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Investigation Commission interviews jailed suspects

AS part of their investigation on the ground, members of the Rakhine State Investigation Commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe talked to some suspects in Sittway and Buthidaung prisons yesterday who are accused of involvement in the violent attacks of 9 October and 12 and 13 November in Maungtau.

The commission first visited Buthidaung Prison and asked the accused questions about the attacks.

Later, the commission proceeded to Koetankauk Outpost and sought detailed information about the 9 October attack, including the violent raid, the death of one security guard and injuries of two others, the loss of two weapons, the

capture of one violent attacker and the death of one attacker.

The commission continued to Sittway and talked to suspects to verify the situation on the ground.

Meanwhile, a team of the commission led by Dr Aung Tun Thet in Sittway met with INGOs and NGOs and sought information about delivery of humanitarian aid. Earlier this week, the commission completed interviews with Muslim communities in Maungtau, where their interrogations revealed that alleged rapes and murders chronicled by The Guardian newspaper did not actually occur.

Afterward, the chairman and the commission left Sittway and arrived in Nay Pyi Taw in the evening.—Myanmar News Agency



A police officer recounts the violent attack that happened at Koetankauk Outpost as the investigation commission led by its Chairman Vice President U Myint Swe inspects the outpost. PHOTO: ZEYAR (MIRROR)

Government can perform its best from commission's findings: Dr Aung Tun Thet



Dr Aung Tun Thet.

Tin Maung Lwin
(Myanma Alin)

THE members of the investigation commission on Rakhine State ended their first fact-finding mission to Maungtau Township yesterday, where violent armed attacks took place in October and November. Here is the interview with commission member Dr Aung Tun Thet.

In the interview, Dr Aung Tun Thet explained, "It is necessary to describe the background situations of the incidents in detail. The incident is sorrowful

and very dangerous and frightening for the country. The incidents already happened, but what will we do in the future? As for the commission, it needs to be well convinced of all happenings, rumours, alleged writings and opinions. For our country to survive for long and to be peaceful, we must build basic needs. It is the responsibility of the commission to decide what to do the next day and which suggestions should be submitted to the government."

He added, "We need the media to report the news as soon as it is received. There may be var-

“We will try our best for the emergence of a report which is to be accepted by all.

ious truths. We depend on news and information. It is very important to know to what extent news and information expressed in media are confirmed and accurate. These days photo-shopping and inventing the news according to one's own will are easy, thus

the commission cannot take these true at a glance of reading. It can be tantamount to being biased," he disclosed.

Dr Aung Tun Thet said, "We studied and assessed on-the-ground situations. It is impossible to make a perfect assessment at one time. But we will hear what they will tell. We will never criticise anything. All what they will tell will be collected. As the case is of interest by people locally and from abroad, we will try our best for the emergence of a report which is to be accepted by all."

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw cuts budget proposals of government ministries

DURING the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session on Tuesday the additional budget of government ministries and organizations for 2016-17 fiscal year were cut yesterday, according to Myanmar News Agency.

The Central Bank of Myanmar's proposed budget, over Ks130 billion, was reduced by about Ks54.6 billion.

The Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee was also approved for about Ks1.5 billion less than its proposed budget of about Ks4.6 billion.

Spending for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reduced by Ks1 billion, almost half of the min-

istry's proposed spending plan.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, which requested over Ks36 billion, was also hit hard by budget cuts of over Ks9 billion, while the Ministry of Border Affairs was allocated about Ks0.5 billion less than its requested amount of about Ks3.5 billion.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Planning and Finance, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Nay Pyi

Taw Development Committee and the Central Bank of Myanmar also suffered budget cuts.

During yesterday's session the Myanmar National Water Policy, a 93.9 billion yen loan from JICA for infrastructure development, agricultural development electricity generation and water supply system for the Yangon City Development Committee were also discussed.

Other loans discussed at the session included 50 million euros from Poland for the Fire Brigade and US\$56.8 million for agricultural development.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is convened in Nay Pyi Taw . PHOTO: MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint receives Ambassador of Canada



Speaker U Win Myint meets H.E. Ms. Karen MacArthur, the ambassador of Canada to Myanmar. PHOTO: MNA

SPEAKER of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Win Myint received H.E. Ms. Karen MacArthur, the ambassador of Canada to Myanmar, at the Pyithu Hluttaw Hall in the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw, at 2:00 pm, on 13 December 2016.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to the friendship and cooperation between the two governments and two parliaments.

Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U T Khun Myat and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw Office were also present at the meeting.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Prospects brighter for stability in Maungtaw

THE prospects for stability in Maungtaw are brighter than ever, according to U Zaw Myint Pe, the secretary of the Rakhine State Investigation Commission.

"We visited every place where violent attacks broke out. We sought information from everyone, including men, women and children. They had to live in fear and now they are having

difficulty getting clothes, shelter and food. Everyone has begun to understand that they cannot live in isolation without any communication with others," said U Zaw Myint Pe.

He also said that the cause of the issue has been known and officials would be able to achieve success step by step and admitted that there remain the obstacles.

"We still have many challenges, but we will give priority to their importance. We need trust, cooperation and communication," he said. U Zaw Myint Pe is the secretary of the Rakhine State Investigation Commission and a member of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission.—*Zeyar (Mirror)*

Fire destroys two houses in Sabai Gone village in Maungtaw Township



Two houses are totally destroyed by fire in Sabai Gone village in Maungtaw. PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

A fire broke out in Sabai Gone Village in Maungtaw Township on Monday night, destroying two homes.

The fire started in the kitchen of Phwe Razul at about 12:30am and then spread to another house.

Villagers brought the fire under control about one hour later. Two homes worth Ks. 30,000 measuring 25 feet long, 15 feet wide and eight feet high built of bamboo were engulfed in the fire.

Phwe Razul has been charged with negligence of fire—*Myanmar News Agency*

Four IEDs discovered in Maungtaw

SECURITY forces discovered and disarmed four Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and a battery in Maungtaw Township yesterday.

While conducting an area clearance operation between

Mayintaung and Myawtaung, they unearthed the IEDs made of car pistons and one 3K 70 AHC battery and a pack of medicine buried about 500 meters east of Mayintaung. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Govt troops discover body of MNDA member, seizes arms in Mongko

THE government troops found the body of a Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) member and 20 bullets for an M-21 weapon and one grenade near the fence of the Mongko outpost around 9:45am yesterday.

Troops also discovered an improvised explosive device at about 10:40 am planted by armed groups about 1,500 metres southwest of Kilarpa Village, Mongko, and disarmed the bomb.

Also discovered near a sugarcane plantation during an area



clearance operation were two cartridges for an M-22 gun with 90 bullets, two mortar rounds, 11 detonators and one handphone.—*Myanmar News Agency*

WFP programme to deliver food assistance to Rakhine State

Date	Village	Rice	Pulses	Oil	Salt	WSB+	WSB++	Total
17-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	17.968	2.396	1.198	0.200	0.102	0.762	22.626
17-Dec-16	Dar Bine	13.027	1.737	0.869	0.145	0.078	0.330	16.186
17-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	13.406	1.787	0.894	0.149	0.033	0.132	16.401
17-Dec-16	Pauk Taw	19.265	2.569	1.284	0.214	0.126	0.345	23.803
17-Dec-16	Ohn Taw Gyi (5)	17.550	2.340	1.170	0.195	0.270	0.789	22.314
17-Dec-16	Ohn Taw Gyi (4)	11.921	1.589	0.795	0.132	0.297	0.804	15.538
Day 6 Total		93.137	12.418	6.210	1.035	0.906	3.162	116.868
19-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	31.320	4.176	2.088	0.348	0.186	0.819	38.937
19-Dec-16	Dar Bine	11.381	1.517	0.759	0.126	0.075	0.366	14.224
19-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	14.756	1.967	0.984	0.164	0.093	0.000	17.964
19-Dec-16	Pauk Taw	7.398	0.986	0.493	0.082	0.222	0.159	9.340
19-Dec-16	Say Tha Ma Gyi	8.789	1.172	0.586	0.098	0.099	0.090	10.834
19-Dec-16	Ohn Taw Gyi (4)	9.275	1.237	0.618	0.103	0.168	0.510	11.911
19-Dec-16	THET KEL PYIN	31.320	4.176	2.088	0.349	0.321	0.933	39.187
Day 7 Total		114.239	15.231	7.616	1.270	1.164	2.877	142.397
20-Dec-16	THET KEL PYIN	33.062	4.408	2.204	0.367	0.357	0.816	41.214
20-Dec-16	Thain Bone Tan	0.365	0.049	0.024	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.448
Day 8 Total		33.427	4.457	2.228	0.371	0.360	0.819	41.662
21-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	18.239	2.432	1.216	0.203	0.096	0.291	22.477
21-Dec-16	Dar Bine	11.421	1.523	0.761	0.127	0.075	0.303	14.210
21-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	15.012	2.002	1.000	0.167	0.921	0.000	19.102
21-Dec-16	Say Tha Ma Gyi	13.838	1.845	0.923	0.154	0.090	0.426	17.276
22-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	16.713	2.228	1.114	0.186	0.105	0.516	20.862
22-Dec-16	Dar Bine	11.610	1.548	0.774	0.129	0.084	0.330	14.475
22-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	16.173	2.156	1.078	0.180	0.060	0.504	20.151
22-Dec-16	Say Tha Ma Gyi	12.919	1.723	0.861	0.144	0.180	0.309	16.136
22-Dec-16	Set Yone Su(1cam	4.995	0.666	0.333	0.056	0.300	0.120	6.200
Day 10 Total		62.410	8.321	4.160	0.695	0.459	1.779	77.824
23-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	29.133	3.884	1.941	0.324	0.063	0.738	36.083
23-Dec-16	Dar Bine	12.042	1.605	0.803	0.134	0.081	0.225	14.890
23-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	12.339	1.655	0.823	0.137	0.057	0.372	15.383
23-Dec-16	Say Tha Ma Gyi	16.051	2.140	1.070	0.178	0.129	0.624	20.192
Day 11 Total		69.565	9.284	4.637	0.773	0.330	1.959	86.548
24-Dec-16	Thae Chaung	19.197	2.560	1.280	0.213	0.000	0.414	23.664
24-Dec-16	Dar Bine	18.360	2.448	1.224	0.204	0.243	0.426	22.905
24-Dec-16	Baw Du Pha	19.141	2.544	1.276	0.212	0.180	0.483	23.836
24-Dec-16	Say Tha Ma Gyi	12.677	1.690	0.845	0.141	0.300	0.270	15.923
Day 12 Total		69.375	9.242	4.625	0.770	0.723	1.593	86.328
Grand Total		1059.891	141.320	70.747	11.778	11.226	33.645	1328.607

State Counsellor's Office Information Committee

State Counsellor delivers video message to WAW-2016

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor of Myanmar, delivered a video message to the World Assembly for Women (WAW) 2016 being held on 13 and 14 December 2016 in Tokyo, Japan. The Assembly was hosted by Mr Shinzo Abe as part of his efforts to promote women's participation in society around the world.

In her message, the State Counsellor highlighted the progress that the world has made in the advancement of women especially in the areas of education and employment. While recognizing the progress, the State Counsellor also underlined the challenges to

overcome in particular violence against women, unpaid work, underrepresentation of women in decision making level and unequal access to economic resources. The State Counsellor further encourages the participants to go beyond traditional thinking, stereotypical views and be creative and find evidence based solutions in addressing the challenges. The Government of Japan has been organizing the WAW annually since Prime Minister, Mr Shinzo Abe introduced his idea of "a society where women shine" at the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 to promote women's participation in society.

Myanmar Gazette

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of U Tun Ohn, Director-General of Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.—*Myanmar News Agency*

U Tha Aung Nyun concurrently appointed to New Zealand

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Tha Aung Nyun, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Commonwealth of Australia, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to New Zealand.—*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Government can perform . . .

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"While interrogating those who got involved and had suffered in these incidents, we found many Muslim villagers frightened. There were many casualties on the side of the border guard forces and police forces. We told the frightened villagers not to be afraid of anyone any longer on account of being protected by the government forces and police forces. As long as they did not help the insurgents, they need not be afraid and they may be free to earn their living," he added.

Now social media is more powerful than TV. Facebook users and net-surfers in the YouTube website are apt to believe in the so-called news and information. Media can enlarge a small matter, and simultaneously it can make big ones small. Our commission is to finish the task within the restricted duration according to the 7 facts. The report is not the final task. There will be different views and opinions among people over the report. By assessing our reports of findings, the incumbent government will implement. The government made concessions to villagers—such as reopening schools and bazaars.

