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Yangon authorities warn bus operators of new bus system against breaking rules

TWO days ahead of launching a new bus system, the Yangon Region Government promised swift action against those who violate the rules of the system, including overcharging.

At a press conference in Yangon yesterday, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein warned against breaking the rules, including taking bus fares higher than permitted.

“We will revoke the permission to operate in the system if drivers and conductors break the rules, including getting bus fares higher than the set rate, and those buses would be probably confiscated,” said the Chief Minister.

The new system, called the Yangon Bus Service (YBS), was formed to help reduce traffic jams that currently plague Yangon and to streamline the bus system, according to the Yangon Region Government.

The new system will launch Monday with 61 bus lines serving the city’s 5.2 million residents. New vehicles and a digital payment system will follow.

Bus lines currently plying routes will be abolished and replaced by new bus lines which are part of the system of public-owned bus lines in which the government will be partial stakeholders.



SEE PAGE 3 >> Yangon has suffered the traffic congestion. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Vacant female teacher positions in Maungtaw filled with more than 500 male teachers

MORE than 500 male teachers have been posted to Maungtaw District, filling positions formerly held by female teachers, according to the Rakhine State Education Department yesterday.

The vacancies occurred after the

department allowed female teachers to transfer to their hometowns as the townships in Maungtaw were not easily accessible.

Since then more than 280 male teachers have been posted to schools in Maungtaw Township

and 253 to Buthidaung Township.

All the teachers who were appointed are initially daily-waged. They will be appointed as permanent teachers after receiving teachership training and after a one-year probationary period, said U Aung

Kyaw Tun, Rakhine State Education Department.

The education officer met with the newly-appointed teachers recently at Basic Education High School-1 in Maungtaw.

“I am delighted to teach chil-

dren and to undertake the duty of a teacher who plays a role in shaping their future,” said U Aye Tun, who was recently appointed at the Basic Education Primary School in Tay-in Village in Maungtaw Township.

—Zin Oo

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Message of Greetings sent by President U Htin Kyaw on the 65th Kayah State Day celebration ceremony (15th January 2017)

Dear esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters residing in the Kayah State, greetings,

I feel very honoured and happy to have this opportunity to send this message of greetings to the 65th Anniversary celebration ceremony of the Kayah State Day which falls on 15th January 2017.

Today marks the Kayah State Day, a truly significant and auspicious day for all ethnic national brothers and sisters residing in the Kayah State,

I send my felicitations and good wishes for the well-being and auspiciousness of all Kayah nationals residing in the Kayah State, all Kayah nationals living all over the country and all Union ethnic nationals on this truly significant and auspicious Kayah State Day.

During the time when we established the States and Divisions after gaining our Independence, according to sub-section (1) of Section 180 of the 1947 Constitution, the Karenni State was amalgamated into the Karen State and according to the

Amendment Act, Section 8 of the 1951 Constitution (1951 Act Number 62), it was enacted that the word “Karenni State” should be substituted with “Kayah State” in all places where it occurs in the Union Constitution. This day when the name of Karenni State was changed to Kayah State, the 15th of January 1952 was first year that the Kayah State Day was celebrated and this year we are already in the 65th year.

My dear esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters residing in the Kayah State,

If we look back into history, we may see that Kayah ethnic nationals comprise (9) groups while other ethnic nationals also reside in the Kayah State from time immemorial in friendship and cordiality. After gaining Independence, because of mistrust and conflicts which lasted for many decades among the different ethnic brothers and sisters, Myanmar lagged behind in politics, economic affairs and social affairs compared to other neighbouring countries.

It is for this reason that our new government is working hard to achieve national reconciliation and peace in the whole Union by convening the Union Peace Conference — 21st Century Panglong.

The Lawpita Hydroelectric Power stations in Kayah State have existed for many years as very important electric power

“In order to build a peaceful and prosperous modern democratic federal Union, it is very important for ethnic nationals to participate in the process on a basis of equality”.

stations for the distribution of electricity for Myanmar. Also because Kayah State is a state which has many natural sceneries such as deep ravines, mountains and waterfalls, it has the potential to be developed for eco-tourism.

Dear esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters residing in Kayah State,

The ethnic national brothers and sisters residing in Kayah State have traveled together on a

long, difficult and arduous journey. Due to the fact that there was very little trust among the ethnic national brothers and sisters, the areas which had experienced the most armed conflicts had suffered the most. Many generations of youths lost their futures. However, today at this time the sound of guns and bombs are almost gone.

Because the ethnic armed groups in Kayah State have cooperated and joined the peace process, the ethnic nationals of Kayah State have begun to enjoy the fruits of peace and also new opportunities for development. It is therefore very important for ethnic national brothers and sisters to join hands and participate for achieving durable peace taking advantage of the ceasefire.

In order to build a peaceful

and prosperous modern democratic federal Union, it is very important for ethnic nationals to participate in the process on a basis of equality.

We firmly believe that we should seek for answers to the political problems of the Union through peaceful negotiations, and that the basic principles for building a democratic federal union will emerge from these negotiations.

I wish to urge our ethnic national brothers and sisters who have participated wholeheartedly in the struggle for Independence and also walked on the path to peace with bravery and foresight to join in with unity and strength for national reconciliation, internal peace and development and modernization.

I send this message of greetings as I urge you to work for the modernization, peace and beauty of the state, not only for the present generation but also for the future.

(Signed)

Htin Kyaw
President

“Where the Water and the Land End” exhibition opened



Oeuvre of Wolfgang Laib is shown to public at “Where the Water and the Land End” exhibition.

PHOTO :MIN THIT

GERMAN conceptual artist Wolfgang Laib’s exhibition “Where the Water and the Land End” was opened yesterday at the Yangon Secretariat.

The exhibition at the old heritage building highlights the intention of the city of Yangon to dedicate the unique piece of architecture in the near future predominantly to arts and cul-

ture.

The Goethe-Institut Myanmar together with the Institute for Foreign Relations (IFA) in Stuttgart/Germany will bring some prominent works by Laib to Myanmar.

The opening day has also attracted students and lecturers from the National University of Arts and Culture.

The exhibition is opened every day from 10 am to 5 pm till 4th February.

The Goethe-Institut together with the Government of the Yangon Region and the investor, the joint venture between Anawmar Art Group and Myanmar Heritage Preservation Limited would like to invite you for this outstanding event.— *Min Thit*

Technological Science Research building to be constructed with German technology

MYANMAR’S Technological Science Research building will be constructed with German technology.

The building will be constructed in the compound of the Department of Research and Innovation Support under the Ministry of Education on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road in Yangon. An advanced laboratory will also be included.

German professionals will give training to the members of staff who will work at Technological Science Research Unit.

Myanmar’s national-level measurement standards will be kept in the building. Later

on, artificial weather conditioning will be tested in the building. The Technological Science Research building will provide measurement and testing for government departments, non-governmental organisations and private organisations.

The Technological Science Research building was aimed at measuring and developing living standards, health care, weather conditions and environmental conservation for the citizens. Upon completion, the building can be used to conduct international-level technological research.—200

Upgrade of Pyay Road railway station complete

UPGRADING of the Pyay Road railway station has been completed, it is learnt from the railway station construction area.

The upgrading of railway station platforms and the building of a two-storey railway station were started in October, 2016.

“The platform construction is almost completed. Only the upper story needs to be finished. We will hand over the building at the end of March,” said sub-assistant engineer U Nay

Win, in charge of the Pyay Road railway station construction site.

The Pyay Road railway station was upgraded to enable passengers to travel more conveniently and to match RBE coaches from Japan. Also, roofs were built on both sides to protect the passengers against wind and rain.

Moreover, a coffee shop and the ticket station will be upstairs while a Station Master’s office will be opened downstairs.—200

President inspects projects in Naga Self-Administered Zone

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin inspected regional development projects in Hkamti and Lahe in Sagaing region yesterday.

The President and wife were accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Dr Myint Htway, U Win Khaing and Dr Win Myat Aye and Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief Army and were welcomed at Hkamti Airport by Chief Minister of Sagaing Region Dr Myint Naing, Commander of Northwest Command Brig-Gen Thet Pon, regional ministers and members of Naga Traditional Culture Committee.

The President and party visited Hkamti People's Hospital and provided cash assistance to patients before inspecting Chindwin Bridge (Hkamti) Construction Project.

The bridge will link Hkamti District and Naga Self-Administered Zone at the project site. Union Minister for Construction U Win Khaing reported to the president on the conditions of road networks along the Chindwin River and in the self-administered zone and on the construction of the Chindwin Bridge in Hkamti, Homalin and Kalewa.

Then, the chief minister reported to the President on requirements for roads and bridges in the region.

Later, the President and party proceeded to Lahe in the self-administered zone by helicopter.

The President and party were welcomed in Lahe by Chairman U Kay Sai of Naga Self-Administered Zone Leading Body, members of Naga Traditional Culture Association, town elders and residents.

The chairman of the leading body, Lahe Township Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Thet Naung and Patron U Yar Paw, reported to the President on the administrative, economic, social, and health affairs of the self-administered zone and the needs of the zone.

The chief minister reported to the President on measures taken for smooth transportation, electricity supply, educational development, health conditions, agricultural growth and conservation of Naga traditional culture.

After hearing the reports, the President said that the union government is exerting efforts for equitable development of regions and states and promised to fulfil the needs of the self-administered zone, before saying that government ministries concerned will also fulfil its needs by implementing short-term and long-term plans.

Then, Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi explained plans to upgrade schools in the zone, including the hiring



President U Htin Kyaw wears Naga traditional dress in Lahe. PHOTO: MNA

of teachers and the construction of staff quarters.

Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung revealed a plan to provide 6,000 bags of rice, 8,000 sheets of corrugated iron, 1,200 blankets, and solar lamps for 150 households in the zone.

Union Minister for Construction U Win Khaing explained the construction of Chindwin Bridge

(Hkamti), upgrading Hsinthe-Lahe Road into a concrete thoroughfare and plans to build Lahe-Nanyun Road and Lashe-Lahe Road.

Union Minister for Health Dr Myint Htway explained plans to appoint doctors, health assistants and midwives and to upgrade the supply of medicine and medical equipment, including vaccines.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Dr Win Myat Aye explained social protection measures for the zone.

Afterwards, the President and party toured the ethnic nationalities development training school and the vocational training school for women before visiting patients at Lahe People's Hospital and providing food and cash assistance. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Special Rapporteur visits Rakhine State



Ms Yanghee Lee holds talks with officials in Buthidaung. PHOTO: MNA

MS YANGHEE LEE, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, and her team left Sittway for Rathedaung to visit the Koetankauk Police outpost and to meet with members of the police department there yesterday.

Ms. Lee then visited the office of the UNHCR in Maung-taw.

