

President says economic growth impossible without regional stability

SITTWAY, 26 Dec— Priority must be given to the rule of law as economic growth is impossible without regional stability, President U Thein Sein on Friday told elders of towns at the eastern prayer's hall of a pagoda in Kyauktaw, a town in Rakhine State, officials said.

The development of individual townships will ensure that of the whole region and the nation as a whole, with the president urging them to make best use of natural favourable conditions to develop their own region through the promotion of exports.

He called for local people and the local government to create new levels of cooperation in the process of social and economic development in the region.

Prior to his meeting with local people, the president offered flowers, water, lights and gold foils at the Maha Muni Buddha Image at the pagoda.

At the U Uttama Hall in Sittway, he met with members of the local government, parliamentari-



President U Thein Sein being welcomed by locals in Kyauktaw, Rakhine State.—MNA

ans, departmental officials, political parties and civil society organizations, and

received briefings on measures being undertaken for regional development rang-

ing from power supply to the construction of transportation infrastructure.

Speaking at the meeting, President U Thein Sein said that the world has wit-

nessed that coastal regions are the first to develop on (See page 3)

Full rehearsal for 67th Anniversary Independence Day's Grand Military Review parade continues



NAY PYI TAW, 26 Dec—A full rehearsal continued for the 67th Anniversary Independence Day's Grand Military Review parade in Nay Pyi Taw on Friday.

Military columns of Defence Services (Army,

Navy and Air), flag bearers, bands, men and women military officers columns, columns of Myanmar police force, Myanmar Red Cross Brigade, Fire Brigade, departmental personnel's columns, columns repre-

sending regions and states, Myanmar Scouts column, armoured and artillery columns participated in the rehearsal.

Helicopters and fighter planes of the Tatmadaw joined the rehearsal.

MNA

Female military service personnel participate in full rehearsal of 67th

Anniversary Independence Day's Grand Military Review parade.—MNA

State-owned sawmills, wood-based factories to be leased out under long-term contracts

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 26 Dec—Myanmar Timber Enterprise under the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry will lease out its 15 sawmills and three wood-based factories across the country to private entrepreneurs under a long-term lease agreement as of the 2014-2015 financial year.

It is aimed at reducing government involvement as well as promoting public sector participation in the timber industry, U Win Naing, a Deputy General Manager of the Enterprise, told the Global New Light of Myanmar on Friday.

The ministry is planning to announce its invitation for expression of interest (EOI) in the first or second week of January through state-run

newspapers.

The enterprise will notify successful individual applicants for tender application after screening their measures for corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental impact assessment (EIA) and social impact assessment (SIA). Those mills and factories will be leased out to the interested applicants who can actually run it on a five or 10 year contract, U Win Naing added.

"I believe that the private sector will be able to carry out some works that the government cannot do," he said, saying that the timber sector is likely to see production of valued-added wood products thanks to the government's reform.

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Natogyi to hold Buddha Pujaniya of Shinpin Tha Dun Oo Pagoda

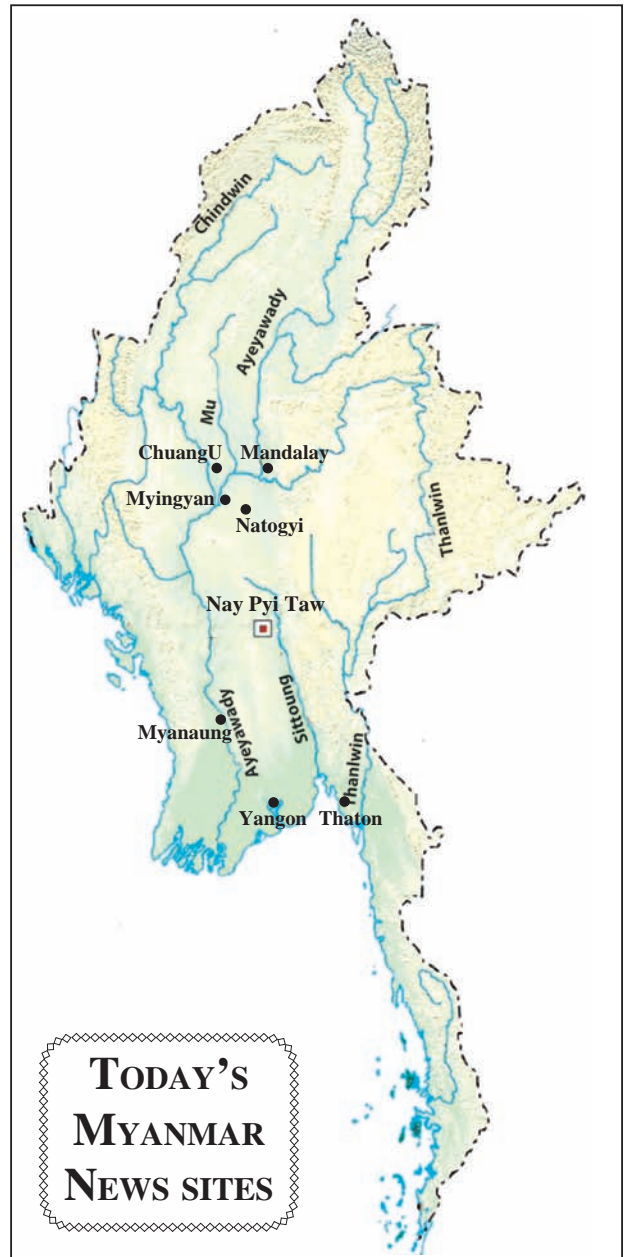
NATOGYI, 26 Dec — A Buddha Pujaniya of Shinpin Tha Dun Oo Pagoda will be held in Natogyi, Mandalay Region, from 1st Waxing Day of Tabodwe to fullmoon day of Tabodwe, (20 January to 3 February 2015), a member of the pagoda's board of trustees told media.

The ancient pagoda was built by King Kunhsaw Kyaungphyu in the early Bagan period (1001-1021 AD). A plan is under way to organize the 57th Buddha Pujaniya festival and offer gold foils to the pagoda.

Buddhist monks will recite Pathana treatise for nine days. Local people will donate meals to over 300 members of the Sangha.

Two theatrical performing troupes will entertain the local people for six nights, free of charge.

Moreover, the pagoda board of trustees plans to hold traditional sports events such as races, a Chinlone (caneball) event and greasing pole contests.—*Htay Myint Maung*



Road upgrades in progress at Yadana Shwegu Pagoda in ChaungU Township



CHAUNGU, 26 Dec — Under the arrangement of Sagaing Region government, a pagoda board of trustees is upgrading roads on four sides of Yadana Shwegu Pagoda in ChaungU, Monywa District, as of 20 November.

The region government donated 38 barrels of tar and well-wishers gave K10.3 million to the pagoda's board of trustees for the project.

As the roads on four sides are 1,700 feet long in total, officials estimate that placing of asphalt on them will cost about K15.7 million.

ChaungU Township Development Affairs Committee is providing machinery and technical assistance to the board for the project.

Township IPRD

Pobbathiri Tsp gets new asphalt road in rural area

NAY PYI TAW, 26 Dec — A ceremony to inaugurate a newly built asphalt road leading to the entrance of Zalokkyi Village, in Pobbathiri Township of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, was held there on Friday.

Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Thay Htay explained the council's efforts to develop the township, while Director (Engineer) U Aung Moe of Nay Pyi Taw Develop-

ment Committee reported on construction of the road.

Council member U Than Htay, committee member U Kyaw Myint and district's deputy commissioner U Tun Zaw formally opened the road and strolled along it.

The local authorities upgraded the 2,000-foot-long road from an earthen one to an asphalt one so as to improve the transportation situation for the local people.—*Shwe Kokko*

Labour shortage causes daily wages to rise in upper Myanmar

MYINGYAN, 26 Dec — Workers in various fields are getting higher wages to help them cope with hikes in prices of commodities. Due to a shortage of workers, entrepreneurs are offering those workers incentives, said a local entrepreneur.

Farming workers get daily wages ranging from K2,500 to K4,000. At harvest time, their wages rise above K4,000.

Some local entrepreneurs in Natogyi engaged in production of

petrified wood pay their workers K8,000 per day. Due to a shortage of skilled workers, carpenters and masons get daily wages of K8,000 each.

Not only factories and workshops but also farming works in various townships across the nation need a large number of workers. At present, entrepreneurs and landowners from PyinOoLwin, Muse, Lashio and Mandalay recruit labourers from rural areas with incentives.—*Htay Myint Maung*



President says economic . . . Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets farmers in Sagaing Region

(from page 1)

their own when natural resources are wisely used.

Regarding his government's efforts to modernize Rakhine State, the president said that exclusive funds have been allotted to regional development apart from regular funds for improved transportation and power supply.

He attached importance to the development of cottage industries, small and medium enterprises and fisheries for regional development, saying that new job opportunities will be created by ongoing projects of industrial zones and deep-sea ports in Kyaukphyu and Made Island.

He stressed the importance of educated human resources to manage natural resources in the region, urging educators to create a better future for young people.

Myanmar needs to lift itself out of poverty

by tapping its rich natural resources and educated human resources, with the president calling for all citizens to participate in the country's political reforms.

He cited as critical an end to the country's armed conflicts, which he said present an obstacle to national development, reaffirming the importance of roundtable negotiations for eternal peace.

Regular income is a top priority in the fight against poverty, he said, adding that a foreign investment law has been enacted to attract more foreign investments.

Pay for government employees at remote regions have been doubled, with the president saying that plans for the establishment of employees provident funds are under way to help them with their medical, educational and living expenses of their families.

MNA

SHWEDO, 26 Dec — Quick actions are needed from parliamentarians and authorities concerned to implement the needs of farmers for ensuring benefits to them, said Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann at a meeting with farmers in Shwedo on Friday.

Speaking to more than

5,000 farmers from eight districts in Sagaing region, the Speaker assured them of commitments from Parliament and the government to improving livelihoods of farmers, vowing to take responsible actions for the sake of the country and its people.

In his speech, he welcomed farmers' questions and proposals, calling them constructive and describing

the meeting as a tangible result of democratic reforms.

Calling for participation of all in transforming the nation into a modern and developed one, the speaker expressed his belief that the meeting will be of great benefit to farmers in the region and citizens throughout the country as well.

After the meeting, the

Speaker viewed round educative and agricultural produce booths on display at the ceremony.

Also present at the meeting were Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Tha Aye, Region Hluttaw Speaker U Thin Hlaing, the chairs of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) committees, parliamentarians, region ministers and guests.—MNA

Yangon Zoo, Sapporo Maruyama Zoo to exchange animals

NAY PYI TAW, 26 Dec — Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun received Vice Mayor of Sapporo City Mr Noriaka Ikushima and party of Japan at the ministry on Friday.

They discussed exchange of animals between Sapporo Maruyama zoological gardens of Japan and Yangon zoological gardens in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Myanmar-Japan diplomatic relations, technical assistance to be provided by Sapporo Maruyama Zoo to Yangon Zoo, establishment of elephant sanctuaries, care of domesticated elephants, drawing



Union Minister U Win Tun holds talks with Vice Mayor of Sapporo City Mr Noriaka Ikushima and party of Japan.—MNA

of elephant conservation action plan and future co-operation plan.