If bazaars can be reopened, businesses can resume, which can result in smooth relations between

the two sides. Our commission cannot solve all the problems, but the incumbent government can perform to its best. The commission will find out the true situations by getting proven facts.

On the news coverage on armed attacks in Maungdaw district, Rakhine State, Dr Aung Tun Thet expressed his opinion, "For the time being, it will be best for the government media to tell the news. As time passes, it will be better for other media, including international media, to cover the news by letting them enter the area where the attacks happened. Yet, there is one condition—that government media needs to describe news as soon as possible. Failing that, it is inappropriate for the government media to reply to rumours." The Investigation Commission on Rakhine State was formed with the signing of President of the State on 1st December to investigate the armed attacks which took place in Maungdaw district, Rakhine State and to submit the report on findings straight to the President not later than 31 January 2017.

The commission has been entrusted with the authority to investigate any persons needed, to get necessary particulars and to go to places as needed in the course of the investigation, it is described.



A member of the investigation commission meets with villagers during the visit to conflict areas in northern Rakhine. PHOTO: TIN MAUNG LWIN (MYANMA ALIN)

Interview with U Tun Myat, ex-top security official for United Nations

Tin Maung Lwin
(Myanma Alin)

VICE President U Myint Swe, chairman of the investigation commission on Rakhine State, and members went to the villages where armed attacks took place to investigate local elders, eye-witnesses. Over the experiences from the present investigations and comparison between situation on the ground and news and information described in foreign media, U Tun Myat, one of the commission member and ex-top security official for the United Nations expressed his statements.

Q. We found a news item in the internet web page posted by some foreign media that a mother of seven children aged 40 fled Kyetyoepyin village to Bangladesh after the October 9 armed attack. It was learnt that her children and husband were killed. As regards this, let me know what the difference between the allegation and the actual situation is.

A. We as well found the news in foreign on-line media. The first one is the Guardian on-line page and another is a news item from Hong Kong. Generally, they are found to be badly written, saying that there were many rumors. The commission led by Vice President cannot go to all places in the conflict area but we went to Kyetyoepyin village which was concerned with the armed attacks as far as we can. Foreign media's description varies in 3 kinds. One said the lady lost her 5 children, with described in one media that her husband and one child were killed whereas she herself and a child fleeing into Bangladesh. And she was said to have been raped. Furthermore, it was written that over



U Tun Myat.

“ We interrogated them whether there were 5 children and a mother and a father and 5 children killed in the arson attack, they replied, "No." They said they overheard that a mother and two children were dead. By seeing this, obviously description in foreign media was wrong. This is their actual statement.

one hundred people were killed, nearly 700 houses burnt down and women raped. We went to that village to interview them. But we learnt that they generally used to avoid meeting with government and governmental teams. Now we met many of them, having a chance to chat with them. We asked them how many villagers were killed in the village so as to be well convinced

as to whether news posted by foreign media was reasonable or not. At first, we think that they will disclose. But when we asked them individually they told us. To be exact, the village has a population of 10500 or so, and over 1000 houses. They gave us the list of the killed—10 men, 3 women and 3 children with their names exactly written in the list. We interrogated them whether there were 5 children and a mother and a father and 5 children killed in the arson attack, they replied, "No." They said they overheard that a mother and two children were dead. By seeing this, obviously description in foreign media was wrong. This is their actual statement.

They said one child was hit with a bullet but he was not dead. And he did not belong to the family. On showing them the photo of one Noor Ayesha and her son, they did never see them in this village. Children also replied that they too did not know them. According to a medical doctor who knows their language, a youth aged 20 or so told the children asking them to tell that they had ever seen them.

Q. How would you like to respond to the false news posted by foreign media and social websites so as to be known to all?

A. They themselves did not know exactly whether over 100 people were killed, over 700 houses burnt down and more than 50 women raped. Usually the commission did not intend to disclose this in detail. But it was badly written at the present time. Though not finishing our investigation, alleged writings are too unreasonable. So we are disclosing the true situations for making all well convinced in advance.

Trade Department, USAID, host explanatory session on GSP



An explanatory session on GSP in progress. PHOTO: THIHA KO KO (MANDALAY)

JOINTLY organized by Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce and the USAID-Funded Private Sector Development Activity, an explanation ceremony on the American Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programmes for business entrepreneurs was held in the hall of Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MRFCCI) in Mandalay on Monday.

Present at the ceremony were the director-general of the Department of Trade and officials, the chairman and executive committee members

of MRFCI and entrepreneurs of its brother business associations, entrepreneurs of SMEs, officials of American Embassy and USAIDS and special guests.

At the ceremony, the director-general of the Department of Trade delivered an opening speech, and vice chairman of MRFCI explained the process of UMFCI and cooperation of MRFCI with the ASEAN countries including neighbouring countries. Mr. Suzanne Yountchi, Economic Officer of the US Embassy, elaborated on the American Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programmes. Mr. Erland Her-

findahl, Deputy Assistant US Trade Representative for GSP and Michael Blaeley of US-AIDS-Funded Private Sector Development gave a talk on "Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)".

America suspended Myanmar's GSP trade rights in 1989, but reinstated them on November 13, 2016.

US trade preference programs such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provide opportunities for many of the world's poorest countries to use trade to grow their economies and climb out of poverty. — *Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*

Junction Center Group to donate to 12 places

THE Junction Centre Group, a Myanmar shopping centre operator whose property includes Junction Square, will make donations to 12 schools and places that provide care that are themselves in need of assistance, including an HIV-infected orphans department and a home for the aged and disabled, it is learnt.

The donation ceremony will be held at Junction Square on 17 December. The shopping centre operator will match the amount of donations received in donation boxes in addition to Ks25 million.

"We haven't opened the donation boxes yet. We will open them on 17 December.

We'll donate the same amount of money which we get from the donation boxes. But, we are not sure how much we'll donate in total, said Ko Thurein Hlaing Win, Director of Public Relations from the Junction Centre Group.

"The Junction Centre Group will donate Ks25 million as an initial fund. Also, they will introduce the Junction V-app Application to visitors. The V-application will let you know the activities of the Junction promotions," said Ko Ye Naing, assistant general manager of the Junction Centre Group.

The Junction Centre Group will donate to 12 locations: Si Zar Yeik Home for the aged

and disabled; Theikha Yeikmyone HIV-infected orphans department; a mental hospital; a school for the deaf; a disabled youth school; two monastic schools, Khaymathiri Youth Development Parahita school; the Kyimyindine School for the Blind; the Khawechan School for the Blind; the Myittar Nyunt School for the Deaf and the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

The Junction Centre Group opened its first shopping centre in 1999. Currently, the company has opened the five shopping centres in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw. The company is also planning to open similar centres in other states and regions. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Mingalar market demolition half-completed

DEMOLITION of the Mingalar market, which was devoured by fire on 9 January, has reached the halfway point, said U Kyaw Myint, assistant head of the markets department under the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

"Currently, we are demolishing the Mingalar market. We have demolished the market 55 per cent. We have not invited the tender for the construction design yet. We will release an

announcement soon in this regard," he added.

The company Ekari Phoo is conducting the demolition of the Mingalar market building and has so far removed the top two floors of the four-floor building. The company still has to demolish the first and ground floors.

"We are demolishing the second floor's roof. We have to finish the demolition not later than February. We believe the company can finish the demoli-

tion in time," said U Ye Myint, a shop owner who is included in the fourth-floor information group.

"I want to discuss the building design as quickly as possible because I want the shop owners to be happy," he added.

The Mingalar Market was severely damaged by a fire on January 9. More than 1,600 shops were destroyed with losses totalling more than Ks23 billion. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Ancient structures in Mon State need renovation: state MP

ANCIENT buildings across Mon State, some of them over 100 years old, need to be renovated, according to Daw Khaing Khaing Lae, an MP from Thaton Constituency, who urged the local government to protect the structures at the 4th regular session of the Mon State Hluttaw.

Some owners of the ancient structures do not understand the importance of renovation, while some others have no money to maintain their historic property, she added.

State authorities recently designated Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda, a well-known Buddhist pilgrimage site, and Khayone Cave, a natural limestone cave, in Kyaukmayaw Township, as cultural zones.

There are nine conserva-

tion areas in Mon State, including archaeological sites in Bilin Township, Moksoema Cave in Kyaikhto Township, Gawun Pagoda in Mudon Township, stone inscriptions at Shwesayan Pagoda and a Buddhist monastery.

"There are many ancient structures such as pagodas, temples, Buddhist monasteries, Christian churches, governmental offices and houses built in the colonial period. Many of them require renovation," Daw Khaing Khaing Lae said.

Yadana Bonmyint Monastery in Mawlamyine, considered a prime example of traditional architecture, and Kawhnat Monastery established by U Na Auk attracts many foreign visitors. Both are badly in need of repair. — *Myitmakha News Agency*



PHOTO: MMK

Crime NEWS

Stimulants seized in Loilem

AN anti-narcotic suppression squad from Loilem searched a passenger vehicle en route from Namhsan to Loilem near Pan Khauk Huu village, Loilem-Namhsan motor road, Loilem Township on 12 December.

Police seized 50,000 stimulant tablets from passenger Ma Ya Mee Saw and 50,000 stimulant tablets from passenger Ma Nar Lon.

On the same day, an an-

ti-narcotic suppression squad from East Yangon found Zaw Htoo (alias) U Khwar in possession of 1,100 stimulant tablets, ICE weighing 120 grams, a phone hand set and Ks 1 lakh.

The police found him on a taxi in front of OK Smile beer pub on Bayintnaung Road, 1 Ward, Mayangon Township. Police filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Law. — *Myanmar Police Force*



Ma Ya Mee Saw and Ma Nar Lon. PHOTO: MPF

LOCAL Business

External trade value reaches US\$17billion, over US\$2700million in trade deficit

EXTERNAL trade value as of 2nd December in this fiscal year 2016-2017 totaled US\$17,521.102million, with US\$2,792.774million in trade deficit, according to the Commerce Ministry.

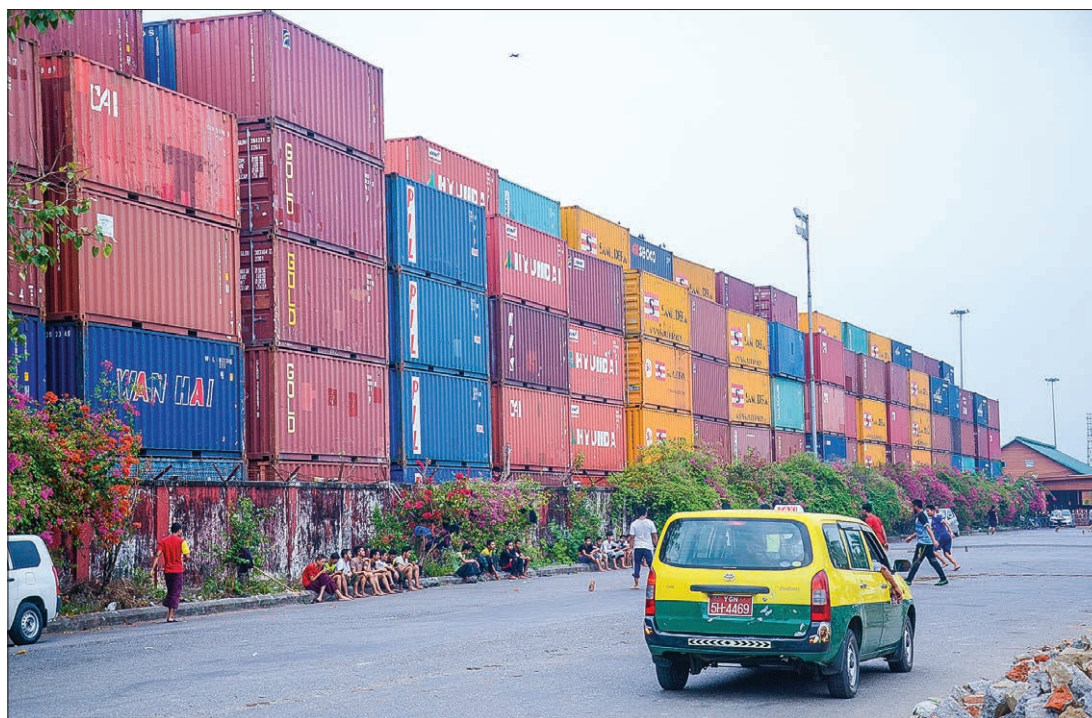
In the similar period of last fiscal year, the external trade value was US\$18,209.307million with a trade deficit of US\$3,888.887million. The trade value this year slumped by US\$688.250million when compared to last year.