In the afternoon, she visited Buthidaung Prison. — *IPRD (Maungtaw)*

University of Dental Medicine holds graduation ceremony

THE 39th Convocation of the University of Dental Medicine was held in the Convocation Hall of Yangon University yesterday

morning.

Dr Shwe Toe, rector of the university, conferred nine doctorates, eight master's degrees,

12 diplomas and 136 bachelor degrees to students at the graduation ceremony.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Yangon authorities warn bus ...

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The bus system is comprised of 20 companies, all of which applied to the Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board to take part in the new system which will serve the city with more than 3,700 buses charging a fare of between 100-300 kyats, depending on

distance.

Volunteers will help advise the public on the new bus lines, while Yangon based companies will also contribute to the launching of the new bus system by changing office hours.

Some companies offered have to transport to travelers

who find themselves in difficulty during the transition period.

More than 200,000 people are currently relying on bus lines in Yangon, which has a population of six million.

On 7 February last year, the first ever BRT buses were unveiled in Yangon as a privately owned company.—*Ko Moe*

Union minister inspects IPRD libraries

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr Pe Myint inspected libraries of Kyaukpadaung Township and Nyaung-U District of the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) yesterday, before discussing library development and promotion of knowledge with staff and local writers.

During the discussions, the union minister urged them to make libraries of the IPRD public-friendly places that promote the public interest and instill knowledge to the public.

He also pointed out the need for delivery services for people who cannot come to libraries and to provide books as well as offer chances for active games for children so that they will want to visit the libraries.

Then, the union minister requested staff to make efforts to display local products and cultural heritages at libraries as if they were small museums and to set up community centres at libraries in cooperation with civil society organisations.—*District IPRD (Nyaung-U)*



Union minister Dr Pe Myint talks to children at a library of the Information and Public Relations Department in Bagan Nyaung-U. PHOTO: MNA

Over Ks700 million earned from Myawady Friendship Bridge in 2016

AUTHORITIES earned over Ks700 million from the Myawady Friendship Bridge in 2016. There are about 6,000 Myanmar citizens who visit Mae Sot, Thailand from Myawaddy township each month, according to an official from Myawady Friendship Bridge.

Annually, there are over 700,000 Myanmar citizens who visit Mae Sot with a Temporary Border Pass (TBP), from which

the government earned over Ks300 million last year.

Additionally, the government earned over Ks20 million from the over 70,000 Myanmar citizens who hold a border passport (BP).

Some of the migrant people from Myanmar hold a Temporary Passport. From this, the government earned over Ks10 million from the 30,000 migrants per year.

Foreigners who want to visit Myanmar with an employment visa have to pay US\$10. There are about 1,300 foreigners who visited Myawady last year.

The Myanmar government collects only 10 baht per person for Thai citizens, but Myanmar citizens have to pay 20 baht when they visited Thailand from the Myawady Friendship Bridge.—*Min Min*

ITA offered UMFCCI to cooperate

THE Italian Trade Agency (ITA) has expressed willingness to see further cooperation between Italian companies and Myanmar counterparts in the Myanmar economy sector, according to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

UMFCCI has urged its member associations which are interested in the offer of the ITA

to contact ITA's commercial section at the Italian Embassy in Yangon tel: 01527100 (Ext: 112) or email yangon.segcomm@esteri.it.

The associations under the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, small and medium economic enterprises who want to work in a joint venture with a foreign company can contact the Federation.—200

Animal feed processing plants to emerge in three big cities this year

ANIMAL feedstuff manufacturers from China (Taipei), Viet Nam and Hong Kong will build animal feed processing plants in three big cities in Myanmar within this year, according to Myanmar Aqua-feed Association under the umbrella of Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

The investors target Hlaingthaya Industrial Zone in Yangon Region to build new

feed processing plants, searching appropriate locations for the establishment of new factories in Mandalay and Ayeyawady regions. All plants will be constructed in accord with international norms and standards.

The list of feedstuff manufacturers who will be permitted to implement their new investment plans in the project areas will soon be announced.—200

111th anniversary of Yangon Zoological Garden next week

THE Yangon Zoological Garden is the oldest and the second largest zoo in Myanmar. The year 2017 is the 111th anniversary of Yangon Zoological Garden. This anniversary event will be held from 21 to 25 January, according to Manager U Myo Kyaw Thu of Administration Department of Yangon Zoological Garden.

The department has planned

to include a stage show, a magic show and cane ball demonstration.

An awareness promotion team will answer questions concerning the animals and their behaviour.

The Yangon Zoological Garden will give presents to those who participate in a Q&A session. Visitors will be able to enjoy snake-charming shows,

an elephant dance, a bear dance, a monkey dance and a dog dance. Anyone can take the photos free of charge together with the animals within the prescribed time during the event, which will be held daily from 08:00 to 18:00 hours.

"During the event, we will open the shops to sell food and other products," said U Myo Kyaw Thu.—200

Crime NEWS

Two killed, ten injured in car brake failure

TWO people died on the spot and ten others sustained injuries during a car accident caused by brake failure in kyaukkyi Township, Taungoo District, Bago Region, on Thursday night, accord-

ing to police.

Investigators say that a car being driven by A Nge-Lay (aka Htoo Myint Lwin), 35, en route from Nawpel Village to Satele Village had its brakes failed

and overturned on the road in Kyaukponetaung Village-tract in Kyaukkyi Township in Taungoo District.

The road accident killed a 27-year-old called Nyi Nyi Aung (aka Ko Aung) and a 25-year-old called Kyaw Thurein Htoo (aka Kyaw Gyi) while 10 others received moderate and serious injuries. Those who survived are now undergoing medical treatment at the nearest hospital's inpatient department.

A police officer said they were delayed when taking the traffic victims to the hospital because of the remote location.

Police are still investigating the case in an effort to arrest the reckless driver, who fled the scene after the accident, said Sub-inspector of Police Nyunt Lynn from Kyaukkyi Myoma Police Station.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



Two killed, ten injured in car brake failure.

PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Two injured in car accident on Yangon-Mandalay expressway

TWO people are in hospital after a light truck overturned between mile posts No. 334/2 and 334/3 on Yangon-Mandalay expressway on Friday morning, according to a police report.

A truck being driven by one Aung Myint with another

aboard heading for Mandalay from Nay Pyi Taw overturned on the right side of the road at 10.10 a.m. on that day as the sleepy driver lost control of his car.

During the accident caused by drowsy driving, both the driv-

er and other person on board sustained injuries, and they were sent to TadaU Hospital by highway police.

Action has been taken against the careless driver under the Penal Code.—*Than Oo (Laymyathnar)*

Yaba seized in Myawady and Yangon

AN anti-narcotic squad from Hpa-an searched a vehicle driven by U Kyu on the Kyauk Lonegyi pagoda road, ward 4 in Myawady and found 2,000 yaba tablets on 12 January.

Interrogation of suspect U Kyu has led the police to discover 10,000 yaba tablets, Ks 2 lakh and two vehicles – 3J/4869 IPSUM and 6J/2304 PAV-4, from a house owned by Sai Kaung at Thatipahtan street, ward 4 in Myawady. Police arrested Sai Kaung together with Sai Aung Tun Oo, Sai Sam, Sai Myint Oo, Khun Soe Naung, Ma Mai Mai Min Nyo for possession of the drugs.

Police also discovered 4,000 yaba tablets which are laid under a poultry farm in Kyaukku, Myitta Lin Myaing

village in Myawaddy. And then, police discovered 4,400 yaba tablets on the Khun Soe Naung's vehicle which was parked in Thatipahtan street, ward 4 in Myawady.

Similarly, an anti-narcotic suppression squad from northern Yangon searched a house owned by Aung Kyaw Oo at No. 1010, Min Hla Kyaw Htin 3rd street, ward 69, Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township on 12 January. Police found Aung Kyaw Oo together with Than Zaw Htike in possession of 1,406 yaba tablets and 1.633 kilos of marijuana.

Police have taken action against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Aung Kyaw Oo and Than Zaw Htike. PHOTO: MPF

LOCAL Business

Export value up by nearly US\$400 million this FY

THE export value as of 6th Jan in the fiscal year 2016-2017 was up by US\$399.051 million when compared to that in the similar period of last fiscal year, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of exports through normal trade and border trade totaled US\$8,464.914 million, whereas the import value was US\$11,938.113 million. The external trade from 1st April to 6th January in this FY fetched US\$20,403.027 million which was down from US\$20,724.593 million in the last FY. There is a trade deficit of US\$ 3473.199 million when import outmanoeuvred exports.

The drop in external trade value is attributed to the decline in import value since the government is making efforts to reduce the trade deficit by scrutinising luxury import items, except for essential items, according to the second five-year National Development Plan.

Out of seven export sectors, mineral and manufacturing goods export declined against the export value of last FY, whereas other export products — agricultural products, fisheries products, animal products, forest product and other items managed to boost the exports.

The export values as of 6th January in this FY were



A containership docks in Yangon Port. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

US\$3,843.756m in manufacturing, US\$2,075.387m in agriculture, US\$1,222.611m for other products, US\$731.611m for min-

erals, US\$404.366m in fisheries, US\$180.794m for forest products and US\$6.389m for animal products.

In the similar period, the values of import amounted to US\$11,938.113m, with the export values of US\$4,809.455m for

capital goods, US\$4,240.215m for raw industrial materials and US\$2,888.443m for personal products. —*Ko Khant*

Tender for bridge to link South Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (North) to be submitted by 26th Jan

THE construction project for a bridge to link South Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (North) has been put out tender and those who want to construct have to submit by 26th January, said an official from the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

This bridge will be built

over Nga Moe Yeik creek, linking South Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (North) townships.

A suitable company will be selected to build the bridge after assessment. A tender document for the construction of the bridge sells for Ks50,000 and only Myanmar Citizens Enterprises are allowed to participate in bidding

the tender.

After the completion of the construction of this bridge, the bridge will help to ease the traffic congestion in Sanpya market and junction of South and North Dagon. The modern technology will be utilized in traffic light and the road system will be changed, it is learnt. —200

Chin State to confiscate land if hoteliers fail to develop properties within three months

CHIN State government will confiscate the land if hoteliers fail to develop their properties within three months after they have been granted permission to construct hotels in Chin State.

About 30 entrepreneurs submitted proposals to build 39 hotels when the state government invited the entrepreneurs to develop the hotels in Chin State. The permitted companies have to start the construction within

a month. The state government grants the land areas to the permitted companies to develop the hotels.

These companies granted permission to develop hotels are KL Amazing Company, King Solomon Company and Chanthar Shwemyay Company in Haka, Adventures Myanmar Company and Falam Cherry Company in Falam, Unique Asia Gate Construction Company and

Shwe Sin Nan Taw Company in Tiddim, Sweet Hotel Group in Paletwa, Shwe Pyi Tagun Company and Chindwin Ayeya Company in Matupi and Taungzalat hotel company and one local company in Khaingkan respectively.

