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Steps taken for construction of Hanthawaddy International Airport Project in Bago

THE leading committee on the construction of the Hanthawaddy Airport held its first meeting at the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the meeting, Vice President U Henry Van Thio, chairman of the leading committee, in his capacity as the chairman of the committee, stressed the need for ensuring transparency and systematic implementation of the project.

He also pledged that the project would be implemented during the time of the incumbent government, considering it a national project.

“On completion of building the international airport, it will become a major gateway for international airlines to use and operate their businesses. So it will be implemented as a national project, thus the need for transparency for the public,” the Vice President said.

The Vice President stressed the need for respective ministries and regional and state cabinets to take part in the discussions about situations on an official develop-



An artist's impression of Hanthawaddy International Airport.

ment assistance (ODA) loan, potential difficulties, convenience of water supply and power supply, upgrading the current roads linking with the airport, having the ownership of the project area registered under the name of the Department of Civil Aviation and

moving the squatters living in the project area to designated places.

Under the current situation, Yangon International Airport has been experiencing many difficulties — inability to expand the current runway and lack of parking space for aircrafts, noise

problems around the clock for those living in the area, shared use of the airport together with the air force and restrictions for aircrafts to land and take off.

“In addition, the need for more passenger planes and cargo planes is likely to increase in

the near future, for which we will continue to abide by the safety standards prescribed by international civil aviation organizations. So, it is urgently needed to construct a high-quality airport for international passenger aircrafts and cargo planes,” said U Henry Van Thio.

To fulfill the need, the Hanthawaddy International Airport project was implemented, which is an essential airport for the future that will help with the development of Myanmar's economy. It is a project based on PPP system (Private-Public Partnership), tendered in 2012, he added.

Afterward, Union Minister U Thant Zin Maung clarified the need for an expansion of international airports, consultation with respective ministries for cooperation and preparation for the imminent emergence of an international airport, followed by explanations of U Min Lwin, Director-General of the department of civil aviation. In the meeting, he explained the need for an additional airport in Myanmar.—*Myanmar News Agency*

World Bank to provide US\$100million credit to support Myanmar

THE World Bank's Board of Executive Directors today approved a US\$100 million credit to support Myanmar in improving the access of families and small and medium-sized businesses to financial services.

Myanmar's Financial Sector Development Project aims to promote the development of a sound and stable financial sector, includes reforms to increase

the provision of banking services and access to loans and financial products across the country, and to develop the country's nascent microfinance and insurance sectors.

“The project will help increase access to finance for households and small and medium-sized enterprises by reforming state-owned banks, strengthening the financial sector's legal and regulatory frameworks and

modernising the financial sector infrastructure,” said U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance. “These reforms are expected to extend the range of basic financial products and services to underserved areas and populations.”

Since 2012, private banks have rapidly expanded their operations. More than 1.4 million debit cards have been issued for

the first time, and thousands of ATMs have been set up. Credit to the private sector has grown steadily, albeit from a low base.

Still, Myanmar's financial sector does not yet effectively meet the demands of the country's growing economy. Myanmar has some of the lowest levels of access to financial services in the world.

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52 investment proposals to MIC in first half of this month

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Pyithu Hluttaw

2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 3rd regular session concludes

THE start of construction on hospital buildings in Muse and Hinthada were among the issues discussed in the latest meeting of the Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday morning.

In reply to the question raised by U Sai Pho Myat of Muse Constituency at the 19th Meeting of 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 3rd Regular Session held yesterday, Dr Myint Htwe, Union Minister for Health & Sports said: "As there was the budget allotment of Ks800 million to construct a 100-bed, 4-storey ward in Muse district general hospital in 2016-2017 fiscal year, the ministry has contracted with the building department of the Ministry of Construction to build the hospital building on a 5-acre plot. Construction work has commenced. It is impossible for the ministry of health and sports to recover the land which had been given out to organisations and for private use, out of the initially permitted land plots. It had been submitted to the Shan State Cabinet to permit another 8.859 acres. If allowed, upgrading the 100-bed ward to a 200-bed one that needs 15 to 20 more acres, will be implemented."

As regards the question raised by U Khin Maung Yi of Hinthada constituency, Dr Myint Htwe, Union Minister said: "MBD Construction Company, which won the tender bid to construct the annexed

ward of a 4-storey building at a cost of Ks780 million at Hinthada General Hospital in the fiscal year 2015-2016, the company has been building. Depending upon the stage of completion, the payment will be given out to the company. Until now, only 35 per cent of the contract had been finished, thus only Ks273 million was given to the company.

In accord with procedure, the remaining portion of the allotted budget has been given back to the State. Due to failure to be on time for demand of another budget allotment in the 2016-2017 financial year, it had been submitted to allot Ks507 million in the 2017-2018 fiscal year to construct the annexed 4-storey building."

In addition, Dr Myint Htwe, U Win Maw Tun, deputy minister for Health and Sports and Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win replied to the questions raised by U Khin Cho of Hlinebwe constituency, Daw Tin Tin Yi of Kyunzu constituency, U Khin Maung Thi of Loilem constituency, U Myint Ngwe of Kyaukkyi constituency and U Bo Gyi of Chauk constituency, concerning questionnaire on education, health and public servicemen.

Afterward, U Win Myint, the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw said: "The 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 3rd

Regular Session will come to an end today. During the period of the session, 117 asterisk-marked questions and 154 with no asterisks were answered. A total of 10 motions including a special one were submitted to the Hluttaw. There were 6 motions put on record and 4 to be tabled at the next session. Out of 17 bills which had been discussed, 7 were approved with 10 bills still to be approved."

He added: "In performing duties vested by the people, all parliamentarians need to be free from racial and political prejudices. And all need to be well convinced of our deeds intended for national reconciliation and nationwide peace. Only if law abiding is strictly followed by us, will rule of law emerge, which will bring about accountability and responsibility. When we can accomplish these, our society will surely develop.

It is necessary for us to protect the benefits of the people, to make effort for the emergence of the federal democratic nation, to get rid of destructive elements by constantly finding enemies on our way to the democracy movement and to exert our concerted efforts for the national peace. Finally, I wish all my parliamentarians meeting again in the fourth regular session in good health and happiness."—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint receives local, international journalists



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint (Left) gives a press conference at the parliament. PHOTO: MNA

PYITHU HLUTTAW Speaker U Win Myint received editors and reporters from newspapers and journals, journalists from local news agencies and local-based International news agencies at 11:15 am in the Zabuthiri Building of the Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw on 21 December.

At the meeting, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint answered questions raised by the media. U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw were present at the meeting. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw

Third regular session of second Amyotha Hluttaw concludes



Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win. PHOTO: MNA

THE third regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw concluded yesterday following discussions on compensation for seized land, implementation of the report of the Investigation Commission of the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project and the crocodile threat in Ayeyawady.

In his concluding remarks, Mahn Win Khaing Than, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw, said 104 starred questions and 62 questions were raised in the third regular session and the third bill amending the Union Election Law was debated and passed to Pyithu Hluttaw.

Also, the bill amending the Civil Service Law came into effect

with the signing of the President, he added.

The parliamentary committees of the Amyotha Hluttaw had held 67 meetings during the period of the third regular session, Mahn Win Khaing Than said.

At the meeting today, Union Minister for Construction U Win Khaing said, in his answer to questions raised by MPs, that the ministry would construct a bypass road linking Kyaikhto and Thaton after setting compensation for the seized land and seeking funds for the construction.

Regarding the bypass construction, the ministry has submitted a report on land survey and

compensation to the Mon State Government.

Concerning the question of whether Investigation Commission on the Letpadaung Copper Mine project would be reformed or not, the Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win said there is no plan to reform the committee as 37 facts out of 47 suggested by the commission are being implemented.

MPs also discussed compensation to 25 land owners for the seized farmland in Mohnyin township, raising public awareness on the crocodile threat in Bogalay Township in Ayeyawady Region,

plans to grant legal rights to local people to grow in and out of reserved forest in Thandaunggyi of Kayin State, growing Myanmar hardwood and sandalwood instead of eucalyptus trees.

The parliament also approved the report on the draft law on Older Persons submitted by its Bill Committee. Members of the Parliament also discussed and approved the report on proposals and queries submitted during the 2nd National Parliament's 2nd regular meetings. Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than then clarified work implementation during the 2nd Parliament's 3rd regular meetings.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Ministry of Industry should sell tractors at a fair price, farmers say

FARMERS want the Minister of Industry to sell tractors at a competitive price and in an installment plan in Mawlamyinegyun, it is learnt. The agricultural mechanization department is selling the tractors in installments at a price ranging from Ks27 million to Ks40 million.

The farmers owning small acres hope that the minister of industry will sell the tractors at a cheaper price.

"I heard that the Ministry of Industry will sell the plough machines on an installment basis.

We have to pay a down payment of 10 per cent. Then, we must pay the rest every six months until all the due amount is paid. But, the price of the tractors is too high.

We cannot buy them because it is too expensive. I want the minister to sell the low-priced machines which every

farmer can afford," said U Hla Tun, a local farmer from Mawlamyinegyun township.

Most of the farmers from Mawlamyinegyun Township are using only hand-pushed tractors, which sell for about Ks2 million.

There are 261,308 acres of land in Mawlamyinegyun Township. Farmer own an average of about 15 or 20 acres of land each. —*Myitmakha News Agency*

KIA armed group attacks Tatmataw troops with landmines

KIA armed group attacked government troops in Waimaw Township, Kachin State, with triggered mines at about 11:10am yesterday, it is learnt.

While performing administrative routine duties in Waimaw township, Kachin State, government troops were attacked by the KIA armed group comprising about ten

troops 200 metres west of Aunggyar village with three triggered landmines and one rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher. Due to the cross-fire from government troops, the KIA armed group fled in a north-easterly direction. In the clash, some military officials were injured, it is learnt. —*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives Chinese Ambassador and British Ambassador separately

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received H.E. Mr. Hong Liang, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar at 10:00 am at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw on 21 December.

Similarly, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

also received the British Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Andrew Patrick at 2:00 pm at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to bi-lateral relations and promotion of co-operation between Myanmar and the United Kingdom. They also exchanged views concerning the peace process of the state.—*Myanmar News Agency*



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives British Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Andrew Patrick. PHOTO: MNA



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for a group photo together with H.E. Mr. Hong Liang, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Independent journalists visit conflict areas in northern Rakhine

A group of independent journalists including local and foreign media made a field trip yesterday to the border outposts which were attacked by violent armed men on 9 October.

At No. 1 Border Outpost (Kyanpyin), Police Brig-Gen Thura San Lwin explained the situation to reporters in the area before, during and after the attack.

He also gave information about the arrests, interrogations, charges and releases regarding the armed attack.

U Ye Htut, Head of the Maungdaw District General Administration Department, spoke about receiving aid from the government and international organizations, the department's efforts for reopening of schools and stability in the area.

The authorities also replied to queries raised by the journalists.

The reporters also visited Warbeik Village, where the vio-

lent attackers fired on government troops and set fire to houses.

During the visit, the journalists interviewed the villagers about the conflict and seizure of arms, ammunition, flags and uniforms from the violent attackers following the conflict in the village.