Yangon Zoo will send elephants to the Japanese zoo that will exchange gi-

raffe, zebra, flamingo and other animals of rare species.—MNA

Kyaukpadaung Township gets fire truck, ambulance

NAY PYI TAW, 26 Dec — The government emphasizes fulfillment of requirements of rural people for uplifting their living standard, Union Minister at the President Office U Hla Tun told the ceremony to donate a fire truck and an ambulance to Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region, on 25 December.

At the people's sports ground, the union minister said local authorities are to undertake township development with the cooperation of people, stressing the need to systematically use the fire truck and ambulance with regular main-

tenance.

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin explained donation of the fire truck and ambulance.

The union minister presented footballs to township sports officer and the fire truck to an official of Township Fire Services Department and the deputy minister, an ambulance to head of township health department.

They watched the township sports and physical education committee chairman's cup inter-club football tournament.

MNA

Local youths take part in Mya Ayeya Sports Festival in Myaungmya

NAY PYI TAW, 26 Dec — Mya Ayeya Sports Festival was kicked off in Myaungmya, Ayeyawady Region, on 25 December.

Union Minister

for Sports U Tint Hsan launched the cycling contest in front of Myaungmya Township Hospital. He presented prizes to winners in the mini mara-

thon event.

In the afternoon, the union minister and Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region U Thein Aung attended the ceremony to mark opening of the sports festival at Naungyoe gymnasium.

At the opening ceremony, basic education students and trainees from Myaungmya Education College performed aerobic exercises and athletes from Myanmar Gymnastic Federation demonstrated their skills.

Mya Ayeya Sports Festival will be held from 24 to 27 December with 17 sports events.—MNA



Missile carriers taking part in rehearsal for 67th Anniversary Independence Day's Grand Military Review Parade.(News on page 1)—MNA

State-owned sawmills, wood-based factories . . .

(from page 1)

It helps support the government to earn more revenue and to create more job opportunities for locals. Locals welcome the hand-over of the state-owned businesses to public entrepreneurs.

There are 84 sawmills and wood-based factories

owned by the ministry. Apart from seven mills and factories, the ministry plans to lease them out to public entrepreneurs on a phase-by-phase basis.

Currently, a bill is being drafted by the ministry to turn Myanma Timber Enterprise into a private-owned economic corporation.—GNLM

Aceh marks decade since Indian Ocean tsunami

BANDA ACEH, (Indonesia), 26 Dec — Thousands of people in Indonesia's Aceh Province paused in remembrance on Friday on the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami that killed more than 230,000 people and displaced 1.6 million on 26 December, 2004.

Gathering at the Blang Padang Field in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, the participants, clad in white clothing, prayed for the dead, the missing and the injured and for a better Aceh.

On Thursday evening, similar throngs had gathered at the Baiturrahman Central Grand Mosque, which 10 years ago survived the 9.1 magnitude earthquake and the ensuing tsunami that killed 170,000 in Aceh, to also pray for the dead, the missing and the survivors from around the rim of the Indian Ocean.

"There are good lessons learned from the tsunami disaster. Reflection, appreciation, and awakening for all of us," Aceh Gov Zaini Abdullah said at the Friday commemoration.

Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla highlighted with special thanks the millions of donors from around the world who had helped rebuild Aceh.

Kalla also reminded the crowd of the pact struck in the wake of tsunami that brought peace to Aceh after years of armed conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, GAM.

"We tried to immediately to make peace, because how we could have reconstructed if there was no peace," Kalla said.

Kalla, well-known to the Acehnese people, was one of the main negotiators that forged the Helsinki Peace Treaty that ended the

decades of conflict in 2005.

Among 35 representatives from donor-countries at the commemoration who were awarded "Thanks to the World" and "Sri Paduka Tanang Seberang" titles, Japanese representative Shuya Takahashi from Miyagi Prefecture said Aceh and his prefecture share a common grief.

"I felt the same grief between Aceh and Japan for the lost," Takahashi said of Banda Aceh and his hometown of Higashimatsushima, which are sister cities.

Higashimatsushima is also one of the Japanese towns and cities struck by a massive tsunami on 11 March, 2011.

In the 10 years since the Indian Ocean Tsunami, more than \$7 billion has poured into Aceh from national and international donors for reconstruction and reconciliation.

But despite the best

efforts of governments and donors, many people have moved back to the coastal areas inundated a decade ago by the 30-metre tsunami. Recent research has shown Aceh is an area of tsunami cycles and the massive quake and tsunami in 2004 was particularly deadly and destructive in the province because its dense population tends to live in the region's lowlands.

"I am sorry that long-term planning to relocate residents to safer places has yet to be completed," Kalla told the crowd.

And it could be many more years before those plans to come to fruition, if ever. Pen, 40, lives in a house just 4 metres from the coast.

"Whenever we move, somehow, we will die. It can be because of tsunami or because other things, so why would we have to move?" asked Pen, repeat-



A woman takes pictures of her daughter in front of the Aceh Tsunami Museum in Banda Aceh, on 25 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

ing feelings expressed by many Acehnese.

Gov Zaini Abdullah said many people have forgotten, not the dead, but the extent of the danger the lowlands represent.

"They have already let go," he told *Kyodo News* on Thursday.

And life does go on. Muhammad Aulianda,

20, said life was hard after all his family members were swept away by the tsunami when he was at 10, but now he is able to earn enough as a security worker while still studying at university.

"The past is hard, but it was the past. Let's gaze toward the future," Aulianda said.

Kyodo News

China vows to boost ties with Vietnam along correct path

HANOI, 26 Dec — China's top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng vowed in Hanoi on Thursday to enhance high-level exchanges with Vietnam and promote bilateral ties along a correct path.

Yu, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), arrived in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 25 Dec, 2014, for an official visit.—XINHUA

remarks while meeting with Le Hong Anh, a Politburo member and standing secretary of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) Central Committee.

Yu arrived in Hanoi earlier on Thursday for a three-day official visit to Vietnam. He spoke positively of Le Hong Anh's latest visit to China in August as special envoy of the CPV Central Committee General Secretary Nguyen Phu

Trong, adding the visit has contributed significantly to the improvement of China-Vietnam ties.

High-level exchanges between the two ruling parties had played a leading role in the development of bilateral relations, Yu said.

"My current visit to Vietnam, commissioned by the CPC Central Committee and General Secretary Xi Jinping, aims to enhance mutual trust, build consensus and boost progress of China-Vi-

etnam relations in a correct path," he said.

China is willing to enhance communication with Vietnam, and deal with bilateral ties from a strategic view and long-term perspective, Yu added.

Le Hong Anh, for his part, recalled his visit to China which he said had achieved positive progress. He said both sides have the responsibility to inherit and carry forward their traditional friendship fostered by the older generations of their leaders, such as late Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh and late Chairman Mao Zedong of the CPC Central Committee.

Vietnam hopes to further enhance high-level contacts with China, boost non-governmental exchanges and cooperation in various areas, he said.

He called on both sides to implement the consensus reached between their senior leaders regarding maritime issues, and properly settle their differences. Le Hong Anh expected Yu's visit to further push forward bilateral all-round strategic cooperation partnership.

Yu is visiting Hanoi from Thursday to Saturday at the invitation of the CPV Central Committee and the Fatherland Front of Vietnam.—Xinhua



Yu Zhengsheng (1st L), a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), arrives in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 25 Dec, 2014, for an official visit.—XINHUA

Japan, China, S Korea ministerial talks unlikely by year-end

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Japan, China and South Korea have yet to set a date for a proposed trilateral foreign ministerial meeting, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said on Friday, making it likely that they will miss the goal of convening it by the end of the year.

"A specific date has yet to be decided at this point, although (the three governments) are continuing coordination, centering on South Korea, the chair country (of the trilateral framework)," Kishida told reporters when asked about the possibility of holding the meeting by the year-end. Kishida said Japan has attached great importance to a trilateral foreign ministerial meeting, a prelude to a trilateral summit, as part of efforts to "ad-

vance trilateral relations in a future-oriented fashion."

Due to strained ties between Japan and China and Japan and South Korea over history and territory issues, a trilateral summit has not been held since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe returned to power in December 2012.

Turning to North Korea, Kishida said Japan has yet to receive a report from Pyongyang about findings from its new round of investigations into Japanese nationals it abducted, despite a call by some officials on the country to do so by the end of the year.

"Japan will continue to demand that North Korea carry out the investigation rapidly and report the findings promptly and honestly," he said.—*Kyodo News*

Three crew members die after cargo ship sinks off northern Japan

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Three crew members have been dead after a Cambodian cargo ship sank off the Aomori Prefecture in the Sea of Japan on early Friday.

The 1,915-ton "MING GUANG" ship sank approximately 18 km off the Aomori coast at around 6:00 am local time in stormy waters. All 10 crew members have been rescued by helicopter and patrol boat but three of them were confirmed dead after being taken to hospital.

Two of the victims came from China and one from Cambodia. Another two Bangladeshis and five Chinese crew members have been rescued. According to Japan's coast guard, the vessel was carrying scrap items to South Korea from Hokkaido. It reported to the coast guard office at around 11:40 pm Thursday that the vessel was submerged and one crew member was injured.—Xinhua

Kiev and rebels to exchange hundreds of prisoners soon: security service

KIEV, 26 Dec — Kiev and rebels will exchange hundreds of prisoners soon, an aide to the head of Ukraine's SBU state security service said on Friday, as the military reported a slight increase in rebel attacks.

The agreement to swap 125 Ukrainian servicemen for 225 rebels held by Kiev followed peace talks between envoys of Ukraine, Russia, the rebels and European security watchdog OSCE on Wednesday.

"We've prepared 225 people, which we will hand over. The main thing is for this not to fall through now," the SBU's Markiyano Lubkivsky told *Reuters* by telephone. The uprising by rebels began a month after Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in March, following the popular overthrow of Ukraine's Moscow-backed president, and has killed more than 4,700 people.

The pro-Western government in Kiev accuses Russia of orchestrating the rebellion in Ukraine's east, a charge denied by



Rebels stand guard next to cars damaged during fighting between rebels and Ukrainian government forces near Donetsk Sergey Prokofiev International Airport, eastern Ukraine, on 16 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

Moscow. Exchanging prisoners is one of the criteria of a 12-point peace protocol, which also includes a ceasefire, agreed by Kiev and rebels in September. But most of the plan has not yet been implemented due to repeated violations of the ceasefire and because separatists defied Kiev by holding leadership elections. Ukraine's Interfax news agency quoted a rebel representative as saying the prisoners would be

swapped by 30 December. Lubkivsky did not confirm this date, but said the exchange would happen "soon". It is not known exactly how many prisoners are currently held by the two sides, but Ukraine's military said this month around 600 Ukrainians were in rebel hands.

Around 1,300 people have been killed since the ceasefire was agreed in September, according to the United Nations, but the

fighting has lessened significantly in December.

On Friday, however, the military said rebels had slightly stepped up their attacks on Ukrainian positions in the east of the country. "In the past two days, (rebel) fighters started using artillery and GRAD rocket launchers. Attacks have intensified to a minor extent," military spokesman Andriy Lysenko told *Reuters* by phone.

Reuters

Floods in S Thailand kill 13

BANGKOK, 26 Dec — Floods in southern Thailand have killed 13 people and injured five others since 14 December, the director general of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department said on Friday.