Currently, the hotels can be seen only in Kanpetlet and Mindat towns in Chin State and there are only guesthouses in other townships in Chin State—200

Fifty tonnes of honey exported through Muse border trade zone in Dec

FIFTY tonnes of honey worth US\$38,500 were exported through Muse 105th Mile border trade zone in December 2016 whereas nearly over 80 tonnes of honey were sent abroad through Muse in November, according to the Commerce Ministry.

The honey is used for medicinal in the domestic market. Some foreign countries use honey as a substitute for sugar. Honey is also popular in countries in the Frigid Zone. Honey became highly valued because many people believed honey had medicinal qualities.

The honey season in Myanmar is from September to May. In the 2014-15 fiscal year, a total of 3,551 tonnes were exported but only 2,490 tonnes of honey were exported in the 2013-2014 FY. All the exports are handled

by 13 Myanmar companies, which collectively own about 120,000 hives in the country, according to local sources.

In the 2015-16 FY, exporters only shipped out roughly 2,000 tonnes, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

Honey produced in Myanmar meets international criteria, but prices have been generally higher than other countries, which led to a decrease in demand.

There are 130,000 commercial beehives in Myanmar, with most beekeepers selling raw honey to exporters, who then create a finished product. The 900 beekeepers throughout the country can produce 4,500 tonnes annually, it is learnt.—*Ko Htet*

Beijing sets 2017 air pollution goal at more than double WHO's acceptable standard

BEIJING — Beijing's air quality target for 2017 is more than double the acceptable standard set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the mayor announced on Saturday in the wake of weeks of hazardous air pollution in the Chinese capital.

"We will work hard to keep PM2.5 at an annual average of around 60 micrograms per cubic metre," Beijing mayor Cai Qi said during his delivery of the city's annual work report at the opening of the Beijing People's Congress on Saturday.

PM2.5 refers to damaging air particles so small they can pass through humans' lungs to affect other organs.

The acceptable PM2.5 annual average set by the WHO is 20-25 micrograms per cubic metre.

Beijing's air quality likely improved 9.9 per cent in 2016, the municipal



People wearing masks cycle past Tiananmen Gate during the smog after a red alert was issued for heavy air pollution in Beijing, China, on 20 December, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

government said in a document, and PM2.5 likely sat at an annual average of 73, better than the 2016 target of around 76.6.

But smog has engulfed Beijing and large swathes of the north and centre of the country for days at a

time in recent weeks, disrupting flights, port operations and schools.

Environmental authorities on Saturday said bad air would strike provinces around Beijing in the coming days, the state news agency Xinhua

reported.

Last week, Beijing said it would establish a police force to deal specifically with environmental offences as part of efforts to clean up its air and crack down on persistent polluters.—Reuters

Philippine Islamist militants free Korean and Filipino from cargo ship

MANILA — Islamist militants in the Philippines allied with Islamic State freed on Saturday a South Korean cargo ship captain and a Filipino member of his crew held captive for more than three months on a southern island, an army spokesman said.

Park Chulhong, skipper of the South Korea-registered carrier DongBang Giant 2, and Filipino Glenn Alindajao, were brought to the house of the island's governor after they were released by the militants of the Abu Sayyaf group, Major Filemon Tan said.

Members of a Muslim rebel faction cooperating with the government in the south of the predominantly Christian country had helped arrange the release, Tan told reporters.

"They were freed this morning with the help of rebels belonging to the Moro National Liberation Front,"

Tan said, adding the two were flown out of the island by a presidential adviser on peace efforts. The cargo vessel was sailing to Australia from South Korea when 10 Abu Sayyaf militants boarded it in October and abducted Park and Alindajao.

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza told reporters the government had not paid a ransom, though some media reported that some sort of payment was believed to have been made.

"You know the policy of the government, we don't pay ransom. But, if there was some form of payment made, the government did not play any role in it," the adviser, Jesus Dureza, told reporters. The waters between the Philippines and Malaysia has become dangerous for merchant shipping due to rising threat of kidnappings, the International Maritime Bureau said this week.—Reuters

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Thai parliament approves king's constitutional changes request, likely delaying elections

BANGKOK — Thailand's military-backed parliament voted overwhelmingly on Friday to make amendments to the constitution as suggested by the new king's office, a move likely to delay a general election scheduled for the end of the year.

The military-backed constitution is a key part of the junta's plans to hold an election to return Thailand to democratic rule following a 2014 coup.

The draft constitution was approved in a referendum last year and has been awaiting endorsement by King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who took the throne in December after the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who commanded immense respect from Thais during his 70-year reign.

Promulgation of the charter, which was forwarded to the palace for royal endorsement in November, was expected in early February.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said on Tuesday the office of King Vajiralongkorn had asked for several changes to clauses related to royal power in the draft constitution, a rare intervention by a sitting Thai monarch.

In order to make those changes, the National Legis-



A woman walks past a portrait of Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun at a department store in central Bangkok, Thailand on 13 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

lative Assembly has first to amend the interim constitution.

Of 231 assembly members, 228 voted in favour of the changes on Friday with three abstaining.

The assembly also made changes allowing the king to travel overseas without having to appoint a regent to rule in his stead.

King Vajiralongkorn travelled frequently while he was crown prince and has spent a significant amount of his adult life abroad, mostly in Germany.

Somjet Boonthanom, a member of parliament, said

it was likely that elections would now take place next year.

"The election will take place 15 months after the constitution is endorsed," Somjet told Reuters.

The US State Department said the United States, a long-time ally of Thailand which scaled back contacts after the coup, wanted to see Thailand "return to inclusive, democratic rule as soon as possible."

"We want Thailand to emerge from this transition period as a strong, sustainable, and prosperous democracy that reflects and

represents the views of all Thais and protects human rights and fundamental freedoms," said Katina Adams, a spokeswoman for the department.

The government must first make the requested amendments. The king then has 90 days to approve the amended charter, Somjet said.

"According to the steps, the election should happen early to mid-2018," he said.

Both the junta and the Royal Household Bureau declined to comment on why the changes were requested by the king.—Reuters

Japan and Australia agree to strengthen defence ties

SYDNEY — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney on Saturday where the pair agreed to deepen defence ties through joint military training and exercises.

Abe's visit to Australia is the first since Turnbull became prime minister in late 2015, and comes amid heightened regional tension as China asserts its claims over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

"We have confirmed our commitment to the rule of law, free trade and open markets in our region," Turnbull told reporters at a joint press conference on Saturday.

Abe said the increasingly uncertain geopolitical landscape made the relationship between Japan and Australia more important than ever.

"It is important to guard and increase the robustness of the free, open and rules-based international order," Abe said.

The two leaders announced the signing of an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which will increase cooperation in combined exercises, training and peace-keeping operations. The agreement is expected to be finalised by the end of 2017.

The announcement comes nearly nine months after Australia chose a French bid over a Japanese design for a new fleet of submarines.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during a media conference as Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull listens on after their bilateral meeting at Kirribilli House in Sydney, Australia, on 14 January, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The loss of the \$40 billion contract was a major blow for Abe's ambitions to develop Japan's defence export capabilities as part of a more muscular security agenda.

Japan, as well as Australia, is looking to protect its strategic and trade interests in Asia-Pacific, especially as China becomes increasingly assertive in the South China Sea.

Both leaders also reaffirmed the importance of their respective security alliances with the United States on Saturday.

China's recent naval exercises in the South China Sea and the building of islands there, with military assets, has unnerved its neighbours and risks a fallout with the United States.

US president-elect Donald Trump's nominee for secretary

of state, Rex Tillerson, has said China should be denied access to islands it has built in the South China Sea.

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

Pilot killed in fighter jet crash during air show in Thailand

BANGKOK — A fighter jet crashed Saturday during an air show in Thailand's southern province of Songkhla, killing its pilot, according to Thai Air Force spokesman Pongsak Sem-achai.

The accident, involving a Jas Gripen 39C aircraft, happened at 9:27 am when the pilot, Squadron Leader Dilokrit Pat-tawee, 35, was performing at the Children's Day air show at the 56 Air Force Division base in Hat Yai district.

The children and their parents who visited the base for the show were all safe, as the crash site was at a distance from the crowd, but three firefighters were wounded when a fire truck overturned while rushing to the site.

A video clip posted online showed the Swedish-made fighter jet crash into the edge of the air base, neighboring Hat Yai international airport.

The 56 Air Force Division shares its runway with the airport.

Initially Airports of Thailand announced a temporary closure of Hai Yai airport, allowing authorities to inspect the scene.

Air Force Commander Jom Rungsawang ordered the setting up of a committee to investigate and find the cause of the crash.

Government spokesman Werachon Sukhondhapharipak said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha expressed his condolences over the accident and the loss.

Children's Day in Thailand is celebrated on the second Saturday of January. Children are allowed to visit several places, including the prime minister's working room at the Government House, the Parliament and armed forces bases, where they can see armaments and shows performed by soldiers. —Kyodo News

Another Dhaka cafe attack mastermind held in central Bangladesh

DHAKA — The Bangladeshi police Saturday said they have arrested another key mastermind of the brutal Dhaka cafe attack from the country's central Tangail district.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Friday night arrested Jahangir Alam alias 'Rajib Gandhi,' a leader of Neo-JMB blamed for the deadly attack.

Neo-JMB is an offshoot

of the banned militant outfit Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

Monirul Islam, chief of DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit, told journalists Saturday morning that Alam is believed to have played a key role in a number of terrorist attacks including the deadly attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery cafe in Dhaka's diplomatic enclave Gulshan in July 2016.

The suspect was wanted in 20 to 22 cases filed in connection

with terrorist attacks in recent years, he added.

He said Alam maintained close connections with many already arrested or killed cafe attacker.

Two militants including Gulshan cafe attack mastermind Nurul Islam Marzan were killed in a gunfight with police in capital Dhaka last week.

Bangladesh police have reportedly so far hunted down and killed at least 40 militants linked

to the cafe attack, including mastermind Tamim Chowdhury who was killed in a police raid on 27 August last year.

Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi-Canadian and Sarwar Jahan, identified as Neo-JMB chief who was killed during a raid in October last year, have been blamed as the masterminds of the brutal attack on the Spanish cafe that left 20 hostages including 18 foreigners dead on 1 July last year. —Xinhua

Chinese ambassador to US cautions against irresponsible talk on S China Sea issue

WASHINGTON — Chinese Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai cautioned certain American nationals against making irresponsible remarks on the South China Sea issue, while expressing hope to have closer communication and cooperation with the new US administration.

Speaking on Thursday night in New York while attending an annual gala dinner of the China General Chamber of Commerce — USA (CGCC), Cui said China looks forward to building a new type of relationship with Wash-

ington, featuring non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

"It is hoped that everyone will make constructive contribution toward that end," the ambassador said. He urged "some people" in the United States to be more careful and act in a more responsible way when talking about possible disputes in other people's waters.