The group proceeded to Pyaungpaik village and collected information on the attack on security forces and also gathered information on the outbreak of fire in the village. Among the stops the reporters made was Kyeinchaung Village, where they interviewed people from both the Muslim and Buddhist communities about their efforts for stability and peaceful coexistence.

Reporters also visited the Basic Education High School in Kyeinchaung and the Ngakhuya Police Station and interviewed subjects about the 9 October attack and the subsequent fires that occurred.—*MNA*



Independent journalists meeting with muslim community in Pyaungpaik Village in Maungdaw Township. PHOTO: MNA

Joint Monitoring Committee on Ceasefire holds its general meeting to find ways and means to overcome difficulties and challenges

Ye Khaung Nyunt

THE Joint Monitoring Committee on Ceasefire held its general meeting to discuss the working process and responsibilities which are being carried out by the JMC, to find ways and means of overcoming difficulties and challenges encountered in implementing the task of the JMC-S (Joint Monitoring Committee at Region & State Level) and for those who have signed the Nationwide Cease-fire Agreement to maintain the bullet-free situations.

The JMC's first-ever general meeting was held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) branch of Shwe Li Street in Yangon at 9 am yesterday.

In his opening address, Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring Committee at Union Level (JMC-U), said, "The formation of the JMC can reduce the volume of fighting. Although there had been conflicts between RCSS and government troops, both sides had managed to solve carefully and systematically in accord with the instruction of working process of the JMC. In the process of accomplishing peace, Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) & Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) were formed

to perform their tasks in the long run. Under the leadership of the State Counsellor, the coordination combined team on peace process was set up to systematically manage the subvention and assistance for the peace process. Provided that those who signed the NCA can perform the peace process as an ideal, it will surely induce the remaining parties to join the signing of the NCA. The Programme for giving aid includes plans for current development and development plans for the respective regions. Therefore, it is necessary for all to maintain the conflict-free situations. As there are not yet definite separations of areas in some regions, ceasefire that is the main objective of the JMC can be maintained if the respective officers at the lower levels can consult with each other."

He added, "Demining tasks are to be carried out by the JMC. Especially, public-used roads and routes need to be cleared so that the development process can be accomplished and the peace process will be successful. The JMC-S is necessary to openly discuss needs, weak points encountered in the period of one year and suggestions they want to make".

Afterwards, Dr Shwe Khar, Secretary 1 of the JMC-U of ethnic armed groups read out the

message of Saw Issac Po, Vice Chairman of JMC-U which said that the period of implementing the JMC under the instruction of the NCA has now reached over one year. Starting from the advent of the New Year, 100 % of the JMC will be operational. During the period of holding political dialogues, ceasefire needs to be maintained, and from the state of building mutual trusts a strengthened ceasefire must be built up.

He also stressed the need to acknowledge the trust gained to a certain extent between the people and armed groups, reminding them of the need to avoid using sensitive terms in their attempts to promote the trust between them.

He also called for promoting the role of the people in the peace making process in order to ensure transparency and trust from the people.

During the meeting yesterday, the joint monitoring committees in Taninthayi Region, Bago Region, Kayin State, Mon State and Shan State discussed their challenges with the participants of the meeting.

"Tomorrow, we will discuss the recent armed conflict between the Tatmadaw and RCSS/SSA," said Dr Shwe Khar.

A total of 67 representatives attended the meeting.

Renovation of 89 quake-hit pagodas in Bagan to start next month

WITH the close collaboration of experts at home and abroad, major renovations of 89 quake-damaged pagodas and Buddhist temples will begin next month, according to the department of archaeology, national museum library (Bagan branch).

In the first phase, the department will repair 36 pagodas including Bagan's well-known Sulamani and Ananda temples, with plans to renovate 53 others in the second stage, said U Aung Aung Kyaw, director of the department.

A total of 389 pagodas and temples were destroyed by a powerful earthquake that hit the ancient city in August. All dam-

aged pagodas have invaluable ancient architecture.

Renovations for more than 200 temples with minor damage were completed this month.

With a spending of Ks4.6 billion donated by well-wishers, renovation plans will be implemented in phases over the next five years, with plans to solicit further donations for each temple, said U Aung Aung Kyaw.

Over 500 types of precious ancient objects from inside the temples have been kept at Bagan's Archaeological Museum, said NyaungU District General Administrator U Soe Tint. — *Myitmakha News Agency*



A temple in Bagan, one of the most famous tourist attractions in Myanmar. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Visitor arrivals to Chaungtha Beach decrease by half

THE NUMBER of high-season visitors this year to Chaungtha Beach, a popular beach resort situated in Ayeyawady Region, declined by half compared to last year.

According to the Chaungtha Zone Hoteliers Association, over 400,000 visitors at home and abroad visited the resort last year, compared to about 200,000 so far this year.

U Nyi Nyi Aung, a spokesman for the association, said it was his opinion that the decrease

of visitors may be linked to the development of new beach resorts elsewhere and the high expense of travel.

Some visitors select world-famous beaches such as Phuket in Thailand and Bali in Indonesia rather than the local beach resorts in Myanmar because the costs are not so different, he added.

Win Maung, a resident of Patheingyi Town, said unpleasant weather in October and November and sanitation problems also

reduced the arrivals of both local and international visitors, in his opinion.

Chaungtha Beach is a well-known resort and one of the top tourist attractions in Myanmar. It is about a 5-hour drive from the commercial capital of Yangon.

According to official figures of the hotels and tourism ministry, about 22 hotels with a total of about 1,000 rooms have been developed in the beach resort. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Stone Age objects found in ancient site in Ingapu Township

SEVERAL Stone Age objects, including human bones and man-made tools, have been found in an ancient site in Ingapu Township, Ayeyawady Region, according to locals.

The ancient objects including a stone axe, human bones, earthen pipes from the Pyu era, bronze statues, bronze rattles and other ancient materials from Paleolithic Era were discovered in the site in October. The objects are being kept at Kyatpyinya Monastery near Ingapu Tawgyitan.

Sayadaw U Pyinnya Thiri of the monastery said he collected several ancient objects from locals after he heard the news that locals from some villages near Ingapu Ancient City found stone weapons in October.

Currently, about 50 ancient objects are being kept at the monastery, the Sayadaw added.

According to locals, not only stone accessories have been found but also fossil footprints and handprints left by early humans were discovered at the bottom of the Rakhine Mountain Range near Kyauktalone Village two miles from the city of Pyu.

Moreover, ancient symbols, including round shapes, and footprints of animals were found on the wall of Taungnyo Mountain, residents said.



Stone Age objects found in ancient site in Ingapu.

PHOTOS: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Daw Thida Win, assistant director of the Archaeology Department (Patheingyi Branch), said the department received photographs of the ancient stone ma-

terials sent by the locals, with plans to forward those items to the headquarters of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Squatters in Hanthawaddy airport project area to get moving expenses

LOCAL authorities are now arranging to pay moving expenses to unregistered residents in the Hanthawaddy International Airport Project area, said U Than Win, Bago Region Minister for Industry, Electric Power and Transport.

The five-year airport project is planned to be started next year by tender winner JGC Yaungnam, the Japanese-Singapore consortium. Several coordination meetings have been held between authorities and the company to successfully implement the project.

In the term of the then-government, authorities paid compensation twice to landowners affected by the development project.

Members of the regional government hosted several meetings to discuss the removal of squatters from the project area after providing moving expenses, said U Than Win.

In 1994, the civil Aviation Department offered compensation for the damage of crops, buildings and households in six villages located within the target area to implement the airport project, carrying out resettlement plans for people living in those villages.

"We will undertake future programmes to remove unregistered residents from the project sites seeking the best solution," an official from the department of civil aviation said.

He added that some squatters are living the project area with the intent of getting compensation.

According to the project survey, over 500 people are living in the project area.

Some farmers who have documents related to ownership of land are waiting for compensation from authorities. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

Crime NEWS

No injuries in home fire in Taunggyi

NO one was injured in a home fire in Taunggyi, Shan State, on Tuesday, according to the town's fire services department.

The blaze broke out at a house owned by Daw Ei Phyu, 28, in Phayaphyu Ward at around 1 pm on that day due to an overheated 5KV-ZEP fire booster, destroying some parts of the building.

The property loss due to the blaze was estimated to be about Ks100,000, an official from the

department said.

The fire was brought under control by 45 local firefighters within one hour and 30 minutes. The fire services department used five fire engines and a water bowser to put out the blaze.

Action is being taken against the owner of the house under Section 285 of the Penal Code which is related to negligence with respect to a fire or combustible matter. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

LOCAL Business

52 investment proposals to MIC in first half of this month

A total of 52 investment proposals domestically and from abroad have been submitted to the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) from 1st to 16th December, according to MIC officials.

"We are trying to verify and approve the submitted proposals as soon as possible," said U Aung Naing Oo, the secretary of MIC. Investors are observing the investment policies of the incumbent government, resulting in a decline in foreign direct investments (FDI).

Foreign investments as of 17th December in this fiscal year reached only over US\$3billion, which is down from US\$4.96billion in the similar period of last fiscal year, it is learnt.

The telecommunications sector topped the foreign investment line-up of Myanmar with 47 per cent of total investments in this fiscal year. However, the figure is down by nearly US\$1billion in comparison with that of last fiscal year, U Aung Naing Oo continued.

During this fiscal year, the



A man checks SIM cards of MPT at a vendor in Yangon. File photo taken on 4 Dec, 2014. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

percentage of investments flowing into the country are 47.07 per cent in the telecoms sector, 25.5 per cent in the industrial sector, 17.5 per cent in the power sector, 3.03 per cent in real

estate, 2.82 per cent in hotel and tourism, 2.5 per cent in livestock and fishery and 1.59 per cent in other services, it is learnt.

The enterprises which want to proceed with the existing old

investment law have to submit their investment proposals by 31st December. The new investment law will take effect on 1st January, 2017, it is learnt.—*Myitmakha News agency*

World Bank to provide US\$100million . . .

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Fewer than 30 per cent of adults can access financial services, and the rates are even lower in rural areas. Businesses identify the lack of access to finance as the largest constraint to doing business in the country.

"As Myanmar implements the Financial Sector Development Project, people in communities across the country will gain access to basic financial services and small loans," said Ulrich Zachau, the World Bank Country Director for Southeast Asia. "Improved access to credit will mean higher incomes and more jobs. Farmers, small businesses and low-income households will benefit. The World Bank Group is pleased to help finance the project." The credit will come from the International Development Association (IDA), the Bank's fund for the poorest. The terms for the IDA credit include a maturity of 38 years, with a grace period of six years and a zero interest rate.—*World Bank*

UMFCCI and associates to establish fund raising for protection from disaster

THE Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and its affiliated associations will jointly establish fund raising for protection from natural disasters, according to federation officials.

The funds will be spent on the agriculture sector, which is the backbone of country's economy, it is learnt.

"The associations under UMFCCI will have to contribute to the fund," said Dr Myo Thet, the

vice chair of UMFCCI. "UMFCCI usually led the associates to provide the disaster-stricken areas. We cannot say sure yet when the fund raising activity will happen."

The UMFCCI reformed its executive committee and central executive committee in September in concordance with the memorandum of association.