Eight provinces had been hit hard by heavy rain-triggered floods, including Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Trang. Chatchai Promlert was quoted by the *Nation* newspaper as saying.

Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani had seen the situation return to nor-

mal while the remaining six provinces were still coping with inundation, Deputy Interior Minister Suthee Makboon said.

In Yala alone, more than 50,000 residents have been affected by flooding, with three people reportedly drowned and two others injured. Thousands have been evacuated. The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation had worked with the military and other agencies to help those affected, Chatchai said. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha visited flood victims in Tak Bai district of Narathiwat on Friday. — *Xinhua*

Iran begins military exercises in southern waters

TEHRAN, 26 Dec — Iran on Thursday started massive military drills in the country's southern waters, Press TV reported.

The six-day military exercise, involving army, naval and air force units and dubbed "Mohammad Rasoulallah," or the messenger of Allah, will cover an area from the east of Strait of Hormuz to the southern

parts of Gulf of Aden, it said. One objective of the maneuvers is to boost Iran's defence capabilities, Brig Gen Abdolrahim Mousavi, the second-in-command of the Iranian army, was quoted as saying. The army also wants to convey a message of peace and friendship to neighbouring states through the drills, Mousavi said.

Xinhua

Japan Post to list shares along with banking, insurance arms

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Japan Post Holdings Co said on Friday that it will list its shares sometime after the middle of the next fiscal year starting in April, together with those of its banking and insurance arms, in one of the biggest stock listings in the country.

The initial public offerings involving Japan Post Bank and Japan Post Insurance Co could possibly be as large as the one by NTT Docomo Inc in 1998, when the mobile carrier was valued at about 8.8 trillion yen (about \$73 billion). The plan will mark the final phase of the privatization of the nation's gigantic postal services, a long-standing reform initiative launched in 2005 by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. — *Kyodo News*

Putin blames Russian gov't for bad economic situation

MOSCOW, 26 Dec — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday blamed the government for the current economic difficulties.

"(The difficulties) are not solely tied to some sorts of external limitations brought by sanctions or the overall international environment, they are tied to unattended defects that

have accumulated over the years," Putin said during a government meeting.

Although efforts have been taken in order to change the Russian economic structure into an innovative one, more should be done to meet the high demand of businesses, he said.

The president espe-

cially named the fulfillment of social commitments and the stabilization of the currency as priorities for the Russian government.

It is necessary to ensure the functioning of vital infrastructure, transportation, communications and power grids, especially during the holiday season and the entire winter peri-

od, *Interfax* quoted Putin as saying. At an annual end-of-year Press conference, Putin called for more government work to coordinate with the Central Bank on economic and currency strategies, adding that it would take at most two years for the Russian economy to rebound in a worst-case scenario. — *Xinhua*

Prosecutors won't indict former Tepco executives over Fukushima disaster

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Japanese prosecutors will likely decide again not to indict three former Tokyo Electric Power Co executives over their handling of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, media reported on Friday, but a rarely used citizen's panel could still force an indictment.

The Tokyo District Prosecutors Office has been reinvestigating the case after a citizens' panel ruled in July that three former Tepco executives, including then-chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata, should be indicted over their handling of the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

The prosecutors are

likely to finalize their decision not to issue indictments early next year because of insufficient evidence, the *Yomiuri* newspaper and *Kyodo news* agency said.

An official with the prosecutors office said no decisions had been made yet.

If the prosecutors again decline to take up the case, as some experts expect, the 11-member panel of unidentified citizens can force an indictment by court-appointed lawyers if eight members of the panel vote in favour.

Prosecutors last year declined to charge more than 30 Tepco and government officials who had



A general view of a building of Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) tsunami-crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is seen from a bus during a media tour at the plant in Fukushima prefecture on 12 June, 2013. — REUTERS

been accused by residents of ignoring the risks of natural disasters and failing to respond appropriately when the crisis struck.

After a review of evidence, the citizens' panel ruled that three of them — Katsumata and former executive vice presidents Sakae Muto and Ichiro Takekuro — failed to protect the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant despite warnings it faced big tsunamis.

Prosecutorial Review Commissions, made up of citizen appointees, are a rarely used but high-profile feature of Japan's legal system introduced after World War Two to curb bureaucratic over-reach.

Reuters

LONDON, 26 Dec — Britain's Queen Elizabeth used her annual Christmas Day broadcast on Thursday to advocate reconciliation, especially in Scotland where an unsuccessful independence referendum earlier this year polarised public opinion.

Channelling the spirit of a brief World War One Christmas truce between British and German soldiers 100 years ago, the 88-year-old monarch held the historic moment out as an example of how irreconcilable differences can sometimes be bridged.

"Of course, reconciliation takes different forms. In Scotland after the referendum many felt great disappointment, while others felt great relief; and bridging these differences will take time," she said.

Scots voted by a

UK's Queen Elizabeth urges reconciliation in post-referendum Scotland

margin of 55-45 to reject independence from the United Kingdom in a September referendum after a sometimes bitter two-year campaign which divided friends and families.

Alex Salmond, the former leader of the defeated pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) suggested before the vote that his party would accept the result, however close, and not resurrect the matter for years.

But the SNP has since staged an unexpected recovery and, under its new leader, Nicola Sturgeon, has made clear it will work towards a second referen-

dum. The divisions that opened up during the referendum campaign remain raw.

"Sometimes it seems that reconciliation stands little chance in the face of war and discord," said the queen. "But, as the Christmas truce a century ago reminds us, peace and goodwill have lasting power in the hearts of men and women."—Reuters

Britain's Queen Elizabeth leaves a Christmas Day morning service at the church on the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, eastern England on 25 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS



Two more NY men arrested for threatening police after officers killed

NEW YORK, 26 Dec — Two more men have been arrested for threatening New York police, including one who called the precinct headquarters of two officers killed as they sat in their patrol car and asked to speak to one of them, a police spokesman said on Thursday.

The arrests bring to six the number of those detained for threats against the New York Police Department since officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu were shot on Saturday by a gunman seeking revenge for unarmed black men killed by police.

Tyrone Melville, 41, of Manhattan, was arrested on

Wednesday after he allegedly called the switchboard of Brooklyn's 84th Precinct,

where the slain officers were based, said Sergeant Carlos Nieves, a police

spokesman.

Requesting to speak to Ramos, Melville asked if the bullets had been removed from the dead officer's head so "he could kill more cops," Nieves said. Melville was charged with making terroristic threats, a felony, and aggravated harassment, a misdemeanor.

Jose Maldonado, 26, was charged with making terroristic threats after allegedly threatening on his Facebook page to kill police officers and posting pictures of weapons, Nieves said. Maldonado also was arrested on Wednesday.

Melville is being represented by a public defender

who could not be reached for comment. Information about Maldonado's legal representation was not immediately available.

Four other people have been charged with making terroristic threats or making false 911 calls, Nieves said.

ABC News reported that the department had received more than 40 threats since Ramos and Liu were shot. Nieves could not confirm that number, but said investigations were continuing.

Compared with other countries, the United States has a strong guarantee of

free speech even when the speech displays racism, hatred or violence.

State laws, however, generally make it a crime to communicate a specific threat against a police officer or anyone else. So despite the federal speech guarantees, prosecutors have won convictions for threats against officers.

US Vice President Joe Biden will travel to New York to attend the funeral service for Ramos on Saturday. Funeral arrangements for Liu, whose family is in China, are still pending.

Reuters



A sign of support is left at the makeshift memorial at the site where two police officers were shot in the head in the Brooklyn borough of New York on 22 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

Japan, Sweden affirm Arctic cooperation

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Japan and Sweden agreed on Thursday to boost cooperation for the sustainable development of the Arctic region through a framework involving Japan and eight Nordic and Baltic nations, according to a Foreign Ministry official.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his Swedish counterpart Margot Wallstrom reached the agreement in a meeting in Tokyo, about two months after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and leaders of the Nordic-Baltic 8, or NB8, held a first summit and vowed to cooperate on Arctic issues.

Tokyo's developing ties with the eight states comes as China has become an active player in the environmentally fragile Arctic

region through development of natural resources and the use of shipping routes.

Kishida and Wallstrom also agreed to increase co-

operation so Japan and the European Union, of which Sweden is a member, accelerate negotiations for a Japan-EU free trade agree-

ment and strike a broad accord in 2015, the official said. Wallstrom told Kishida that a Japan-EU free trade deal is important for a trading nation like Sweden and that her country aims to conclude the negotiations at an early date, according to a news release issued by the Foreign Ministry after the meeting.

Wallstrom was quoted as saying that Sweden appreciates Japan's proactive contribution to the maintenance and building of peace, an area to which Stockholm also actively contributes.

Among other issues, the ministers exchanged views on the crisis in Ukraine, women's empowerment and reforms of the UN Security Council, according to the ministry.

Kyodo News



Visiting Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom (R) and Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida shake hands at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo on 24 Dec, 2014, prior to their talks.—KYODO NEWS

Firebomb attack wounds Israeli father and daughter in West Bank

JERUSALEM, 26 Dec — A firebomb attack on a car in the occupied West Bank left an 11-year-old Israeli girl severely burned and her father injured on Thursday, the Israeli military said.

The Israeli military said the suspected Palestinian attack was near the Ma'ale Shomron Jewish settlement, north of the West Bank city of Nablus.

Video footage of the incident obtained by Reuters TV showed firefighters trying to douse the flames engulfing a vehicle on the side of a road after darkness fell. The military did not say whether the victims of the attack were settlers, who are bitterly resented by many Palestinians.

Palestinians want to establish a state in East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and Gaza, territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

US-brokered peace talks between the two sides broke down in April. A July-August war between Israel and Islamist Hamas, which controls Gaza, saw the deaths of more than 2,100 Palestinians and 67 Israelis.

On Wednesday Israeli troops shot and killed a member of Hamas' armed wing in the Gaza Strip, and an Israeli soldier was wounded. Recent months have seen an upsurge in violent confrontations in the West Bank and of attacks by Palestinians inside Israel.

Reuters

WORLD

Syria's war enters new year more fragmented than ever

BEIRUT, 26 Dec — Deep into its fourth year of conflict, Syria looks less and less like a state than a patchwork of warring fiefdoms, making outside powers more reluctant to intervene even as it becomes more destabilising for the region.

The United States finally entered Syria's war this year, three years after President Barack Obama said Bashar al-Assad must leave power. But it did so only reluctantly, to staunch advances by Islamic State fighters in neighbouring Iraq, and without challenging Assad.

With over 200,000 now dead and millions displaced, Syria's disintegration may worsen even further due to the surprising drop in oil prices in December. Added economic pressure may make it tougher for any faction to gain a decisive advantage. Attempts to find a "political solution" which international powers say is the only way forward — possibly in the form of a set-

tlement between Assad and his opponents — have gone nowhere.

Now it is not even clear who would be party to any future solution. The strongest anti-Assad forces are mainly hardline Islamists such as Islamic State, also known as ISIS, and al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front, who are as abhorrent to the West as they are to Assad's backers Russia and Iran.

Many analysts say Western powers and even staunch regional Assad opponents such as Saudi Arabia now see the war's dominant factions as groups they cannot support, limiting their options.

