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A MATTER OF TEAMWORK

Political dialogue framework drafting kicks off

Ye Myint

A NINE-member team began the task of drawing up the details of a political dialogue framework at Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon yesterday. The remaining members of those selected to represent political parties and the current government's side were also confirmed, according to a spokesperson.

"The drafting of the framework began today," U Hla Maung Shwe, who represents the government side, told *The Global New Light of Myanmar* yesterday.

The government has selected Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing, a director at Myanmar Peace Centre, as its representative to the team, while political parties named U Nang Ngan Lin who is currently Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) representative from the National League for Democracy party.

"Today was very productive. It will take until 5 December to finalize the details," said U Thu Wai, who also represents the group of political parties.

The framework is expected to be submitted for approval by the President on 15 or 16 December and will first require approval



Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, who represents an ethnic group ceasefire signatories, is pictured during the first round of a nine-member political dialogue framework drafting team meeting at Myanmar Peace Centre yesterday. PHOTO: MYANMAR PEACE CENTRE

from the relevant meetings on 7-9 December in Yangon and 12-14 December in Nay Pyi Taw, added U Thu Wai.

The joint drafting team of three members from each of the political parties, the present gov-

ernment and ethnic group ceasefire signatories was formed on Monday.

According to a press conference held afterwards, the framework will be drafted between 1 and 5 December and it will

pave the way for political dialogue, which will take place no later than 14 January as per the requirements of the nationwide ceasefire agreement, which was signed in October.

The names of those who will

also be involved in drafting the framework were announced at the press conference, with one more representative from political party and the government to be confirmed on Tuesday.

According to Monday's announcement, Deputy Minister for Defence Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and U Hla Maung Shwe, a senior adviser at Myanmar Peace Centre, were selected on behalf of the government side while U Thu Wai of Democratic Party (Myanmar) and Sai Kyaw Nyunt of Shan National League for Democracy were named to represent political parties.

Ethnic ceasefire signatories declared its full list of representatives on Monday, which includes Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong of Chin National Front, U Myo Win of All Burma Students' Democratic Front and Saw Kyaw Nyunt of Karen National Union/ Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council).

In accordance with the concepts approved at the three-day meeting, the framework must be drafted in accordance with the terms of the national ceasefire agreement signed in October,

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Indaw's 'earth wave' not connected with Sagaing Fault Line: seismologists



Members of Myanmar's earthquake committee at work. PHOTO: MAUNG CHIT LIN

SEISMOLOGISTS have said that a one-metre high earth formation that sprouted across the Indaw-Bamauk Road near Indaw Township is not connected to the Sagaing fault line.

After conducting a survey in the site yesterday, a member of a Myanmar earthquake committee said that the landslides at Kyargaung Mountain and the formation of the earth wave were caused by torrential rains in July and August.

Large volumes of rain sank into the mountain, causing the weight of the land to increase and result in a landslide. The same situation caused the formation of an 'earth wave' on the road near

the mountain, said committee member Dr Saw Ngwe Khaing.

It could take one or two years for the land to stabilise, he added.

A one-metre high earth formation was apparently due to shifting underground faults. The formation has become a traffic obstacle and has created anxiety among the local people, who refer to the formation as an 'earth wave'.

The area also suffered torrential rains and landslides in July.

"Landslides are happening nearly every day and it has been found that the road has moved significantly over the last 10 to 15 days. The earth wave on the road

is getting bigger and bigger," said Ma Yu from Aunggon Village.

The mountain where the landslides are occurring seem to be inching closer to the road, she added.

Vehicles passing the mile post No 203 reported that the height of the earth wave has grown to a height of about three feet within a week, said U Aung Kyi, a resident of Thakkekyin Village.

Local people are anxious about the unusual formations, particularly in the wake of an earthquake measuring on 4.6 Richter scale that struck near Indaw Township on 11 October.—Maung Chit Lin



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

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Roundup

UNION Minister U Aung Min outlined the terms and conditions of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement during yesterday's Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session.

He said the truce was signed with three aims; strengthening the ceasefire agreement, implementing political dialogue and the realisation of the peace process. He added that the truce

agreement has been submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for approval.