Out of external trade value of US\$17,521.102million as of 2nd December in this fiscal year, the export value was US\$7,364.164million and import value amounted to US\$10,156.938million.

In the same period, the value of export through normal trade reached US\$ 4,439.946million, whereas the value of import through normal trade was US\$8,333.422million.

Meanwhile, the values of export through border trade hit US\$ 2,924.218million, whereas the import value via border trade hit US\$1823.516million, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar exports agricul-



Containers seen at the container yard in Yangon on 8 December 2016. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

tural products, livestock, fishery products, forest products, minerals, manufacturing and other products while capital goods, consumer goods and raw industrial products are imported into Myanmar.

The government is trying to reduce the trade deficit by low-

ering the imported items, except for essentials, according to the second five-year National Development Plan.

There were trade deficits of US\$91.9million in 2012-2013, US\$2,555.5million in 2013-2014, US\$4,912.559million in 2014-2015 and

US\$5,407.464million in 2015-2016 respectively, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO). About US\$3.1billion is expected to show as trade deficit in this fiscal year, it is learnt from the Planning and Finance Ministry. —Ko Htet

Domestic market needs to manufacture products made from water hyacinth

WITH a lack of techniques for transforming water hyacinth into value-added products and a small number of makers, the moribund business of water hyacinth products requires improvements to formulate a healthy domestic market, according to the Myanmar Forest Products Merchants Federation (MFPMF).

There is already an export market for high-end products made from water hyacinths, but there are only one or two entrepreneurs engaged in this industry.

The MFPMF is reportedly implementing a water hyacinth and rubber development project. The federation opened the first batch of basic courses for manufacture value-added products from rubber and water hyacinths on 12th December in North Dagon Township, Yangon Region, with 30 trainees.

The course aims to produce workers who can manufacture the value-added products of water hyacinth such as tables, chairs, handbags, etc. The talented workers will have an opportunity to also undertake design courses, it is learnt.—Ko Khant

Rubber price on the rise with demand from abroad

WITH increasing demand from abroad, the price of rubber is on the rise at Ks1,000 to Ks1,010 per pound, Mon State rubber entrepreneurs said.

The price of Ribbed Smoked Sheet Type 3 (RSS-3) rubber was between Ks800 and Ks850 per pound last month. The current rubber price has risen up to Ks1,010 per

pound.

The RSS-3 rubber fetched around Ks1,800 per pound in 2011, but the price then began a downward trend, dropping down to around Ks550 to Ks600 per pound.

To maintain the price on the rise, quality needs to be controlled so that Myanmar's rubber meets the export market's criteria. However, the

quality of Myanmar's rubber is inconsistent, merchants said. A high price is offered when the rubber is of high quality, said a rubber merchant.

Myanmar exported its rubber to China, Japan and Malaysia. Over 80,000 tonnes of rubber are annually exported, according to Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association.—Mon Mon

Companies not allowed to import more than three machines a week

COMPANIES are no longer permitted to import more than three machines a week through both normal and border trade starting from 12th December, according to the Commerce Ministry.

This limited number of import of machinery is effective starting from 5-ton-and-below machines, according to an announcement by

the Commerce Ministry.

The companies mainly import the machinery through the border trade channel. According to 2017 model year limit on car imports, the model years for trucks are set from 2007 to 2014. The trucks are imported from Thailand, China and Korea via normal and border trade, it is learnt.—Mon Mon

Local, foreign investments in first half of FY reach only US\$2billion

BOTH local and foreign investments in the first half of fiscal year 2016-2017 reached only US\$2billion, despite the fact that the investments are expected to hit US\$6billion, according to Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

The investments in the first six months of last year were over US\$3billion, US\$1 billion higher than that of this fiscal year.

"The inflow of investments this year is on the decline. The expected investment is US\$6bil-

lion and we cannot say for sure whether it can meet the target or not. The investors from within and without the country were still observing during the period of transition", said U Aung Naing Oo, the secretary of MIC.

Efforts will be exerted in a bid to attract more investors in Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ). In making investment proposals, the investment plan is drawn up on the basis of a national plan, it is learnt.

"We mainly focus on Thilawa SEZ to attain more invest-

ments. We are trying to approve the submitted proposals in hand as soon as possible after verification and assessments to check whether it meet the prescribed criteria", said U Aung Naing Oo.

China is the main investor in Myanmar, followed by Singapore and Thailand. The manufacturing sector garners the largest investments. Additionally, heavy investments occur in the industrial businesses, transport and communications sectors.—Myitmakha News Agency



Factory workers work at the Thilawa Special Economic Zone outside Yangon, on 23 September 2015. PHOTO: XINHUA

Thousands in North Korea at risk months after devastating floods — IFRC

SEOUL—Thousands of survivors of floods that hit a remote corner of North Korea in August are in need of urgent aid as winter sets in, a senior international aid official said on Tuesday.

The floods, the worst in North Korea for 70 years, hit near its northeast borders with China and Russia and affected 600,000 people and left 70,000 homeless, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said.

"There is still much to do. Many people lost everything," IFRC president Tadateru Konoé said in a news release following a 10-day visit to the isolated country.

"They need basic relief supplies to get through the winter months and more investment is needed to restore health services, water supply and sanitation systems together with mass awareness campaigns to guard against

the spread of communicable diseases".

Underdeveloped rural North Korea suffers from a lack of proper infrastructure and much of its mountainous terrain has been deforested to make provide farm land, removing a natural flood barrier.

The country also suffers from very cold winters, meaning people made homeless by the floods are particularly vulnerable.

In September, the IFRC made a \$15.5 million emergency appeal to help North Korea's Red Cross Society reach more people with aid, but only 25 per cent of the target had been met, the IFRC said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in September that, according to figures based on government data, 133 people were killed in the floods and 395 were missing. — Reuters



Villagers wash clothes in the garbage-filled Shenling River, in Yuexi county, Anhui Province, China, on 14 February 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

China to appoint 'river chiefs' to fight pollution

SHANGHAI — China will appoint "river chiefs" to prevent pollution in the nation's waterways, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Monday, in the latest step taken by Beijing to rein in environmental damage.

With the evolution of China from an agricultural nation to an industrial one, toxic pollutants from factories have increasingly seeped into the environment, leading to health

problems among the population.

A detailed system for appointing the chiefs will be published by the Ministry of Water Resources and Ministry of Environmental Protection on Tuesday, the agency reported. Zhou Xuewen, deputy of Water Resources, saying at a press conference on Monday.

"New problems have mushroomed along with fast economic and social development, including

excessive discharging of pollutants into rivers and lakes," said Zhou.

River chiefs will protect water resources, control and prevent pollution and restore the ecology, according to a document forwarded by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council.

They will be held accountable if environmental damage occurs in the rivers under their supervision and

their names and responsibilities will be made public to ensure oversight, the document said.

Government officials will be hired at the provincial, city, county and township levels, with large rivers and lakes partitioned across multiple officials.

On Monday, the Ministry of Finance criticised some local governments for misappropriating funds earmarked for smog control. — Reuters

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South Korea lawmakers to quiz doctors, nurses about Park's 'missing' 7 hours

SEOUL — Seven hours may have sealed the fate of South Korea's beleaguered President Park Geun-hye. That was the time between the first news reports that the Sewol ferry carrying hundreds of children was sinking off the nation's southern coast on 16 April 2014 and her first TV appearance that day.

The tragedy, which claimed the lives of 304 people — many of them kids from one high school — continues to gnaw at the nation's consciousness, especially because a rescue effort was widely seen as botched.

A lack of information on Park's whereabouts and actions during that time has fuelled conspiracy theories which have re-emerged during the investigation into an influence-peddling scandal that is poised to bring down her presidency.

The missing seven hours may have marked a turning point in Park's relationship with the nation's people, breeding mistrust and anger, and leaving many South Koreans, now

seething over the current scandal, to question what else may have been covered-up.

"What was she doing while the children were dying?" asked Kim Geum-ja — whose son was killed in the tragedy — and who is among a group of activists camped-out in Seoul's main ceremonial plaza since shortly after the disaster. "What was so urgent that she was missing for seven hours?"

On Wednesday, a parliamentary panel looking into the influence-peddling allegations will hold a hearing specifically on the missing seven hours and is expected to probe into exactly what Park was doing during that time. The seven hours were included by parliament in its motion to impeach her.

Park's former medical staffs, including two personal doctors and two nurses, are scheduled to appear, as is an outside plastic surgeon who treated Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend at the centre of the scandal.

Last month, more than

two years after the disaster, Park's office published a page on its website detailing what reports the president received, and when, on the day of the sinking in a bid to quell the rumours about what she was doing at the time.

"We've repeatedly explained, two years ago and since then, that she had been receiving reports about the Sewol incident all throughout the day and gave instructions either by phone or written reports," Kim Dong-jo, a Blue House spokesman, told Reuters.

The official timeline details exactly when Park received reports or gave orders, including an early demand — less than an hour after the doomed ferry began to sink — to make sure that there are no casualties and that no one on board is left behind.

But the timeline does not reveal where Park was or what she was doing as she gave those orders, further fuelling speculation.

Park's powers were suspended on Friday after parliament voted to im-



Park Geun-hye.

PHOTO: REUTERS

peach her over allegations she colluded with Choi and a former aide to pressure big businesses to donate to foundations backing key policy initiatives.

Park Young-sun of the opposition Democratic Party held up a placard at last week's hearing showing two photos of Park, before and after the day of the disaster.

The photos focused on Park's eyes, which she said appeared to have undergone anti-wrinkle treatment. Park's office has denied she had been receiving Botox injections at the time. —Reuters

Thai king to pardon up to 150,000 inmates, including royal insult convicts

BANGKOK — Thailand's new King Maha Vajiralongkorn will pardon or commute the sentences of up to 150,000 prison inmates, including some jailed under one of the world's toughest laws against royal insult, officials said on Tuesday.

King Vajiralongkorn ascended the throne on 1 December after the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, on 13 October.

"This is the first opportunity since his majesty's ascension to show his mercy," the Royal Gazette said in a statement, announcing that 150,000 inmates could be eligible for release or to have sentences cut, under the pardon.

Officials do not have a figure for the number of inmates who will benefit from the pardon, with decisions to be made by different prisons depending on factors including the inmate's age, how much of the sentence has been served and behaviour.

Prisoners jailed for insulting the monarchy and drug offences will be eligible, said Kobkiat Kasivivat, director general of the De-



Thailand's new King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun leaves after paying his respects to a statue of King Rama VII on the occasion of Thai Constitution Day at the Parliament house in Bangkok, Thailand, on 10 December, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

partment of Corrections. "Prisoners convicted of 112 and prisoners convicted of drug offences will be included for consideration for release or commuting of sentence," Kobkiat told Reuters, referring to the royal insult law by its article number in the criminal code.

The government has not released a figure for the number of people who are in jail for royal insult

but there have been more than 80 prosecutions under the law since mid-2014, according to figures from the legal monitoring group iLaw.

"The inmates will be looked at on a case by case basis at each individual corrections facility," Chanchao Chaiyanukit, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Justice, told Reuters.

Those convicted of

murder and rape will not be eligible for release or to have sentences cut, officials said.

Thailand's prison population has soared in recent years, largely because of tough drug laws.

Corrections Department figures for July showed a prison population of 321,347 in Thailand, with about 70 per cent jailed for drugs offences.—Reuters

Philippine lawmakers file criminal case against Duterte critic

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's allies in Congress on Tuesday filed a criminal complaint against a senator who has been an outspoken critic of a surge of extrajudicial killings unleashed by the president's campaign against drugs.

The legal complaint against Senator Leila de Lima, who was justice minister in a previous administration, is the latest government action against her since she led an inquiry into the killings.

She has denounced the government attacks on her as "madness" and "harassment" and she has appealed to Duterte to stop the string of bizarre accusations and insults.

Senators loyal to Duterte ousted her from the leadership of the investigation in September.

Congressmen then accused her of disrespect in connection with criticism she made of her treatment and the fate of the inquiry. That led to a criminal complaint.

"Senator de Lima has shown disrespect to the

House of Representatives," said Congressman Reynaldo Umali, head of the lower house's justice panel.

"We cannot allow this incident to pass, how can we earn the respect of the people when a senator insults us by calling the inquiry a sham and a kangaroo court."

De Lima is on an official trip to the United States and Europe and was not available for comment.

Duterte's war on drugs, the key plank of his campaign for a May election, has claimed about 5,000 lives since 1 July.