"Resettlement plays a key role when disaster strikes. Fund-raising will help to resettle the commerce and industry

sectors," said U Win Shwe, the director of the Yangon region resettlement department.

There are a total of 23 affiliated associations with UMFCCI, with over 30,000 members.

Cyclone Nargis was the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar during early May 2008, and floods in 2015 adversely affected the socio-cultural status of local residents, it is learnt.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Eight companies selected to run in public bus line system

EIGHT companies have been selected to run in the public bus line system, according to the Yangon Region Transport Authority.

The public bus line system is set to launch on 1st January, 2017. The bus lines running in the city and bus companies were invited to operate a public bus line and 20 bus line companies applied for it, it is reported

Out of 20 companies, eight consortium companies were selected to operate in the public

bus line, including Bandoola Transport Co., Ltd; a company comprising Htet Myat Thu and Southern District bus lines; a company consisting of BRT Lite, Myauk Pine Thar Bus line and Shwe Myo Taw bus lines; a company combined by Omni Focus Services and Trans Link Co., Ltd; Yangon Urban Public Transport (YUPT); a company of Power Eleven Public, A Mye Sein and Shwepyitha bus lines; a company of SRT, San Wai La and Shwe Inwa bus lines and a

public company comprising Khit Thit Bayint Naung and Northern District Bus Lines, it is learnt.

"We are gearing up to run our bus lines in the city. We have already submitted the routes which we want," said Ko Ta Yoke Lay from Power Eleven Public Company.

The government will allocate Ks78billion for operation of a public bus line system in Yangon and the eight public companies will also jointly provide a set amount.—200

Honda opens car servicing business in Myanmar

HONDA Motor Co. has opened its first automobile service center in Myanmar together with its regional subsidiary and a local firm to provide after-sales service to the owners of Honda vehicles.

Teaming up with Eastern Nova Co. as well as Asian Honda Motor Co., Honda's regional headquarters for the Asia and Oceania region, the Japanese automaker set up the service center close to one of the largest parks in Myanmar in the western part of Yangon, the commercial hub of the South East Asian country.

Myint Oo, director of newly established Eastern Nova, said the increasing popularity of the Honda brand in Myanmar has driven the automaker to boost its presence in the market, which is largely dominated by Toyota which held a 65 per cent market share in 2014.

"People have imported more Honda vehicles since the government changed its vehicle import policy in 2011. The most popular model is the Honda Fit," he said. He estimates that the second most favored brand in Myanmar currently controls about 20 per cent of the market, rising from 11 per cent in 2014.

In a country where used cars account for 95 per cent of the market, demand for spare parts is likely to continue to grow as the automobile market flourishes.

A report released in mid-2016 by Germany's largest market research institute GfK said car owners in Myanmar need to send their cars for maintenance and replacement of parts more frequently due to the hot climatic conditions and rough roads.

Nobuo Kannonji, general manager of the customer service division of Asian Honda, told NNA that Myanmar has growth potential in the after-sales automobile market.

"I see many Honda vehicles in the market. So, I see some potential."

"Later we will consider new car business here," he said.

According to Honda, there are more than 42,000 registered and used Honda vehicles in Myanmar at the moment.

Since 2011, Myanmar imported over 670,000 vehicles and changed its import policy at least 12 times in this period.—*Kyodo News*

Indonesian police kill three suspects in gunfight after bombs found

JAKARTA — Indonesian anti-terrorism police killed three suspects after a gunfight on the outskirts of the capital, Jakarta, on Wednesday and foiled a suicide bomb plot, a police spokesman said.

The raid is the latest in a series over recent weeks that police say have disrupted bomb plots, raising concerns that homegrown militants in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation are getting bolder in their attempts to launch attacks.

Police said earlier this week that at least 14 people were being interrogated over suicide bomb plots targeting the presidential palace in Jakarta and an undisclosed location outside Java island. Both involved a female suicide bomber — a new tactic for Indonesian militants.

After Wednesday's raid, police said the suspects, who authorities believe are supporters of



Indonesian police officers stand outside a home following a gunfight in which three suspected militants were killed in South Tangerang, Banten province near Jakarta, Indonesia on 21 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

the Islamic State militant group, had planned to stab officers at a traffic post, and then detonate a "large, homemade" bomb as crowds gathered.

The attack was planned for the end of the

year.

"The intention was for a suicide bomb," national police spokesman Rikwanto, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, told a news conference.

Police said a total of

five bombs were found at the house in South Tangerang.

Television footage showed a bomb squad officer wearing a blast-resistant suit entering the house as locals watched from be-

hind a police line.

"During the raid, we tried to be careful but they threw something from inside the house and it was a bomb but it did not explode. Then they fired from inside," Rikwanto earlier told Metro TV.

He said one suspect was captured alive.

President Joko Widodo commended security forces for preventing attacks and called on the public to be vigilant against the spread of radicalism.

"We hope the public can also help fortify this country against terrorism and radicalism," Widodo said in a statement.

Indonesia has suffered several major militant attacks over the years, the worst of which was the 2002 bombing on the holiday island of Bali that killed 202 people, many of them foreigners.

That attack led to Western help and funding for Indonesia to develop

an elite counter-terrorism unit, which has been effective in stamping out militant cells.

Authorities however now worry about a resurgence in radicalism, inspired in part by Islamic State.

A gun and bomb assault in the heart of Jakarta in January killed four people and was the first attack in Southeast Asia claimed by Islamic State.

Police have arrested dozens of suspected militants in recent months, including a cell in Indonesia's Batam island that planned a rocket attack on neighbouring Singapore.

Many suspects from the most recent arrests were found with military-grade explosives and police say they had been communicating with and receiving money from Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian militant known to be fighting with Islamic State in Syria.—Reuters

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South Korea seeks arrest of daughter of Park's friend at centre of scandal

SEOUL — South Korea on Wednesday issued an arrest warrant for a daughter of the woman at the center of President Park Geun-hye's corruption scandal and investigators raided the National Pension Service over possible links to the scandal.

A special prosecutor's investigation started on Wednesday into the influence-peddling scandal that threatens to make Park, 64, the first democratically-elected leader to leave office early in disgrace. Parliament has voted to impeach Park, a decision that must be confirmed or overturned by the Constitutional Court.

A court issued an arrest warrant on Wednesday for Chung Yoo-ra, the 20-year-old daughter of Choi Soon-sil, Park's long-time friend



Choi Soon-sil, a long-time friend of South Korean President Park Geun-hye who is at the center of the South Korean political scandal involving Park, arrives for her first court hearing in Seoul, South Korea, on 19 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

who is in custody and on trial for fraud and abuse of power. Chung's lawyer has said she is in Germany, where she flew with her mother and child in September, according to media reports.

"We have Chung's arrest warrant on several charges including obstruction of justice and we plan to request the cooperation of German prosecutors based on these charges," Lee Kyu-chul, a spokesman

for the special prosecutor's office, told a news conference.

Lee said authorities are working to invalidate Chung's South Korean passport and have asked German prosecutors for information on her whereabouts and financial assets.

Chung, an equestrian athlete who competed in the 2014 Asian Games and won a gold medal in a team competition, sparked public ire earlier this year when it emerged that she had received special treatment from the prestigious Ewha Womans University.

Her admission to the university was subsequently canceled. She was also stripped of her high school diploma for fabrication of grades and attendance, according to the Seoul education office.—Reuters

Thailand seeks to develop military production facilities with China

BANGKOK — Thailand and China are in talks about building military production facilities in Thailand, a Thai defence ministry spokesman said on Wednesday, the latest sign of warming relations between China and America's oldest ally in Asia.

Relations between Thailand and the United States cooled following a

May 2014 military coup that the Thai military said was necessary to end months of unrest, including street protests that led to the ouster of an elected government.

The United States has said relations cannot return to normal until democracy is restored. The generals running Thailand have promised an election for

2017.

Since the coup, the military government has sought to counterbalance US ties by developing relations with China and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan met his Chinese counterpart, Chang Wanquan, during a visit to Beijing last week.

"The defence minister told his Chinese counter-

part that we are interested in setting up facilities to repair and maintain the Chinese equipment we currently have in our arsenal," ministry spokesman Kongcheep Tantravanich told Reuters.

"We will also look to their expertise in producing small arms and other security-related equipment like drones," he said.—Reuters

China, UK vow pragmatic cooperation, joint efforts in climate battle

LONDON — China and Britain on Tuesday pledged to enhance their pragmatic cooperation and join hands to combat the climate change.

The latest development came as visiting Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi met with the British Prime Minister Theresa May after the 8th China-UK Strategic Dialogue held in London.

Chinese and British leaders met on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in China in September, months after the Brexit Referendum and British government reshuffle. Leaders of the two countries had reassured each other for the commitment and confidence in the “golden

era” for the bilateral relations.

Yang said that the mutual reassurance had injected fresh momentum into the Sino-UK cooperation. China stands ready to maintain frequent exchanges of high-level visits with the British side and also deepen their pragmatic bilateral cooperation in areas including nuclear power, high-speed railway, finance and innovation, he said.

The senior Chinese official also called on the two sides to strengthen their communication and coordination to solve major international and regional issues, jointly push forward the open, inclusive economic globalization and combat the



British Prime Minister Theresa May (R) meets with visiting Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi in London, Britain, on 20 December 2016. PHOTO: XINHUA

global challenges such as the climate change.

On her part, May said her country is expecting to

strengthen pragmatic cooperation with China in various areas and promote global free trade.

She said Britain is willing

to address common challenges such as the climate changes with other countries in a concerted manner. —Xinhua

Japan should take leadership role in UNSC reform push: ex-US official



Shirin Tahir-Kheli, a former senior adviser to the secretary of state for UN reform, speaks in an interview with Kyodo News in her home in Philadelphia on 18 November 2016 as Japan marks its six-decade-long membership in the United Nations. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

PHILADELPHIA, (Pennsylvania) — Japan should leverage a window it has as President-elect Donald Trump sets up his new administration and as Tokyo marks its six-decade-long membership in the United Nations to press its case for a permanent seat on a reformed Security Council it envisions, a former US official said.

“Japan would have to take a lead and make a real concerted private, as well as public, effort to engage early and strongly and kind of become the spokesman for the expansion group,” Shirin Tahir-Kheli told *Kyodo News* in a recent interview at her Philadelphia home.

She was referring to efforts by Japan, Brazil, India and Germany, collectively known as the Group of Four. They have been pushing for additional permanent and nonpermanent council seats in the body which currently has 15 members.

Their expansion plan collides with other groups, such as Uniting for Consensus, which counts Italy,

Pakistan and South Korea as its members, and advocates only for increasing the number of nonpermanent seats.

Despite a broad consensus in the international body that reform is needed to better reflect the reality of today’s world, and an apparent boost in 2005 when global leaders supported an “early reform” of the Security Council, intergovernmental negotiations have continued year after year with little notable change. The five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — hold veto powers on issues related to maintaining international peace and security. Ten nonpermanent members also comprise the council for two-year terms. Japan was elected last year for a record 11th time, with its present term set to expire at the end of 2017. As the former senior adviser to the secretary of state for UN reform, a position she held under Condoleezza Rice from 2005 to 2006, Tahir-Kheli was instrumental in crafting past policy on reform issues. In her view, Japan should “become more active in making its case” for Security Council reform, including a need for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to prioritise the matter in his discussions with Trump.