"The idea of the opposition has evaporated for Saudi Arabia," said Nasser Qandil, a Lebanese newspaper editor and former lawmaker with good relations with Damascus. "They know that the option is ISIS and Nusra or the regime. There's no third option."

Instead, he says, many



Rebel fighters climb a ladder to the justice palace near Aleppo's historic citadel controlled by forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad on 23 Dec, 2014.

REUTERS

regional players, and perhaps even Western powers, are choosing what he called a strategy of "retreat" — essentially leaving Syria's combatants to fight it out on their own.

Washington says supporting Assad's "moderate" opponents is part of its strategy. But by bombing Islamic State positions daily and carrying out a handful of strikes against Nusra Front, it has freed Assad's air force to hit

other opponents elsewhere.

The opposition forces that Western powers have half-heartedly supported are now splintered into hundreds of groups, many with competing ideologies and interests.

Kurdish militias in the northeast have fought against Islamic State in coordination with the US-led coalition — as in the more than three-month battle for the border town of Kobani — but play little role

outside their ethnic enclave.

Pro-Assad militias are also playing a larger role in the conflict than ever before.

"More and more warlords are rising in Syria, who are becoming difficult for the regime to control, which of course adds pressure on the Assad regime," said Lina Khatib, director of the Carnegie Middle East Centre in Beirut.

"I think basically 2015 will be total chaos for Syria."

Many analysts say US air strikes against Islamic State will do little more than contain the group, which has thoroughly embedded itself in the parts of Syria it controls. Some "moderate" or non-jihadist rebels appear to be pinning hopes to the idea that US military action could be turned against Assad — perhaps at the urging of regional allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia, both staunch Assad opponents.

Obama's administration is planning to carry out a multiyear programme to train and equip "moderate"

rebels and field local forces.

Turkey also wants the United States to set up a "buffer zone" along the Syrian-Turkish border to protect moderate rebels, although US officials have played down the idea.

Even with a safe zone, it would take far more resources than the United States has committed to "take a handful of fractious militias that own maybe 1 or 2 percent of Syria and turn them into the conquerors of the entire land," said Joshua Landis, an expert on Syria at the University of Oklahoma.

He pointed to the hundreds of billions of dollars and years of military occupation the United States spent in Iraq, where the government is still struggling.

"Nobody's going to do that for Syria ... All sides, all these proxy armies in Syria — their supporters are willing to spend enough money so that they don't lose and not enough money that they can win," Landis said.

Reuters

Turkey, Iraq pledge more military cooperation in fight against Islamic State



Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (R) addresses the media in Ankara 25 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

ANKARA, 26 Dec — Turkey and Iraq, both worried by the advance of Islamic State, pledged on Thursday to work towards greater military cooperation in their fight against the ultra radical Sunni militants.

Turkey is already training Kurdish peshmerga fighters in northern Iraq to help them battle Islamic State insurgents, who control territory in Iraq and Syria.

Some major battles are being fought very close to Turkish borders, and Turkey has become a haven for thousands who fled the militants.

Turkey is ready to work with Iraq to extend its military assistance, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said at a joint news conference with his Iraqi counterpart, Haider al-Abadi. Abadi, the first Iraqi prime minister to visit

Turkey since his predecessor Nouri al-Maliki's visit in 2010, signalled Turkey could also be sending arms to Iraq.

"There are preparations being made with the assistance of the Turkish side in providing us with weapons," Abadi said.

Turkey, a NATO member with a 1,200 km border with Syria and Iraq, began its training of Iraqi peshmerga forces last month, and said this could be extended to Iraq's National Guard.

"Our defence ministers will carry out a more detailed study on this issue. We already have provided support in terms of military training. We are ready to give whatever further assistance we can in these areas," Davutoglu said.

Ankara has refused to take a frontline military role

in the air offensive mounted by a US-led coalition against the insurgents, saying there could be no lasting stability with air strikes alone.

Supported by air strikes, Iraqi Kurdish fighters this week broke an Islamic State siege of Sinjar mountain in western Iraq, freeing hundreds of Yazidis who had been trapped there for months.

Abadi said Iraqi forces were fighting to root out the militants and were regaining territory. "Their grip is weakening," he said.

Turkey and Iraq have had tense relations for years. Maliki's government was angered by Ankara strengthening ties with northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, with which Baghdad had been locked in a bitter feud over oil.

Relations have improved since Abadi took office in September and since Baghdad and Arbil clinched an initial deal on the sharing of oil export revenues.

Contrary to Maliki, Abadi said Iraq supported increasing its oil exports via a Kurdish-built pipeline going through Turkey. "We would like strengthen this agreement and carry on these exports via Turkey. This is in the interest of Iraq."—Reuters

Rocket hits storage tank at Libya's biggest oil port

BENGHAZI / TUNIS, (Libya), 26 Dec — A rocket set a storage tank at the eastern Libyan oil port of Es Sider on fire as armed factions allied to competing governments fought for control of the country's biggest export terminal, officials from both sides said on Thursday.

Clashes were also reported from Sirte, a city west of Es Sider, killing up to 19, among them 14 guards at a power plant, residents said. No more details were available.

Es Sider and its adjacent Ras Lanuf terminal have been closed since a force allied to a rival government in Tripoli moved east trying to take them, part of a struggle between former rebels who helped topple Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 but now fight for power and a share of oil reserves.

Libya has had two governments and parliaments since a group called Libya Dawn seized the capital in August by expelling a rival faction, installing its own prime minister and forcing the recognized premier, Abdullah al-Thinni, to operate out of the east with the elected House of Representatives.

Thinni accuses Libya Dawn of relying on Islamists. The Tripoli-based government says Thinni's forces have allied themselves with former Gaddafi officers such as ex-general Khalifa Haftar.

Ali Hassi, spokesman for a security service allied to Thinni's internationally-recognized government, said the rival force tried taking the Es Sider with speedboats, opening fire on an oil tank.

Ismail al-Shukri, spokesman for the rival force, said it had launched a new push to take the ports but denied it had sent boats or shot at any storage tanks. He blamed the other side, saying aircraft had attacked the tank.

"A tank was hit but

the damage is limited," said Hassi, adding that the advance had been stopped with aircraft and ground troops. Clashes were also reported in Ben Jawad west of Es Sider.

An oil ministry official said the storage tank was still on fire. Smoke could be seen on pictures posted on social media websites and described as showing the port.

The fighting has reduced Libya's crude output to 352,000 barrels a day, a spokesman for state National Oil Corp said. Only the Brega, Sarir, Messla and offshore operations were still producing, he said. Es Sider and Ras Lanuf ports had been processing an estimated 300,000 bpd.

Reuters



Black smoke billows out of a storage oil tank in the port of Es Sider in Ras Lanuf on 25 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

PERSPECTIVES

Saturday, 27 December, 2014

Cooperation essential for making Yangon a cleaner place

By Myint Win Thein

Trash is everywhere in Yangon, the country's largest city known for its ancient pagodas and colonial buildings. Although the Yangon City Development Committee has been trying to clean up the litter, it can be still found in streets, at bus stops, around shops, in gutters and at various public places. It is not strange for residents of Yangon, as they have been living with this situation for many years,

but it makes Yangon ugly for foreign visitors. One foreigner recently remarked that he was shocked to see Yangon residents living among trash.

The problem persists because there are two factors in it, one being the lack of an efficient garbage collection system and the other being careless littering by residents. These two causes should be tackled simultaneously if Yangon is to be transformed into a cleaner and more beautiful city. The city's garbage collection system should be enhanced, while it is necessary for the public to stop disposing of plastic bags and such in public places. Just ridding public places of litter will make them clean for a while, but there will be a mess again sooner or later if people habitually litter.

Now, it is clear that the problem can only be solved only through the cooperation between city

authorities who are to make the garbage collection system efficient and the residents who are to help the authorities by stopping littering. In addition, the residents should also volunteer to collect trash whenever they find it so that city authorities will not be burdened with so much of it to be collected again and again. Cooperation between the city authorities and residents would make Yangon a cleaner and more beautiful city.

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

What we need is a stronger and stabler Kyat

By Khin Maung Myint

During my younger days, to be more precise, right after the Second World War when I started going to school, my pocket money allowance was two annas per school day. For those who are not familiar with the monetary units of those days, there were sixteen annas in one Rupee or Kyat as it was called, since then. So my daily allowance was one eighth or twelve point five per cent of a Kyat. Anyway, that amount was more than enough for a primary school student. I could even save some money to buy tops, kites and other play things that young boys loved to play with. Those were the bygone good old days, when our currency was strong.

I hope I won't be judged as being nostalgic and dwelling in the past, by reading the above passage. It was just a prelude to what I am going to discuss in this article.

When I reached the high school level, my allowance increased to four annas (later known as twenty five pyas) or one fourth of a Kyat. By that time I was in my teens and my life style, if I may term that, had changed somewhat. We high school students thought we were grownups, so we started to behave accordingly, and started to go to teashops during recess periods. We can afford to patronize the tea shops with that amount of money. Then, when I went to the university, my monthly pocket money allowance was fifty Kyats. It

was more than enough, so there was no need to be thrifty. That amount remained the same throughout my university years.

After university I entered the government service as a trainee with an allowance of one hundred and twenty five Kyats a month plus free meals during the training period. I kept only twenty five Kyats with me for contingencies and as I was already married at that time, I sent one hundred Kyats to my wife, which was an ample amount for her as we did not have any children as yet. That was until nineteen sixty two, when I completed my training course.

When I looked back to those days, I realized one interesting thing, and that was the prices of commodities and hence the costs of living were very stable, without distinctive increase over nearly two decades. It indicated that the Kyat had remained stable. That situation continued for nearly another decade until the early nineteen seventies as far as I can remember. Then the Kyat started to depreciate, but not drastically in leaps and bounds, so the effects were not very severe. The increases in commodity prices and costs of livings were not too exorbitant, but the salary earners were starting to feel the effects of the Kyat depreciations. However, the situations were well under control until the mid nineteen eighties. By then, I remember that my family of three had to be overly thrifty with my salary of

thirteen hundred Kyats a month, to make ends meet and be free from debt. The depreciation of the Kyat gathered momentum in the nineteen nineties prompting the government to hike the salary of the employees. That was a very generous undertaking on the part of the authorities, but the unscrupulous businesspersons and retailers, even including the hawkers raised the prices of everything. Their actions undermined the state's generosity and we were back at square one, and even worse, if I may voice my views freely and frankly. It has become a phenomenon, that whenever there was a salary increase or a rumor of it, the prices rose as if on cue.

It is a sort of a vicious circle—because of the depreciation, the costs of living increased, necessitating the salary hike, which triggered the unscrupulous businesspersons to raise the prices, resulting in the shrinkage in the value of Kyat, as we laypersons used to say. I am not an economist, who is versed in these matters, but as a consumer who has to bear the brunt of the effects of this shrinkage or depreciation, whatever that is called, I would prefer a stronger and stabler Kyat to a pay hike, if that can be achieved.