Cui's remarks came after US President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for Secretary of State talked tough on the South China Sea dispute.

Rex Tillerson, former chairman and CEO of the oil giant ExxonMobil, told a Senate hearing Thursday that China should stop island building in the South China Sea and be denied access to these islands, which China regards as an integral part of its territory.

Meanwhile, Cui highlighted the importance of China-US relations in realizing China's goals of building a relatively prosperous society.

In order to accomplish these tremendous tasks, China needs a stable, peaceful, and supportive in-

ternational environment. "For that international environment, the key is the relationship with the US," he said.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Washington in 1979, great progress has been made. "Now, we look forward to even closer cooperation and communication with the new administration in a few days time," Cui said.

The road ahead will have obstacles, but China is determined to overcome difficulties and develop a stronger, more stable and more

productive relationship with the United States, because this serves the fundamental interests of both countries and peoples, and certainly the world at large, he said.

"This is a shared responsibility of China and the US to the global community," the ambassador added.

The CGCC awarded Cui "Goodwill Ambassador for China-US Exchange" at the dinner, which was attended by over 500 people from government, business communities and think tanks of the two countries. —Xinhua

Opinion

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Process ownership matters a lot

Myint Win Thein

A shared vision and the ownership of its process are important factors for the achievement of the vision. That is why State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi pointed out that ownership is an important term in politics and young people, who were present at the meeting with her at the beginning of the New Year, were urged to engage in the peace process of Myanmar by the State Counsellor while she said she will also meet with

other people from the education and other various sectors so that she can know how they can contribute to the peace process. In fact, it is a term of total quality leadership and process ownership can be acquired by allowing each and every stakeholder involved in the achievement of a vision to engage in the formulation of the process after identifying the needs of customers or end users of the process. The customer or end users of the peace process

are the people who are desirous of peace.

However, the peace process of Myanmar was formulated by the previous government and ethnic armed groups, some of which were dissatisfied with the process, and customers or end users of the process, the people who are assumed to enjoy peace, were not allowed to participate in the formulation of the peace process. In fact, the new government inherited the peace process from the previous

government.

The new government is led by the National League for Democracy, which won a landslide victory in the general election in 2015, accepted the legacy of the previous government. Now, the State Counsellor is trying to hand over the peace process to the young people of Myanmar, who are important for the future of the country. The State Counsellor has pointed out that it is high time people owned the process.

Township Sangha Nayaka Committees in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Ba Sein
(Religious Affairs)

IN the history of Buddhism of Myanmar, the very First Congregation of the Sangha of All Orders was successfully held in 1980 to carry out purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana throughout the world as well as to reconstruct the unity of the members of the Sangha all over the country. The unity of the members of the Sangha is very important because it was found in the history of Buddhism that, without the unity of the members of the Sangha, it was impossible to carry out the noble task of the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana (the Teachings of the Buddha). The Buddha Himself urged the members of the Sangha to unite in implementing the purification, perpetuation and propagation of His Teachings.

Over 2560 years ago, after the noble demise of the Buddha, altogether six Buddhist great synods were held in order to purify, perpetuate and propagate the Buddha Sasana (The Teachings of the Buddha). Although the six great Buddhist synods were successfully held, it was found that many different schisms and schools appeared in the Buddhist world, and they were really contradictory to be incompatible with the true Buddhism. They were unlawful views which absolutely endangered the noble teachings of the Buddha.

And also, in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, different schisms, schools and unlawful views which really endangered the Theravada Buddhism appeared within one hundred years. Hence, the Buddhist people, the members of the Sangha and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar worried about it. In reality, we all Buddhists want the true Buddhism which indeed benefit and provides the interest and peaceful mind of all beings and leads to the world peace. We firmly believe that the world peace exists forever if we all could follow and practice

the teachings of the Buddha.

In order to purify, perpetuate and propagate the Buddha Sasana and reconstruct the unity among members of different schools and sects of Sangha Orders throughout the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the very First Congregation of the Sangha of ALL Orders of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar unanimously supported and encouraged by members of the Sangha, the Buddhist people and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was successfully held in 1980. The Congregation was attended by 1218 Sangha Samuti representatives of over five hundred thousand members of the Sangha throughout the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The very first successful Congregation of the Sangha of ALL Orders could reconstruct the unity of the Sangha in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the first time within one hundred years. The successful Congregation approved and adopted the concrete resolutions regarding unity of the Sangha Organizations throughout the country in order to carry out the noble task of the Buddha Sasana (the Teachings of the Buddha) at home and abroad.

According to the resolutions of the very first successful Congregation of the Sangha of ALL Orders for the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana, the officially recognized nine sects of Sangha Orders and the different levels of Sangha Organizations are as follows:-

Nine official Sects of Sangha Orders

- (1) Sudhamma Sect
- (2) Shwe Kyin Sect
- (3) Dhammanu Dhammma Mahadwara Nikaya Sect
- (4) Dhammanulomamuladwara Nikaya Sect
- (5) Anaukchaung Dwara Sect
- (6) Veluvan Nikaya Sect
- (7) Catubommika Mahasatipathana Ngettwin Sect
- (8) Gannavimotti Kuto Sect
- (9) Dhammayotti Nikaya Mahayin Sect

These different schools and

sects of the Sangha unitedly carry out the noble task of the purification perpetuation and propagation of Buddha Sasana under the guidance of the different levels of the Sangha Organizations which have been formed throughout the country.

Different levels of the Sangha Organization -

- (1) State Patron Committee of the Sangha
- (2) State Central Working Committee of the Sangha of ALL Orders
- (3) State Sanghamahanayaka Committee
- (4) State/Regional Sanghanayaka committees
- (5) Township Sanghanayaka Committees
- (6) Ward/ Village-tract Sanghanayaka Committees

Township Sanghanayaka Committees

Over (542) Township Sanghanayaka Committees comprising over (3900) members of the Sangha have been formed throughout seven States and seven Regions in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In accordance with the fundamental principles of Sangha Organizations, members of Township Sanghanayaka Committees shall be elected only by majority of Sangha Working Committee members of respective townships with their free consent. The main objectives of Township Sanghanayaka Committees are to carry out the noble task of the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana and other religious matters in their respective townships.

Functions and duties of Township Sanghanayaka Committees

- (1) Shall carry out their functions concerned in accordance with the fundamental principles approved and adopted by the Congregation of the Sangha of ALL Orders and procedures of Sangha Organization. procedures of settlements of Vinavadhama Kamma Adhikarenu Disputes Act, other decisions and instructions

approved and passed by the meeting of the State Central Working Committee of the Sangha of ALL Orders.

- (2) Shall perform their duties leading to the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana and the unity of the members of Sangha.
- (3) Shall make monks and novices (Samaneras) dwelling in their township to know and follow the instructions of the higher levels of Sangha Organizations.
- (4) Shall collect and prepare the final list of monk-hood/ novicehood of monks and novices in their township and send it to respective State/Regional Sanghanayaka Committees and State Sangha Mahanayaka Committee.
- (5) Shall report their functions to respective State/Regional Sanghanayaka Committees in their townships
- (6) Shall issue necessary instructions to Ward/ Village-tract Sangha-nayaka Committees in their townships.
- (7) According to the clause (93) sub clause (I) and (K), if submissions are made, it must be inquired and make appropriate decision and shall report it to respective State, Regional Sanghanayaka Committees.
- (8) Shall perform to issue new registration cards of Sasana members and amend, substitute, cancel or keep back them as necessary in accordance with the instructions of higher levels of Sangha Organizations.
- (9) Shall perform to scrutinize the Sasana matters related to Pariyatti and Patipatti affairs.
- (10) Shall perform to form Sangha Vinicchaya Court to decide and settle disputes cases arising in their township in accordance with special prescribed procedures and settlements of Vanayadhamma-kamma. Adhikarana Dis-

putes Act, and the court's decision shall be informed to respective township authorities concerned to carry out the decisions to be obeyed.

- (11) Shall conduct and supervise the election and limitation of Vinayadharas, Township Sangha Working Committee members and Ward/Village-tract Sanghanayaka committee members.
 - (12) Shall give advice and admonitions occasionally to the monks and novices in their township without affecting management of respective monasteries and monastic institutes.
 - (13) If it is necessary, shall consult with Township authorities concerned regarding the Sasana affairs in connection with Township authorities concerned.
 - (14) Out of the matters, the important ones which had been done within a year shall be submitted to the annual meeting of the Township Sangha Working Committee.
 - (15) If any representative of Sangha Samutti or any member of Vinayadharas, Sangha Working Committee, Sanghanayaka Committee and patron Committee falls vacant, it shall be informed to the respective State/Regional Sanghanayaka Committees and the State Sanghamahanayaka Committee within five days after vacancy has been learnt.
- According to the functions and duties of the Township Sanghanayaka Committees, various matters and affairs in connection with the members of the Sangha or Sangha Organizations can only be decided and settled by members of the Sangha themselves. Matters, affairs or disputes in connection with the members of the Sangha cannot be decided and settled by any civil court or authorities concerned.

Trump suggests he may do away with Russia sanctions if Moscow helpful



US President-elect Donald Trump waves to supporters as he makes an appearance in the lobby at Trump Tower in New York, US, on 13 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — US President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview with the Wall Street Journal he would keep intact sanctions against Russia “at least for a period of time,” and also said he wouldn’t commit to the “one China” policy until he sees progress from Beijing in its currency and trade practices.

In excerpts from an hourlong interview published by the Journal on Friday, Trump said: “If you get along and if Russia is really helping us, why would anybody have sanctions if somebody’s doing some really great things?”

Trump suggested he might do away with the sanctions — imposed by the Obama administration in late December in response to Moscow’s alleged cyber attacks — if Moscow proves helpful in battling terrorists and reaching other goals important to Washing-

ton, the Journal reported. Trump told the newspaper he is prepared to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin some time after he is sworn in on 20 January. “I understand that they would like to meet, and that’s absolutely fine with me,” he said.

Asked if he supported the “one China” policy on Taiwan that has underpinned US relations with Beijing for decades, Trump told the Journal: “Everything is under negotiation including One China.”

Trump angered the Chinese by taking a congratulatory phone call after his election win from Taiwan’s leader and questioning the “one China” policy. The United States has acknowledged the Chinese position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China. Trump has said in the past he would label China a currency manipulator after he takes

office. In the interview, he said he wouldn’t take that step on his first day in the White House. “I would talk to them first,” he said.

“Certainly they are manipulators,” he added. “But I’m not looking to do that.” But he made plain his displeasure with China’s currency practices. “Instead of saying, ‘We’re devaluating our currency,’ they say, ‘Oh, our currency is dropping.’ It’s not dropping. They’re doing it on purpose,” he said, according to the Journal.