Under the Trump administration, it remains to be seen what role the United Nations will have or the stance that will be taken on Security Council reform efforts.

“If those like Japan who want a (permanent) seat at the table make it a priority, the beginning of an administration is probably a better time because soon they will get overwhelmed with all the other challenges,” Tahir-Kheli said.

Also describing the six-decade anniversary that fell on Sunday

as “an important time,” she further stressed how Tokyo could use the occasion to clearly state its interest in securing a permanent seat.

“If I were the government or the people of Japan, I would assume that if I am willing to play a responsible role in the region and internationally that I have a duty and a need to be at the big table,” she added. Reflecting on her earlier UN career from 1990-1993 when she was a New York ambassador, Tahir-Kheli recalled the important role Japan played in the key issues of the day, especially related to the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein when Tokyo became recognised as an important and responsible global player.

“The US committed to supporting — it doesn’t necessarily mean (permanent membership) would have resulted — but it committed to Japan as being a country that had good credentials to be a permanent member of the Security Council,” she said.

However, when Japan later joined forces with Brazil, India and Germany, it suffered from the consequences of becoming caught in the group’s internal politics, which complicated the picture, she said. With the addition of Brazil, objections were voiced from other regional players, such as Mexico and Argentina.

In considering Germany as a possible seat holder, questions were raised about the fairness of having three European nations represented when there was no representation from Africa.

With India’s bid came objections from neighboring Pakistan. She admitted, however, that over the last 10 years dynamics with Russia and China have created new challenges. —Kyodo News

Modi losing friends as anger grows over Indian cash crackdown

NEW DELHI — A leading political ally of Narendra Modi has abruptly distanced himself from the Indian prime minister’s move to scrap high-value banknotes, as broad initial support for the radical monetary reform showed signs of crumbling.

The shift by N. Chandrababu Naidu, chief minister of the southern state Andhra Pradesh, came six weeks after Modi announced to a stunned nation that he would scrap 86 per cent of the cash in circulation.

While Modi remains by far India’s most popular politician, any crack in his authority could have negative implications in state elections next year that will set the tone for his expected bid for a second term in 2019.

Naidu’s regional party is allied to Modi’s nationalists and he heads a federal committee set up to find ways to soften the impact on ordinary people of the crackdown against tax evaders, racketeers and bribe takers who rely on so-called “black cash”.

“I am breaking my head daily but we are unable to find a solution to this problem,” Naidu told party workers on Tuesday in the city of Vijayawada.

Modi, announcing the reform on 8 November cautioned that people would face temporary hardship. He promised to restore normalcy by the end of the year, when a deadline to deposit old 500 and 1,000 rupee banknotes expires.

His announcement enjoyed popular support at first, with many people prepared to endure hardship as long as others are forced to give up their ill-gotten



India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks to the media inside the parliament premises on the first day of the winter session in New Delhi, India, on 16 November 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

wealth or pay tax.

But continuing shortages of new 500 and 2,000 rupee notes have caused tempers to rise as millions queue at banks and ATMs to draw money. With new 500 rupee notes, worth \$7.50, in very short supply it is hard for people to buy necessities because of a shortage of change.

“Modi is now a one-man army, every political ally will blame him if the cash crisis does not come to an end in the next 10 days,” said P. Raja Rao, a political science professor in Hyderabad. Furious over the lack of cash, mobs attacked six bank branches in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, forcing police to rescue bank staff.

The northern state, home to one in six Indians, is due to hold an election in early 2017 that is increasingly being viewed as a referendum on Modi’s demonetisation drive. —Reuters

Opinion

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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.

Co-operatives require effective team development

Htun Tin Htun

AIM HIGH, Think Global, Act local. Always be creative and innovative to think how to include women members in different operations of cooperative enterprises. The Paraguayan statistics follow national trends, which show that savings and credit cooperatives have higher rates of female participation than agricultural cooperatives. For this reason, it is important to mention that most of the CDP participant cooperatives do not have savings and credit operations. This is likely an important factor in explaining why Manduvira's rates of female participation are so high above the average.

Teamwork, team building and effective team development need to be built up and developed within the cooperatives in order to create more opportunities for

women to lead the cooperatives. According to the Observatorio del Sector Cooperativo Paraguayo (OBSECOOPY), Paraguayan savings and credit cooperatives have achieved gender parity in membership. These cooperatives also have a much higher percentage of female presidents. However, it is important to keep in mind that a large number of these cooperatives are located in the capital of Asuncion and provide services to professional men and women.

Inclusiveness is one of the elements of good cooperative governance. Manduvira stands out among CDP participant cooperatives in its rates of female-elected leadership as well. While over half of the CDP participant cooperatives do not have a single female-elected leader, 24 percent of Manduvira's 17 elected lead-

ers are women. The positions held by women are Treasurer for the Board of Directors, Alternate for the Board of Directors, President of the Electoral Committee, and member of the Electoral Committee. There are also women in the Solidarity Committee, Education Committee, Credit Committee, and various staff management positions.

Our Vision is to protect, preserve, promote and perpetuate Our Planet, Our Dignity, Our Equity, Our Equality, and Our Future. One for all and all for one is our motto for democratic organization. Each for all and all for each is our motto for social services. In both of its operations, Manduvira adheres strongly to the principle that men and women should be treated equally. In 1999 the cooperative began to certify its sugar as fair trade

and continues to do so through Fairtrade International (FLO). In order to achieve the fair-trade certification, the cooperative has to comply with the standards set forth by FLO.

Not for profit but for service. From egg to electricity. From cradle to the grave. From primary health care to hospital care. From Microfinance to Cooperative Bank. From farm products to funeral services. Thrift is the back-rock of cooperation. No pain, no gain. More pain, more gain. As one male leader said, the principles of fair trade state very clearly that "there is no type of discrimination, whether political, whether religious, gender." Several leaders described the cooperative as "open" to women or stated that there was "space" for women to participate as members and leaders.

Foreign tourists are flocking in. But !

Khin Maung Myint

I had written two articles in the GNLM under the same title before. I'm using the same title over and over again not because I cannot think of other titles, but I intend it to be a feature series, where I can highlight the adverse consequences of tourism. Saying thus, I may sound like a pessimistic person with negative attitude, which I'm definitely not. Regular readers of my articles may have noticed that most of my articles covered a variety of fields where reforms are needed.

I agree that tourism generates much incomes and much needed foreign currencies for the country. It also creates jobs and increases the incomes of many individuals who are directly or indirectly related to that business. In fact tourism is more than just a business, it's an industry---a smokeless industry. It is metaphorized as a smokeless industry because though it is a provider of services, it generates large incomes that are comparable to the industries that depends on smoke-emitting machineries.

It is universally accepted that there are always pros and cons or advantages and disadvantages or upsides and downsides, related to everything, and the tourism industry is no exception. Though it may generate much incomes, create jobs and promotes businesses in the related sectors, there are many drawbacks or pitfalls. The most serious negative impacts, which are commonly seen in connection with the tourism industry are threats to the security, the culture and the

civilization of the country, and also to the businesses of the locals.

Threats to the security are the most serious and dangerous of all. In their bid to attract more tourists, most countries relaxed their visa regulations and immigration checks at the ports of entry. Such relaxations led to the influx of foreign tourists. Most are genuine tourists who come to do what tourists normally do. Even among these genuine tourists are some rude and unruly persons who cause nuisances. On the other hand, there are the ingenuine tourists among whom are criminals, fugitives, terrorists, drug users/traffickers, human traffickers, swindlers, scammers and even paedophiles. Some countries in the region have their reputations tarnished by being designated as sex tourism destination for tourists. The latter categories pose threats to the security and undermine the law and order of the host country.

As I'm alternately living in Myanmar and Thailand nowadays, I have been witnessing the adverse consequences that Thailand have to bear due to the tourism trade. Some of those adverse consequences have started to be felt in Myanmar too. Cases of ATM scamming committed by foreigners a few years back, breach of security at the new airport terminal in Yangon recently, spates of explosions of homemade bombs are harbingers of the adverse impacts of the blooming tourism trade. The most disturbing is the recent news of a foreign drug trafficking gang, comprising of Taiwanese and Hong Kong citi-

zens apprehended in Yangon. These incidents undermined our country's security. Severe actions, including death sentences should be considered for such cases.

Today, the international tourist arrivals are on the rise in our country. Some extremists from within and without are profusely promulgating false and fabricated news on the media. There were also open threats on the social media mentioning some of our leaders on the hit list by a certain terrorist group. These should not be taken lightly. In such a scenario, our country could become a target of the terrorists from abroad posing as tourists. I'm sure the authorities know better than I do, and are taking necessary precautions. As the security is more important than anything else, it shouldn't be compromised for the sake of tourism.

Then, there are the undesirable impacts on our culture and religion. The incidents of foreign tourists wearing footwear on the Shwedagon Pagoda and the unplugging of the amplifier at Mandalay, by tourists, are just the beginnings. The most insulting to the religion are the inappropriate pre-wedding photos purported to be shot on locations at Pagan that went viral on the social media. Thailand have been facing such disregards to their culture and religion for quite sometimes. In my opinion, Thailand had tolerated such behaviours for long until they are out of control. Now they have to issue warnings and regulations, especially intended for those undisciplined tourists from a populous country who are arriving in droves almost everyday. These

people are becoming nuisances to other tourists too. In Thailand I usually shun hotels and restaurants where most of them patronized.

From the business point of view, tourism may be attractive for those who are in that business and other related businesses, such as the hoteliers, restaurateurs, hospital operators, other retailers and of course the governments stand to gain from the revenues generated by the tourism industry. However, the downsides are the infiltrations of the businesses of the locals'. The business people from the most populous country in the world have elbowed their ways into the lucrative Thai businesses, ranging from tour services, setting up brokerages for exporting of sea foods, fruits and flowers, and other food stuffs back to their country. Such activities are undercutting the local businesses and putting them out of business. Some have even ventured into the prostitution, massage parlors, bars and karaoke businesses, most of which are illegal.

Lately the Thai authorities had closed down a tour company, which is operating with a large fleet of 2000 tour buses, whose majority of the shares are in the hands of the businesspersons from that most populous country. That company targeted the tourists from that country by offering low budget services and have managed to monopolize that market. That situation deprived other local operators, chances to get a share of the lucrative tourism market that the tourists from that country provide. The latest step taken by the Thai authorities is to carefully vet the hundreds of thousands of med-

ical tourists from that country, who are coming for medical checkups or treatments. There must be sound reasons for the Thai authorities to take such drastic actions.

Today, there are quite a sizeable number of foreigners working in the construction sector of our country with tourist visas, which is illegal. Some had even infiltrated into the local businesses. One such example is the rapid popping up of chain stores, where every commodity is priced at 5000 Kyats. Many of the land plots and real estate properties are also in the hands of some foreigners, purchased in our citizens' names. There may be many more sectors where they are involved, which we cannot know because some foreigners used our citizens as fronts to cover their illegal activities. As we are now encountering some similar cases of unscrupulous business operations, though not yet on a large scale as in Thailand, we should be cautious in promoting tourism.