The high toll and mysterious circumstances of some of the killings have alarmed rights groups, the United States and United Nations, whose concerns have drawn angry rebukes from Duterte.

Umali said de Lima faced imprisonment of up to six months if found guilty.

A small group of opposition politicians in Congress said the case against de Lima would have a chilling effect on critics of Duterte's war on drugs.—Reuters

South Korea, US, Japan to fully implement sanctions on North Korea

SEOUL — The top nuclear envoys of South Korea, the United States and Japan on Tuesday agreed to work closely to fully implement the latest sanctions imposed on Pyongyang by the UN Security Council and unilateral sanctions measures taken by the three allies.

The agreement came at talks held between Kim Hong Kyun, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs at South Korea's Foreign Ministry, Joseph Yun, US special representative for North Korea policy,

and Kenji Kanasugi, director general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau.

The three officials are head delegates to the long-stalled six-party talks on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

At a joint press conference, Yun said the latest sanctions resolution adopted at the United Nations on 30 November is "a broad international consensus" that the international community will not accept the North's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

"The sanctions are the latest step in our ongoing efforts to convince North Korea that the only path to economic development and international recognition it claims to seek is by returning to credible negotiations on denuclearization," Yun said.

He reiterated the United States' position that it remains willing to hold "credible and serious denuclearization talks" with North Korea while confirming Pyongyang has not shown any signs toward that end.

"Unfortunately, the DPRK response — an es-

calating pattern of ballistic missile launches, nuclear tests and inflammatory rhetoric — underscores it is not ready," he said, referring to North Korea by its official name — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Kanasugi reaffirmed the importance of maintaining cooperation between the three allies. The Japanese envoy said Tuesday's discussions covered ways to ensure a series of UN sanctions resolutions, including the latest, are carried out in an effective way, and also ways to make each country's

unilateral sanctions measures more effective.

Meanwhile, Kim, the South Korean envoy, urged North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programme, warning of "self-destruction."

"(North Korea) should realize denuclearization is the only destination they should be headed for," Kim said. The UN Security Council imposed tightened sanctions on North Korea on 30 November, including a cap on its coal exports to China as a way of choking off major funding sources

for Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

In an unprecedented move, China said in a statement on Sunday it has suspended imports of North Korean coal until the end of this year as part of the latest sanctions slapped on Pyongyang. This year alone, North Korea has carried out two nuclear tests and launched more than 20 ballistic missiles in violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning the country from conducting such activities.—Kyodo News

Abe pledges \$3 billion to assist women in developing countries

TOKYO — Japan will put a total of \$3 billion towards supporting the advancement of women in developing countries by 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said at a symposium on women's empowerment in Tokyo Tuesday.

"These efforts will assist women in developing countries, focusing on pro-

moting respect for women's rights, improving an enabling environment for women to reach their full potential and advancing women's leadership," Abe said in a speech at the third annual World Assembly for Women.

The symposium, modeled after the World Economic Forum held annually

in Davos, Switzerland, is hosted by the Japanese government.

Scheduled participants in the events over Tuesday and Wednesday included the prime minister's wife Akie Abe, Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike and UN Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark.—Kyodo News

IEE Study of 3D Seismic Survey in Offshore Block M9 by PTTEPI

PTTEP International Limited (PTTEPI) plans to conduct a marine seismic survey in Block M9, located in Gulf of Moattama, Myanmar. This is scheduled to commence in early 2017. An Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) for the proposed activity is currently being prepared by PTTEPI, ERM, and Resource & Environment Myanmar (REM) and will be submitted to the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) end of 2016. After the IEE report is completed, it will be publically viewable on PTTEPI's website as follows: www.pttep.com

In the meantime, questions and comments can be submitted to PTTEPI in writing by contacting the following e-mail address: TinNilarSoe@pttep.com

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Some kinds of demonstrations will never result in placebo effect!

Khin Maung Oo

"Democracy", "Human Rights", "Freedom of Expression", "Demonstration", "Bribery & Corruption" etc., are being heard almost every day, not only in Myanmar but also across the world. Who can deny it if we claim these words broaden our knowledge bank, widen our mouths? Not long ago, these words would not have even slipped out of our tongues. Now the iron door has opened up and we have had freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. The words regarded to be dangerous ones in the previous decade became sweet words and powerful weapons at the present time. Words and weapons beginning with "W" can be used in both good and evil ways. Sweet words can make listeners change their minds with impolite or rude words leading us to destruction. Likewise, weapons can be used to hinder activities of destructive elements with all things likely to be destroyed by weapons,

on the other hand.

Some say that many people in fact do not know the meaning of democracy. Others say that Myanmar people do not deserve democracy. I do not accept these. Especially, Buddha's Teachings, moral lessons passed on to us by our ancestors through bed-time stories, social ethics taught in primary schools guide us to move on a right path. In our minds, sense of duty and love of truth have been conceived. But during the past five decades, situations pushed them to moral derivation, making them selfish.

The incumbent government was left with a legacy of problems—unemployment, poverty, skyrocketing commodity prices, bribery & corruption, increasing problems of traffic jam with urbanization and so on. Knowing that the people's government elected by the people themselves is solving and trying to find ways of solving these problems, why

do they want to point their fingers at the government? No government has miraculous powers of healing these problems in a short period of time. Despite the fact that we acknowledge we have never had such a good government as the present one, why have we prioritized our desires without glancing at the benefits of the majority? As known by all, sellers on streets and container drivers are mostly violating rules and prescribed laws. They know themselves that their deeds cause traffic jam and many casualties in accidents. Though they have been offered particular places and times to perform their daily routines, they did not accept it. At new designated places, sellers may find it difficult to attract customers in the beginning. Customers and buyers will come to them later for sure. Container drivers also seemingly want to occupy public roads, using days and nights and driving at high speed

exceeding the speed limit.

If every individual wanted to avoid performing night duties, there will be no doctors and nurses in hospitals at nights. Newspapers will not come out. Meat and vegetables cannot be bought early in the morning so that we can leave in time for our work. We cannot live and sleep in a place without soldiers and police performing their duties at nights. For the government to achieve their goals in bringing national benefits, we are all responsible to take an active part. A panacea for solving all the problems the country is experiencing, is in our hands. It is none other than for us to live in peace and unity under the leadership of our elected government. Freedom of expression is our inborn right, but we must be well convinced that some kinds of demonstrations that are completely done for selfish reasons will never result in Placebo Effect.

Nat Festivals of the Month Nattaw

**Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu
Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt**

MYANMAR cultural heritage is rich in both tangible and intangible aspects. It is well preserved in visual, literary, performing, culinary and herbal medicinal arts. To quote but a few evidences of literary art, twelve Myanmar traditional festivals of Myanmar lunar calendar are rhymed in verse for easy memorisation as follows:-

သက္ကတကူး	First month	New year or Water Festival
နှစ်ဦးညောင်ရေ	Second month	Waterpouring on Bodi Tree Festival
ဝါပုလွေခင်း	Third month	Religious Examination Festival
ပဉ္စင်းတော်ခံ	Fourth month	Ordination Festival
စာရေးတံနွဲ့	Fifth month	Charity by Lot Festival
မြစ်လျှံပွဲကြီး	Sixth month	Regatta and Boat Race Festival
ဆီမီးထွန်းချိန်	Seventh month	Light Festival
ကထိန်၊ နတ်ကျင်း	Eighth and ninth months	Kahtain Rode offering and Nat Festival
မြင်းခင်းထွက်ဝင်	Tenth month	Equestrian Tournery Festival
သဘင်မီးပုံး	Eleventh month	Bon fire Festival
ဂူလုံးသဲပုံ	Twelfth month	Sand Pagoda Festival

Traditionally designated seasonal followers of the twelve months versified in the form of Lay Cho poem is as follows:-

ပန်းကံကော်၊ ရွှေစကား	Gantaw	First Month
ငွေသားနု၊ စပယ်မှန်	Saga	Second month
မြတ်လေး၊	Jasmine	Third month
ခတ္တာနှင့်	Myat Lay	Fourth month
ရွှေယင်းမာ	Khat tar	Fifth month
ကြာ၊ ခဝဲ၊	Yin mur	Sixth month
ဖွဲ့စနင်းလျှံ	Lotus	Seventh month
သင်္ဃေကျန်၊ ခွာတံ	Khawe	Eighth month
ပေါက်၊ လဲ	Jhazin	Ninth month
ပုန်းညက်ကယ်၊	Khwa Ngo	Tenth month
ရွှေမင်းရယ်တို့	Pauk and Lei	Eleventh month
သင်းထုံနဲ့ တံ၊	Jharaphe	Twelweth month

This verse mentions designated seasonal flowers in order of twelve months or seasons of Myanmar Calendar. The name of the ninth month of Myanmar calendar is Nattaw which literally means Nats' month. Nat is a derivative from Pali word "Na-ha" meaning a resplendent being worthy of veneration "Taw" is royal or respectable. In general parlance, 'nat' applies to all spiritual beings- devas, gods, goddesses deities or spirits who deserve worship and propitiation by humans.

In Myanmar astrology this month is named 'Dhanu yathi' [Sagittarius] Dhanu means bow and arrow. So the zodiacal symbol of this month is an archer. Most orchids bloom in cold season. But Thazin [Bulbophyllum auricomum] a peculiar species with fragrant yellowish blooms on a single graceful shoot coming out of a delicate bulb is designated the flower of Nattaw month.

In pre-Buddhist Myanmar, animism and ancestor worship were indigenous belief systems. Myanmar peoples believe that natural phenomena are possessed by deities and that the spirits of ancestors, national heroes, and those who died of tragic or violent death, live on. They deserve veneration. They should be worshipped and propitiated for their favour. When Hindu merchants arrived and

settled in Myanmar they brought their Hindu Brahmanism. Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, Sakka, Ganesha, Svarasti etc. became deities of popular worship. After Theravada Buddhism was introduced and became religion of a great majority, pre-Buddhist and post-Buddhist religions co-exist because Buddhism is a tolerant religion.

Myanmar peoples till today have two types of religion- Buddhism as a spiritual religion for the benefit of life here after whereas nat-worship is the temporal religion which promotes the material welfare of the present life.

In the precincts of Shwezigon Pagoda at Bagan we find the earliest evidences of peaceful co-existence between Buddhism and Nat worship. In the inner and outer precincts are shrines with images of Hindu deities, national and local nats. In the order of Myanmar 37 nats in Myanmar pantheon, Bodaw Thagya comes first. He is the Myanmar version of Hindu god- Thunder god Indra or Sakka. The rest are all Myanmar national heroes and heroines who became nat, because of their tragic violent deaths. Mount Popa, Myanmar Olympus, about 30 miles to the southeast of Bagan has the largest grand nat Shrines for 37 nats.

Next to Sakka the Thunder god of the Hindus, two Mahagiri nats are the most senior. They were

brother and sister- Maung Tint and Thon Pan Hla. The brother was a mighty black smith in the kingdom of Tagaung and the sister a beautiful lady. The King of Tagaung burnt Mating Tint De alive tied to the trunk of a champac Tree because he was afraid that Maung Tint De would rebel against him. The sister jumped into the fire. So the two became nat-spirits dwelling at the Champac Tree. The King cut off the tree and floated it down the Ayeyarwaddy River and when it stranded at the jetty of Bagan, King Thay-li-gyaung of Bagan [344-387 A.D.] had a dream in which the two brother sister nats appeared to tell their tragic story and begged the King to give them a dwelling place to live and they promise to guard his kingdom. When the King sent his men to the jetty they found a big champak trunk stranded there. The trunk was cut into two pieces, longer one to represent the brother and the shorter the sister. They were set up in a shrine built on the summit of Mount Popa. Royal order was issued to make local people to worship and hold festival annually in the month of Nattaw. The King and his court paid homage and participated in the festival. These two nats are known as Ein twin Min Mahagiri [Nat spirits of Great Mountain who guard your house hold].

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Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends demonstration of Myanmar thaing martial arts

A demonstration of Myanmar Thaing Martial Arts took place on the coloured grounds of the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Science in Mingaladon station yesterday, with Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in attendance.

At the demonstration, trainees demonstrated their skills in six categories as a group and five categories individually.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech, presented prizes, and observed teaching aids used in training.

The Senior General and party later visited the Military



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivering a speech at the ceremony to demonstrate Myanmar Thaing Martial Arts. PHOTO: MNA

Orthopedics Specialist Hospital and Defence Services Physical Rehabilitation Hospital, and

gave food, cash and words of encouragement to military patients injured in battle.