Here, I would like to share some of my experiences with the readers, to make my point tangible. In 1967, I had an opportunity to go abroad on duty. At the Bangkok International Airport, while waiting for the connecting flight, I had some snacks at a restaurant. When settling the bill, as I

had only US dollars, I had to pay in that currency. The cashier converted the costs in Thai baht to US dollars at a rate of twenty two bhat to a dollar. Then in 1980, I was en-route to another destination and had to take a connecting flight from Bangkok Airport. I found that the bhat was very stable, still at twenty two to a dollar. Again during 1986, while returning from a seminar in Japan, I had to transit Bangkok and this time, as there was no connecting flight to Yangon at the time I arrived at Bangkok, I had a chance to stay over night at a hotel provided by the airline. While there, my ex-boss and a very good friend of mine who was working in Bangkok invited me to dinner at a restaurant.

At the restaurant, I was introduced by my ex-boss to a Myanmar gentleman, who was and still is the owner of a shipping line. During the conversation over dinner, I learned that his shipping line was formerly based in Singapore, but he had shifted it to Bangkok as the Thai government depreciated the bhat, twenty six to a dollar, so his dollars were worth more, which made the investments more viable. He went on to explain to me that, as Hong Kong, then still a British colony was to be handed over to China in 1997, when the ninety years lease would expire, the businesses there were wary of what will happen in the aftermath. So many businesses had started to invest in other countries. Their priority choices were Singapore, Canada, Aus-

tralia and some other countries elsewhere in the region. According to him, Thailand took the opportunity to jump onto the bandwagon by depreciating its bhat to attract those investors. Thus, that gentleman being a fore-sighted person, took the initiative to be one of the early foreign investors, and his decision proved to be right, as far as I can observe. Now, the exchange rate is stable at thirty one to a dollar give or take one bhat. The present exchange rate of the baht was the result of the economic recessions of the 1997, which I don't intend to go into detail as I am convinced I had made my point.

I am citing this as a good example, where intentional depreciation of the currency can be beneficial to the economy of the country. However, unintentional depreciations due to mismanagements are undesirable. Though I am not an economist as I admitted, my common sense, observations, thirst for knowledge and rational thinking had taught me to believe that depreciating or appreciating of the currency

plays vital roles in manipulating the economy. It's true that they dictate the export and import trades, but thorough assessments and considerations should be made to avoid inconvenience for the peoples, before applying them.

In conclusion, I would like to humbly suggest that the authorities should be cautious not to create unintentional depreciations by only increasing the salary whenever the prices soared. It's not the right remedy, but should find ways to curb the soaring prices by strictly controlling the prices of every commodity and enforce the businesspersons to obey the orders. It may take sometimes, but nothing is impossible if you really wish. By suggesting thus, I don't mean the the employees' salary should not be increased, it must be done when the situations demand. However, precautions should be taken not to create the vicious circle mentioned above. What we need is a strong and stable Kyat.

Looking forward to a developed and prosperous nation.

The author is Retired Deputy General Manager, Admin: Dept; Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

GOLD PRICE, FE RATE
(26-12-2014)

Yangon Gold Price

Buying K660,500 per tical: Selling K661,500

Mandalay Gold Price

Buying K658,300 per tical: Selling K659,300

FE RATE

USD Buying K 1035: Selling K----

SGD Buying K 783: Selling K792

Euro Buying K 1,255: Selling K1,275

LOCAL NEWS

YANGON, 26 Dec — Under the arrangements of North Okkalapa Township electrical engineer's office, transformers were installed in the township in the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Up to 21 December, the township office has built 10 of 18 planned transformers to supply electricity to the local people. Township engineer's office plans to install the eight remaining transformers before the matriculation examination for enabling students to study their lessons under lightings at full capacity.

Skilled workers and electricians are substituting old wires and cables with new ones for electric safety of the people.

Aung Thura

Authorities manage installation of transformers for supply of electricity at full capacity



Artiste soldiers perform entertainment for locals

THATON, 26 Dec—With the aim of enhancing relations and trust between the Tatmadaw and local people, a squad from No. 4 Mobile Public Relations Company performed entertainment in Theinseik Ward, Thuwunawady Town, Mon State on the night of 23 and 24 December. Local people

enjoyed performances of artiste soldiers from the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare of the Ministry of Defence.

The company plans to provide such entertainment to local peoples in Kyaikto, Bilin, Thaton and other townships in Thaton District.—*Thaton District IPRD*

Professionals, amateurs join Mayor's Cup invitational golf tournament in Mandalay

MANDALAY, 26 Dec—The 15th Mandalay Mayor's

Cup invitational golf tournament kicked off at Yaydagun Taung golf club in Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region, on 25 December.

Mandalay Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Aung Kyaw Moe, Region Minister for Development Affairs Mayor U Aung Moun, Myanmar Golf Federation Secretary U Aung Hla Han and Patron of Mandalay Golfers Association U Aung Win Khaing teed off the balls at the opening ceremony.

A total of 262 men's and women's professional and amateur golfers participated in the tournament up to 28 December.

Photographers from various regions covered the tournament.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

MCDC to hold mini-marathon race on 10 January

MANDALAY, 26 Dec — With the aim of successfully holding the Mandalay Mayor's Cup mini-marathon race 2015, the organizing subcommittees held a meeting at the hall of the Mandalay City Development Committee on 24 December.

The chairman of the leading committee, MCDC Secretary U Khin Maung Tin, made a speech. Officials of the subcommittees reported on preparations for organizing the race.

The mini-marathon will be split into men's and women's open events



and novice events.

The race will kick off at 6.30 am on 10 January

2015 from the MCDC office on 26th street. The participants are to finish at

the grandstand of Bahtoo Stadium.

The MCDC will pres-

ent handsome prizes to the winners.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Cooperative societies need to pay back loans in six months

MANDALAY, 26 Dec — Mandalay Region Economic Minister U Aung Zan made trips to TadaU, Ngazun nad Natogyi Townships on 17 December and met executives of basic cooperative societies.

The minister, who was accompanied by Mandalay Region Cooperative Department Deputy Director U Kyaw Kyaw Tun and Region Cooperative Syndicate Chairman U Sann Lwin, urged the executives to pay back loans of Exim Bank of China.

In his speech, the minister said the loans from Exim Bank of China were disbursed to the villagers so as to alleviate poverty and develop rural regions. He urged officials to collect the loans to be paid back to the department within six months.

After hearing the reports, the minister solved the difficulties of basic cooperative societies.—*Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)*

MYANAUNG, 26 Dec—Ayeyawady Region Department of Rural Development allotted the budget for construction of Inbin-Kanaung inter-village road in Myanaung Township of the region in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The fund will be spent on upgrading the earthen road to a gravel one. Thitsalun Company will construct a five-mile-long and 12-foot-wide road section.

Township Development of Rural Development has constructed a 10-mile long road section in the 2013-14 fiscal year. According to the upgrading plan, gravel will be places on a five-mile long section of the road starting from Inbin Village.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Rural people to get gravel road in Myanaung Tsp



China's antitrust regulator says Qualcomm case to be settled soon



A Qualcomm sign is pictured in front of one of its many buildings in San Diego, California on 5 Nov, 2014. — REUTERS

BEIJING, 26 Dec — The Chinese government said on Friday that it will soon settle its antitrust investigation of US mobile chipmaker Qualcomm Inc (QCOM.O).

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's anti-monopoly regulator which launched a probe of the San Diego-based company 13 months ago, said the case would be settled lawfully, according to an online statement.

The notice cited Xu Kunlin, director general

of NDRC's anti-monopoly bureau.

The NDRC also said it had completed its seventh round of discussions with Qualcomm President Derek Aberle and his team earlier this month.

Qualcomm will continue to cooperate with the regulator to reach a settlement, the NDRC statement said. A company spokeswoman could not immediately be reached for comment.

The regulator provided no indication as to when discussions with the US chipmaker would resume.

The NDRC said in February that Qualcomm was suspected of overcharging and abusing its market position in wireless communication standards.

An imminent decision in the case is expected to force the company to pay fines potentially exceeding \$1 billion (642.88 million pounds) and require concessions that would hurt its highly profitable business of charging licensing fees on phone chipsets that use its patents.

The NDRC said in August that Qualcomm had expressed its willing-

ness to improve and correct pricing issues.

At least 30 foreign firms, including Qualcomm, have come under the scrutiny of China's 2008 anti-monopoly law, which some critics say is being used to unfairly target non-Chinese companies.

US President Barack Obama pressed his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping during talks in November on the use of Chinese antitrust policy to limit royalty fees for foreign companies.

While Western business lobbies had criticised China's use of its antitrust law earlier this year, the elevation of the controversy to the level of presidential talks indicated that it had become a centrepiece of commercial friction between the world's two largest economies.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told Qualcomm Executive Chairman Paul Jacobs last month that opportunities in China remained far greater than the challenges, in a meeting on the sidelines of the World Internet Conference.

Jacobs said the company was having "difficult discussions" with the regulator to find a "win-win solution".

Reuters

Prosecutors raid LG headquarters over washing machine row with Samsung

SEOUL, 26 Dec — Prosecutors raided the headquarters of LG Electronics on Friday as part of a probe into whether the South Korean company had damaged the washing machines of rival Samsung Electronics at retail stores in Germany, *Yonhap News Agency* reported.

The raid comes amid an increasingly bitter rivalry between the two companies which compete in home appliances, TVs and smartphones, and ahead of the world's biggest consumer electronics show at Las Vegas in January. Samsung had asked the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office to investigate LG employees who Samsung says were seen deliberately destroying several of its premium washing machines on display at two stores in September ahead of the IFA electronics show in Berlin.

On Friday, investigators

searched the Seoul offices of LG Elec's home appliance head and others and secured documents and computer hard disks related to the IFA fair, *Yonhap* said. They also combed through LG Electronics' home appliance factory in the southeastern city of Changwon, the report said. An LG Electronics spokeswoman declined to comment on the *Yonhap* report, while prosecutors were not immediately available for comments. Samsung sued LG Electronics employees after the incident in Germany, and the LG spokeswoman said the company has counter-sued Samsung employees. Media reports have earlier said prosecutors banned Jo Seong-jin, head of LG's home appliances division, from leaving the country ahead of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) to be held on 6-9 January.

Reuters



The LG company logo is seen following an event during the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on 6 Jan, 2014. — REUTERS

Yuan to see normal fluctuations in 2015



BEIJING, 26 Dec — The Renminbi will experience "normal fluctuations" in 2015, experts said on Thursday.

The yuan will continue to experience depreciation and appreciation next year, said chief economist with the Bank of Communications Lian Ping.

The central parity rates of the yuan will see less violent changes in 2015 and its spot exchange rates will fluctuate between 6 and 6.4 against

the US dollar, as in 2014, Lian said.

The market is expecting the United States will raise interest rates amid its economic recovery and the US dollars will strengthen, thus, the yuan will face downward pressure, but it will not depreciate remarkably, said chief analyst of the Beijing-based CFFEX Institute for Financial Derivatives Zhao Qingming.

This view was echoed by chief economist of the Industrial Bank Lu Zheng-

wei, who believes that China's economic growth, trade and foreign exchange reserves are positive signs that the yuan will remain stable.

The spot exchange rate of China's currency dropped below 6.21 against the US dollar last Thursday, the weakest point in almost five months.

The central parity rate of the yuan climbed 34 basis points to 6.1213 against the US dollar on Thursday, after five-consecutive day drops.

In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

Xinhua

Somber Christmas, gatherings banned in Ebola-hit Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, 26 Dec — Sierra Leoneans observed a somber Christmas in their homes on Thursday, after the government banned traditionally boisterous holiday celebrations to prevent the spread of deadly Ebola in the worst-hit country.