Officials also clarified the benefits of signing an ASEAN+3 tourism cooperation agreement and representatives discussed a report on tax collection. The session also approved a bill amending the Myanmar Mining Law. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw Roundup



Dr Lin Aung. PHOTO: MNA



Daw Khin San Hlaing. PHOTO: MNA



U Aung Kyaw Khin. PHOTO: MNA

REPORTS on the Pyithu Hluttaw Farmers, Workers and Youth Affairs Committee, as well as its National Plan, Union Budget and Taxation Scrutinising Committee were submitted during yesterday's parliamentary session. MPs were invited to discuss the reports during upcoming sessions.

Reports by the Pyithu Hluttaw Rights of Citizens, Democracy and Human Rights Com-

mittee and the Pyithu Hluttaw Social Development Committee were also presented for approval.

The contents of the People's Debt Management Bill of the Ministry of Finance were read out, while bills on Insurance Business and Savings Banks Laws, with amendments by Amyotha Hluttaw, were also submitted for approval.

In response to a question

raised by Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale Constituency over measures being taken by the ministry for the conservation of watershed areas in Myanmar, the Deputy Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry clarified that the ministries are working with one another, international organisations and experts to promulgate a National Land Use Policy. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw Roundup

THE Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) approved three bills, including the Basic Education Bill, during yesterday's session.

Dr Myat Nyanna Soe, Secretary of the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee, suggested that parliament should amend the bill to include the phrase "to gain basic skills for proficiency and technology" so as to make the objectives of the bill more clear-cut.

The committee had already amended the bill after checking it thoroughly, he added.

The two other bills approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw were bylaws amending the Myanma Pearl Enterprise Bylaws and the Organisations Registration bylaws, which were both amended by the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and sent back to the Amyotha Hluttaw. — *Myanmar News Agency*



Daw Khin San Yi. PHOTO: MNA



Dr Myat Nyanna Soe. PHOTO: MNA

Ceremony held to recognise awareness about HIV/AIDS



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe presents prize to a school girl. PHOTO: MNA

WINNERS of the World HIV/AIDS Day 2015 drawing and essay competitions were awarded prizes by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myit Swe yesterday.

The Chief Minister presented prizes to middle and high school-level winners while Daw Khin Thet Htay, the Chairperson of the Yangon Region Women's Affairs Federation (WAF) gave outstanding performance awards for an HIV/AIDS knowledge test to WAF members. Healthcare staff in Yangon Region also received awards in recognition of their outstanding knowledge about HIV/AIDS. After the ceremony, which was held at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) in Lanmadaw Township, the Yangon Region Chief Minister and guests visited booths to commemorate the annual event. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Union Finance Minister talks tax reform in parliament

THE Ministry of Finance is stepping up its efforts to prevent tax evasion in Myanmar but is keen to avoid placing too great a burden on law-abiding taxpayers, Union Minister for Finance U Win Shein said at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session yesterday.

The union minister outlined new methods in tax collection, the allocation of taxes in the national budget and efforts to prevent tax evasion. He said that reforming the country's tax system is vital for generating income that can be used for the public good. — *Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Shein. PHOTO: MNA

Correction

The Global New Light of Myanmar regrets the incorrect spelling of 'reconciliation' on the front page of yesterday's edition.

World AIDS Day observed in Nay Pyi Taw



Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung visits World AIDS Day commemorative booths. PHOTO: MNA

OVER 100,000 Myanmar people living with HIV/AIDS are receiving free antiretroviral therapy thanks to the cooperation of local and foreign partner organisations, said the Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung during a ceremony to mark the World AIDS Day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his speech, the minister explained the efforts Myanmar is undertaking to help prevent the

spread of HIV and the treatments provided in Myanmar in collaboration with its local and international partners.

Although prevalence rates are decreasing, according to the Myanmar Ministry of Health there are 200,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Myanmar and approximately 15,000 people die of AIDS-related illnesses every year.

UNAIDS Country Director

Mr Eamonn Murphy and Investment and Efficiency Adviser Ms Krittayawan Tina Boonto read out messages on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNAIDS.

The union minister presented prizes to winners of essay, painting and cartoon competitions that were held as part of the event, which also included an exhibition aimed at raising awareness. —Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister meets World Bank delegation

THE Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Chairperson of the National Disaster Management Work Committee Dr Myat Myat Ohn Khin met with a World Bank delegation led by Senior Infrastructure Specialist Mrs Henrike Brecht at the ministry on Tuesday.