Later in the day, the Senior General inspected the progress of the Vertical Wind Tunnel

constructed by Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Limited. —Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar–Japan Medical Seminar 2016

MYANMAR- JAPAN Medical Seminar 2016 was held at Park Royal Hotel Yangon on Friday.

The seminar was hosted and organized by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (METI); Medical Excellence Japan (MEJ) by the support of Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS), Embassy of Japan in Myanmar, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

At the Seminar, opening Remarks were delivered by Mr. Soichiro Sasago, Director of Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, Mr. Yuichiro Funai, First Secretary of Embassy of Japan and Dr. Kyaw Zin Thant, Director-General of Department of Medical Research, Ministry of Health and Sports.

Then the lectures were given respectively by Dr. Shuzo Yamamoto, President of Medical Excellence, Japan, Profes-

sor Yoshihiro Kimata, Prof. U Kyaw Myint Naing, Associate Professor Dr. Khine Shwe Wah, Dr. Jun Oda and Dr. Junichi Kaburaki.

In the seminar, the presentation and discussions were made on Necessity of Human Resources Development in Biomedical Engineering, Development of Emergency Medicine and Early Management of Non Communicable Diseases (NCD's) and Cancer. Japanese Medical Doc-

tors, Japanese Government Authorities and Myanmar Medical Professionals discussed further collaborations between Myanmar and Japan to develop the Medical Education and Health Care in Myanmar.

Present at the meeting were delegates from Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, Medical Excellence Japan, Japan External Trade Organization, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Director General and Officers of Department of Medical Research, President and Executive Committee

Members of Myanmar Medical Council, Myanmar Medical Association, Myanmar Academy of Medical Science, Myanmar Private Hospitals Association, Medical Professionals, Bio Medical Engineers and Post Graduate students from Medical Universities and State owned Hospitals and responsible officials.

The Exhibition of Cutting Edge Medical Equipment including advanced medical devices of Fijifilm, Hitachi, Nihon Kohden, Olympus, Panasonic Health Care and Terumo were displayed at the seminar. —GNLM

Nat Festivals of the Month Nattaw

>> from page 8

Later, King Anawrahta forbade nat idol shrine at every house hold because he promoted Theravada Buddhism. But he allowed a green coco nut hung in the house as a shrine for Ein twin Min Maha Giri to guard the house. On either side of Tharapa old city gate of Bagan we can still find two nat shrines of Ein twin Min Maha Giri nats where Bagan and successive Myanmar Kings held nat festival in the month of Nattaw.

King Bayint Naung [1551-1581 A.D] made attempts to stamp out the primitive practices in the nat worship. He issued order forbidding animal sacrifice and offering and taking of intoxicants of nat festivals of Nattaw.

In the latter part of Taungoo dynasty, Maha Giri nat festival was over shadowed by Maha Peinne [Ganesha] nat festival, due to the influence of Mon culture. King Tabin Shwehti [1531-1550 A.D] and his brother-in-law and successor King Bayint Naung who founded their capitals Taungoo and Hanthawaddy respectively in lower Myanmar were admirers of Mon culture. Tabin Shwehti adopted Mon hair style and put both Mon and Myanmar htis [crowns] on the pagodas to indicate that the two

nationalities were or: united. Ceremonies and festivals of Mon court were adopted and faithfully held by these two Kings and their successors.

Mon kingdom in Lower Myanmar known as Ramanya desa at that time came into contact with oversea Hindu merchants much earlier than Tampadipa and Thunaparanta territories of the kingdoms in Upper Myanmar. Therefore the Mons received more and longer influence of Hindu Brahmanic culture. Hindu Brahmanic priests were raja gurus at Mon Courts. They conducted all royal ceremonies and festivals. The worship and the festival of an elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesha was introduced by them. It is believed that Ganesha showers special favours upon his worshippers such as power, might, health, longevity, prosperity, good rain and good harvest, peace and protection from all dangers- the kind of favours which the ruling class covet most. Therefore Bramanic god Ganesha was adopted as Myanmar nat with Myanmar name "Maha Peinne" whose festival is held annually on the full moon day of the month of Nattaw.

"On the 13th waxing moon of Nattaw, a grand entertainment by performing artists was held at the shrine in which the idol of

Maha Peinne Nat was housed. On the full moon day of Nattaw the idol was put on a bejeweled spired coach made in the design of a flying peacock and it was taken in precession to the palace. The coach was pulled by the princes and courtiers. At the palace Their Majesties and members of the palace offered milk, butter, sweets fruit juice, flowers and incense to the idol and worshipped and propitiated it. They prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of the country. On the first waning moon of Nattaw the Maha Peinne idol was taken to the houses of the princes princesses and ministers by turn for similar pujas.

The following is an excerpt from Loka Byuha Inyone Sadan, [a treatise on court ceremonies and Festivals compiled by Thiri Uzana, the minister of Inyone in the Inwa Period.

"In the season of Nattaw, the traditional festival of Maha Peinne takes place. On the 13th waxing moon of Nattaw the idol of Maha Peinne Nat, housed in the zayat [Pavilion] in the precinct of Shwezigon Pagoda was worshipped. One Myanmar Saing [Musical Ensemble] and dancers performed their talents [to entertain the worshippers]. At the palace, milk, butter, sweets and fruits were offered to the idol. Princes, princesses, royal grandchildren and ministers were instructed to hold the ceremony of

Puja to Maha Peinne Nat'.

"On the full moon day of Nattaw Maha Peinne Idol was carried on a coach to the palace to be worshipped by Their Majesties. On the first waning moon, the Idol made a round of the houses of princes, princesses and ministers to receive their homage and offerings".

"Eight Brahman Priests, each facing a cardinal direction incanteted mantras invoking Maha Peinne Nat and praying for his favours. Then they offered to it fruits, flowers, perfume, milk, butter, sweet and drinking water. Entertainments followed creating a festive atmosphere for the public".

We learn from Myanmar chronicles that up till the reign of the last Myanmar King Thibaw [1878-1885 A.D]. Maha Peinne Nat festival was held annually in the month of Nattaw in accordance with the precedent and tradition. In Myanmar today Maha Peinne temples are found in cities and towns built and maintained by Hindu communities. During the festival they are visited by people of other faiths.

Two other festivals held in Nattaw in the past were the festival of trapping wild elephants and the festival of conferring titles and giving awards to the deserving ones. Myanmar literature has references to these two festivals of Nattaw.

Trapping wild elephants and taming them for human services was an important skillful profession as well as a princely pastime. Kings Tabin Shwehti, Bayint Naung and Prince Min Ye Kyaw Swa were noted elephant catchers and tamers. Stockades of thick teak trunks were built near elephant stables. Wild elephants caught by using a tamed female elephant as a decoy, were driven into the stockade and trapped into a strongly built keddha where they were tamed. Ceremonies were held and festivals followed when such activities took place.

At the palace, in the month of Nattaw, the King held a special audience to honour those who had literary achievements and those who had performed outstanding military service and military exploits. It was called "Hpyin Htat Mingala Pwe" meaning the ceremony of conferring titles and awarding Hpyin cloths and gowns. Men of letters and men of might [pens and swords] were honoured by the King by giving them promotion, title, dress, gowns, cloths, insignia, gift, land, house, fief, or special privilege.

This ceremony and festival is replaced by Sarsodaw Day and Festival [Writers' Day and Literary Festival which Myanmar Government observes and celebrates annually on the 1st waxing moon of the month of Nattaw.

French EU exit would be tricky for a Le Pen presidency



Marine Le Pen (R), France's far-right National Front political party leader and the party vice-president Florian Philippot speak to journalists at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France after a meeting with France's president, in this picture taken on 30 November 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — France's far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen, who wants to become president in next spring's elections, celebrated Britain's vote to leave the European Union.

"Victory for freedom!" she said on her Twitter page in June after Britons voted for Brexit. "We now need to hold the same referendum in France and in (other) EU countries."

But unlike Britain, France has a written constitution, which states that "the Republic is part of

the European Union". So a "Frexit" would require a constitutional change which experts say is difficult, but not impossible.

Pollsters say Le Pen is unlikely to become president, but if she does, she has promised to seek revised terms for France's EU membership, and then ask in a referendum if voters want to leave. She says EU membership has stripped France of autonomy, including on immigration, monetary and fiscal policy.

Given surging support for

populists worldwide, the chance of an electoral upset in the euro zone's second largest economy is being taken seriously by financial market participants concerned about the future of the euro and the EU.

France's constitution says that proposed laws on the organisation of state powers, reforms relating to economic, social and environmental policy, or a request for authority to ratify a treaty can be decided by referendums.—*Reuters*

Top US spy agency has not embraced CIA assessment on Russia hacking — sources

WASHINGTON — The overseers of the US intelligence community have not embraced a CIA assessment that Russian cyber attacks were aimed at helping Republican President-elect Donald Trump win the 2016 election, three American officials said on Monday.

While the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) does not dispute the CIA's analysis of Russian hacking operations, it has not endorsed their assessment because of a lack of conclusive evidence that Moscow intended to boost Trump over Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, said the officials, who declined to be named.

The position of the ODNI, which oversees the 17 agency-strong US intelligence community, could give Trump fresh ammunition to dispute the CIA assessment, which he rejected as "ridiculous" in weekend remarks, and press his assertion that no evidence implicates Russia in the cyber attacks.

Trump's rejection of the CIA's judgment marks the latest in a string of disputes over Russia's international conduct that have erupted between the

president-elect and the intelligence community he will soon command.

An ODNI spokesman declined to comment on the issue.

"ODNI is not arguing that the agency (CIA) is wrong, only that they can't prove intent," said one of the three US officials. "Of course they can't, absent agents in on the decision-making in Moscow."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose evidentiary standards require it to make cases that can stand up in court, declined to accept the CIA's analysis — a deductive assessment of the available intelligence — for the same reason, the three officials said.

The ODNI, headed by James Clapper, was established after the 11 September, 2001, attacks on the recommendation of the commission that investigated the attacks. The commission, which identified major intelligence failures, recommended the office's creation to improve coordination among US intelligence agencies.

In October, the US government formally accused Russia of a campaign of cyber attacks against American political organ-

isations ahead of the 8 November presidential election. Democratic President Barack Obama has said he warned Russian President Vladimir Putin about consequences for the attacks.

Reports of the assessment by the CIA, which has not publicly disclosed its findings, have prompted congressional leaders to call for an investigation.

Obama last week ordered intelligence agencies to review the cyber attacks and foreign intervention in the presidential election and to deliver a report before he turns power over to Trump on 20 January. The CIA assessed after the election that the attacks on political organisations were aimed at swaying the vote for Trump because the targeting of Republican organisations diminished toward the end of the summer and focused on Democratic groups, a senior US official told Reuters on Friday.

Moreover, only materials filched from Democratic groups — such as emails stolen from John Podesta, the Clinton campaign chairman — were made public via WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy organisation, and other outlets, US officials said.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish warplane crashes near southeastern city of Diyarbakir — army

DIYARBAKIR — A Turkish fighter jet on a training mission crashed on its final approach to an airport in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir on Monday, Turkey's military said on Monday, noting that the pilot had ejected from the plane and was unharmed.

An investigation had started into the cause of the crash, the army said in a statement.

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said initial findings indicated that a technical fault was responsible and noted that the plane was not carrying any ordnance.

The jet crashed in an empty field about 4-5 km (about 3 miles) away from the Diyarbakir military airport.

Commercial flights to predominantly Kurdish Diyarbakir's civilian airport, next to the military air base, were rerouted to nearby airports, sources said.—*Reuters*

Terrorism police arrest 6 in London, Midlands

LONDON — Police counter terrorism units in London and central England arrested six people in early morning raids Monday.

The six, five men and a 32-year-old woman, are being held on suspicion of offences under Britain's terrorism laws and are being questioned at police offices.

Properties in London and in Derby and Burton-on-Trent are being searched as part of an ongoing investigation.

In Derby at least one street, Leopold Street, was cordoned off by police squads as enquiries continued.

So far police have not revealed whether the arrests have averted a planned terror attack in Britain. There has so far been no indication on the nationalities of the people being held in police custody.

In a brief statement, police said they have arrested four men from Derby — aged 22, 27, 35 and 36 — as well as a 27-year-old man from Burton on Trent and a 32-year-old woman from London.—*Xinhua*

Vucic: Focus on economy, Lavrov: Balance in interests

BELGRADE — The cooperation between Serbia and Russia should also focus on the economy, Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic said Monday at a meeting with Russian FM Sergey Lavrov, who noted Russia would not interfere in Serbia's internal matters.