If the tourism sector is left unchecked, we are bound to be in the same dire situations that Thailand is now facing. My suggestion to the authorities and the business persons in the tourist industry is: "Please do not compromise the security, cultural values, religion, businesses of our citizens and the stability of the country just to acquire more tourist arrivals". Though they may generate much incomes and create more job opportunities, the price we will have to pay is too much — a lesson learned from the experiences of Thailand.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects Sasana Beikman construction

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and officials inspected the construction of Sasana Beikman within the precinct of Lawkananda Pagoda in Sittwe on the morning of 21 December.

Defence Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited the pagoda, and during his visit he gave instructions to those officials concerned to construct the beikman systematically and in accordance with the target of the project, to use good quality construction materials so that the building can endure the natural disasters and to ensure sufficient water supply and electric power supply as well as systematic sanitation.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects Sasana Beikman construction. PHOTO: MNA

New care centres for children with disabilities to open early 2017



A care centre. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

A SPECIAL care centre for children with disabilities is planned to launch in Mawlamyine, the capital town of Mon State, at the beginning of next year, according to the Myanmar Autism Association.

With contributions of well-wishers and local charities, including the New Light Foundation and the Myanmar Autism Association, the new training centre will be located in the compound of the youth training centre in Sangyi Ward in Mawlamyine Town with the permission of Mon State government.

Daw San San Myint, vice chairman of the MAA, said well-

trained experts will systematically provide individual care with the use of suitable teaching facilities.

Plans are underway to offer technical support for disabled children to care providers by both organisations.

The move aims to improve the lives of those children by providing specialised care, allowing for various kinds of disabilities, including physical, intellectual, audiological and visual impairments.

The centre will allow those from different backgrounds to receive special care. Needy children will not need to pay any fees for the rehabilitation services, but the

centre will collect appropriate fees from those who can afford it.

The privately owned centers have been opened in Yangon, Mandalay and PyinOoLwin. There are eight centres in Yangon—two in Mandalay and one in PyinOoLwin. U Thike Tun, the father of an autistic child, said he welcomes the establishment of the training centre and believes it can help autistic children.

“There are many reclusive children with disabilities who are facing barriers to receive adequate rehabilitation services from the outside because of different reasons,” he said.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Donation ceremony of 450 solar lighting systems to 130 schools held in Nyaung U

OVER 13,000 students in Nyaung U township have better conditions in their school, following the donation of 450 Eneloop Solar Storage Systems to 130 schools. The donation was made by Panasonic in coordination with UNESCO and the Myanmar Ministry of Education, through the project “Strengthening Schools for Education for Sustainable Development”.

The solar storage systems were donated during a ceremony held in Nyaung U on Saturday 17 December 2016. The ceremony was attended by over 200 teachers, students, parents and school leaders from basic education schools in the township. Opening remarks were given by Dr. Thant Sin, Deputy Director-General, Department of Alternative Education, Ministry of Education. Mr. Hisakazu Maeda, Chief Representative, Panasonic Myanmar welcomed those attending. Ms. Min Jeong Kim, Head of Office, UNESCO Myanmar gave further description of the project and the role of sustainable development in our daily lives and for global prosperity. The ceremony also

included Panasonic’s Eco Learning Program, in which students made their own solar lights and learned that renewable energy can reduce our carbon footprint. The importance of choosing renewable energy was emphasized by Mr. Hisakazu Maeda, as the Eco Learning program’s objective is to “raise local leaders passionate about sustainable development”. Following the ceremony, 60 school heads and teachers attended a training conducted by UNESCO to learn more about teaching sustainable development in their classrooms.

The donation of the Eneloop Solar Storage Systems is the result of the public-private partnership of Panasonic, UNESCO and the Myanmar Ministry of Education. Dr. Thant Sin stated “This is the proudest day for us since Nyaung U has been chosen as the starting point for public-private partnerships for sustainable development in Myanmar.” He further stated the importance of private sector contribution in Myanmar’s development, including the emphasis placed on private sector assistance by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu

Kyi. Mr. Hisakazu Maeda stated that Panasonic “believes all people benefit from access to electricity” and described Panasonic’s work to ensure all had access to electricity and especially renewable energy, and its long presence and contribution to Myanmar. The Eneloop Solar Storage Systems will provide a full day of solar lighting and access to power per each charge for the 130 schools, all of which do not currently have access to electricity.

Increasing awareness and use of renewable energy – which, as noted by Dr. Thant Sin, will be needed to sustainably answer Myanmar’s energy needs – is a featured component of the project “Strengthening Schools for Education for Sustainable Development”. The project, which will also develop teaching materials and teacher trainings, promotes knowledge and skills for sustainable development in classrooms. Sustainable development, as Ms. Min Jeong Kim described, is “development in which all are able to equally prosper and have lives with dignity for generation after gener-

ation.” She further noted this project is unique in that it brings together education, science and culture to improve lives. With these three elements, we can share in a culture of peace, using resources in a manner that allows for a harmonious society.

The project will continue through 2017, with the commitment voiced by the teachers

and students at the Donation Ceremony to renewable energy and to practice their skills and knowledge for sustainable development. They will be supported by tools and trainings for their classrooms by UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, and Panasonic in their effort to “provide a better life and better world for people everywhere”.—*GNLM*



Solar lighting system being distributed to representative from government schools. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Trump, Bill Clinton trade insults in unusual exchange

NEW YORK — Donald Trump pounced on a reported comment from Bill Clinton, the former president and husband of his Democratic rival in the 8 November election, in an unusual exchange on Tuesday between future and former US presidents.

Clinton, whose wife, Hillary, lost last month's election after spending millions of dollars more than her Republican rival, was spotted at a bookstore near the couple's hometown a suburb of New York City earlier this month. One person asked him, "Is Trump smart?" according to the editor of a local newspaper.

"He doesn't know much. One

thing he does know is how to get angry, white men to vote for him," Clinton replied, according to the Record-Review of Bedford and Pound Ridge. Clinton also said he had received a telephone call from Trump the day after the November election, the newspaper said.

The report of the impromptu question-and-answer session was widely picked up on Monday.

Trump waited until Tuesday morning to hit back.

"Bill Clinton stated that I called him after the election. Wrong, he called me (with a very nice congratulations). He 'doesn't know much'..." Trump wrote on Twitter.

Trump added in a second post: "especially how to get people, even with an unlimited budget, out to vote in the vital swing states (and more). They focused on wrong states."

Trump has used Twitter regularly as his megaphone on everything from personal beefs to US policy on China. Trump's individual targets have ranged from Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, whose questions during a presidential debate angered Trump, to the leader of an Indiana steelworkers union who disputed the number of jobs saved by a Trump deal in that state. —Reuters



President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a USA Thank You Tour event in Mobile, Alabama. PHOTO: REUTERS

Migration fears ebb since Brexit vote, giving PM May breathing space

PRESTATYN, (Wales) — When farmers, business leaders and politicians met in north Wales to discuss what Brexit meant for their community, there was barely any mention of immigration — the very issue that dominated the referendum campaign across Britain.

One man did stand up to air his worries over the unfettered movement of migrants from the rest of Europe which he blamed for losing his job. But the others responded by simply rolling their eyes and quickly moving on to the next point.

Most of those assembled by a British parliamentary committee in a cinema in the seaside town of Prestatyn had come to discuss their concerns about their future outside the European Union, not to revisit the arguments that led to Britain's vote in June to leave the bloc.

Their response is part of a trend emerging across the country, according to opinion polls,

with the immigration fears that loomed so large before the referendum being overtaken by concerns over what Brexit will mean for everyday life.

In the monthly Ipsos MORI/Economist Issues Index, which asks about 1,000 people across the country "What are the most important issues facing Britain", the EU and the terms of Britain's exit led at 39 per cent in November — above immigration on 35 per cent.

A month earlier, immigration was at 36 per cent, with the EU and Brexit at 32 per cent, while in June — during the run-up to the vote — immigration was at 48 per cent with the EU at 32.

This shift in public concerns could offer some respite to Prime Minister Theresa May as she prepares for negotiations on Britain's exit from the 28-nation bloc.

She has been under immense pressure to curb free movement of people from Europe to Britain but

will face fierce opposition from Brussels negotiators as she seeks at the same time to retain access to the bloc's trade and financial markets.

Should the talks boil down to a trade-off between accepting a degree of movement of people from the EU in return for preferential access to the single market, as widely expected, any relaxation of public pressure on immigration could help free the government's hand at the negotiating table.

Gideon Skinner, research director at Ipsos MORI, told Reuters it was still too early to say whether fears about how Britain will manage outside the EU will continue to stay high as "concern about immigration will be partly dependent on the outcomes of the Brexit negotiations".

But he added: "It is certainly the case that concern about Brexit has increased significantly from the beginning of this year." —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cambodia seizes 1.3 tons of elephant tusks bound for China

PHNOM PENH — Cambodian authorities have seized more than 1.36 tons of elephant tusks imported from Africa and bound for China, a government official said on Wednesday.

Un Vanaridh, deputy chief of the Phnom Penh forestry office, said his authority, in cooperation with other concerned government bodies, had seized 1.58 tons of elephant tusks, tails and other animal parts including tiger bones.

According to the government's report, the tusks and other animal parts were packed inside three hollowed-out logs imported from Mozambique, and were spotted by Cambodian authorities in Phnom Penh last Saturday after they were loaded onto a train from the country's southwestern sea port of Sihanoukville.

The authorities took several days to uncover all animal parts and logs loaded in three containers. The government said the items, thought to be bound for China, were confiscated.—Kyodo News

US announces biggest land return on Okinawa to Japan since 1972

TOKYO — The US forces in Japan said Wednesday the United States and Japan are now prepared for the return of thousands of hectares of US military-used land on Okinawa to Japanese control, in what would be the biggest such land transfer in more than 40 years.

The return of part of the land of a US military training area is a positive development for Okinawa, which hopes to see a reduction in its heavy burden of hosting US bases, but the prefecture is in a far from festive mood following the recent crash landing of US Marines Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft off the coast of Okinawa.

Okinawa Gov. Takeshi Onaga, who is stepping up his demand to remove all Ospreys in the prefecture, plans to skip a ceremony, to be organised by the central government in Okinawa on Thursday, to mark the largest land return since the prefecture reverted to Japanese control in 1972 following postwar US occupation.

The land return involves about 4,000 hectares of forest area, or roughly half of the land in the Northern Training Area in the villages of Kunigami and Higashi. The move is based on an agreement reached between Japan and the United States in 1996.

But six helipads, likely to be used by Ospreys, have been built in the retained area in exchange for the land return — a project that has met stiff opposition from residents living nearby.—Kyodo News

German police step up manhunt after releasing Christmas market suspect

BERLIN — German police on Wednesday intensified a manhunt for the driver of a truck, who killed 12 people when he mowed into a Berlin Christmas market, and said they were following a number of good leads.

After releasing a Pakistani asylum-seeker arrested near the scene, authorities warned that the attacker is on the run and may be armed. They have also said it is unclear if the perpetrator was acting alone or with others. Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The head of the Association of German Criminal Detectives, told German television late on Tuesday that police hoped to make another arrest soon. "I am relatively confident that we will perhaps tomorrow or in the near future be able to present a new suspect," Andre Schulz told a talk show on the ZDF public channel.