They discussed measures being taken by the ministry and the committee in providing ongoing aid to flood victims and future cooperation between the ministry and the World Bank. —Myanmar News Agency



Union Minister Dr Myat Myat Ohn Khin receives more than K 5.7 million donated by Ministry of Culture. PHOTO: MNA



Vietnamese actress Nguyễn Trần Huyền. PHOTO: HLA MOE

Vietnamese actress Nguyễn Trần Huyền arrives in Myanmar

MYANMAR crowds welcomed Vietnamese actress Nguyễn Trần Huyền at her arrival at Yangon International Airport yesterday evening.

Shar Htut Eindra, Miss Universe Myanmar-2014, was among other miss Myanmar who greeted the Vietnamese actress.

“I am delighted to see an in-

ternational actress coming to our nation, I am here to honour her,” she said.

She will leave today after visiting Shwedagon Pagoda and giving a press conference.

She will return to Myanmar in February of next year to star in a film with Myanmar actor Nay Toe. —Myat Sandi

A matter of teamwork

>> From page 1

and a new draft framework will be set up collaboratively, making it flexible enough to accommodate a transition of government in Myanmar, said a spokesperson.

Although various stakeholders drew up frameworks before the

ceasefire deal was signed, it has been agreed that each will be considered as a reference tool only as amalgamating the contents of each framework would be overly complicated.

Over the past three days, the drafting committee has reached an agreement on 10 elements, which in-

clude basic principles, representation and participation of stakeholders in political dialogue, the method of decision-making, the management of political dialogue, the signing of Union agreement and the implementation process, to be involved in the framework.

According to the terms of NCA, the framework must be created within 60 days after the signing of the NCA.

President U Thein Sein sends messages of felicitations to Lao People's Democratic Republic

U THEIN SEIN, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Choummaly SAYASONE, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and His Excellency Mr. Thongsing THAMMAVONG, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which falls on 2 December 2015. —Myanmar News Agency

Vice-President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham sends message of felicitations to Lao People's Democratic Republic

DR. SAI MAUK KHAM, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Bounnhang VORACHITH, Vice-President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which falls on 2 December 2015. —Myanmar News Agency

Vice-President U Nyan Tun sends message of felicitations to Lao People's Democratic Republic

U NYAN TUN, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Bounnhang VORACHITH, Vice-President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which falls on 2 December 2015. —Myanmar News Agency

U Wunna Maung Lwin sends message of felicitations to Lao People's Democratic Republic

U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Dr. Thongloun SISOU LITH, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which falls on 2 December 2015. —Myanmar News Agency

Talks on issues of Sovereignty and Disaster Matter held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 1 December 2015

WITH the aim to support capacity for Foreign Service Personnel, the capacity building process was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw which has been organizing every month as a third wave programme involved in Myanmar's transformation into a democratic nation. Professor Dr. Daw Yin Yin Nwe, Education Advisor to the President of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar came to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a special guest speaker for the month December, 2015.

Talks on Issues of Sovereignty and Disaster Matter were divided into two parts and presented by professor Dr. Daw Yin Yin Nwe on 1 December 2015 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw. The Talks were commenced at 0950 a.m. and opening remark was delivered by H.E. U Aung Linn, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Deputy Minister U Tin Oo Lwin, Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General, Officers and staff members of all levels attended the lecture which was followed by an inter-active discussion session and concluded at 1430 hrs. in the afternoon. —Myanmar News Agency

Toyota art contest aims to stimulate children's imaginations

More than 800,000 children from over 80 countries participated in last year's contest



Judges and organizers of Toyota Dream Car Art Contest aim to inspire children's creativity.

PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

Khaing Thanda Lwin

JAPAN'S top automaker Toyota has launched its 10th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest – a picture drawing contest for children – with the aim of inspiring creativity in youth and encouraging their interest in the automotive industry.

Children below 15 years of age are invited to take part in the contest, with plans to select nine winners from three categories, said U Aye Zaw, the chairman of TTAS Co. Ltd, Toyota's first authorised dealer in Myanmar.

Winning illustrations will be exhibited in Japan with national

winners from across the globe. Worldwide winners will be chosen from the field of national winners and flown to Japan with their parents or guardians.

Artist Nyein Chan Su, a judge presiding over the contest, said the contest is an opportunity for local children to reveal their artistic skills, which may also help them develop their imagination skills.

