holidaymakers' New Year exodus from Japan peaks

TOKYO — The exodus of people spending the New Year's holidays abroad peaked at Japan's airports on Thursday, while train terminals were congested with people heading to their hometowns and other domestic destinations.

On Thursday alone, around 50,000 people are expected to leave the country from Narita airport near Tokyo, 33,400 from Osaka's Kansai airport, and some 8,800 from Chubu airport serving Nagoya, operators of the airports said.

"I want to photograph Hawaii's beautiful scenery," said Hikoichi Sekine, a 40-year-old company employee from Saitama city outside Tokyo, before departing from Narita airport to spend New Year's Day in Hawaii with his wife.

At Kansai airport, Izumi Seguchi, a 28-year-old company employee from Osaka city, said she will visit Finland with her colleague and is looking



People crowd on a shinkansen bullet train platform at JR Tokyo Station on 29 December 2016, the first day of the year-end and New Year holiday period for many workers in Japan. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

forward to buying dishes and other items that suit her taste. "Going abroad is an opportunity to refresh myself because my job keeps me busy," she said.

Tokyo Station and other major train stations were also jam-packed with trav-

ellers. According to Central Japan Railway, also known as JR Tokai, westbound Tokaido Shinkansen bullet trains were congested, with some of them crammed to overcapacity.

At Tokyo Station, Kazumi Mizuno, a 27-year-

old Tokyo resident, said she is returning to her hometown in Miyagi Prefecture in northeastern Japan to show her 7-month-old son to her parents. "I want to relax and spend a leisurely time there," she said.—*Kyodo News*

## Burger King, Tim Hortons to curb antibiotics used in chicken

CHICAGO/LOS ANGELES — Restaurant chains Burger King and Tim Hortons plan to switch to chicken raised without antibiotics considered "critically important" to human medicine, their owner said on Wednesday, making it the latest company to ditch the drugs over health concerns.

Restaurant Brands International Inc, which owns both chains, said it aims to make the change in US stores in 2017 and in Canada in 2018.

An estimated 70 per cent of antibiotics that are important to fighting human infections and ensuring the safety of invasive procedures such as surgeries are sold for use in meat and dairy production.

Concern has been growing among scientists, public health experts, consumers and shareholders that the overuse of such drugs is contributing to rising numbers of life-threatening human infections from antibiotic-resistant bacteria dubbed "superbugs."

"We believe that it is important to reduce the use of antibiotics important for human medicine in order to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics in both veterinary and human medicine," Restaurant Brands said.

The company did not

immediately respond to requests for further comment.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 2 million people in the United States are infected with drug-resistant bacteria each year and that 23,000 die as a direct result.

Officials with health advocacy group As You Sow said they have been working with Restaurant Brands on its antibiotics policy for more than a year. In February, the group withdrew a shareholder proposal calling on the company to develop a stricter policy after Restaurant Brands agreed to address the issue before the end of 2016.

Austin Wilson, environmental health programme manager for As You Sow, said the company's new plan represented progress. Still, he said it was "disappointing, since it is weaker than the standards set in the last year or two by Tyson, McDonald's and Wendy's."

McDonald's Corp has already removed all antibiotics important to human medicine from its US chicken supply chain, and Wendy's Co said in August it would quit using chickens raised with antibiotics important to human health by 2017.—*Reuters*

### mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(30-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 31-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes: Pre Kayaw (Their Life and Customs) (Part-2)
07:53	Am	Yoghurt Vendor
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	School For the Blind (Kye Myin Dine)
08:53	Am	Kyeikhteeoyoe: Welcome All
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	A Visit to Kyauk Kyi
09:42	Am	Mrauk U, Treasure Trove of Rakhine Culture
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	The Green Corner (Epi-7) Cloth Fish
10:37	Am	The Legend of An ambulatory Surgeon (EP-2)

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Thursday 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	My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake
07:47	Pm	Natural Lake: Fish Breeding Business
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	National Literary Icon and Guiding Light of Myanmar Literature
		"Sayar Zaw Gyi" (Childhood and Student Life) (Epi-1)
08:50	Pm	Entrepreneur - Dr. Thant Thaw Kaung

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Thursday 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](http://www.myanmaritv.com/schedule))



# Liverpool, Man City bid to stay on Chelsea's heels

LONDON — The much-anticipated clash between Liverpool and Manchester City at Anfield on Saturday looks like a knock-out to determine who can challenge Chelsea for the Premier League title.

A draw would do neither side any favours in their pursuit of Antonio Conte's Blues who are six points clear of second-placed Liverpool and threatening to disappear over the horizon even before new year.

City lie one point further back in third and have traditionally reserved some of their worst performances for Liverpool. Last season they were humiliated 4-1 at home

and have not won at Anfield since 2003. At least they seem unlikely to face their chief recent tormentor, Philippe Coutinho, who is recovering from an ankle injury. Coutinho has scored five goals in his last six games against them.

They can also call on Sergio Aguero to lead their attack as he has completed a four-game suspension.

Much will depend on how Liverpool's wobbly defence handles the Argentine although they possess plenty of threat at the other end with Adam Lallana leading the comeback in Tuesday's 4-1 victory over Stoke City and Daniel Sturridge fit and fir-

ing again after scoring his first Premier League goal of the season.

City must also keep a close eye on Sadio Mane, who scored a hat-trick in his last game against them, for Southampton in a 4-2 win this year.