Small groups of Christians in formal attire were

permitted to attend church services, but the family gatherings, beach parties, concerts and dancing that usually accompany the holiday were banned to help slow the deadly virus.

Police patrolled the capital's twisting streets and manned temperature check points to watch for

symptoms of the haemorrhagic fever. On the radio, musicians who would normally be performing at live concerts played Ebola awareness jingles.

"We want to avoid contact because of this deadly disease. It's necessary but I am not really happy. Normally we have a lot of fun with family and friends, but we just have to stay home," said Kadija Kargbo, a cleaner in the capital Freetown.

She planned to stay indoors and watch films with her children instead of celebrating at the beach this year. At a Red Cross treatment centre in the eastern city of Kenema, a small group of patients gathered around a cassette player listening to Christmas carols, said Jestina Boyle, a psychosocial assistant with the Red Cross.—Reuters



A girl walks past a sign in Freetown on 21 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

Tizen TV no substitute for Samsung's long-awaited answer to Android

SEOUL, 26 Dec — Global smartphone leader Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is planning a new product launch next year based on its own Tizen operating system, the South Korean giant's strategic push to free itself from Android and blaze its own software path.

But after years of development and a handful of Tizen-powered smartwatches and cameras, the only product confirmed for a 2015 launch so far is a TV set.

While that may impress designers of smart homes, Samsung's failure to release a handset based on its own operating system is fuelling scepticism about its ability to build a meaningful software alternative to Apple Inc's iOS and Google Inc's Android in the all-important mobile sector.

"To be honest the software that Samsung has made on its own so far have not been very good ... I have not yet seen anything

to suggest that Samsung has become competitive in the software space," said Lee Min-hee, analyst at brokerage IM Investment and Securities.

Developers say that until there is a meaningful user base for Tizen they will have little incentive to make innovative software applications for the system, deemed crucial if Samsung is to convince wary consumers to try it out.

"I see it (Tizen) as very similar to Android but without the gigantic user base," said Brazil-based Eduardo Ribeiro, founder of app developer Kazoowa.com. "With that, it is hard to find benefits in developing for Tizen."

Samsung's communications on the new system have only raised doubts further.

The company announced and then scrapped plans for a Tizen phone launch in Russia during the third quarter, citing the



Samsung flags are set up at the main entrance to the Berlin fair ground before the IFA consumer electronics fair in Berlin, on 28 Aug, 2012.—REUTERS

need to "further enhance the Tizen ecosystem".

Meanwhile source-based media reports have suggested for some time that a Tizen phone launch is imminent in India. In the latest example, the *Korea Economic Daily* on Friday said a low-end Tizen smartphone would debut in India on 18 January, citing an unnamed company source. Samsung declined to comment on the report.

"We have supported the Tizen platform for a

long time and believe Tizen to be a good alternative mobile platform for consumers," the company said.

Analysts say Tizen will struggle to make a dent in the smartphone world. Android and iOS had a combined 95.8 percent market share in July-September, according to Gartner, with Microsoft Corp's Windows platform trailing as a distant third at 3 percent.

Samsung smartphones currently operate on Android.

"It has been really tough for any other operating system to position itself against iOS or Android ... So for Tizen to succeed, it will need to bring a very compelling proposition to the market," said Kiranjeet Kaur, an analyst at research firm IDC.

Samsung has more than 40,000 software development employees globally but its apps and content services have failed to stand out from the crowd, and the firm is winding back some projects.

The company on Friday said its ChatON messaging app — one of Samsung's more recognisable services — will be shut down in February.

Earlier this month it disbanded its media solution centre in South Korea that was responsible for developing and launching software and content-related services.

Samsung's ability to support Tizen in the smart-

phone world also may be diminishing, with the firm's global market share down annually for the third consecutive quarter in July-September, amid intensifying competition from Chinese rivals.

Still, the tech giant is expected to press on with Tizen, particularly in the growing smart-home sector where the operating system's ability to run on devices with low computing power could be a big advantage.

Plans for the launch of a Tizen-powered television next year, revealed by a senior Samsung executive last week, would be a welcome addition to the smart-home business. Samsung declined to elaborate on the launch.

Samsung told *Reuters* in a statement it remained "committed to developing the Tizen ecosystem with a wide range of Tizen-based product categories".

Reuters

Australian scientists to focus on eight research priorities

SYDNEY, 26 Dec — A panel of Australian experts have identified eight research priorities that are aimed to give the nation a competitive edge.

The nation's chief scientist Ian Chubb said on Monday that the sectors of food, soil and water, transport, health, energy and resources, cyber security, environmental change and manufacturing will be boosted by additional research. A large part of the nation's research, science and innovation budget of 9.2 billion Australian dollars (7.5 billion US dollars) will be directed toward these priorities, Chubb said.

Last month, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott chaired the inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Science Council,

which identified these research priorities.

Chubb told Fairfax Media that the priorities would take into account Australia's interests and needs as well as areas where Australian researchers are excelling in their work.

"Just because we say let's look into Australia's food production cycle to make sure it's adequate for our needs, and that of our trade agreements, that doesn't make it applied research," he said.

"It just means we're focusing our efforts, basic and applied, in a particular area."

A Universities Australia report last week said identifying research priorities would help universities plan more strategically.

Xinhua

Sony PlayStation, Microsoft Xbox hit by delays

NEW YORK, 26 Dec — Microsoft Corp's (MSFT.O) Xbox Live and Sony Corp's (6758.T) PlayStation Networks experienced user connection problems on Christmas Day, for which a hacker group claimed responsibility.

The group, called Lizard Squad, could not be reached for comment, and the companies did not give a reason for the connectivity issues.

Both companies expected heavy use as people who received Microsoft Xbox players or Sony PlayStation on Christmas tried to hook up. The problems may have been exacerbated by Sony's decision to let consumers download the controversial movie "The Interview" through Xbox Video as well as other online sources.

"Are you having a rough time signing in to Xbox Live?," a service alert on the Microsoft product's website asked. "We're

working to get this figured out right away. We appreciate your patience."

Two hours after the message was posted at 4:33 pm ET (2133 GMT), the Xbox Live site said technicians were still "hard at work trying to reach a solution."

As of 7:30 pm ET (0030 GMT), PlayStation Network was still offline, according to the device's status page.

"We are aware that some users are experiencing difficulty logging into the PSN," it said. "We will update this article with any changes that occur in regards to this issue. Thank you for your patience."

Three Xbox platforms were affected by the service problem: Xbox One, Xbox 360 and Xbox on other devices, Microsoft's status website said.

Spokespeople at Sony and Microsoft did not immediately respond for comment.



Visitors looks at Sony Corp's PlayStation 4 game consoles and control pads displayed at a booth during the Tokyo Game Show 2014 in Makuhari, east of Tokyo on 18 Sept, 2014.—REUTERS

"I have the nation on strings," Lizard Squad wrote on its Twitter site. It also said it would put the sites back online if enough people retweeted its messages.

Earlier on Thursday, Microsoft Xbox spokesman Sean McCarthy declined to give details of how the company may have been preparing for security breaches,

given the problems that Sony has experienced in releasing "The Interview."

"Of course, it's safe to say Holiday season is always a very busy time of year for any consumer electronics company, so we work hard to ensure the stability of our infrastructure when so many consoles are activating for the first time."

Reuters

China sets up 21 new national nature reserves

BEIJING, 26 Dec — China has set up 21 new state-level nature reserves, increasing the country's total conservation area to nearly ten percent of the country's

land territory.

A circular approving the new reserves was issued on Tuesday by the State Council General Office.

The newly-established

nature reserves, with a total area of more than 6,200 square km, are scattered across 15 provinces and autonomous regions, including Liaoning, Fujian and He-

nan provinces and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The reserves will become sanctuaries of 35 state-level endangered animal species, such as

the Manchurian tiger, giant panda and golden monkey, as well as 12 kinds of rare wild plants.

The number of national nature reserves has now reached 428, cover-

ing 930,000 square km.

The reserves are important in protecting biodiversity and implementing international conventions, the circular said.—*Xinhua*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV THAI BINH 68 VOY NO (-)

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China encourages airlines to use domestically produced jets

BEIJING, 26 Dec — China's airlines are encouraged to use Chinese aircraft, including the regional jet model ARJ21, an official with China's civil aviation authority said on Thursday.

The country should accelerate the development of routes in central and western areas and regional aviation, Zhou Laizhen, deputy director of Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), said at a conference.

The CAAC will help airlines in developing regional routes and encourage them to use domestically manufactured jets, Zhou said.

The ARJ21, short for Advanced Regional Jet for the 21st Century, is a regional liner model designed and manufactured by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC). At present, the jet has gained 278 orders. The CAAC will also seek to export aircraft and strive to ensure their safe operation, Zhou said. — Xinhua

Indian Army to intensify operations against Bodo militants after massacre in NE India



Tribal people, who fled from their villages after an attack by indigenous separatist groups, take refuge at a school in Sonitpur District of Indian eastern state of Assam, on 24 Dec, 2014.—XINHUA

NEW DELHI, 26 Dec — The Indian Army on Friday said that it would intensify its operations against Bodo militants, who killed over 80 people in the northeastern state of Assam on Tuesday.

"We had a review meeting and will soon in-

tensify our operations in Assam," Indian Army chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag told the media, after meeting Home Minister Rajnath Singh in the national capital.

Local TV channels reported, quoting sources, that the home minister

had asked the Indian Army chief for an all-out operation against the militants.

On Tuesday evening, Bodo militants, who are opposed to peace talks with the Indian government, killed over 80 people, mostly tribals, in five attacks across the state with-

in an hour. Men, women and children were dragged out of homes by militants dressed in military uniforms and killed, and their houses were also burnt.

More than 10,000 people are said to be displaced in the state.

Xinhua



Stewardess Ma Xiaoying works in a bullet train on the Lanxin high-speed railway in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on 2 Dec, 2014. The 1,776-kilometre Lanxin high-speed railway was put into operation on Friday, linking Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province, Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, both in northwest China, and Urumqi. — XINHUA

Malaysian government to step up efforts to help flood victims

KUALA LUMPUR, 26 Dec — Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak on Friday called for more efforts to send aid to flood victims in at least six states hit by the country's worst monsoon floods in decades. In two Twitter messages, Najib said he had spoken with Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to discuss how to increase efforts to help those affected by the floods. "I have asked

Muhyiddin to further step up operations to send aid to victims of the floods in our conversation," said Najib, who is currently overseas.

The prime minister's remarks followed his statement on Thursday, in which he assured all Malaysians that authorities would keep trying to rescue victims and to send them aid despite difficulties posed by severe weather conditions. Malaysia is regularly hit by

seasonal flooding. This year more than 100,000 people in at least six states have so far been displaced by worsening floods, according to reports.

The number of people evacuated in four worst flood-hit states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Perak stood at 103,649 on Friday morning, with the state of Pahang seeing a sudden rise in the number of evacuees. — Xinhua

Government aims to create regional jobs in 5-yr plan to fight depopulation

TOKYO, 26 Dec — As part of its comprehensive strategy to combat population decline and revitalize Japan's regions, the government will aim to create 300,000 regional jobs by 2020 to stem the flow of young workers to Tokyo, according to a final five-year policy plan obtained by Kyodo News on Thursday.