“Our companies can’t compete with them now because our currency is strong and it’s killing us,” the Journal quoted Trump as saying. Calls to the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman’s office were not answered, and the ministry did not respond immediately to an emailed request for comment on the Wall Street Journal interview.—Reuters

Turkey’s parliament approves key articles of constitutional reform

ANKARA — Turkey’s parliament has approved key measures allowing the president to be a member of a political party and issue decrees, part of a constitutional reform the opposition says will fuel authoritarianism.

The ruling AK Party, backed by the nationalist MHP, is pushing through legislation that President Tayyip Erdogan says will bring strong executive leadership needed to prevent a return to the fragile coalition governments of the past.

The three articles approved overnight set out parliament’s supervisory role, enable the president to retain ties with a political party and detail the president’s executive powers as head of state, in-

cluding the power to issue decrees.

Their approval, announced on Friday, is a positive sign for the AKP, although the changes will need to pass in two more rounds of voting before the constitutional package as a whole is put to a referendum, expected in the spring.

The main opposition CHP and the pro-Kurdish HDP, the second largest opposition party, strongly oppose the changes.

The previous night, lawmakers from the AKP and CHP came to blows as tempers boiled over in debate on the bill, after which a ruling AK Party deputy warned elections would be held if it was not passed.

Erdogan himself floated the

possibility of early elections on Friday, saying they were not desirable but “not unthinkable” if parliament became unable to do its job.

A CHP deputy said on Thursday his party would not shy away from such a move.

“Today instead of seeking such a regime change, we as the CHP give full support to an early election decision. We say bring it on,” Ozgur Ozel told the general assembly.

Under the planned changes, a president can be elected for a maximum of two five-year terms. The plans envisage presidential and general elections in 2019.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

US says al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader killed in Yemen air strike

WASHINGTON — A senior leader of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was killed in a US air strike on Sunday in Yemen, the Pentagon said in a statement on Friday.

AQAP leader Abd al-Ghani al-Rasas was killed in the air strike in a remote area of al Bayda Governorate in Yemen, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in the statement.—Reuters

US House backs waiver allowing Mattis to serve as defence secretary

WASHINGTON — The US House of Representatives backed a waiver on Friday that will allow James Mattis to serve as President-elect Donald Trump’s secretary of defense, despite having retired as a Marine General in 2013.

The House voted 268 to 151, largely along party lines, for a one-time waiver of a provision of a law on civilian control of the US military that requires a seven-year wait after retirement before active-duty military can lead the Department of Defence.—Reuters

Islamic State attacks Syria’s Deir al-Zor city, dozens dead — monitor

BEIRUT — Islamic State militants launched their biggest attack in months on government-held areas of the Syrian city of Deir al-Zor on Saturday, leaving dozens dead, a war monitor said.

At least six large explosions rocked the city as the militants clashed with government forces, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Syrian government warplanes hit back against Islamic State positions, it added. Islamic State controls most of Deir al-Zor province, which borders Iraq, including more than half the city, and has besieged the remaining government-held areas of the city for nearly two years.—Reuters

US Senate intelligence panel to probe Russia hacking

WASHINGTON — The leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee said the panel will investigate allegations Russia used cyber attacks to influence the US presidential election, including any links between Russia and the political campaigns.

The committee plans to interview senior officials of both the Trump and Obama administrations and may issue subpoenas to compel testimony, the panel’s Republican chairman, Richard Burr, and its top Democrat, Mark Warner, said in a statement.—Reuters

Palestinian President Abbas says US embassy move would hurt peace

VATICAN CITY — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Saturday that if US president-elect Donald Trump goes through with plans to transfer Washington’s embassy in Israel to Jerusalem it will hurt the peace process.

“We are waiting to see if it happens. If it does it will not help peace and we hope it does not happen,” Abbas told reporters minutes after discussing the Middle East situation with Pope Francis.—Reuters

6.1-magnitude quake hits Fiji — USGS

HONG KONG — An earthquake measuring magnitude 6.1 jolted 152km SW of Nadi, Fiji on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10 km, was initially determined to be at 18.5884 degrees south latitude and 176.2304 degrees east longitude.—Xinhua

Six dead, 15 injured in south China highway pileup

GUANGZHOU — Six people died and 15 others suffered injuries Saturday in a 19-car pile-up on a highway in south China’s Guangdong Province, local traffic authority said.

The accidents occurred at around 9:29 am in Qingyuan city, along a highway that connects Guangdong with Hunan Province to the north.—Xinhua



Members of the Iraqi rapid response forces fire missile toward Islamic State militants during a battle between Iraqi forces and Islamic State militants in Somer district of eastern Mosul, Iraq on 11 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iraqi forces fight on at Mosul university, find chemicals

MOSUL, (Iraq) — Iraqi special forces battled Islamic State militants inside the Mosul University campus on Saturday in a second day of fierce clashes in the complex and also discovered chemicals used to try to make weapons, officers said.

“There are still clashes. We entered the university and cleared the technical institute, dentistry and antiquities departments,” Lieutenant General Abdelwahab al-Saadi of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) told a Reuters reporter in the complex.

“In the coming hours it will be liberated completely,” he said.

CTS troops had gathered in the university canteen. As they unfurled a map of the area, a suspected Islamic State drone flew overhead and they shot at it.

The Iraqi forces also found chemical substances IS had used to try to make weapons, CTS commander Sami al-Aridhi said.

The United Nations says the militants seized nuclear materials used for scientific research from the university when they overran Mosul and vast areas of northern Iraq and eastern Syria in 2014.

Islamic State have used chemical agents including mustard gas in a number of attacks in Iraq and Syria, US officials, rights groups and residents have said.

Recapturing the university would be a crucial strategic gain and allow Iraqi forces to advance quicker towards the Tigris river, from where they will be able to launch attacks on the city’s west, still all under IS control, military officers say.—Reuters

27th Africa-France summit to focus on security

BAMAKO — The ministerial meeting of Foreign Affairs ministers of France and Africa kicked on Friday in Bamako, one day prior to the 27th Summit Africa-France which will focus on issues on security, peace and economic opportunities in Africa.

During the summit, in which more than 40 heads of state and governments have confirmed their presence, security and peace keeping will clearly be the centre of the discussions, French Foreign Affairs minister Jean-Marc Ayrault told journalists on Friday.

Faced with challenges including radicalism or terrorism, human, drugs and weapons trafficking, new forms of cyber violence and those that endanger maritime safety, Ayrault said “we should work together to find common solutions through cooperation, reinforcement of the action mode and intensification of information exchanges.

He added the holding of this summit is an act of confidence in the future of Mali, but also that of the whole Africa.

His Malian counterpart Abdoulaye Diop echoed his remarks, telling the press “it is a sign of great confidence. But it is also the recognition of all the efforts made here”.

“Mali welcomes, in strength as a standing and united people, the ensemble of the African continent and French partners,” Diop told the journalists.—Xinhua

Ivory Coast mutineers say reach deal amid fears of renewed revolt

BOUAKE, (Ivory Coast) — Disgruntled soldiers in Ivory Coast reached an agreement with the government late on Friday resolving a dispute over bonus payments that had threatened to reignite a nationwide army mutiny, negotiators for the mutineers said.

There was no confirmation of the deal from the government, and it was not immediately evident that the terms had been accepted by the rank and file, who took to the streets in Bouake, the second largest city, and other locations on Friday.

Soldiers, most of them former rebel fighters, launched a revolt in Bouake a week ago that rapidly gained momentum in the world’s top cocoa grower until the government was forced to yield to the mutineers’ demands after two days.

But the soldiers said they had received none of the 12 million CFA francs (\$19,278) in bonuses they said the government had promised to pay each of them under an initial deal to end the uprising struck last Saturday.

“We’ve reached an agreement. They will pay five million Monday and the rest each

month,” Sergeant Mamadou Kone, one of the mutineers’ negotiators, told Reuters. “We haven’t finished up, but that’s the most important thing.”

The soldiers had appeared poised to relaunch their mutiny on Friday.

Renegade troops sealed off Bouake as evening fell, even as a government delegation headed by Defence Minister Alain-Richard Donwahi pursued talks with the mutiny’s leaders inside the city.

Gunfire meanwhile broke out at two strategic military camps in the commercial capital, Abidjan, and mutineers seized entrances to Korhogo, a city in the country’s north.

Ivory Coast has one of the world’s fastest growing economies but has struggled to resolve deeply entrenched problems left over from years of civil war and political turmoil.

The government has failed to bring significant reform to the army, which remains a patchwork of former rebel fighters and troops who stayed loyal to the government during the 2002-2011 crisis. Divisions and parallel chains of command persist.



Security forces member stands guard at the airport as Ivory Coast’s Minister of Defence Alain-Richard Donwahi arrives to speak with mutinous soldiers in Bouake, Ivory Coast on 13 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heavy gunfire briefly broke out earlier in Bouake outside the venue for the talks, with mutineers blaming the shooting on soldiers venting their frustration after they accused the government of reneging on its promises.

Sporadic gunfire continued through the evening, and telephone networks appeared to have been shut down, hindering communications with the city.

Donwahi, his delegation and the mutineers’ negotiators were trapped for several hours during

a similar incident during the first round of negotiations last Saturday.

But another leader of the mutiny said Donwahi, who was also accompanied by the heads of the army and gendarmes as well as the youth employment minister, was under no threat on Friday.

“They’re still here, but we will let them go after. The minister and his delegation will go home without any problems,” said the soldier, who asked not to be named.—Reuters

Tehran says any review of nuclear deal is “impossible”

TEHRAN — Tehran said on Friday that any attempt to review its nuclear deal would be “impossible” and that is the position of all countries which signed the deal.

“We will not let the nuclear dossier be re-opened, and any attempt to review the Iran deal is impossible,” Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht Ravanchi told reporters.

Ravanchi’s remarks came after US Secretary of State nominee Rex Tillerson said on Wednesday he would recommend a “full review” of the landmark nuclear

deal which Iran inked with Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and the United States in 2015.

Speaking at his Senate confirmation hearing, Tillerson said that while “no one disagrees with the ultimate objective” of the deal with Iran, which limits its nuclear ambitions, he and President-elect Donald Trump would seek “a full review of that agreement as well as any number of side agreements that I understand are part of that agreement.”

As part of the deal, Iran

agreed to limit its nuclear activities, including uranium enrichment, in return for an end to crippling economic and banking sanctions which had affected the lives of millions of Iranians since 2006.

During his election campaign, Trump described the deal as “disastrous” and vowed to rip it up, a remark which was countered by harsh threats from Iran’s supreme leader, who has the last word in the country’s crucial issues.

“The Iranian side will not be

the first to violate the nuclear deal, but if the opposite side violates it, as the US presidential candidate is threatening to rip it apart, we will burn it,” Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last June.

Speaking to Kyodo News, a senior Iranian diplomat said it is still not clear what exactly Tillerson meant by a “full review.”