Actress Chit Thu Wai, who also serves as a judge for the contest, urged parents to encourage their children to create works with their own ideas, saying the majority of children and young people in the country are influenced by

their parents.

As part of its social contribution initiatives, the Toyota Motor Corporation has held the global drawing contest since 2004. Last year's contest attracted more than 800,000 children from over 80 countries.

This is the third time Myanmar has joined the contest since 2014. More than 1,000 Myanmar children joined last year's contest.

Interested children across Myanmar can send their works of art to No. 4 Pyidawaye Yeiktha Street, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Yankin Township, or to Toyota showrooms in Yangon no later than 13 February 2016.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nimala of Nandaraungmyay Monastery to be honoured



Officials of WMC hospital presents honorary certificate to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nimala. PHOTO: U ASARA

SAYADAW Bhaddanta Nimala of Nandaraungmyay Monastery in the compound of Leikpyakan, Bahan Township would be honoured by the World Medical Centre international hospital in Bangkok.

The hospital's honorary

certificate would be conferred on Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nimala for his contribution to the hospital's free medical service programs in Myanmar. He would be invited to Thailand in January to accept the certificate presented by the officials of WMC.—GNLM

Marionette training course concludes in Mandalay



People enjoy puppet show staged by trainees of marionette. PHOTO: THIHA KO KO



A TWO-WEEK Myanmar marionette training course, conducted by Myanmar Upperland, concluded on 28 November in Mandalay's Chanmyathazi Township. The course was sponsored by the Swiss Development Cooperation Association.

Patrons of the Myanma Marionette Association U Thein Naing and U Ye Dwe, counselor of the Swiss Embassy Ms Carin Salerno and director of the Goethe-Institut in Yangon Mr Franz Xaver Augustin gave keynote addresses at the com-

pletion ceremony.

The trainees and younger artists also paid traditional respect to the doyen marionette artists.

In the afternoon, cultural exchange discussions were held. One German marionette artist

spoke about arts education and cultural exchange. Professors U Khine Tun and Daw Aye Sanda Aung of the Departments of Traditional Dance at the National Universities of Fine Arts and Culture in Yangon and Mandalay, respectively, discussed arts

and entertainment.

In the evening, a German marionette show and a Myanmar marionette show by Yangon and Mandalay artists with a traditional Pyittaingtaung music troupe were held in Mandalay Square.—Thiha Ko Ko

India's Modi says developing nations need space to grow

PARIS — Developing countries need room to develop while fighting climate change, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi told delegates at the start of two weeks of UN talks in Paris on Monday.

"The prosperous still have a strong carbon footprint and the world's billions at the bottom of the development ladder are seeking space to grow. So the choices are not easy," Modi said.

Earlier, he held talks with

US President Barack Obama during which Modi pledged to ensure India's development would go "hand in hand" with environmental protection, while Obama acknowledged India's right to grow and fight poverty.—*Reuters*

S Korea warns against planned Japanese colonial history review panel

SEOUL — South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesman yesterday warned against a reported plan by Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party to create a panel to re-examine Japan's colonial history, saying the panel should not defend Japan's wartime wrongdoings.

"We are aware of the reports (on the planned panel) and Japan will come under a lot

stronger criticism from the international community if the panel tries to distort historical facts and support historical revisionism," Cho Joon Hyeok said during a news briefing.

Japan's LDP is reportedly planning to set up a history review panel to mark the 60th anniversary of the party's founding and re-examine the history of Japan from the Sino-Japa-

nese War in the late 19th century to World War II. Critics in South Korea raised concerns that the move may be part of Japanese nationalists' efforts to justify Japan's aggression against Asian countries in the first half of the 20th century.

Japan ruled the Korean Peninsula until the end of World War II after annexing it in 1910.—*Kyodo News*

Thailand's airports install to counter-terrorism systems

BANGKOK — Six international airports in Thailand implemented a new advance passenger information checking system yesterday in a bid to help prevent terrorists and criminals from entering and exiting the country.

Thailand's inbound and outbound passengers will now receive a background check through a screening system called the "Advance Passenger Processing System," which will enable Thai authorities to detect black-listed criminals and those subject to a "Red Notice" — an Interpol arrest warrant.