Wednesday's Passauer Neue Presse quoted the head of the group of interior ministers from Germany's 16 federal states, Klaus Bouillon, as saying tougher security measures were needed.—Reuters

Kremlin: Too early to say who behind Turkey envoy's killing

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Wednesday it was too early to say who stood behind the murder of Russia's ambassador to Turkey, Andrei Karlov, who was shot dead by a gunman at an Ankara art gallery on Monday.

Turkey's foreign minister has told US Secretary of State John Kerry that Ankara and Moscow believe followers of Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen were behind the killing, ministry sources said on Tuesday.

But when Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was asked about the Turkish foreign minister's comments on Wednesday, he said it was too early to draw any conclusions about who may have orchestrated the murder. "We need to wait for the results of the joint investigative group," Peskov told reporters on a conference call. "It is really not worth rushing to any conclusions."—Reuters

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Peacekeepers serving in the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) patrol in their armoured personnel carrier during demonstrations against Congolese President Joseph Kabila in the streets of the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital Kinshasa, on 20 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Congo forces kill 26 protesters against leader Kabila

KINSHASA — Security forces shot dead at least 26 protesters who had gathered in the streets of Kinshasa and other cities of Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday to demand that President Joseph Kabila step down after his mandate expired overnight.

Scattered protests started on Tuesday, and opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi called on the Congolese people to peacefully resist Kabila, who has remained in power beyond his constitutional mandate with no election to pick a successor.

Human Rights Watch

researcher Ida Sawyer said on Twitter that at least 26 people were killed by security forces.

The government spokesman could not be reached for comment and a police spokesman had no information on deaths.

Gunfire crackled in several districts of the capital, Kinshasa, a city of 12 million, as measures to thwart dissent raised fears of bloody repression.

With a ban on demonstrations in force and a heavy military presence, Kinshasa's normally busy main boulevards were mostly deserted as pockets of youths gathered in side-streets only to be dispersed

by volleys of teargas.

By sunset, the city was calm, although littered with debris from earlier rioting. Youths played soccer in the streets. Scores of people were arrested, especially in the eastern city of Goma, rights groups said. Reuters witnesses saw more than a dozen young men who had been arrested seated in the back of a military truck near the university.

"I'm gravely concerned by the arrests of those who seek to express their political views," the head of the UN mission, Maman Sidikou, said in a statement, adding that UN staff had not been able to

consistently gain access to jails to gather information on how many people had been arrested.

He called on Congo to end "politically motivated detentions".

UN peacekeepers in armored personnel carriers patrolled the streets, at one point cheered on by a crowd shouting: "Kabila, know that your mandate is finished!" In Lubumbashi, in the heart of Africa's richest copper-mining area, police and Kabila's elite Republican Guard fired live bullets to prevent demonstrations, said Gregoire Mulamba, a local human rights activist.—Reuters

Thousands stuck as Aleppo evacuation deal hits last-minute hitch

BEIRUT — A convoy of 60 buses carrying people desperate to leave the last rebel-held enclave of Aleppo was held up in freezing temperatures on Wednesday when an evacuation deal hit a last-minute hitch.

The eventual departure of the thousands left in the insurgent zone will hand full control of the city to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the biggest prize of the nearly six-year-old civil war.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group, said the bus convoy entered the last besieged pocket of the city on Tuesday in harsh weather conditions and some were loaded with people, but

they had not moved since.

Eight buses en route to Aleppo from the pro-government villages of Foua and Kefraya had also been held up since Tuesday, the Observatory said. Government forces had insisted the two villages, besieged by rebels in Idlib, must be included in the deal to bring people out of east Aleppo.

State television, broadcasting live from near the Aleppo departure zone, said the rebels had presented new conditions with the aim of obstructing the evacuation deal. Rebels said the government was to blame for hindering the evacuations.

So far, about 25,000 people have been evacuated from Aleppo, according

to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is helping with the process. A UN official said 750 people had so far been evacuated from Foua and Kefraya.

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

Rebel-held parts of the once-flourishing economic centre with its renowned ancient sites has been pulverised during the war which has killed more than 300,000 people, created the world's worst ref-

ugee crisis and allowed for the rise of Islamic State. But in the much larger western part of the city, held throughout the war by the government, there were big street parties on Tuesday night, along with the lighting of a Christmas tree, as residents celebrated the end of fighting.

The Syrian army has used loudspeakers to broadcast warnings to rebels that it was about to enter their rapidly diminishing area and told them to speed up their evacuation.

Control of Aleppo would be a major victory for Assad, and his main allies Iran and Russia, against rebels who have defied him in Syria's most populous city for four years.—Reuters

Experts scour site of deadly blast at Mexico fireworks market

TULTEPEC, (Mexico) — Teams of forensic investigators pored over the charred remains of fireworks market outside Mexico City on Wednesday after a series of blasts a day earlier killed at least 31 people and injured dozens more in a disaster marked by disbelief and tears.

Videos of the blasts at the San Pablito market showed a spectacular flurry of pyrotechnics exploding high into the sky, like rockets in a war zone, as a massive plume of charcoal-gray smoke billowed out from the site.

It was the third time in just over a decade that explosions struck the popular marketplace in Tultepec, home to the country's best-known fireworks shopping and located about 20 miles (32 km) north of Mexico City in the adjacent State of Mexico.

Eruviel Avila, the state's governor, said the explosions injured at least 72 people while another 53 remained missing.

"Everything was destroyed, it was very ugly and many bodies were thrown all over the place, including a lot of children. It's the worst thing I've ever seen in my life," said 24-year-old housewife An-



Photo taken by a mobile device on 20 December, 2016 shows the site of a blast at the San Pablito fireworks market in Tultepec, Mexico. PHOTO: XINHUA

gelica Avila as tears ran down her face.

Avila spoke outside a nearby hospital as she waited for an update on the health of her brother, a fireworks salesman, who she said was burned and also suffered a heart attack.

The federal attorney general's office opened an

investigation, saying in a statement late on Tuesday that six separate blasts kicked off the destruction.

Director of Tultepec emergency services Isidro Sanchez told local television earlier on Tuesday that a lack of adequate safety measures was the likely cause of the blasts.

The vast majority of

the market's 300 stalls were completely destroyed by the explosions, said state official Jose Manzur, adding that the site was inspected by safety officials just last month and no irregularities were found.

In late 2005, explosions struck the same Tultepec fireworks market just days before independ-

ence day celebrations, injuring scores of people.

Another explosion gutted the area again almost a year later.

The market was particularly busy on Tuesday as many Mexicans buy fireworks to celebrate the upcoming Christmas and New Year's holidays.—
Reuters

Hong Kong bans import of German, Dutch poultry products

HONG KONG — The Hong Kong food safety authority said on Wednesday that it has banned the import of poultry meat and products from areas of Germany and the Netherlands.

In view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany and the Province of Overijssel in the Netherlands, it has banned the import of poultry meat and products, including poultry eggs, from the two areas, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of Hong Kong's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said.

The ban, with immediate effect, aims to protect public health in Hong Kong, the CFS said.

According to a CFS spokesman, in the first 10 months of this year, Hong Kong imported about 8,400 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 2 million poultry eggs from Germany, and about 7,800 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 7.3 million poultry eggs from the Netherlands.—*Xinhua*

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (16 / 2016)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-069(16-17)	OTECO Gate Valves and Spares for Rig Pumps (16) Items	US\$
(2)	IFB-070(16-17)	Assorted Sizes of Steel Casing & Accessories (8) Items	US\$
(3)	IFB-071(16-17)	Assorted Sizes of PDC and Tri-Cone Bits (13) Items	US\$
(4)	IFB-072(16-17)	Spares for BOP Ex ZJ-70L Drilling Rigs (6) Items	US\$
(5)	IFB-073(16-17)	Spares for FA-1600 Triplex Pump Ex Ex EMSCO Rig (9) Items	US\$
(6)	IFB-074(16-17)	Spares for NAT-55 and EMSCO Drilling Rigs (40) Items	US\$
(7)	DMP/L-016(16-17)	Spares for Allision Transmission Ex KB-150 Well Servicing Truck (32) Items	Ks
(8)	DMP/L-017(16-17)	Spares for MWM D 226-4 1/Set Engine Ex MTBN-3 River Craft (30) Items	Ks
(9)	DMP/L-018(16-17)	Steel Wire Rope (2) Items	Ks
(10)	DMP/L-019(16-17)	Mud Testing Equipments (6) Items	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time - 16-1-2017, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 19TH December, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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Obama bans new oil, gas drilling off Alaska, part of Atlantic coast

WASHINGTON — US President Barack Obama on Tuesday banned new oil and gas drilling in federal waters in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, in a push to leave his stamp on the environment before Republican Donald Trump takes office next month.

Obama used a 1950s-era law called the Outer Continental Shelf Act that allows presidents to limit areas from mineral leasing and drilling. Environmental groups said that meant Trump's incoming administration would have to go court if it sought to reverse the move.

The ban affects 115 million acres (46.5 million hectares) of federal waters off Alaska in the Chukchi Sea and most of the Beau-

fort Sea and 3.8 million acres (1.5 million hectares) in the Atlantic from New England to Chesapeake Bay.

Trump, who succeeds Obama on 20 January, has said he would expand offshore oil and gas drilling. A recent memo from his energy transition team said his policy could increase production in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, as well as the mid- and south Atlantic.

A Trump representative did not immediately comment on the announcement.

Even if Trump tries to fight the move, few energy companies have expressed a desire to drill anytime soon off the coasts thanks to abundant cheap shale oil in North Dakota and

Texas.

Exploratory drilling in the Arctic is expensive and risky. Shell Oil ended its quest to explore in harsh Arctic waters in 2015, after a vessel it was using suffered a gash and environmentalists uncovered a law that limited its drilling.

The American Petroleum Institute oil industry group disagreed about the permanence of the ban and said Trump could likely use a presidential memorandum to lift it.

"We are hopeful the incoming administration will reverse this decision as the nation continues to need a robust strategy for developing offshore and onshore energy," said Erik Milito, API's upstream director.—*Reuters*



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အစားအာဟာရကို ရွေးချယ်စားသုံးပါ။



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(ဥပမာ-ဆောက်လုပ်ရေးနှင့် ကစားကစားသည့် လုပ်ငန်းများ)



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မျက်စိရောဂါရှိမရှိ စစ်ဆေးပါ။



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သိရှိထားရန် လိုအပ်ပါသည်။

သင့်မျက်စိပါဝါ
တိကျမှန်ကန်မှုရှိပါစေ



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နေပူထဲထွက်လျှင်
နေကာမျက်မှန်တပ်ပါ



မျက်စိစောင့်ရှောက်မှုဆိုင်ရာ သတိပညာအဖြစ် မိမိကိုယ်ကိုယ်မျှပြီး
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၂၀၁၅ နှင့် ၂၀၁၆ တွင် "ကြည်လင်သော အမြင်အာရုံကို မျှဝေခြင်း"
အစီအစဉ်မှ မွန်ပြည်နယ်ရှိ မျက်စိအတွင်းတိုင်းရောဂါ အသိပညာ ၄၀၀ ကို ခွဲစိတ်ကုသပေးနိုင်ခဲ့ပါသည်။
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America mourns heroes, rock icons and sporting legends in 2016

NEW YORK — The United States lost some literal and figurative pioneers in 2016 with the deaths of famed sons and daughters from John Glenn, the first American to orbit Earth, to Gwen Ifill, the first black woman to co-anchor a major US television newscast.