After implementing the deal in January 2016, Iran repeatedly accused the United States of jeopardizing the agreement — allegations which Washington has rejected.—Kyodo News

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE

YANGON TO BANGKOK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-304	09:50	11:45	Daily
TG-302	15:00	16:55	Daily
TG-306	19:50	21:45	Daily
PG-706	6:00	8:15	Daily
PG-702	10:30	12:25	Daily
PG-708	15:30	17:25	Daily
PG-704	18:20	20:15	Daily
8M-335	7:30	9:15	Daily
8M-331	16:30	18:15	Daily
UB-017	17:45	19:15	Daily
UB-019	8:00	9:30	3,5,7
UB-019	8:55	10:25	1,6

BANGKOK TO YANGON			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-303	8:00	8:45	Daily
TG-301	13:15	14:00	Daily
TG-305	18:05	18:50	Daily
PG-701	8:45	9:40	Daily
PG-707	13:45	14:40	Daily
PG-703	16:45	17:35	Daily
PG-705	20:30	21:45	Daily
8M-336	10:15	11:00	Daily
8M-332	19:20	20:05	Daily
UB-020	10:35	11:10	3,5
UB-018	21:05	21:35	Daily
UB-020	11:30	12:05	1,6

YGN TO DMK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-252	8:30	10:20	Daily
FD-256	12:55	14:40	Daily
FD-254	17:35	19:25	Daily
FD-258	21:40	23:30	Daily
DD-4231	08:00	9:45	Daily
DD-4235	12:00	13:45	Daily
DD-4239	21:00	22:55	Daily
SL-201	11:00	13:35	Daily
SL-207	19:45	21:45	Daily

YGN TO CAN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-713	20:25	01:00+1	1
8M-711	8:40	13:15	2,4,5,7
CZ-3056	11:35	15:50	3,6
CZ-3056	17:40	22:20	1,5

YGN TO SIN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-231	8:20	12:40	Daily
SQ-997	10:25	15:10	Daily
MI-515	14:20	18:50	1,3,5
MI-519	17:35	22:10	Daily
MI-522	16:20	20:50	4,6
MI-533	13:35	20:50	2
3k-584	19:40	00:10	Daily
3K-582	11:35	16:05	Daily
TR-2823	9:25	13:55	1,2,4,5,7
UB-001	7:15	11:45	Daily

YGN TO NRT			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
NH-814	22:10	06:45	Daily

YGN TO ICN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily

YGN TO KUL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily
AK-503	19:10	23:30	Daily
8M-501	16:10	20:10	2
8M-501	11:45	15:45	1
MH-741	11:15	15:40	Daily
MH-743	16:00	20:15	1,4,6,7

YGN TO KMG			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-416	12:30	16:00	Daily
MU-2032	15:30	18:50	Daily
MU-2012	12:55	19:55	3

YGN TO TPE			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CI-7916	10:50	16:10	Daily

YGN TO PEK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-906	23:50	05:50+1	1,3,5,7

YGN TO HAN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-956	19:10	21:30	Daily

YGN TO SGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-942	12:10	14:55	2,3,4,5,7

YGN TO HKG			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KA-251	1:05	5:25	Daily
UB-8027	09:00	13:30	1,3,5,7

YGN TO DOH			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
QR-919	8:05	11:30	1,3,4,6,7

YGN TO CNX			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-724	13:40	15:35	Daily

YGN TO DAC			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
BG-061	16:45	18:30	1,3,6

MDL TO DMK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-245	12:55	15:15	Daily



MDL TO SIN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-533	15:45	20:50	2
MI-522	14:15	20:15	4,6

SIN TO MDL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-522	11:30	13:20	4,6
MI-533	11:30	14:50	2

MDL TO BKK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-710	14:10	16:35	Daily

BKK TO MDL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-709	12:00	13:20	Daily

MDL TO KMG			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MU-2030	14:25	17:15	Daily

KMG TO MDL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MU-2029	13:20	13:15	Daily

NYT to BKK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-722	19:50	22:50	1,3,4,5,6,7

BKK TO NYT			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-721	17:20	19:20	1,3,4,5,6,7

AIRLINE CODES

- 8M = Myanmar Airways International
- BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines
- MH = Malaysia Airlines
- MU = China Eastern Airlines
- NH = All Nippon Airways
- SQ = Singapore Airways
- PG = Bangkok Airways
- UB = Myanmar National Airlines
- VN = Vietnam Airline
- 3K = Jet Star
- AI = Air India
- CI = China Airlines
- DD = Nok Airline
- KA = Dragonair
- MI = Silk Air
- TG = Thai Airways
- AK = Air Asia
- CA = Air China
- CZ = China Southern
- FD = Air Asia
- KE = Korea Airlines
- QR = Qatar Airways
- TR = Tiger Airline

DAY	
4	= Thursday
1	= Monday
2	= Tuesday
3	= Wednesday
5	= Friday
6	= Saturday
7	= Sunday

SpaceX 2015 accident cost it hundreds of millions: Wall St Journal

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Elon Musk's SpaceX lost more than a quarter of a billion dollars in 2015 after a botched cargo run to the International Space Station and the subsequent grounding of its Falcon 9 rocket fleet, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The accident derailed SpaceX's expectations of \$1.8

billion in launch revenue in 2016, an analysis of the privately held firm's financial documents showed, according to the Journal, which said it had obtained the documents.

SpaceX declined to comment on the Journal's report.

In a statement emailed to Reuters, SpaceX Chief Financial Officer Bret Johnsen said

the company "is in a financially strong position" with more than \$1 billion in cash reserves and no debt.

SpaceX, owned and operated by Musk, who also is chief executive of Tesla Motors Inc (TSLA.O), is aiming to return to flight on Saturday following a second Falcon 9 accident on 1 September.—Reuters



An unmanned SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket explodes after lift-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, June 28, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

China confirms one more human death from H7N9 bird flu

SHANGHAI — A man in China's central Henan province has become the latest person reported to have died this winter from H7N9 bird flu, the state news agency Xinhua said on Saturday citing local health authorities.

The 36-year-old roast duck salesman developed a fever and a cough around 25 December in coastal Zhejiang province, near Shanghai, and returned to Henan in early January, Xinhua said. He was diagnosed with H7N9 on 10 January and died the next day.

Bird flu is most likely to strike in winter and spring. In recent years, farmers have

stepped up cleaning regimes, animal detention techniques, and built roofs to cover hen pens, in their efforts to prevent the disease.

China's last major outbreak killed 36 people and caused more than \$6 billion in losses for the agricultural sector.

The H7N9 strain does not seem to transmit easily among people, and sustained human-to-human infection has not been reported, the World Health Organization says. The danger is that any such virus mutates and acquires genetic changes that could boost its pandemic potential.—Reuters

Suspected case of bird flu detected at poultry farm in Gifu

GIFU, Japan — Chickens at a poultry farm in Yamagata, Gifu Prefecture, in central Japan tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza in a preliminary test on Saturday, the prefectural government said.

The local government may order chickens at the farm to be culled depending on the results of a genetic test expected later in the day.

The farm notified the prefectural government of a suspected bird flu case in the morning, saying that many chickens there had died. Of seven chickens tested by the local government, six tested positive.

The farm has 80,000 chickens for producing farm eggs. More than 100 have died, according to the local government.—Kyodo News

US House votes to begin repealing Obamacare

WASHINGTON — US House Republicans on Friday won passage of a measure starting the process of dismantling Obamacare, despite concerns about not having a ready replacement and the potential financial cost of repealing Democratic President Barack Obama's landmark health insurance law.

The House of Representatives voted 227-198 to instruct committees to draft legislation by a target date of 27 January that would repeal the 2010 Affordable Health Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare. The Senate approved the same measure early Thursday.

No Democrats supported the initiative. Nine Republicans voted against the measure.

With this vote, Republicans began delivering on their promise to end Obamacare, which also was a campaign promise of Republican President-elect Donald Trump.

The programme, which expanded health coverage to some 20 million people, has been plagued by increases in insurance premiums and deductibles and by some large insurers leaving the system.

The resolution passed by the House and Senate does not need presidential approval, since it is part of an internal congressional budget process. But once the Obamacare repeal legislation is drafted, both chambers will need to approve it, and a presidential signature will be required.

By that time, Trump will have been sworn in as president. He has urged Congress to act quickly to repeal and replace the Democratic programme.

Obamacare was enacted nearly seven years ago — over Republican objections — in an ef-



House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) (L) walks to the House Chamber to vote on Obamacare repeal, on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, on 13 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

fort to expand coverage and give new protections for people with pre-existing health conditions and other barriers that left them without insurance.

In the past few years, the House has voted more than 60 times to repeal or alter Obamacare, but Republicans had no hope a repeal would become law as long as Obama was president and could veto their bills.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Republican, said Obamacare was collapsing and action was urgent. For people who have health insurance through the Obamacare system, he said, "The deductibles are so high it doesn't feel like you've got insurance in the first place."

"We have to step in before things get worse. This is nothing short of a rescue mission," Ryan said.

Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi rebutted Republicans' claims

that the law was a failure.

"The rate of growth in health-care costs in our country has been greatly diminished by the Affordable Care Act," she said. "In the more than 50 years that they have been measuring the rate of growth, it has never been slower than now."

The choice before lawmakers, she said, is "affordable care versus chaos."

Harvard University economist David Cutler warned that there could be trouble in US insurance markets if lawmakers do repeal the law but a replacement is slow in coming.

"You could create a lot of havoc," he said, adding that some insurers "may get out of the market entirely."

Trump applauded Congress's efforts with a Friday morning tweet saying, "The 'Unaffordable' Care Act will soon be history!"

The president-elect, who takes office on 20 January, pressed lawmakers this week to repeal and replace it "essentially simultaneously."

Republican leaders would like to finish the repeal process within weeks, but some lawmakers think it could take far longer.

Some Republicans have expressed concern about starting a repeal before agreeing on how to replace provisions of the complicated and far-reaching law.

The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimated repealing Obama's signature health insurance law entirely would cost roughly \$350 billion over 10 years.

Republicans say a good replacement would give states more control of a healthcare program and provide more stability on health insurance premiums.—*Reuters*

Mexico will 'immediately' respond to any US border tax

MEXICO CITY — Mexico must be ready to respond immediately with its own tax measures if the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump imposes a border tax, the economy minister said on Friday, warning such protectionism may trigger a global recession.

Trump, who takes office on 20 January, has promised a "major border tax" on companies that shift jobs outside the United States, and such a measure could hobble Mexico's exports to its top trading partner.

"It is clear we need to be prepared to immediately neutralize the impact of such a measure," Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said in an interview on Mexican television.

"And it is very clear how to take a fiscal action that clearly neutralizes it," he said.

Trump has repeatedly attacked Mexico over trade, jobs and immigration since he first launched his run for the White House in 2015, driving the peso currency to historic lows and unnerving investors, especially in the auto sector.