"We are always ready to find a balance in our interests," a statement from the Serbian government quoted Lavrov as saying. Vucic and Lavrov discussed bilateral cooperation and further development of ties based on their countries' strategic partnership and the interest to deepen it in all directions.

Serbia is ready to improve cooperation in energy, agriculture and telecommunications, and Russian investments are welcome in all three sectors, Vucic said.

Vucic expressed Serbia's interest in expanding the gas storage capacities at Banatski dvor and exporting Serbian-made Fiat vehicles to the Russian and Eurasian Union markets.—*Tanjug*

Endangered goose carcass at Nagoya zoo confirmed infected with bird flu

NAGOYA — An Aleutian Canada goose, classified as a critically endangered species, has died at a zoo in Nagoya in central Japan and is now confirmed to have been infected with avian influenza, the Nagoya city government said on Tuesday.

A female mallard at Higashiyama Zoo and Botanical Gardens also has died but it tested negative for bird flu in an initial test. Eight birds have died at the zoo since late November leading the municipal government to close the zoo area Sunday.—*Kyodo News*

Romanian leftists win parliamentary election with 46 per cent — 99 per cent of results

BUCHAREST — Romania's leftist Social Democrat Party (PSD) won Sunday's parliamentary election with just under 46 per cent of votes in both houses of parliament, official results from more than 99 per cent of polling stations showed on Tuesday.

Long-time PSD ally ALDE scored about 6 per cent, the Central Electoral Bureau said.

The centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL) was on about 20 per cent, the Save Romania Union party just under 9 per cent and the ethnic Hungarian UDMR party about 6 per cent.

The Electoral Bureau said it will announce the new parliament seat distribution later this week. President Klaus Iohannis is due to make a statement at 1000 GMT.—*Reuters*

Iraqi police say ready to join assault on east Mosul

BAGHDAD — Several thousand Iraqi federal police are ready to join the assault against Islamic State in east Mosul, a spokesman said on Monday, reinforcing troops who have faced weeks of fierce counter-attacks from the militants.

The extra forces are being deployed as the grueling US-backed campaign to crush Islamic State in its Iraqi stronghold enters its ninth week. Elite army troops have retaken a quarter of the city, but their advance has been slow and punishing.

The federal police units, around 4,000 strong, have been moved to an area southeast of the city, near where an army tank division last week made the deepest incursion into Mosul so far, briefly seizing a hospital used as a base by the militants.

The troops were forced to pull back from the Salam hospital, less than a mile (about 1 km) from the Tigris river which runs through the center of Mosul, when they were attacked by suicide car bombs, mortar volleys and machine gun fire. A spokesman for Iraq's federal police commander, Lieutenant-General Raed Shakir Jawdat, said the police units were near Qaraqosh, about 15 km (10 miles) from the southeast edge of Mosul, and were ready to mobilize.

However, he said they were waiting for advances elsewhere on the eastern front, where elite Counter Terrorism Services (CTS) have made steady street-by-street progress, unlike last week's dramatic push by the armored division towards the hospital.

"We are waiting for orders from the supreme commanders to start the offensive to defeat Daesh



Members of the Iraqi Army take part during clashes with Islamic State militants at the south of Mosul, Iraq, on 12 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

(Islamic State) and clear the eastern part (of Mosul)," he said. The CTS forces said on Sunday they had captured another district of east Mosul, al-Nour neighbourhood.

Accounts from Mosul are difficult to confirm since authorities have increasingly restricted international media access to the battlefronts and areas retaken from Islamic State in and around the city.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi tried to play down concerns over the slow pace of progress, saying the recapture of cities such as Ramadi and Baiji from Islamic State had taken four times longer than the Mosul campaign so far.

Visiting commanders near

Mosul on Monday, a day after a trip by US Defence Secretary Ash Carter, Abadi also said the United States and other allies must continue to support Iraq's battle against what he said was a global threat posed by the militants.

Defeating Islamic State "requires cooperation with all countries... and this is why we appeal to the new US presidency to take this into consideration," Abadi said.

The prime minister, who spoke to Donald Trump last month, said the president-elect promised "not just to continue American support but to increase it".

Carter told reporters on Sunday the battle for Mosul "hasn't

been an easy fight (and) won't be an easy fight", but said it was going to plan.

He was speaking to reporters after meeting US Lieutenant-General Steve Townsend, commander of the US-led coalition supporting Iraqi forces in Mosul, who said that more than 2,000 Islamic State fighters had been killed or badly wounded.

The police and CTS troops are part of a 100,000-strong Iraqi alliance which launched the campaign to retake Mosul on 17 October. It includes soldiers, security forces, Kurdish peshmerga fighters and mainly Shi'ite Popular Mobilisation forces.

Defeating Islamic State in Mosul, the biggest city it controls in Iraq or Syria, would be a crushing blow to the self-styled caliphate it declared in large parts of both countries two years ago, and might see it revert to more covert militant operations in Iraq.

Iraqi commanders say progress has been slowed by the fierce defence waged by the jihadists, who they say have used a network of tunnels under the eastern half of the city and exploited more than 1 million civilians as human shields.

The fight in crowded residential areas has also restricted the use of heavy weapons and air strikes from the coalition.

For weeks, commanders have talked about opening a new front in southwest Mosul to stretch Islamic State defences. But the despatch of the units to the southeast may delay that plan. The forces in Qaraqosh had been due to join other police units who have reached within 3 or 4 km (2 or 3 miles) of the airport on Mosul's southwestern edge, and were expected to open the new front inside the city on the west bank of the Tigris. Nearly two months into the campaign, the United Nations says 91,000 people have been registered as displaced from Mosul and nearby towns and villages. That figure excludes thousands more forced as human shields back into Mosul by retreating militants. Most people though have stayed put, and 1 million are likely to be still living in remaining Islamic State-held areas of the city. With the militants largely sealed off, civilians are enduring increasingly siege-like conditions, with shortages of fuel, food and water as winter sets in.—Reuters

Thousands flee Aleppo onslaught as battle reaches climax

ALEPPO (Syria) / ANKARA — Thousands of people fled the front lines of fighting in Aleppo on Tuesday as the Syrian military advanced on the final pocket of rebel resistance, and a senior Turkish official said Russia and Turkey would meet to try to set up an evacuation corridor.

The rout of rebels from more than half of their ever-shrinking territory in Aleppo sparked a mass flight of civilians and insurgents in bitter weather, a crisis the United Nations said was a "complete meltdown of humanity".

The UN human rights office said it had reports of abuses, including that the army and allied Iraqi militiamen summarily killed at least 82 civilians in captured city districts.

"The reports we had are of people being shot in the street trying to flee and shot in their homes," said Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN office. "There could be many more."

Behind those fleeing was a wasteland of flattened buildings, concrete rubble and bullet-pocked walls, where tens of thousands had lived until recent days under intense bombardment even after medical and rescue services had collapsed.

Colville described the rebel-held area as "a hellish corner" of less than a square kilometre, saying its capture was imminent.

Turkish and Russian officials will meet on Wednesday to discuss a possible ceasefire and the opening of a corridor, the Turkish official told Reuters, who declined to be identified.

But international efforts to seek a negotiated settlement to end fighting in Aleppo have shown no signs of a breakthrough, with Russia and the United States exchanging recriminations over hitches in ceasefire talks.

The spokesman for the civil defence force in the former rebel area of Aleppo said rebels now

controlled an area of less than three sq km. "The situation is very, very bad. The civil defence has stopped operating in the city," he told Reuters.

A surrender or withdrawal of the rebels in Aleppo would mean the end of the rebellion in the city, Syria's largest until the outbreak of war after mass protests in 2011, but it is unclear if such a deal can be struck by world powers.

By finally dousing the last embers of resistance burning in Aleppo, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's military coalition of the army, Russian air power and Iran-backed militias will have delivered him his biggest battlefield victory of the war.

However, while the rebels, including groups backed by the United States, Turkey and Gulf monarchies, as well as jihadist groups that the West does not support, will suffer a crushing defeat in Aleppo, the war will be far from over.—Reuters

Netanyahu says Israel 'mightier' as first F-35 fighter jets arrive

NEVATIM AIR BASE (Israel) — Israel on Monday became the first country after the United States to receive the US-built F-35 stealth jet which will increase its ability to attack distant targets, including Iran.

The much-hyped arrival of the first two fighter jets was overshadowed by US President-elect Donald Trump's tweet that Lockheed Martin's (LMT.N) whole F-35 project was too expensive, and the delivery was delayed for hours by bad weather preventing their take-off from Italy.

The squadron is expected to be the first operational outside the United States. The planes are the first of 50, costing around \$100 million each.

"Our long arm has now become longer and mightier," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Nevatim air base in the southern Negev desert.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter, also attending the cere-

mony which was delayed until after dark, said the planes were critical to maintaining Israel's military edge in the region.

A US squadron of the planes, which have suffered delays and cost overruns, became operational in August. The F-35 programme is the Pentagon's largest weapons project.

"The F-35 programme and cost is out of control," Trump said on Twitter, sending Lockheed Martin's shares down 4 per cent. Jeff Babione, Lockheed Martin's F-35 programme leader, said the company understood concerns about affordability and had invested millions of dollars to try to reduce its price.

Israel, which finalised a 10-year, \$38 billion arms deal from the United States this year, plans to maintain two F-35 squadrons.

Critics of the plane say it can carry a smaller weapons payload and has a shorter range than Israel's current squadrons of US-built F-15s and F-16s.—Reuters



People line up to withdraw cash from an automated teller machine (ATM) outside a Banco de Venezuela branch in Caracas, Venezuela, on 12 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venezuelans scramble to ditch largest bill ahead of surprise removal

CARACAS — Venezuelans hastily dumped the country's 100-bolivar bill, the largest denomination, on Monday after the government said it would be pulled from circulation as the crisis-racked nation suffers what is believed to be the world's highest inflation.

Socialist President Nicolas Maduro said the withdrawal of the bill — worth just 2 US cents on the black market — was needed to reduce contraband of the banknotes on the Venezuela-Colombia border.

The 100-bolivar note will be removed in 72 hours as of Tuesday, state media said on Monday, with new, higher-denomination bills due on Thursday.

Despite heavy printing of the 100-bolivar bills — 2.3 billion this year alone out of 6.1 billion in total — they are in short supply. Moreover, Venezuela's shaky telecoms network means card readers often collapse.

Luis Volcanes, 36, had for six weeks withdrawn cash every day but on Monday ran around with a big brown envelope trying to deposit that same money, only to find cash machines at four banks in a row were not working.

"This seems crazy, like the government did this on a whim. I don't know what I'm going to do," Volcanes said as people trickled in and out of a bank in Caracas, complaining none of the machines worked.

One man unable to deposit money yelled, "This is total chaos!"

Adding to the aggravation, Monday was a bank holiday, meaning there were no tellers. Venezuelans have 10 days to exchange the notes at the central bank.

While many business were not accepting 100-bolivar bills, or warning they would only do so on Monday, poor people living day to day could not afford to reject cash.

"I'll take everything you can give me to eat today," said taxi driver Jose Manuel Henrique, 49, whose cash income goes entirely to feeding his two children. Still, Henrique, a former supporter of late socialist leader Hugo Chavez, was annoyed.

"The government can't get anything right. This wasn't thought out."

Authorities on Thursday are due to start releasing six new notes and three new coins, the largest of which will be worth 20,000 bolivars, less than \$5 on the streets.

Maduro, a former bus driver and union leader elected after Chavez's death in 2013, said Colombian shoppers and organised criminals were buying up the 100-bolivar bills to go on a spending spree in Venezuela, worsening shortages of basics such as flour and antibiotics.

Venezuela is heaving under its third straight year of recession, pushing millions to skip meals and medical treatment. —Reuters

Lufthansa plane search negative after bomb threat-Port Authority

SAN FRANCISCO/FRANKFURT — A Lufthansa flight bound for Germany from Texas was diverted to New York City on Monday due to a bomb threat, but a subsequent search of the aircraft found no explosive device, officials said.

Flight 441 destined for Frankfurt from Houston landed safely at John F. Kennedy International Airport at about 8:30 pm local time (1:30 am GMT), said Steve Coleman, a spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The bomb threat was phoned into the airline's headquarters. But a search

of the plane was negative, the authority said on Twitter.

Calls to the Port Authority and the New York City Police Department remained unanswered.

All passengers had left the airplane and were put up at hotels, Lufthansa spokesman Joerg Waber said on Tuesday morning in Germany. He neither confirmed nor denied the bomb threat.