The year also saw the deaths of stars of sports, the arts and politics, including former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali and golfing great Arnold Palmer, rock star Prince and US Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia.

Glenn, a Democrat who served four terms as one of Ohio's US Senators after his astronaut career, died at the age of 95 earlier this month.

Like former first lady Nancy Reagan and the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "To Kill a Mockingbird," Harper Lee, who also died this year, Glenn was part of the generation that lived through the deprivations of the Great Depression and the hardships of World War II.

"We will remember them for a long time," said writer Nick Taylor, who collaborated with Glenn on his memoir.

"That generation was tested in a way that subsequent generations have not



Musician Prince gestures on stage during the Apollo Theatre's 75th anniversary gala in New York, US on 8 June 2009. Prince has died at the age of 57, according to news reports. PHOTO: REUTERS

(been)," Taylor said in an interview. "They had this attitude to put one foot in front of the other to make things better."

British rock star David Bowie died of liver cancer in his adoptive New York City home in January just days after releasing his final album. He was one of the first in a long list of musical greats to play their last in 2016. Tearful fans gathered in suburban Minneapolis after the April death of Prince at the age of 57 of an accidental, self-administered overdose of the painkiller fentanyl.

The music world also bid farewell to rock and roll Hall of Famer Glenn

Frey, of the 1970s group the Eagles, guitarist Paul Kantner, co-founder of the psychedelic rock band Jefferson Airplane, and singer, songwriter and poet Leonard Cohen.

Country music fans were saddened by the death of Merle Haggard, the voice of the American working man whose songs included "Hungry Eyes" and "Okie from Muskogee."

"It is a heavy loss," said Daniel Levitin, a professor at Canada's McGill University and an expert in music history. "These were real icons and giants and they became that way because they didn't sound

like anyone else."

The film and theater worlds also lost some stars this year. Comedians Gene Wilder and Garry Shandling took their final bows, as did Academy Award winning-actress Patty Duke, Florence Henderson, America's favorite TV mom from "The Brady Bunch," and Zsa Zsa Gabor, who paved the way for future celebrities like Kim Kardashian.

American theater lost one of its greatest dramatists with the death of Edward Albee, the triple Pulitzer Prize winning playwright.

"He redefined what our theater could talk about and how," actor Harvey Fierstein tweeted about the man who penned "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "A Delicate Balance."

The year also saw the passing of many activists, politicians and journalists.

Among them were veteran CBS broadcast journalist Morley Safer, a long-time correspondent of the "60 Minutes" news show, and Ifill, a co-host of PBS "NewsHour."

Anti-war activist and former California state legislator Tom Hayden, died in October, and Janet Reno, the first woman to serve as US attorney general, died in November.—Reuters

Budapest museum lifts lid on Houdini's magic, Hungarian roots

BUDAPEST — Even almost 100 years after his death, the name Harry Houdini is synonymous with escapology, but less is known about his first great escape — how he left his Hungarian home as a child for a new life in the United States.

The House of Houdini, a museum in Budapest's historic Castle district, seeks to shed light on the illusionist's roots with a display of memorabilia and a research team tracking down documents about his life.

"He was of course the greatest escape artist history ever had ... but I believe his secret lies from deep inside from his Hungarian roots, when as a poor Jewish family they escaped Hungary,"

museum founder David Merlini said.

"That was maybe his first escape: to America, in the hope of a better life."

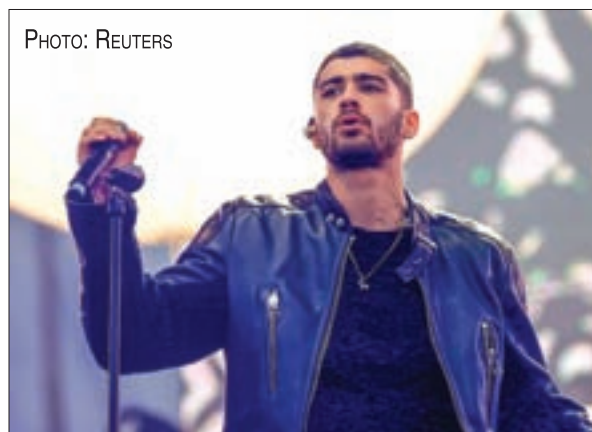
For Merlini, 38, himself a Hungarian escape artist who advised actor Adrien Brody about Houdini for a mini-series in 2014, Houdini has been a major inspiration.

Merlini opened the museum this year as a tribute to the artist who was born in Budapest as Erik Weisz into a Jewish family in 1874.

He left with his family for the United States in 1878 and became an American citizen. When he became a magician, Houdini started to call himself Harry Houdini after the French magician Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin.—Reuters



Posters are seen in the 'House of Houdini' museum in Budapest, Hungary, on 19 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



Zayn Malik postpones Japan's concert until 2017

LONDON — Singer Zayn Malik has postponed his Japan's concert until 2017 due to the "change in the recording schedule" for his new album.

Malik, who was earlier scheduled to perform at Saitama Super Arena on 14 January, will now perform at Yokohama Arena on June 18 as well as Osaka-jo Hall in the Kyobashi area of Osaka, Japan on 19 June, reported Femalefirst. "Due to a change

in the recording schedule of the new album, Zayn's show at Saitama Super Arena on 14 January has been rescheduled to new dates and venues. And we have added a new show in Osaka... We sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused," the concert's promoters said.

It is not the first live show Zayn has had to miss after he pulled out of a gig in October due to "extreme anxiety".—PTI

Jennifer Lopez cancels New Year's Eve appearance

LOS ANGELES — Singer Jennifer Lopez has canceled her plans to ring in the New Year with a club appearance in Miami in order to spend some time with family.

Citing personal and family time, Lopez's manager Benny Medina has announced that the 47-year-old star won't be able to appear on the New Year's Eve, reported People Magazine.

"Having attended the event last year, artiste and management look forward to rescheduling the appearance at E11even in the future," Lopez's spokesperson said. The "On the Floor" hitmaker

had a busy year as she just wrapped filming the second season of "Shades of Blue" in New York and completed her first year of her Las Vegas residency show, 'All I Have', on 17 December. "It was just a crazy year, and she is finally home in her new house. The last six months have been shooting Shades in New York and then doing the Vegas shows. She is just happy to be home to have personal and family time," her representative said.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Diesel hopes Paul Walker would be proud of 'Fast & Furious 8'

LOS ANGELES — "The Fate of the Furious" will mark the first film in the 'Fast & Furious' series since 2006's "Tokyo Drift", not to feature actor Paul Walker, who died in a car accident in 2013 and his co-star Vin Diesel hopes that he would be proud of the upcoming movie.

Diesel, 49, paid tribute to Walker in an Instagram post, sharing a photo of the pair at an Award ceremony, where they won the prize for best on-screen team for their work in the original 'Fast and the Furious' movie.

"You Pablo have given me strength, purpose and resolve. I promised you we would make something you would be proud of and I pray that we have... Miss you," he captioned the picture.—PTI

Asleep in Jesus**Pee Pee Vera (a) Naw Khin Htway****Age 90 years**

Residing at No. 951, Saya San Ba Road, Yodayahkone, Pathein; daughter of (U Ba Thaing+Daw Martha); daughter-in-law of (U Shwe Ba+Daw Martha); sister of (Saw Patrick)+ Naw Grita and Naw Sara; beloved wife of (U Saw Bruce Ba Thar); beloved mother of Naw Martha Shwe Ba+Saw Aung Ko, Naw Katharina Shwe Ba, (Naw Jan Shwe Ba), Saw James Shwe Ba+Naw Astric Elenor, Saw Luke Shwe Ba+Naw Khu Wah, Naw Dorcas Shwe Ba, Saw John Shwe Ba+Naw Junie Khine, Naw Elly Shwe Ba+Manh Manate Tun, Saw Silas Shwe Ba+Naw Eh Hse Wah; beloved grandma of (15) fell asleep in Jesus peacefully at 2 pm on 21-12-2016. Funeral service will be announced later.

Bereaved family

Tropical Thailand expects up to 6 per cent rise in tourists in 2017

BANGKOK — Thailand's tourist arrivals are forecast to rise between 3.75 per cent to 5.8 per cent next year, the Tourism Council said on Wednesday, driven largely by Chinese visitors.

Thailand's tourism industry, which accounts for about 10 per cent of gross domestic product, has remained strong despite more than a decade of political turbulence including military coups in 2006 and 2014.

A wave of deadly bombings in August in key resort towns that killed four Thai tourists and injured dozens, including foreigners, has had a negligible impact on tourist arrivals.

Budget-friendly Thailand expects up to 34.4 million tourists in 2017, council president Ittirit Kinglek told Reuters.

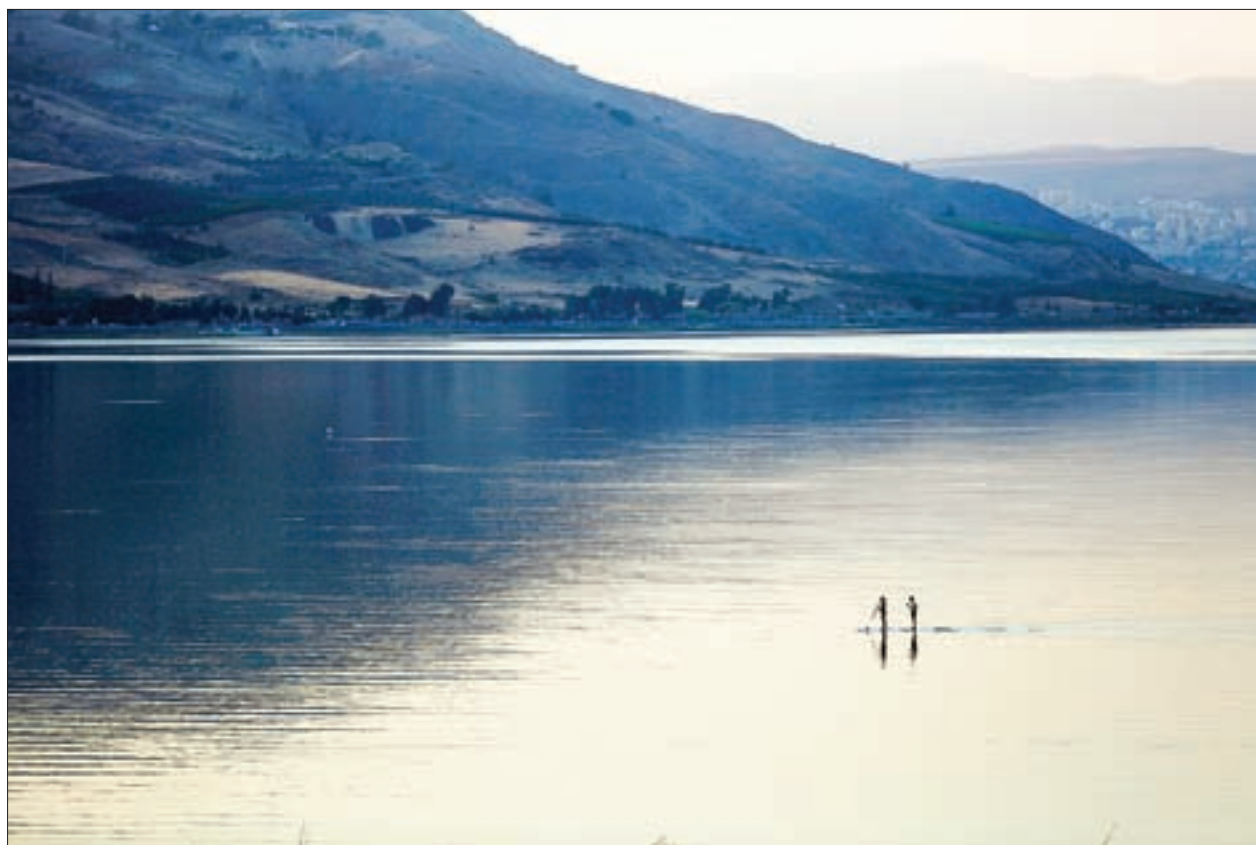
A crackdown earlier this year on cheap tour packages for Chinese tourists — known as “zero dollar tours” — has also failed to dent tourist arrivals, he said.