Guajardo said Trump's proposed tax "was a problem for the entire world" and that it "would have a wave of impacts that could take us into a global recession."—*Reuters*

PM May must set out Brexit plan by mid-Feb to allow scrutiny — UK lawmakers

LONDON — The British government must publish a detailed plan for Brexit by mid-February setting out its position on future membership of the European Union's single market and customs union, a committee of lawmakers said in a report published on Saturday.

Parliament's Exiting the EU committee, made up of lawmakers from several parties including Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservatives and opposition Labour, also said the government should seek a transitional deal with the bloc.

May, who has said she will begin formal divorce talks with the EU by the end of March, has come under fire from businesses, investors and lawmakers for hav-

ing revealed little about the government's Brexit plans more than six months after the country voted to leave in last June's referendum.

"The government needs to publish its Brexit plan by mid-February at the latest, including its position on membership of the single market and the customs union, so that it can be scrutinised by parliament and the public," said opposition Labour lawmaker Hilary Benn, chair of the committee.

May, who has said giving a running commentary on preparations would weaken the government's hand in the upcoming negotiations, is due to set out more about her approach to Brexit in a speech on Tuesday.

The committee said the

Brexit plan must be presented in the form of a white paper, a government policy document, and should be published alongside economic assessments of the different options for market access and trade.

"We're not asking the government to give away its red lines or negotiating fall-back positions but we do want clarity on its broad aims, given the significance and complexity of the negotiating task," said Benn.

The committee called on the government to seek to ensure continued access to EU markets for financial services firms and avoid the imposition of tariffs. It also said May should commit to giving parliament a vote on the final Brexit deal.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves Downing Street in London, Britain on 11 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

The risk of a "cliff-edge" at the end of the two-year negotiation period with the EU may push some businesses to pre-empt the final outcome and minimise the impact on their firms by re-locating or investing elsewhere, the committee said.

"The government must make clear from the outset that a period of adjustment to any change in trading arrangements or access to EU markets for UK service industries will be sought as part of the negotiations," it said.—*Reuters*

Cuba's Raul Castro meets with US Chamber of Commerce president

HAVANA — The head of the US Chamber of Commerce met with Cuban President Raul Castro and in separate meetings with members of Castro's economic cabinet on Friday, as they prepare for the advent of a more hostile Trump administration next week.

The chamber has been urging the Cuban government to sign a number of agreements with major companies such as General Electric (GE.N), negotiated over the last 18 months, before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on 20 January.

A brief government statement said chamber President Thomas Donohue and Castro discussed "issues of mutual interest."

"The goal of the US business community has shifted from seeking more from Cuba to preserving what exists from the soon-to-be Trump administration," John Kavulich, president of the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, said.

"US companies need the Cuban government to quickly and substantially



Thomas Donohue (L), President and CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce speaks with Vice President of Cuba's Council of Ministers Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz (R) in Havana, Cuba, on 13 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

expand its purchases of products and services and permit a highly visible presence of companies," he said.

Donohue was accompanied by Maurice Greenberg, chairman and chief

executive officer of CV Starr & Co Inc, a major US insurance company.

The chamber has opposed the US trade embargo for decades and is a strong supporter of the normalization process be-

gun by President Barack Obama.

That process has included the signing of 17 agreements between the two former Cold War foes and the use of executive orders to punch holes in

the embargo, which can be lifted only by the US Congress, now controlled by Republicans.

Travel to the Communist-run Caribbean island from the United States has increased, with the start of

direct flights and cruises and roaming agreements signed, but there have been no manufacturing or trade deals inked.

Cuba and the Obama administration have been scrambling to deepen and cement their detente, through bilateral agreements and commercial links, since Trump's election in November.

Cuba agreed earlier this month to export charcoal to the United States, the first export in half a century, and in December Google (GOOGL.O) reached an agreement to place servers on the island to quicken access to its products.

Trump has said he will dismantle the still-fragile detente unless Cuba gives the United States a better deal, while providing no specifics.

Trump is expected to review Cuba policy upon taking office and has named Jason Greenblatt, a Trump Organization executive and chief legal counsel, as negotiator for sensitive international issues, including Cuba.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO (137N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV WEST SCENT VOY. NO (137N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1030)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MATHU BHUM VOY. NO (1030) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MOL (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SIMA PRESTIGE VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SIMA PRESTIGE VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ANAN BHUM VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANAN BHUM VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GLODEN SEA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ARCA VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ARCA VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV RATANA THIDA VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV RATANA THIDA VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Actors Johnny Depp, Amber Heard finalize bitter divorce

LOS ANGELES — Film star Johnny Depp's tumultuous divorce from actress Amber Heard was finalized on Friday, ending the couple's marriage after months of highly publicized claims by Heard of domestic violence and counterclaims from Depp of financial blackmail.

Court papers filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Friday detailed a splitting of marital assets and an agreement by Depp, 53, to pay a previously announced sum of \$7 million to Heard, 30, that she said will be donated to charity.

Heard filed for divorce in May after 15 months of marriage, and days later obtained a temporary restraining order against Depp.

She said in court filings that Depp was abusive to her throughout their marriage, culminating in an argument in May in which he hurled a cell phone into her face and shattered var-

ious objects in her apartment.

A lawyer for Depp denied allegations of abuse and argued that Heard was "attempting to secure a premature financial resolution by alleging abuse."

"We are all pleased to put this unpleasant chapter in Mr Depp and his family's lives behind them," said Laura Wasser, a lawyer for Depp.

"Having his request for entry of the dissolution judgment granted today made it a particularly lucky Friday the 13th."

As part of the divorce settlement, Heard dismissed her request for a continued restraining order against Depp.

She also dropped her defamation lawsuit against Depp's friend, comedian Doug Stanhope, over an article he had written accusing the actress of blackmailing and manipulating her estranged husband.

The divorce papers showed that Depp



Cast member Amber Heard and husband Johnny Depp pose during the premiere of the film "The Danish Girl," in Los Angeles, California on 21 November, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

would retain sole possession of numerous real estate assets, including properties in Los Angeles, Paris and his private island in the Bahamas. He will also keep

more than 40 vehicles and vessels, including vintage cars and his motorcycle collection.

Heard will maintain custody of her dogs Pistol and Boo,

the two canines at the center of a scandal in Australia in which Heard pleaded guilty to falsifying travel documents to sneak her pets into the country in 2015 without proper quarantine procedures.

Heard said she would split her \$7 million divorce settlement equally between the American Civil Liberties Union and the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles.

Court papers said Depp has paid \$200,000 of the settlement so far, and will pay the rest over the course of the year.

The payments will be made from Depp's compensation from his upcoming film "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales" and sale of some of his properties, the papers showed.

Heard's attorney, Pierce O'Donnell, hailed the finalization as a "great day" for his client, adding, "All Amber wanted was to be divorced and now she is."

There was no immediate statement from Depp.—Reuters



Actress Priyanka Chopra arrives at the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, US, on 8 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Priyanka Chopra recovering after mishap on 'Quantico' set

NEW YORK — Actress Priyanka Chopra is resting at home after a "minor incident" on the set of her ABC show "Quantico," the network said on Friday.

Celebrity news website TMZ, citing unnamed sources, said Chopra had slipped and fallen during a stunt and suffered a concussion after hitting her head.

In a statement, ABC did not confirm this but said a "minor

incident" took place on the New York set of the FBI drama series on Thursday night.

"It would be premature to comment further until we have all the information. Priyanka was examined by a doctor, released and is home resting comfortably," the network added.

A representative for the actress said she will return to work after the weekend.

Walt Disney Co's ABC did

not comment further on whether production of the show will be halted, but trade publication Variety said production will not be shut down while Chopra recovers.

Chopra, 34, made her transition from Bollywood to Hollywood as the lead of "Quantico," in which she plays an FBI recruit turned CIA agent. She will also be starring in the upcoming film reboot of "Baywatch."—Reuters

'Star Wars' makers vow not to digitally recreate Carrie Fisher



Actress Debbie Reynolds poses with her daughter actress Carrie Fisher (L) after Reynolds star in the live theatre and stage category was unveiled on the Hollywood Walk of Fame during ceremonies on 13 January PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — The studio behind the "Star Wars" movie franchise said on Friday it has no plans to digitally recreate film performances of the late actress Carrie Fisher, best known for her role as Princess Leia, in upcoming installments of the blockbuster series.

Speculation had mounted since Fisher died unexpectedly last month, at age 60, that filmmakers might use new advances in computer graphics technology to resurrect digital images of the actress in forthcoming chapters of the "Star Wars" film epic. Such technology was notably utilized in the newly released "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," in which a digital embodiment of British actor Peter Cushing, who died in 1994, returned for the role of the Grand Moff Tarkin that he first played in the original 1977 "Star Wars" adventure.

The Walt Disney Co-owned Lucasfilm, producers of the "Star Wars" franchise, posted a statement online putting to rest the

notion that Fisher's image would likewise be recreated.

"We want to assure our fans that Lucasfilm has no plans to digitally recreate Carrie Fisher's performance as Princess or General Leia Organa," the studio said.

"Carrie Fisher was, is and always will be part of the Lucasfilm family," the statement added. "She was our princess, our general and more importantly, our friend. We are still hurting from her loss. We cherish her memory and legacy as Princess Leia, and will always strive to honor everything she gave to 'Star Wars.'" Fisher appeared in four of the "Star Wars" films, beginning with the original 1977 movie and its two sequels, playing the intrepid Princess Leia as a young actress. She returned in Disney's 2015 reboot of the franchise, the "The Force Awakens," appearing as the more matronly General Leia Organa, leader of the Resistance movement fighting the evil First Order.—Reuters

LVMH cuts ties to crocodile farms criticized by animal rights group

PARIS — Luxury good maker LVMH said its Louis Vuitton brand had ceased all trading with Vietnamese farms which animal rights activist group Peta alleged mistreated crocodiles, whose skins are used to make handbags and other accessories.

“The LVMH group and its suppliers ceased all trading in 2014 with the farms named by Peta,” LVMH said on Friday,

adding that it sources its crocodile skins from other Asian suppliers.

Peta (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) said on Thursday it had bought one share in LVMH to enable it to put pressure on the French company to stop selling products made with exotic animal skins.

The animal rights group, which has long campaigned for changes

by luxury goods groups, released a film which it said showed poor conditions at farms that have supplied LVMH. It did not name the farms concerned.

This is not the first such campaign by Peta. In 2015 it alleged luxury goods group Hermes was sourcing skins from a crocodile farm in Texas which it also said was not treating the reptiles properly.

Actress and singer Jane Birkin responded by asking Hermes to remove her name from one of its best-selling handbags.