A passenger who was on the plane, who asked to remain anonymous, told Reuters the pilot announced two to three hours after takeoff that the flight had to be cancelled and diverted to New York due to a bomb threat. —Reuters

Crisis leaves Greeks gloomiest in Europe and beyond

LONDON — Greece's debt crisis has made its population the unhappiest not only in western Europe but also in comparison with people in some former Communist countries, a study showed on Tuesday.

The "Life in Transition" survey conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank has questioned households across a broad region since 1991 as the Cold War came to an end, but Greece was included for the first time this year.

Over 92 per cent of Greeks said the debt crisis had affected them, with 76 per cent of households suffering reduced income due to wage or pension cuts, job losses, delayed or suspended pay or fewer working hours. Only one in 10 Greeks were satisfied with

their financial situation and only 24 per cent with life overall, compared with 72 per cent in Germany and 42 per cent in Italy, the two western European countries used as comparisons. The figure was 48 per cent in post-communist countries.

Austerity measures demanded by international creditors have been tough on Greeks. Pensions, for example, have been reduced by about a third since the crisis began in 2009. The leftist-led government is still at odds with lenders over labour reforms and a projected fiscal gap in 2018.

Only 16 per cent of the respondents in Greece saw their situation improving over the next four years, compared with 48 per cent in post-communist countries and 35 and 23 per cent in Germany and Italy, respectively. —Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SEIYO GODDESS VOY. NO (4)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SEIYO GODDESS VOY. NO (4) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W 5 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 ECL (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301191, 2301178

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV STAR 62 VOY. NO (1416)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV STAR 62 VOY. NO (1416) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV CMB WEIHAI VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV CMB WEIHAI VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.12.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of SHWE ME BOY 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
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AGENT FOR: M/S NOBLE CHARTERING
HONG KONG

Phone No: 2301186

Brazil's Federal Police asks prosecutors to charge Lula for more crimes — media

SAO PAULO — Brazil's Federal Police asked prosecutors to charge former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for more crimes in the country's widest-ever corruption probe, Globo's G1 news site reported on Monday.

Lula, president from 2003 to 2010 and a possible candidate in the 2018 election, is already a defendant in three criminal probes linked to the so-called Car Wash investigation into large-scale corruption at state-controlled oil company Petrobras [PETR4.SA].

According to the Federal Police, he should also be charged for corruption in the acquisition of land for his foundation and the rental of an apartment in the same building where he lives. The Federal Police alleges these expenses were paid by Brazilian en-

gineering firm Odebrecht SA, G1 said.

The former president's spokesmen told G1 that Lula had been paying rent on the apartment for years and that his foundation does not own the land on which its headquarters were built. Odebrecht said it is collaborating with Justice and declined to comment further. Neither the Federal Police nor Lula's spokesmen were immediately available to comment on the report.

The Odebrecht family and top executives have signed plea bargains with Brazilian prosecutors in which as many as 77 of the engineering group's executives are testifying about widespread political graft. The family has apologised for its involvement in Brazil's massive corruption scandal.—Reuters

UK must set out plans for transitional deal with EU — lawmakers

LONDON — Britain will need a transitional trade agreement with the European Union, and the government should set out plans for it before beginning formal divorce talks with the bloc, members of parliament's upper house said on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Theresa May plans to trigger Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, beginning the two-year withdrawal period, by the end of March and wants to seek a unique deal with the EU rather replicate any existing third-country agreements.

Banks and businesses have repeatedly argued the government should agree a transition period to avoid a damaging "cliff edge" or abrupt exit from the bloc before Britain has finalised its future trading



British Prime Minister Theresa May. PHOTO: REUTERS

terms.

"It is unlikely that a bespoke EU trade agreement can be agreed within Article 50's two-year period, so a transitional deal is vital for protecting UK trade, and jobs that rely on trade," said Sandip Verma, chair of the House of Lords' EU External Affairs Sub-Committee.

The committee said in a report the government

should set out at the start of negotiations a clear plan for a transitional agreement, which it said would allow talks to be carried out in a less pressured environment.

The government should consider remaining a member of the EU's customs union as an interim arrangement, it added.

The committee said it had seen no evidence that

trade on terms equivalent to full membership of the EU's single market could be achieved by Britain, particularly in services, which account for around 80 per cent of Britain's economic output.

May and her trade minister Liam Fox have said they want to agree new trade agreements with countries around the world as soon as possible after Brexit and have begun informal talks with several.

But the committee said the government should prioritise securing its future relationship with the EU and its new membership terms, or "schedules" at the World Trade Organisation.

"Deals with non-EU countries are contingent on the outcome of these negotiations, and need to be sequenced accordingly," said Verma.—Reuters

Qatar defends new labour law as accused of abusing migrant workers

LONDON — Qatar defended its labour law reforms on Monday after coming under attack from a human rights group that said the changes won't end the abuse and exploitation faced by migrant workers in the country — and may even make it worse.

The Qatari government said a new law coming into effect on Tuesday will replace the controversial "kafala" or sponsorship system that forces foreign workers to seek their employer's consent to change jobs or leave the country.

Rights groups say the kafala system has forced workers to live in squalor and toil under dangerous,

sometimes fatal, conditions which amount to modern-day slavery.

Qatar is spending billions of dollars on infrastructure related to hosting the World Cup in 2022 and has imported hundreds of thousands of construction workers from countries such as India, Nepal and Bangladesh for building projects.

An Amnesty International report said the reforms won't lead to significant changes on the ground and workers will continue to need their employer's permission to change jobs and require exit permits to leave the oil-rich Gulf state.

"This new law may get rid of the word 'sponsor-

ship' but it leaves the same basic system intact," James Lynch, deputy director for global issues at Amnesty International, said in a statement.

"FIFA [football's governing body that organises the World Cup] its sponsors and foreign governments seeking business ties with Qatar cannot and must not use this reform to claim that the problem of migrant labour abuse has been solved."

A statement from the Qatar government rejected the Amnesty report and said it was continuing to review and adapt its laws to "ensure our approach to reform is fit for purpose".



Migrant labourers work at a construction site at the Aspire Zone in Doha, Qatar, on 26 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"We remain committed to the development of a labour system that is fair to both employers and employees alike," the statement said.

"These new legislative changes, combined with ongoing enforcement and a commitment to systemic reform, not just in Qatar but also in countries of origin,

will ensure workers' rights are respected across the entire labour pathway."

According to Amnesty, abusive employers can also withhold workers' passports under a new loophole — something that wasn't allowed under the previous laws. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that despite the new laws, "Qatar remains a slave state".

"This is just new labels on old laws. The exit permit system still remains a fact of life. This is just a relabelling of an extremely exploitative system," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.—Reuters

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Emotion-filled 'La La Land,' 'Moonlight' lead Golden Globe nominations

LOS ANGELES — "La La Land," an ambitious musical about two dreamers falling in love in Hollywood, and the intimate coming of age drama "Moonlight" led nominations for the Golden Globes on Monday, underscoring their front-runner status in the long road to the Oscars.

"La La Land" scored seven nominations in all, including for Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling in the comedy/musical acting categories, while writer-director Damien Chazelle received nods for best director and best screenplay.

"Making 'La La Land' was a dream come true and we're thrilled that Damien Chazelle's vision has been recognized," producers Fred Berger, Jordan Horowitz and Marc Platt said in a statement.

"Moonlight," the tale of an impoverished black boy in Miami struggling with his sexuality, scored six nods, including Barry Jenkins in the directing and screenplay categories and Naomie Harris and Mahershala Ali in the best supporting acting races.

"La La Land" is up against "20th Century Women," the story of a free-spirited mother; raunchy superhero action movie "Deadpool"; singing comedy "Florence Foster Jenkins"; and teen tale "Sing Street" for best comedy-musical film at the Golden Globes.

"Moonlight" will face war drama "Hacksaw Ridge," Western



Cast members pose as they arrive for the gala screening of the film 'Moonlight', on the second night of the 60th British Film Institute (BFI) London Film Festival at Embankment Garden Cinema in London, Britain, on 6 October 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

crime story "Hell or High Water," adoption tale "Lion" and "Manchester by the Sea," which is about a working-class family dealing with tragedy, in the best drama film category.

"La La Land" and "Moonlight" are very different films. But Claudia Puig, film critic at National Public Radio's Film-Week and president of the Los Angeles Film Critics' Association, said they had a key element in common.

"Both are very emotional movies. They move you, they're poignant, they touch your emotions," Puig told Reuters.

"One maybe has a much more intellectual, sociological component while the other is escapist, but both are also about

love and finding your dreams," she added.

"Manchester by the Sea" landed five nominations, including for actor Casey Affleck and screenplay and director nods for Kenneth Lonergan.

"It will actually be my first time attending the Golden Globes and I've been working for more than 20 years, so this moment isn't lost on me," Affleck said in a statement.

After a furor that erupted earlier this year because all 20 acting Oscar nominees were white, the Golden Globes feature numerous actors of color, including Ruth Negga of "Loving," Ali and Harris of "Moonlight," and Dev Patel, who is of Indian descent, for "Lion." —Reuters

Billboard success, Globes nod for 'Hamilton' star Lin-Manuel Miranda

LOS ANGELES — Lin-Manuel Miranda scored a double whammy on Monday as the remixed soundtrack to his Broadway hit "Hamilton" debuted at the top of the US Billboard 200 album chart and his musical work on "Moana" nabbed a Golden Globe nomination.

The Rolling Stones only managed No. 4 on the Billboard chart for the release of "Blue & Lonesome," their first studio album since 2005.

"The Hamilton Mixtape," which features songs from the Tony award-winning historical musical sung by artists such as Kelly Clarkson, John Legend and Alicia Keys, sold 187,000 album units according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan for the week ending on 8 December.

"How Far I'll Go," the song Miranda composed for Disney's animated film "Moana," landed a Golden Globe nomination in the best original song category on Monday. It was the first such nomination for Miranda, who is an Oscar short of achieving the coveted 'EGOT' — Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony.

Miranda's "Hamilton Mixtape" knocks off

last week's chart-topper, Canadian R&B singer The Weeknd's "Starboy," which dropped to No. 2 with 151,000 albums sold.

The "Moana" soundtrack, featuring all of Miranda's compositions for the film, dropped two spots to No. 7 this week.

The Billboard 200 album chart tallies units from album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one album).

Other new entries in the top 10 of the Billboard 200 album chart include veteran rockers Rolling Stones at No. 4 with "Blue & Lonesome" and hip hop artist Childish Gambino (the alter-ego of actor Donald Glover) at No. 5 with "Awaken My Love."

Glover also scored two Golden Globe nominations for his FX TV series "Atlanta."

"America's Got Talent" winner Grace VanderWaal debuted at No. 9 with her "Perfectly Imperfect" EP record, while country music artist Kane Brown entered the chart at No. 10 with his self-titled new album. —Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

Priyanka Chopra becomes UNICEF's Global Goodwill Ambassador

UNITED NATIONS — Actress Priyanka Chopra, appointed as UNICEF's newest global Goodwill Ambassador, urged people from across nations to become the "collective voice" of oppressed children in the world and join forces to leave a better future for the coming generations.

Footballer David Beckham and 12-year-old British actress Millie Bobby Brown announced Chopra's appointment as UNICEF's newest global Goodwill Ambassador at a star-studded celebration here late last night to commemorate 70 years of the world body's children's agency.

"My wish for children is freedom. The freedom to think, the freedom to live," Chopra said, addressing top UN diplomats, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors and children at the event.

She said while man has made unprecedented advancements in every sphere of life, children across the world remain unprotected

from violence, abuse and exploitation.

"I, we ask you to join us today to become the collective voice of the oppressed children across the world in our fight against the injustices that they have to endure everyday," she said.

Chopra lauded decades of efforts by UNICEF on shining the light on children and bringing awareness that "we are seriously endangering our future, which is our children."

"...Let's choose humanity, let's choose to act now, let's choose to fight now and let's choose to ensure a better world for our children, their children and the generations to come," Chopra said. The "Quantico" star was joined by UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors Ishmael Beah, Beckham, actors Orlando Bloom and Jackie Chan at the event that celebrated UNICEF's 70 years of work for children.

Chopra said her involvement with UNICEF began almost 10 years ago in India and she was "humbled, enriched and committed" as she takes on her new role of the agency's global Goodwill

Ambassador.

"Along this decade old journey, with UNICEF, I have been on many field trips to villages and centers across India. On those trips, I spent time with numerous young girls and their families and experienced firsthand the transformative power of empowering young girls with opportunities that are rightfully theirs."

"Together, with my fellow, dedicated ambassadors, I am now proud to stand with UNICEF to help build a world where children's rights are respected and protected," she said.