Pep Guardiola watched Tuesday's victory from the stands and knows Anfield will again be red hot. Stoke, meanwhile, will need to show more resilience at Stamford Bridge to prevent Chelsea bagging a 13th successive Premier League win to equal the record set by Arsenal in one season in 2001-02.

Chelsea's Diego Costa and

N'Golo Kante both return from suspension but Pedro is missing after receiving his fifth booking of the season in Tuesday's 3-0 win over Bournemouth.

Champions Leicester City are deep in trouble after just one win in nine games and will again be without the suspended Jamie Vardy against fast improving West Ham United. Claudio Ranieri must decide whether to recall Riyad Mahrez after dropping the Algerian against Everton.

Mahrez is one of four Leicester players about to depart for the African Nations Cup so the Italian is expected to spend heavily in the transfer window.

Swansea City are also looking to strengthen their under-performing squad once they appoint a manager to succeed Bob Bradley who was sacked this week.

The Swans are 19<sup>th</sup> and desperately need a win at home to Bournemouth. The only side below them, Hull City, entertain Everton on Friday while 15<sup>th</sup>-placed Middlesbrough, away to Manchester United on Saturday, are among the sides looking anxiously below them.

Sam Allardyce's Crystal Palace face a difficult game at Arsenal on Sunday when Tottenham Hotspur make the short trip to Watford.—Reuters

## Alli double helps Spurs sink 10-man Southampton

LONDON — Tottenham Hotspur kept up the pressure on the Premier League's top four after coming from behind to beat 10-man Southampton 4-1 thanks to two goals from Dele Alli and one apiece by Harry Kane and Son Heung-min on Wednesday.

Alli cancelled out Virgil Van Dijk's second-minute opener before Kane fired Tottenham ahead and missed a penalty after Southampton winger Nathan Redmond hacked down Alli and was sent off.

England midfielder Alli produced a superb individual performance and stressed it was crucial that Spurs kept their composure after falling behind.

"It's never nice to concede a goal that early in the game and it was important that we didn't lose our heads and didn't panic," he told Sky Sports.

"We stuck to the game plan and after we put the first one away it was a good game. We knew it wasn't going to be an easy game, they are a great team and have some fantastic players."

Kane was expecting a tough match against Southampton.

"We have come here and scored four in a comfortable win. We've got another game in a few days and we've got to focus on that," he said.

Spurs, who stayed fifth in the table with 36 points from 18 matches, one behind arch-rivals Arsenal and three adrift of third-placed Manchester City, visit 10<sup>th</sup>-placed Watford on Sunday.

Southampton, who are eighth with 24 points, are at home to West Bromwich Albion on Saturday.

The Saints had Tottenham on the ropes in the opening 15

minutes as Van Dijk headed in a James Ward-Prowse free kick before Redmond shot just wide of the far post.

But the tide turned after Alli rose to head home a deflected Moussa Sissoko cross from the left and Kane fired the visitors in front with a thumping header from a corner.

The England striker then blazed his spot-kick over the bar after Redmond was dismissed for hauling down Alli, but the home side were punished again for throwing caution to the wind in the closing stages.

Substitute Son rounded off a swift break for Tottenham's third in the 85th minute and Alli put the icing on the cake two minutes later with an equally superb finish into the bottom left corner after neat footwork.—Reuters



Tottenham's Son Heung-min scores their third goal during Premier League at St Mary's Stadium, on 28 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Woods worth \$740 million, Jordan a billionaire says Forbes

NEW YORK — Golfers Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson and former NBA player Michael Jordan are among the 20 wealthiest American celebrities, Forbes reported on Wednesday.

Woods, 40, is the youngest person on the Forbes top-20 list, with a net worth estimated at \$740 million.

The 14-times major champion, who trails only Jack Nicklaus (18 majors) on the all-time list, recently launched a competitive comeback after being sidelined for more than 15 months while recovering from back surgery.

Woods who went through a costly divorce in 2010 and lost several sponsors after revelations of multiple infidelity, is seventh on the list, while Mickelson is 18<sup>th</sup>, with an estimated worth of \$375 million.

Jordan, 53, who retired in 2003 with the mantle of arguably the greatest basketballer, is worth \$1.2 billion according to the magazine, good for fourth



Charlotte Hornets owner Michael Jordan yells at an official in the second half against the Chicago Bulls at Spectrum Centre, at Charlotte, NC, USA on 23 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

on the list, which is topped by filmmaker George Lucas (\$4.6 billion).

Forbes says eligibility for the list was limited to United States citizens who are rich because of their fame, rather than famous because they are rich.

According to Forbes, President-elect Donald Trump belongs in the latter category.—Reuters

## Former world number one Ivanovic retires at age 29

BELGRADE — Former French Open champion Ana Ivanovic announced her retirement from tennis at the age of 29 on Wednesday because she no longer feels fit enough to compete at the highest level.

Ivanovic became the first Serbian woman to win a grand slam tournament when she beat Russian Dinara Safina in the 2008 French Open final, following in the footsteps of compatriot Novak Djokovic who clinched the Australian Open title the same year. "There is no other way to say it. I have decided to retire from professional tennis. It

has been a difficult decision but there is so much to celebrate," Belgrade-born Ivanovic said on Facebook. "I began dreaming about tennis when I was five. My dear parents backed me all the way and by the time I was the world number one and won Roland Garros in 2008, I have seen the heights I never dreamt of achieving," she added. Her French Open victory catapulted Ivanovic to the summit of the WTA tour rankings but she only occupied top spot for a few weeks and dropped to 22<sup>nd</sup> at the end of 2009 after a dramatic loss of form.—Reuters