Hermes said it had investigated those allegations and re-assured Birkin that it imposed the highest ethical standards for the treatment of crocodiles on its suppliers and was conducting monthly checks on them. —Reuters



The logo of Louis Vuitton is seen on a handbag at a Louis Vuitton store in Bordeaux, southwestern France, on 4 October 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Prized pigeons fetch high prices at famed Turkish auction

SANLIURFA (Turkey) — As night-time approaches in Sanliurfa, southeastern Turkey, most of the alleyways of the city’s old bazaar are emptying out, except for one.

The bustle of daytime trading has died down, but on this little street, a stream of men carry cardboard boxes filled with pigeons to a cluster of three teahouses.

Here, they sell the birds at Sanliurfa’s famed auctions to a dedicated band of pigeon keepers and breeders, a pastime that has been thriving for hundreds of years across the region

and over the nearby border into war-torn Syria.

In a country where the minimum wage is about 1,400 Liras (\$367) a month, enthusiasts regularly easily spend hundreds of dollars for one bird.

“I once sold a pair of pigeons for 35,000 Turkish Lira,” says auctioneer İmam Dildas. “This is a passion, a hobby you cannot quit. I’ve been known to sell the fridge and my wife’s gold bracelets to pay for pigeons.”

Sanliurfa sits just 50km (30 miles) from Syria, in a southeastern region rocked

by its own clashes between government troops and Kurdish insurgents. But the trade has taken the turmoil in its stride and carried on.

In the early days of the conflict next door, there was a glut of birds on the market as enthusiasts from northern Syria fled into Turkey with their pigeons.

“Prices fell due to over-supply but as the conflict escalated and there were no more pigeons coming from Syria, prices rose again,” says 23-year-old breeder İsmail Ozbek.

He keeps about 200 pigeons — together worth

about 50,000 lira — in lofts fitted with alarms and closed circuit TV cameras.

At the auction, men sip tea and smoke cigarettes as Dildas picks up a bird and shows it to the crowd. He gives a starting bid price and buyers shout out their offers.

Prices vary from 30 to 3,500 Lira. Some birds wear silver adornments on their feathers or feet to boost their value.

At the end of the night, Dildas has sold around 13,000 Lira worth of birds. His commission is 10 percent.

When they are not trading, most of the city’s pigeon fanciers head to the rooftops at sunset and let their birds stretch their wings. Hundreds fill the sky — a familiar sight in the city — before following their training and heading home.

“The birds are my friends. They give me peace,” says 55-year-old enthusiast Resit Guzel.

He gives his 70 birds quality feed and regular vitamins.

“Upkeep ... costs 5 Lira a day, which is not much. Even if it cost me more, I wouldn’t mind,” he says.

“They have been my hobby for the last 40 years ... You can only understand if you keep pigeons.”

—Reuters

Zegna’s relaxed, classical-inspired looks open Milan’s men fashion

MILAN — Italy’s high-end tailor Ermenegildo Zegna launched Milan’s menswear fashion show on Friday with a relaxed yet sophisticated collection inspired by classical looks from the 1940s and 1950s.

From Cashmere suits to vegetable-leather overcoats, Zegna’s ‘Crafting Modernity’ collection blends exquisite tailoring with the fast-paced needs of the modern globetrotter, while the influence of sportswear brings a new look to formality.

The show is the first of just under 40 catwalk runs in the Italian fashion capital that will showcase designs for autumn and winter 2017/2018.

But some top brands including Kering’s Gucci and Bottega Veneta and Calvin Klein will be missing, shunning the men’s shows and opting instead to present combined collections at the more high profile women’s week.

Also off the calendar is Italian fashion group Roberto Cavalli, whose creative director Peter Dundas left in October and has not yet been replaced.

Zegna presented the first full season by Alessandro Sartori, who returned to the family-owned firm as artistic director in June.

The fashion house has moved away from three distinct brands — Z sportswear, classic Ermenegildo Zegna, and couture — opting for a single brand with three lines sharing colour palette,

styles and shapes, but keeping their own label.

“Our clients can mix pieces from the different lines more easily and freely,” Sartori told reporters ahead of the show.

He said his clothes transcended generations and were for the consumer with an “interesting personality”.

Models on Friday evening walked through ‘The Seven Heavenly Palaces’ installation of German painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer in a section of the Pirelli HangarBicocca, a former locomotive factory, on the outskirts of Milan.

The models wore over 250 new pieces, in 46 different full outfits, many of which inspired by the shapes, styles and details of the post-war years.

They wore Casentino coats, reinterpreted in alpaca cashmere, and suit ensembles made in cashmere jersey. Formal 2-button jackets were downplayed by padded sleeves and classical-cut trousers were made more sporty by cuffed hems.

Derbys were reinterpreted with light-weight materials to make them look like sneakers and brogue shoes made sturdier with silicone soles.

Outfits were prevalently in wool white, melange grey and vicuna beige, dotted with browns, greys, petrol blue a pond green. Milan’s menswear shows close on Tuesday with veteran designer Giorgio Armani. —Reuters



Pigeons are seen in a coop in Sanliurfa, Turkey, on 23 December, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(15-1-2017 07:00am ~ 16-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	The World’s Largest Book
07:50	Am	Excavation At Kawhmu
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	The Longest Living Siblings (Part-1)
08:48	Am	Toddy Palm Product Shop
09:03	Am	News
09:27	Am	Tourism development of Bagan
09:42	Am	My Tour Around Hopone City
09:55	Am	Modifying Natural Thanakha Bark into Ready-make Skin Care Product
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Sayit-Wyne Girls

10:48 Am Dhamma School

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Saturday 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	Mrauk U, Treasure Trove of Rakhine Culture
07:46	Pm	Today Myanmar: CBT in Kampetlet Township
07:55	Pm	Myanmar Harpist
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Sai Htee Hseng or an Exceptional Music Star from Shan Plateaus (Ep-3)
08:53	Pm	Crocodile Keeper

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)- Saturday 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)

Serena defers engagement joy to focus on Melbourne effort

MELBOURNE — Serena Williams drive to reach the overall record for grand slam titles was never more evident at Melbourne Park on Saturday when she revealed that her engagement to fiancée Alexis Ohanian was being forced to take a back seat.

The world number two announced her commitment to the social media entrepreneur shortly before the New Year and while it was “great”, she was pushing it to the back of her mind, at least until after Melbourne Park.

“I’ve said from the beginning, I just didn’t want to think about it until after Australia because... grand slams mean a lot to me,” she told reporters ahead of next week’s first round clash with

Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic.

“I was, ‘well, I’m not going to think about it’.

“It’s almost a little unreal right now because I haven’t taken it in. I won’t allow it to sink in because I’m so focused... (on) training, cardio, all kinds of stuff.”

Williams equalled Steffi Graf’s Open era record of 22 grand slam titles last year when she clinched her seventh Wimbledon crown and sits just two away from the all-time record held by Australia’s Margaret Court.

Following her London victory, she played in just two more tournaments, losing to Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina in the third round at the Rio Olympics before being upset by Karolina Pliskova in the

US Open semi-finals.

Williams then promptly shut down her season to have treatment on a troublesome shoulder injury.

The 35-year-old Williams returned to the court in Auckland last week but was upset by fellow American Madison Brengle in the second round, then created a minor controversy when she said she could not get to Melbourne fast enough.

Her quest for her seventh Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup begins on Tuesday when temperatures are expected to top 38 degrees Celsius against Bencic, who could be her most dangerous first round opponent in years.

Bencic was ranked as high as world number seven last February but struggled with injury and poor form over the remainder of 2016, leading her to drop down to 48th ahead of the season’s opening grand slam.

The 19-year-old, however, made the fourth round at Melbourne Park last year and beat the American the last time they met, in the Toronto semi-finals in 2015.

“She’s done well here before. She’s had a good win over me. It’s never easy for me,” Williams said.

“So I always go out there, and all I can do is do my best. I didn’t come here to lose in the first round, or the second round, or at all.

“If I can play the way I’ve been practising, it will be fine.” —Reuters



Serena Williams of the US attends a news conference ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia, on 14 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Karate championship tournament held in Yangon



An athlete contests in “Kata” event. PHOTO: TIN SOE (MYANMAR ALIN)

THE second Takuya Taniyama Cup Karate-do Championship tournament organised by the Yangon Region Sport and Physical Education Committee was held at Bogyoke Aung San Indoor Stadium in Yangon in yesterday morning.

At the tournament, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyto Minn Thein delivered the opening speech. Next, Takuya Taniyama who has been coaching Myanmar Karate-do National Teams since 1995, greeted the teams taking

part in the championship tournament. Yangon Region chief minister, ministers, officials from the Japanese Embassy, chairman of Myanmar Karate-Do Federation Dr. Win Zaw Myint, executive members of Myanmar Karate-Do Federation and officials from sport and physical education department watched the first day matches.

There are 55 competitors from nine Karate-do teams in the tournament, which continues today.—Tin Soe (Myanma Alin)

Murray confidence sky high despite final hurdle failures

Britain’s Andy Murray serves during a training session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia, on 14 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS



MELBOURNE — Losing five Melbourne Park finals would leave many believing they were destined to never win the Australian Open title but world number one Andy Murray remains confident that this could be the year he lays his demons to rest.

Murray after all, has solid form on the blue hardcourts in Melbourne, where he is arguably the second-most consistent man at the tournament this decade — after six-times champion Novak Djokovic.

The Briton has appeared in five finals at the venue since 2010, the same as Djokovic. Unfortunately for Murray, the Serb has won all five of his, including four against the Scot.

The 29-year-old Murray’s confidence, however, has been boosted by his run of form in the second half of last year when he clinched his second Wimbledon title and Olympic gold medal. He also finished the year as world number one for the first time, having defeated Djokovic in the ATP Tour World finals in London.

“I obviously feel pretty confident after the way that last season finished,” Murray told reporters on Saturday ahead of his first round clash with Ukraine’s Illya Marchenko. “I do love it here. I love the conditions.

“I have played really well here over the years, and just haven’t managed to obviously get over the final hurdle.

“But, yeah, I think I’m in a decent position, for sure, to do it. I think I have a chance to win here. Obviously nothing’s guaranteed.

“But why not? I’m playing well. Practice has been good. I feel healthy. I’ll give it a good shot.”

Apart from winning the ti-

tle for the first time and probably holding onto the top ranking, Murray has an added incentive this year after admitting his mind was elsewhere during last year’s final.

His wife Kim was pregnant with their first child, while his father-in-law Nigel Sears, who was coaching Ana Ivanovic, collapsed in the stands during the Serb’s third round match and was taken to hospital.

Murray left just hours after the final, with his wife giving birth about a week afterwards.

“It was a tough tournament. Obviously the situation with Kim and the baby coming was tough,” he added.

“Then with what happened with Nigel made it really awkward because there was times where I was thinking... ‘I want to go home’, but then I’m not just going to leave whilst my father-in-law is also in hospital.

“It was tough, and certainly not a position I would want to put myself in again, or my wife, or any of my family really.”—Reuters