“Chartered flights from various Chinese cities declined afterwards for a short period but they are now back again. It's an encouraging sign. We may see a decline in tourist arrivals in the first quarter but by the second quarter things will improve,” Ittirit said.

The tourism ministry has said it expects a record 32.4 million visitors this year. The council forecasts about 9.17 million Chinese arrivals next year, up from 8.9 million in 2016.

Tourism has been a rare bright spot for Southeast Asia's second-largest economy, which has been dragged by sluggish exports and domestic demand since the military took power in a May 2014 coup.

Thailand's centuries old exotic allure, its array of beaches and gilded Buddhist temples have ensured that the country remains one of the world's top travel destinations. —Reuters



People paddle on a stand-up paddle board in the Sea of Galilee, northern Israel, on 8 November 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sea of Galilee draws faithful despite receding waters

SEA OF GALILEE (Israel) — On the shimmering Sea of Galilee, where the Christian gospels say Jesus walked on water, 150 Nigerian pilgrims aboard a river boat sing and dance to an African beat.

Their pastor, Reverend Samuel Tunde Ogunmodede, said he and his congregation had come to the biblical lake to see what they had, until now, only read about in the scriptures.

“We came here to seek the face of God, pray to God as he did in the time of the disciples. We will pray here so that he will do the same in our lives,” he said on board the boat.

About 1 million tourists from abroad visit the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Tiberias or Kinner-

et, each year, according to the Israeli Tourism Ministry.

Stretching about 65 sq miles (170 square km) from the foot of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, the Sea of Galilee, at its southern tip, spills into the Jordan River, where Jesus is believed to have been baptised.

On a crisp winter day, worshippers from Singapore, Nigeria and Germany performed their own baptism ceremonies in the waters.

The gospels tell of Jesus walking on the lake to comfort and save disciples as their ship was foundering in a storm and miraculously producing huge catches of fish for their nets.

But the Sea of Galilee may need a few more miracles these days.

A sharp drop in annual rainfall in the northern Galilee region over the past three years has caused the lake's waters to recede, according to Israel's Water Authority. It is now at its lowest in five years.

This has created problems for the largest freshwater lake in Israel, which is a water resource for the country's north and neighbouring Jordan, a tourist hot-spot and a main fishing zone.

Receding water levels means higher salt levels, which harm the eco-balance and could render the water unusable.

In an effort to control the damage, only a

10th of the annual average quantity of water supply has been drawn from the lake this year, Water Authority spokesman Uri Schor said.

And in a complex operation, salt water springs are found and their flow is diverted out of the lake.

To better keep the eco-balance and maintain water quality, the lake is stocked with millions of fish every year, Schor said.

The Sea of Galilee has in the past provided up to a third of Israel's water. Because of its grave situation it now supplies a fraction of the country's water.

Israel relies now on the more expensive methods of desalination and recycling for more than half its water supply. —Reuters

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(22-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 23-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:25	Am	Gold: King of All Metals
07:56	Am	Will you feed the pigeons?
08:03	Am	News
08:25	Am	Myanmar Masterclass: Performance Art
08:39	Am	Myanmar Betels
08:54	Am	Cosplayer
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar Handicrafts
09:57	Am	Moe La Win's Piano Melody 3 (Jingle-Bell Rock by Joe Beal & Jim Boothes)
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Aesthetic Chinlone

10:53 Am TECH School

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	To The Land of Countless Temples - Bagan Trip (Ep-2)
07:47	Pm	A Tourist Destination of Shan State
08:03	Pm	News
08:25	Pm	Pride of Myanmar — Bagan arts and handicrafts
08:40	Pm	Thin Byu Mat
08:47	Pm	PET FISH BIZ

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

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

Viet Nam to welcome 10m foreign visitors in 2016

HANOI — Viet Nam is expected to welcome over 10 million international arrivals in 2016, according to the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) on Wednesday.

The 10 millionth foreign visitor to Viet Nam is forecast to be welcomed at Phu Quoc international airport in the southern coastal Kien Giang province on Sunday.

On the same day, a ceremony will take place to round off the 2016 Na-

tional Tourism Year, which was designated to draw visitors to Viet Nam's tourist attraction of Phu Quoc Island and southern Mekong Delta region.

In 2016, more than 5.4 million tourists are likely to visit Kien Giang, increasing 24 per cent year-on-year and exceeding the yearly quota by 9.5 per cent. Of the figure, international arrivals will grow 31.4 per cent annually, 14 per cent higher than initial plan. —Xinhua



Eintracht Frankfurt's Ayman Barkok scores a goal against FSV Mainz 05 goal keeper Jonas during German Bundesliga at Commerzbank Arena, Frankfurt, Germany, on 20 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Dortmund stumble against Augsburg, Eintracht win again

BERLIN — Borussia Dortmund missed a bagful of chances to draw 1-1 at home with Augsburg on Tuesday, as they squandered the opportunity to make up ground in the Bundesliga title race heading into the winter break.

South Korean Ji Dong-won beat keeper Roman Weidenfeller at the second attempt in the 33rd minute to put the visitors ahead.

Dortmund, who had hit the post through Mario Goetze

in the ninth minute, dominated late in the first half but could not make their pressure count until Ousmane Dembele levelled two minutes after the restart.

The hosts had numerous chances in a one-sided second half with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, the Bundesliga's top scorer, going close half a dozen times. Dortmund are fourth on 27 points, nine points adrift of leaders Bayern Munich and RB Leipzig, who face each other on Wednesday.

"I think the game tonight reflects our first half of the season," said Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel after Dortmund's third consecutive league draw. "We are being punished too often. We should be able at some point to keep a clean sheet and win 1-0," Tuchel said. "We will obviously not stop working at it. We need to be consistent in our competitions."

Eintracht Frankfurt moved up to third on 29 after beating 10-man Mainz 05 3-0 with

Branimir Hrgota scoring twice as they secured a fourth victory in their last seven league games.

Mario Gomez's winner gave VfL Wolfsburg a 2-1 victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach that left both teams on 16 points and heaped further pressure on Gladbach coach Andre Schubert following their fifth loss in the last seven games.

Hamburg SV climbed into the relegation playoff spot after edging past Schalke 04 2-1.—*Reuters*

Toure keen to help Man City become 'bigger' than United

LONDON — Midfielder Yaya Toure is determined to realise his dream of helping Manchester City eclipse arch rivals Manchester United.

The side have a long way to go to overhaul England's most successful club but backed by the wealthy City Football Group, Toure felt huge strides had been made since he joined from Barcelona in 2010. "I have already won two Premier League titles and I want more than that, another new story," Toure told British media.

"What we are seeing is the Premier League is so tough, this year it's going to be tougher than any other years. When I signed for City, I came to this club to make history. "I want this club to change, I want this club to be bigger than United. I know it's going to be a lot of work, but that's my dream." City made a flying start under manager Pep Guardiola, winning their first 10 games, but have won just six of 17 matches since, a run which has left them third in the Premier League, seven points behind leaders Chelsea after 17 games. Toure, however, is certain Guardiola will not buckle under pressure to tweak the tactics that have served the manager well during trophy-laden spells at Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

"You always have to do what you know. I don't think he's (Guardiola) going to change many things," Toure said.

"I think he's seen how difficult this league is physically, but he's a very intelligent guy, he understands football very well. He always has to win, to conquer a league, but he's seen that in England it's complicated."—*Reuters*

Kvitova undergoes hand surgery following knife attack, full recovery expected

PRAGUE — Two-time Wimbledon tennis champion Petra Kvitova underwent nearly four hours of surgery on her playing hand on Tuesday after she was stabbed by a knife-wielding intruder in her home in the Czech Republic.

Early indications showed the Czech world number 11 could well make a recovery and return to tennis, where she has been a mainstay in the top rankings for the past five years.

"The scale of the injury is serious, but Petra is young and strong, according to the surgeon, who sees no reason why she could not return to playing tennis," Karel Tejkal,

spokesman for the Czech Fed Cup team, said.

Doctors operated on all five fingers of her left hand and she will not be able to exert pressure on the injured hand for three months to let repairs to tendons heal, he said.

Kvitova had said on social media before undergoing surgery that the attack by an individual with a knife on Tuesday had left her "shaken, but fortunate to be alive".

The assault took place in her flat in the city of Prostějov, about 260 km (160 miles) southeast of Prague, the location of a tennis club where she, men's world number 10 Tomas Berdych and other top-

ranked Czech players often train.

Czech media reported the intruder presented himself to Kvitova as a boiler inspector.

"In my attempt to defend myself, I was badly injured on my left hand," Kvitova said on Twitter. "The injury is severe and I will need to see specialists, but if you know anything about me I am strong and I will fight this."—*Reuters*



PHOTO: REUTERS

Leicester's Vardy to serve three-game ban after appeal rejected

LONDON — Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy will serve a three-match suspension after the club's appeal against his dismissal during Saturday's 2-2 Premier League draw with Stoke City was rejected, the Football Association (FA) said on Tuesday.

The 29-year-old, Leicester's top-scorer last season, was shown a straight red card in the 28th minute by referee Craig Pawson for a two-footed tackle on Mame Diouf. "Jamie Vardy will

serve a three-match suspension with immediate effect after his wrongful dismissal claim was rejected, following an Independent Regulatory Commission hearing," the FA said.

The Premier League champions had earlier on Tuesday said they were appealing for wrongful dismissal.

"He wants to challenge and get the ball, not make a foul. He touched the ball. Maybe it was yellow," Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri was quoted as saying by the BBC.

Leicester, 15th in the table, host Everton on 26 December and West Ham United on 31 December, before visiting Middlesbrough on 2 January, with Vardy missing all three matches.—*Reuters*