The plan also aims to move more workers into permanent jobs from temporary ones, and reduce the number of underemployed "freeters" to 1.24 million nationwide by 2020, down 580,000 from 2013. The strategy is set to be adopted at Saturday's extraordinary Cabinet session along with a long-term vision of Japan's population as of 2060. Policies are then expected to be reflected in the government's fiscal 2015 budget and in upcoming revisions to the tax system.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has expressed an intention to implement "policies of another dimension" to revitalize Japan's regions, but many of those in the five-year plan are rehashed versions of existing government

Seven die in two drone strikes in Pakistani tribal area

ISLAMABAD, 26 Dec — Seven suspected militants were killed in drone attacks on Friday on two targets in Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, security officials said.

They said the attacks took place on militants' hideouts in the Kund and Shawal areas in North Waziristan where the Pakistan Army is carrying out a ground operation against Tehreek Taleban Pakistan and al-Qaeda remnants.

Two missiles were fired on a compound used by the Imran Qari group of the Punjabi Taleban known to have been involved in attacks inside Pakistan and across the border in Afghanistan.

North Waziristan is used as a staging post for terrorist attacks by Pakistani and Afghan Taleban inside Pakistan and in Afghanistan. The last drone attack in North Waziristan was last Saturday in which seven militants of the Hafiz Gulbahadur group were killed.—Kyodo News

policies and their feasibility remains unclear. The job creation target aims to provide secure employment in the regions to stop the annual net flow of about 100,000 workers below age 35 from the regions and into Tokyo and the three surrounding prefectures of Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa. Under the plan, an annual increase of 100,000 regional jobs in 2020 would be reached by starting with 20,000 new jobs in fiscal 2015 and widening the target in annual increments of 20,000 jobs. The government is also considering establishing in fiscal 2016 a system of new subsidies to local governments that set their own targets for business creation, while deciding by the end of next March whether to allow local governments the authority to rezone farmland for other uses. The long-term population vision projects that Japan will be able to keep its population at about 100 million in 2060 if the fertility rate rises to 1.8 children born per woman by 2030 and 2.07 by 2040. The rate was 1.43 last year.

Kyodo News

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

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Ministry of Construction
Public Works
(Invitation of Proposal for Yangon-Mandalay
Expressway under BOT Scheme)

1. Proposal for operating and upgrading the relevant sections of Yangon-Mandalay Expressway (366 miles 3 furlongs long) to the international and local Companies either individually or joint venture in line with the Master plan as well as under current Build -Operate - Transfer (B.O.T) Scheme is invited by Public Works, Ministry of Construction, Nay Pyi Taw, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Sr	Name of Work	Type of Work
1.	Yangon-Mandalay Expressway (366 miles 3 furlongs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (8) lane asphalt concrete pavement • Installation of road furniture and CCTVs to meet the safety and security standard of expressway, • Installation of fencing and service roads on both side of the expressway.

2. Distribution period of Proposal Documents - (5.1.2015) to (16.1.2015)
3. Last Submission Date of Proposal Documents - 12:00 noon on 31.1.2015
4. Opening date of Proposal - 13:00 hours on 16.2.2015
5. Proposal Documents can be purchased with fifty thousand kyats (50000 ks.) at the following address and for the detailed Information, please contact the office within office hours.

Proposal Selection Committee, Public Works,
Road Department, Office No.(11), Nay Pyi Taw
Contact number: 067-407468, 407578, 407603, 407583, 407380

Malaysian
delegation
visits
north China
coastal city

BEIJING, 26 Dec — A Malaysian delegation exchanged ideas about business chances with representatives from the city of Tangshan, north China's Hebei Province.

It concluded the visit to the coastal city on Tuesday. The delegation is made up of representatives from Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce and Malaysian enterprises, including Xia Baowen, leading official of Malaysia's Port Klang International Trade and Halal Industry Development Center, Huang Jin-rong, Director of the SME Department (medium-sized and small enterprises) of Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce, etc..

Also, an official of the Chinese Embassy in Malaysia said Malaysia supports the construction of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which would benefit countries along the line.

Xinhua

WEATHER
REPORT

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 27th December, 2014: Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.
OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in the extreme Southern Myanmar Areas.



Avril Lavigne slams rehab rumours post health issues

LONDON, 26 Dec — Singer Avril Lavigne has slammed rumours that she went to rehab after her recent health issues.

The 30-year-old singer took to Twitter to term the rehab rumours as “hilarious” and told her more than 17 million fans that she is only addicted to the famous Christmas songs by late singer Bing Crosby, reported *People* magazine.

“The rehab rumours are hilarious! The only thing I’m addicted to right now is Bing Crosby. Merry Christmas everyone! and to all a goodnight!,” she posted on Twitter.

The ‘Complicated’ hit-maker said she was having some health issues and requested her fans to keep her in their prayers.

“I feel bad because I haven’t been able to say anything to the fans to let them know why I’ve



Singer Avril Lavigne

been absent. I’m not feeling well. I’m having some health issues. So please keep me in your prayers.”

Lavigne was back to wishing people a happy holiday and merry Christmas yesterday.—PTI

‘The Hobbit: The Battle of five armies’ crosses USD 100 million mark in US

LOS ANGELES, 26 Dec — Director Peter Jackson’s ‘The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies’ has crossed USD 100 million mark in its first week in the US.

‘Five Armies’ is the third movie to pass USD 100 million in the US in a week this year, following Lionsgate’s ‘The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 1’ which grossed USD 168.7 million in its opening week, and Disney-Marvel’s ‘Guardians of the Galaxy’ with USD 134.4 million, reported Variety.

‘The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies’ is the third part based on the novel ‘The Hobbit’ by J R Tolkien. ‘The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey’, which is the first part of the adaptation grossed USD 113 million in its first week and ‘The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug’, took in USD 96 million in US.

‘Five Armies’ was released on 17 December and is expected to lead the four-day Christmas weekend in the US with about USD 30 million to USD 35 million.—PTI

Tyga sets new release date for upcoming album

LOS ANGELES, 26 Dec — Rapper Tyga’s upcoming album *The Gold Album: 18th Dynasty* will release on 27 January, 2015.

The ‘Rack City’ hit-maker announced on his website that his oft-delayed LP would finally see the light of the day next year, reported Ace Showbiz.

The news came just days after he unveiled the album’s official cover art.

The artwork featuring an eagle made of real gold was designed by Kanye West’s creative team DONDA, the same team who worked on the cover of Nicki Minaj’s recently-released *The Pinkprint*.

The *Gold Album: 18th Dynasty* was executive produced by West.

The album is already done and was originally planned for release earlier this year via Young Money Records. After the record label refused to give him the green light to put out the effort, T-Raww vented his frustration in a string of Twitter posts in October.

PTI

Making Annie for next generation was awesome: Cameron Diaz

LONDON, 26 Dec — Actress Cameron Diaz is happy to be a part of musical-comedy adaptation of ‘Annie’. In the film, which released last week, little orphan Annie is played by 11-year-old

Quvenzhané Wallis, Miss Hannigan taken on by Diaz and Jamie Foxx plays Will Stacks based on the original character, Oliver Warbucks, reported Contactmusic.

“I grew up with Annie. The songs were something

everybody knew. Even if you didn’t see the movie, you knew the songs. “Getting to do Annie was such a great opportunity — one because you get to sing and dance which is something you never get to do and two

to make a movie that is for a new generation. To say, here you go, here’s your Annie. That’s really awesome,” Diaz said.

This is the third on screen adaptation of ‘Annie’ and the cast and producers, Will Smith and Jay Z, are hoping that modern take on the classic musical should be appreciated well among the audience.—PTI

Taylor Swift spends USD 6,000 for Hugh Jackman’s shirt at charity auction

LOS ANGELES, 26 Dec — Singer Taylor Swift has dropped USD 6,000 to win Hugh Jackman’s shirt in an auction benefiting Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS (BC/EFA).

The 25-year-old singer bid to win the shirt after the ‘X-Men’ star’s performance on Broadway show ‘The River’ on yesterday afternoon, reported Ace Showbiz.

Jackman, 46, also auctioned another T-shirt, which he was wearing during his performance, for the charity and raised an additional USD 6,000 from another audience member and threw in USD 6,000 himself. One of the audience even offered USD 2,000



Singer Taylor Swift has dropped USD 6,000 to win Hugh Jackman’s shirt in an auction. —PTI

for his belt.

The ‘Real Steel’ star posted a picture on Instagram later on with Swift and wished every one Merry Christmas.

“Lovely to see taylorswift13 and her family. Merry Christmas Eve to all,” he captioned the picture.

He also posted a picture alongside a Christmas tree greeting his fans.

“Sending wishes for an awesome holiday! TheRiverPlay,” Jackman posted.

Swift was joined by her younger brother Austin Swift and her parents Andrea Finlay and Scott Kingsley Swift while watching the Broadway play.

PTI

Courtney Love huge fan of One Direction?

LONDON, 26 Dec — Singer Courtney Love is reportedly a huge fan of the English boy band One Direction. The 50-year-old singer, who was married to Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain until his suicide in 1994, enjoyed hanging out together at a Saturday Night Live TV after party in New York over the weekend and was keen to take selfies with the boys group, reported Contactmusic.

“Louis enjoyed chatting to Courtney as he’s into all kinds of music and loves that she’s rock royalty. Harry also chatted to her for a while. It was funny, as Courtney was clearly a huge fan and dead set on staying until she got selfies with the band,” said a source. Love posted a photograph of herself with Louis Twitter.

“Good times with some great guys,” she captioned the picture. The band, which includes Louis Tomlinson, Niall Horan, Liam Payne, Zayn Malik and Harry Styles are said to have equally enjoyed their encounter with Courtney.—PTI

Indonesia's famed "tsunami boy" chases dream of pro football

TIBANG VILLAGE, (Indonesia), 26 Dec — Martunis was 8 when he was found alive, stranded in a swampy area near the beach, 21 days after a giant tsunami hit and devastated Indonesia's northern province Aceh on 26 December, 2004.

His survival story made him famous, not only because of his nearly unbelievable experience, but also because he was wearing a fake Portugal national soccer shirt. Martunis was playing soccer with his friends in his village of Tibang about 7 kilometres north of the provincial capital Banda Aceh when the M9.1 earthquake struck Aceh.

He went home to check on his family, but was swept away by the tsunami that followed the quake.

The earthquake, which unleashed 1,500 times as much energy as the Hiro-

shima atomic bomb, and the tsunami that followed killed about 230,000 people in 14 countries around the Indian Ocean. In Aceh alone, 170,000 people were killed or unaccounted for.

Martunis' mother and two sisters were among those missing, caught in the tsunami in front of his eyes.

He clung to a school chair, then a mattress, then a big log and finally a sofa as he was pulled into the ocean and then deposited in the swamp by the returning waves. For 18 days, surrounded by bodies, Martunis, who could not swim, survived on packs of instant noodles, bread, soft drinks and bottled water washed out of sea and floating around him.

"I was not afraid at all at that time because I still wanted to be alive to meet my family and to be a

football player," Martunis told *Kyodo News*. By the 19th day, no food or water was washing up any more, leaving the boy dehydrated and near death when someone found him and delivered him to a British television journalist.

The journalist took Martunis over to a Save the Children staff member who got him to hospital.