Celebrating Chopra's appointment, UNICEF Executive

Director Anthony Lake said, "Priyanka Chopra is already a champion for India's children — and as a UNICEF global Goodwill Ambassador, she will be a force for children and adolescents everywhere." The anniversary celebration, which was led by the next generation of young celebrities and other young people, demonstrated the impact of UNICEF's work over seven decades to protect the rights of the world's most vulnerable children.

"This celebration of UNICEF's 70th anniversary belongs to those for whom UNICEF was created in the first place: children. And it also belongs to the thousands of UNICEF staff and our partners whose work in some of the world's most dangerous and difficult places has touched the lives of millions of children. What can be more important?" Lake said. Bloom conducted an on-stage discussion with child refugee Mustafa Al Said, who fled conflict in his native Syria and now lives in Germany. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Ishmael Beah spoke about his experience as a child soldier in Sierra Leone and his work advocating against the recruitment of children into armed groups.

The Bajirao Mastani" star later thanked Beckham and Brown for welcoming her into the UNICEF's international family.

"Thank you David Beckham and Millie Bobby Brown for inducting me into the UNICEF global family. Always delighted to meet like-minded people who believe that there is humanity left inside in us after all," she tweeted. —PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Hendrix and Prince guitars expected to make noise at auction



A Bonhams assistant displays an Epiphone FT79 Acoustic Guitar owned and played by Jimi Hendrix in central London, Britain, on 12 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — A guitar owned by American rocker Jimi Hendrix is expected to fetch more than 80,000 pounds (\$101,000) when it goes under the hammer in London on Thursday as part of the annual entertainment sale by British auction house Bonhams.

“Purple Haze” singer Hendrix, who died in 1970 aged 27, is said to have owned the Epiphone acoustic guitar for three years after purchasing it second-hand for \$25 in New York City while on tour in 1967, Bonhams said.

“It was actually the guitar he owned for the longest period... and because it’s an acoustic guitar, it is quite likely that he composed some of his songs on it,” Katherine Schofield, Head of Bonhams entertainment department, told Reuters.

A custom-made cloud guitar used on tour by late American musician Prince is also up for auction in London on Thursday, carrying an estimate of 25,000 to 30,000 pounds.

Other auction items include a flamboyant jacket worn by Rolling Stone Keith Richards, rare self-portrait caricatures of The Beatles signed by the band, and a Boesendorfer piano played by Queen’s Freddie Mercury and Coldplay.—Reuters

Polish vertical runner wins race up Japan’s tallest building

OSAKA — Polish man Piotr Lobodzinski was the winner of a race up the stairs of Osaka’s Abeno Harukas building, Japan’s tallest skyscraper at 300 metres, on Sunday. Reigning Vertical World Circuit champion Lobodzinski, 31, clocked an 8 minute, 34 second time up the building’s 1,670 steps to claim victory in the “Harukas Skyrun.”

Masaki Kawamoto, a 42-year-old man from Katano, Osaka Prefecture, said after taking part in the race that it was a difficult challenge due to there only being walls to look at as he raced.

“But when I finished, I felt a release as if I had gone through a tunnel,” he said.

The event was an exhibition event on the Vertical World Circuit, which has held similar skyscraper runs in London, Dubai, New York, Paris and other cities this year.—Kyodo News

Atlanta zoo names twin giant pandas ‘Elegant’ and ‘Joy’

ATLANTA (Georgia) — Thousands of giant panda fans from around the world have chosen the names Ya Lun and Xi Lun for the new female twins at the Atlanta zoo, officials said on Monday.

Ya means “elegant,” Xi means “happy,” and Lun refers to the fluffy black-and-white bears’ mother, Lun Lun. The names were announced on the 100th day after their 3 September births, in line with Chinese tradition, Zoo Atlanta said in a statement. The names were the winning combination from among seven sets supplied by the zoo’s partners in China. Ya Lun and Xi Lun earned just over 11,000 of the more than 23,400 votes cast by panda fans globally from 21 November to 4 December.

“As we wish Ya Lun and Xi Lun well today, we celebrate the future of their species together,” Zoo Atlanta Chief Executive Officer Raymond King said.

Although the International Union for the Conservation of Nature downgraded the giant panda’s status to “vulnerable” from “endangered” in September, the species still relies heavily on conservation programs, the zoo said.

Fewer than 1,900 giant pandas are estimated to remain in the wild in China’s Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. They are threatened by habitat fragmentation and loss as a result of deforestation and other human activities, the zoo said.

Ya Lun and Xi Lun are the second set of twins for Lun Lun and male Yang Yang, and the pair’s sixth and seventh offspring.

Their older brothers and sisters, male Mei Lan, male Xi Lan, female Po and female twins Mei Lun and Mei Huan, live at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in China.

The pandas did not attend a ceremony announcing their names since they are still learning to walk. Ya Lun and Xi Lun are expected to make their debut in late December or in January.—Reuters



Giant panda twins Ya Lun and Xi Lun are seen in this handout photo provided on 12 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

Nintendo-themed area coming to Universal Studio Japan in 2020

OSAKA — The operator of Universal Studios Japan in Osaka said Monday that it will open a Nintendo-themed area featuring the game maker’s popular characters by the summer of 2020, investing over 50 billion yen (\$432 million).

USJ Co. said it will create an area called “Super Nintendo World,” showcasing iconic characters including “Super Mario Bros.,” in its most expensive project to date.

The operator hopes to attract overseas game fans as inbound tourism is likely to increase in the run-up to the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics games in 2020.

The partially two-storey venue will include rides, shopping stores and restaurants. Nintendo-themed areas will also open in theme parks in Orlando, Florida and Hollywood, California after the launch in Osaka, the operator said. Construction of the area in Osaka is likely to begin next year.

USJ’s biggest project comes after it invested roughly 45 billion yen in the “Harry Potter” area, based on the Harry Potter film series. That area opened in 2014. — Kyodo News



Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(14-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 15-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

07:03 Am	News	10:26 Am	Sayit-wyne Girls
07:26 Am	The Richly Blessed Gem Land	10:48 Am	He can do it
07:52 Am	Coin Collectors		
08:03 Am	News		
08:26 Am	Life of Sea Urchin Dive		
08:38 Am	Toddy Palm Product Shop		
08:50 Am	Excavation At Kawhmu		
09:03 Am	News		
09:26 Am	Myanmar Outstanding Lady Thin Zar Phyo		
09:39 Am	Yangon Markets: Da Nyin Gone Market		
09:50 Am	Myanmar’s Export: Mango		
10:03 Am	News		

Prime Time

07:03 Pm	News
07:25 Pm	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-1)
07:42 Pm	The Art of Making Glaze Ware
08:03 Pm	News
08:26 Pm	Exquisite Myanmar Silk
08:46 Pm	Art Students: Sculpture
08:53 Pm	Now in Yangon

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Tuesday 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)

Ronaldo's golden year rewarded with fourth Ballon d'Or

PARIS — Cristiano Ronaldo capped a remarkable year by claiming a fourth Ballon d'Or award on Monday after leading Portugal to an emotional European Championship title and Real Madrid to a record-extending Champions League crown in 2016.

Ronaldo is one short of the record tally of five awards won by Barcelona's Argentina forward Lionel Messi, who was second with the pair having taken the first two spots since 2011.

"For me it's a great honour to receive my fourth golden ball. The emotion is like for the first one, it's a dream come true again. I never thought in my mind to win four times. I'm so happy," said Ronaldo, who won the award in 2008, 2013 and 2014.

"It's probably the best year of my career collectively, with Real Madrid and Portugal.

"Real are used to winning

titles while Portugal had never won a major title so this (Euro 2016) title is special. I don't want to lack respect to the Champions League but the title with Portugal is a level above."

The Ballon d'Or, which merged with the FIFA World Player of the Year award from 2010-15 to create the FIFA Ballon d'Or, returned to France Football magazine this year.

A total of 173 journalists voted but not national team coaches and captains who were also polled for the FIFA award.

France and Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann, who lost to Ronaldo's Portugal and Real in the Euro 2016 and Champions League finals respectively, took third place.

Uruguay forward Luis Suarez was fourth and Brazil's Neymar fifth, giving Barcelona three players in the top five.

Ronaldo was a cut above the competition, though.

He scored 51 goals in 54 games for club and country, albeit his lowest tally since 2008, claimed another Champions League winners' medal and lifted the European Championship trophy.

Ronaldo limped off midway through the first half of July's Euro 2016 final, which Portugal won 1-0 after extra time against hosts France, but he hobbled back onto the pitch to celebrate his country's first major football title.

Six weeks earlier, after a fairly anonymous performance against local rivals Atletico in the Champions League final, he scored the decisive penalty in the shootout to hand Real their 11th European Cup.

It was, therefore, hard to see past 31-year-old Ronaldo for the winner of the Ballon d'Or, even if the trophy is designed to reward individual performance rather than team results.—Reuters



Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo attends training ahead of FIFA Club World Cup Semi-Final match against Club America at Yokohama, Japan, on 13 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Atletico title bid nosedives after defeat at Villarreal

MADRID — Atletico Madrid's title hopes faded after a costly 3-0 defeat at Villarreal on Monday saw Diego Simeone's side fall 12 points behind La Liga leaders Real Madrid and lose influential goalkeeper Jan Oblak to injury.

Villarreal midfielder Manu Trigueros intercepted a weak back pass from Tiago Mendes before firing the ball into the bottom corner in the 28th minute.

Jonathan dos Santos then nipped in to grab the second goal in the 38th minute after Oblak spilled a shot from Alexandre Pato.

Roberto Soriano capped a first win in four league games for Villarreal by finishing off a one-two with Alfred N'Diaye in injury time at the end of the match.

"I leave with the sensation that the team is fighting, working hard and trying to do everything to win but results aren't going our way," said Simeone.

"We have to keep working because that's the only way we'll improve."

Oblak was taken to hospital for tests on a shoulder problem he sustained when trying to prevent Dos Santos reaching the loose ball.

Tiago had also been taken off immediately after his error, complaining of discomfort in his

knee.

"Oblak's injury is worse, we hope it's not too serious," added Simeone.

"Tiago's knee was bothering him and he realised the best thing to do was to ask to come off."

Villarreal leapfrogged Atletico into fourth place with 26 points from 15 games. Simeone's side dropped to sixth on 25 and may now have to target

a top-four finish rather than a title push.

"The result does not reflect the story of the game but when you commit errors like the ones we made you end up paying for them," said Atletico captain Gabi after the visitors were beaten for the fourth time in seven league matches.

"We need to improve so we can get back towards the top of the table."—Reuters



Atletico Madrid's Juanfran Torres (L) and Villarreal's Roberto Soriano in action at El Madrigal stadium, Villarreal, Spain, on 12 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Liverpool's Coutinho targets early return from injury

LONDON — Liverpool midfielder Philippe Coutinho has set his sights on making his return from an ankle injury in the Premier League match against Manchester City on 31 December.

The 24-year-old Brazilian, who was initially expected to be out for five to six weeks, has been on the sidelines since sustaining the injury during the 2-0 win over Sunderland at Anfield last month.

"This is still my hope — to return for this game (against Manchester City)," Coutinho told the club's website (www.liverpoolfc.com).

Liverpool have dropped points in their last two games, losing at Bournemouth and being

held to a home draw by West Ham United on Sunday to slip six points behind leaders Chelsea.

"The rehab is going really well. I can now walk without crutches and I am working well with the medical team. So I'm pleased with how I am recovering," Coutinho added.

"Straight after the game, when I first saw the pictures and videos of my injury, I was a little scared. But after the scans, of course it was bad, but not as bad as it could have been. I am happy, as it could have been a lot worse."

Liverpool, third in the table, travel to 16th-placed Middlesbrough on Wednesday.—Reuters

Brazil fans vote Chapecoense keeper Player of Year

SAO PAULO — Chapecoense goalkeeper Danilo, who was killed in the Colombian air crash last month, was posthumously named Brazil's Player of the Year after a vote by fans on Monday.

Danilo, whose last gasp save in the semi-final against San Lorenzo helped his side into the Copa Sudamericana final, got 48 per cent of the internet vote.

His mother Ilaidés Padilha collected the award on his behalf at a ceremony in Rio de Janeiro.

"In the name of Chapecoense, I want to thank everyone for their affection and ask for their prayers," said Padilha, who touched the hearts of millions when she hugged a reporter whose colleagues were also killed in the 28 November tragedy. "May the future warriors that come to Chapecoense be like the warriors that left there."

Players, directors and reporters were among the 71 people who died when their plane crashed into a mountainside outside Medellin.—Reuters