Martunis, wearing the Portugal team shirt, appeared on television screens across the world and attracted the attention of soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo, then playing for Manchester United in England.

A member of Portugal's national team, Ronaldo raised money to rebuild the house where Martunis now lives.

Five months later, Ronaldo, who now plays for Real Madrid, also invited

Martunis and his father Sarbini to Portugal to meet him and other Portuguese soccer stars.

A couple months later, Ronaldo visited Martunis in Aceh, giving him a cell phone with contact numbers for all members of Portugal's national team.

Since, Martunis has received invitations from international celebrities, including singers Madonna and Celine Dion.

Martunis, now 17, just graduated from senior high school.

And despite his frequent visits with overseas celebrities, he is still shy, answering questions in only a few words.

Questions he found difficult elicited only, "Let me think about the answer."

And his gaze was always on his phone except when offering quick an-

swers to questions.

Like many others his age, he doesn't really know what he wants to do in his community, although his miraculous survival has certainly made him appreciate life more.

Now, his focus is on his dream to be a professional soccer player like his idol Ronaldo, attending English classes three times a week and playing soccer every day at Banda Aceh's Real Madrid Soccer School, which was built by the Real Madrid Foundation.

When he turned 17 in October, he joined a selection to be chosen for the Indonesian national team and passed the first stage, but failed at the second.

"I was told that I'm physically weak. I'm easy to get tired," the young man who loves playing as a striker said. — *Kyodo News*

MITV

MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

(27-12-14 07:00 am~
28-12-14 07:00 am) MST

- * Local News
- * The Repository of Buddhist Scriptures And Archives
- * World News
- * Scented Buddha Images
- * Local News
- * Myanmar Traditional Festival
- * World News
- * Food Trip
- * Local News
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- * Will you feed the pigeons
- * Live Show "Myanmar Motion Picture Academy Awards for 2013"
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- * World News
- * Kyauk Phyu "Special Economic Zone"
- * Local News
- * Herbal Medicine by Thurein (Aloe Vera)
- * World News
- * In the Studio: Ja Som (The Myth)

Sony releases "The Interview" online

LOS ANGELES, 26 Dec — Sony Picture Entertainment released the controversial film "The Interview" online Wednesday, in advance of a limited theatrical screening on Christmas Day.

The film, a comedy about a plot to assassinate the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) which prompted a cyberattack, was available at Google Play, YouTube Movies, Microsoft's Xbox Video and a Sony site called seetheinterview.com since 10 am Pacific time (1700 GMT).

Hackers crippled the studio based in Culver City, Southern California, in late November. Sony was balking at the original plan of Christmas Day release, but announced on

Tuesday to release it at selected theaters, as well as a video-on-demand availability. But it changed tactic Wednesday by releasing the film online.

It will cost 5.99 US dollars to watch on YouTube and other streaming sites.

"It has always been Sony's intention to have a national platform on which to release this film," Sony Chairman and Chief Executive Michael Lynton said in a statement.

"With that in mind, we reached out to Google, Microsoft and other partners last Wednesday, 17 December, when it became clear our initial release plans were not possible. We are pleased we can now join with our



A man walks by the poster for the film "The Interview" outside the Alamo Drafthouse theater in Littleton, Colorado on 23 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

partners to offer the film nationwide today."

The cyberattack exposed thousands of employees to identity theft,

embarrassed executives and celebrities with the release of off-color emails and crippled the studio's digital infrastructure.

A week ago, Sony announced it was canceling the release, saying big exhibitors were backing out of agreements to show the movie.

"Guardians of Peace," the hacker, sent an email to top Sony executives threatening that it would release more private data stolen in the cyberattack if "The Interview" is ever leaked or released in any way.

FBI has maintained contact with Sony Pictures Entertainment and others in industry. The Los Angeles Police Department told media that it was not planning any special security arrangements at any of the theaters in the city screening "The Interview." — *Xinhua*

Olympic canoeing champion needs to lose 20kg: coach

RIO DE JANEIRO, 26 Dec — Olympic canoeing champion David Cal needs to lose 20kg if he is to qualify for the Rio 2016 Games, according to his long-time coach Jesus Morlan. Cal is currently training in Brazil after accepting an offer to reunite with Morlan, now the South American country's head canoeing coach.

The 32-year-old became Spain's most prolific Games medallist after clinching silver in the C-1 1000m event at London 2012 — his fifth Olympic podium finish. But Cal, who won the C-1000m event at the 2004 Games in Athens, is in a race against

time to be fit for Rio 2016.

"If David wants to return I'm not going to abandon him," Morlan was quoted telling the *Folha de S Paulo* newspaper on Thursday. "Here he helps the (Brazil) team. He is like a God to them. He passes on his experience and knowledge. But I'm not entirely happy. He has to be an example. He needs to lose 20kg."

Cal says he is determined to regain peak condition as he trains with Brazil's top Olympic prospects in the southeastern city of Belo Horizonte. "There is still time," he said. "I have to work hard every day to be in

good shape for 2016. I have to lose weight. It's possible."

Cal's immediate focus is on next year's world championships in Milan, where a top six finish will guarantee a berth in Rio.

Failing that, he will need to qualify via the European trials, considered to be more difficult.

"This (coming to Brazil) was the right decision for me," Cal said. From 2007 to 2012 we trained alone, just me and Jesus. It was monotonous and very tough. The change has been a good thing. Here I have another routine and I'm feeling more positive." — *Xinhua*



Palestinian scouts perform during the Annual Candle Lighting ceremony on the Christmas Day in the West bank city of Beit Sahour near Bethlehem on 25 Dec, 2014. — XINHUA

Brazil set for Olympic swimming glory

RIO DE JANEIRO, 26 Dec — Local hero Cesar Cielo believes Brazil is on track for its best ever Olympic swimming performance at the Rio 2016 Games.

Cielo, who won the 50m freestyle gold at the 200 Beijing Games, said on Wednesday that next year's FINA World Championships in Kazan, Russia, would provide an accurate gauge of Brazil's progress.

His comments came after Brazil finished fourth at August's Pan Pacific Championships in Australia before topping the medal table at the Short Course World Championships in Qatar earlier this month.

"It's been a great year," Cielo told Rio2016.com. "We made history at the short course worlds and are heading for the FINA World Championships."

Cielo, who also has two Olympic bronze medals, was adamant the best is yet to come for Brazil's swimmers.

Among other Rio 2016 medal hopefuls are Thiago Pereira — the 400m medley silver medallist in London — and breaststroke and medley specialist Felipe Franca, Brazil's top performer in Qatar with five gold medals.

Xinhua

World soccer body to honour 89-year-old Japanese journalist

TOKYO, 26 Dec — Japanese soccer journalist Hiroshi Kagawa, who is still plying his trade at the age of 89, will become the first Japanese recipient of the FIFA Presidential Award, an informed source said on Friday.

The award will be presented next month in Zurich at FIFA's Ballon d'Or 2014 Awards, which will name world soccer's player of the year for 2014.

Kagawa, a native of Hyogo Prefecture, has been covering soccer at home and abroad for more than 60 years as a pioneer of soccer journalism in Japan. While covering his 10th World Cup this summer in Brazil, he was introduced to FIFA as the world's oldest soccer journalist.

"As Japanese soccer has developed, I guess I was considered as one man who supported that (growth)," Kagawa said.

Kyodo News

Fernando Torres to return to Atletico Madrid

MADRID, 26 Dec — Former Spain international striker, Fernando Torres will return to Atletico Madrid, the club where he began his career after the Spanish side reached agreement with Chelsea, the club which now owns him, over a loan deal until the end of June 2016.

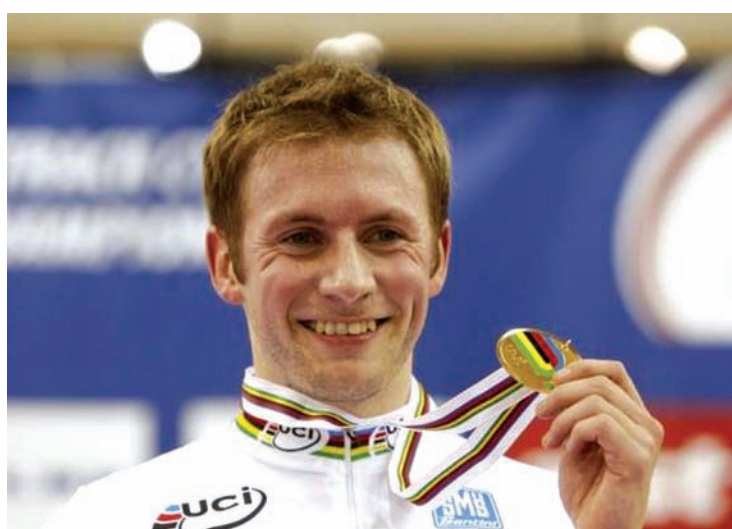
The complicated deal sees Torres leave AC Milan, where he has been on loan since the start of the current campaign, with Atletico striker Cerci almost certainly moving in the other direction according to reports in Spain.

The 30-year-old Torres, who is from the town of Fuenlabrada in the south of Madrid and has always been an Atletico fan. He left the club where he began his career and leapt to fame. He joined Liverpool in 2007 and netted 61 goals in 102 league appearances and subsequently joined Chelsea in 2011, but never repeated his feats, scoring just 20 league goal in 110 games.

Jose Mourinho let him move to Milan in the summer, but that move has also failed with just one league goal this campaign and a return 'home' could be what he needs to kick start his fading career.—Xinhua



Trott announces engagement to British team mate Kenny



Britain's Jason Kenny poses for a photo with his gold medal during the men's keirin final at the 2013 UCI Track Cycling World Championships in Minsk on 22 Feb, 2013.—REUTERS

LONDON, 26 Dec — British Olympic track cycling gold medallists Laura Trott and Jason Kenny are to tie the knot.

"Merry Christmas every-

one. I've had the most amazing couple of days thanks to @JasonKenny107 and the whole family #engaged", Trott write on Twitter on Thursday.



England's Laura Trott holds her gold medal after winning the women's 25km points race finals cycling race at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, on 27 July, 2014.—REUTERS

Trott, 22, took two golds at London 2012 in the team pursuit and omnium while 26-year-old Kenny also topped the podium in team sprint and

individual sprint.

Both are expected to be part of the British team for the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Reuters

Tskhadadze named new head coach of Georgia

MOSCOW, 26 Dec — Former Manchester City defender Kakhaber Tskhadadze has signed a two and a half year contract to take over as head coach of Georgia, the country's football federation said on its website (www.gff.ge).

Tskhadadze won 25

caps for Georgia, scoring one goal, and was also part of the CIS team that took part in 1992 European Championships.

Tskhadadze played for Spartak Moscow, Eintracht Frankfurt and Manchester City in the 1990's. Since 2009 he has been in charge of Azerbaijani side Inter Baku and will contin-

ue to work with the club until May.

His first match in charge of Georgia will be against Malta on 23 March.

"I believe in our players and I want to say to them immediately that they are strong and have the ability to win and take part in major football tournaments,"

he told reporters.

Tskhadadze takes over from Temuri Ketsbaia, who was in charge of Georgia for five years. Georgia are currently in fifth place in their qualifying group for Euro 2016, with three points from their first four games.

Reuters