Police Maj. Gen. Nathathorn Prousoontorn, commissioner of immigration, told reporters at the system's launch at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport that the APPS system will obstruct criminals with arrest warrants from coming into Thailand at the point of boarding, as well as from trying to leave Thailand.

"The system will link with the immigration police's blacklist database and partly with Interpol

and airlines so the check-in counters will receive information instantly on whether the passenger is approved to board the plane to Thailand or not," said the police.

Additionally, a one billion baht (\$27.9 million) biometric facial, fingerprint and iris recognition system will be linked with the newly installed procedure.

"Besides being fully connected to Interpol's database next year, the APPS system will link to the biometric system so officers can identify criminals even more precisely," said the commissioner.

After a deadly bomb attack in Bangkok in August killed 20 people and injuring more than a hundred, Thai Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha ordered a reform of the country's security and border control systems, and approved a budget of one billion baht for the purchase of the biometric system to be enacted at immigration checkpoints at airports and border crossings throughout the country.—*Kyodo News*

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Indonesia says faulty component, crew response contributed to AirAsia crash

JAKARTA — Chronic problems with a faulty rudder system and the way pilots tried to respond were major factors in the crash of an Indonesian AirAsia (AIRA.KL) jet last year that killed all 162 people on board, investigators said yesterday.

The Airbus (AIR.PA) A320 crashed into the Java Sea on 28 December, less than halfway into a two-hour flight from Indonesia's second-biggest city of Surabaya to Singapore.

In their first public report, Indonesian investigators did not pinpoint a single underlying reason why flight QZ8501 disappeared from the radar, but set out a sequence spotlighting the faulty component, maintenance lapses and crew actions.

"There was a chain of events, starting with a broken (part), how it was handled and then after it was handled what the consequences were and how the pilot handled it. It's difficult for me to say what the main cause was," National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC) investigator Nurcahyo Utomo said.

Bad weather did not play a role.

The crash was part of a string of aviation disasters in Southeast Asia's biggest economy, where rapid growth in air travel has led to overcrowded airports and stirred safety concerns.

The NTSC said a system controlling rudder movement on the



Workers unload the fuselage of AirAsia QZ8501, which crashed into the Java Sea on 28 December, from the ship Onyx Crest in Tanjung Priok port in Jakarta, on 2 March. PHOTO: REUTERS

plane had cracked soldering that had malfunctioned repeatedly, including four times during the flight and 23 times over the previous year.

Officials told reporters there were indications from the black box data recorder that crew had tried to shut off power to the computer that controls the rudder system by resetting a circuit breaker, something not usually done during flight.

They cautioned there was no

proof of this but said they had recommended to Indonesia AirAsia and Airbus that they take steps to prevent pilots from "improvising" when faced with problems.

"The thing we recommend is to please provide some procedure to prevent the pilots from improvising. Today maybe they improvise by pulling the circuit breaker, tomorrow they may do something else," said Utomo.

Investigators confirmed that to reach the circuit breaker, the

captain would have had to leave his seat. In February, the NTSC said there was no evidence for a Reuters report that the captain had left his seat or that the power was reset. The temporary loss of power to the computer would have cancelled the autopilot and removed automated protections against an in-flight upset, handing manual control to the crew. "Subsequent flight crew action resulted in inability to control the aircraft," the NTSC said in a statement.—*Reuters*

Japan vessels leave for Antarctic to resume 'research' whaling

SHIMONOSEKI — Japanese vessels left a port in western Japan yesterday to resume so-called research whaling in the Antarctic Ocean for the first time since an international court ruled against the practice last year.

Two vessels departed Yamaguchi Prefecture to join the 8,145-ton mother ship Nisshin Maru from Hiroshima Prefecture and another ship that had already left a port in the northeastern prefecture of Miyagi the day before.

The four-ship whaling fleet is accompanied by the Fisheries Agency's patrol boat.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Hiroshi Moriyama said the resumption of research whaling "helps promote the policy aimed at resuming commercial whaling," while pledging Japan would make ef-

forts to gain support from the international community. He added ministries and agencies will closely work together to secure the safety of the vessels if anti-whaling groups try to intervene.

The fleet is scheduled to hunt whales from late this month to March, ending a hiatus prompted by the International Court of Justice ruling that said Japan's research lacked scientific ground and ordered its suspension in March 2014.

The ruling forced Japan to conduct only visual surveys of whale populations between January and March in the Antarctic mission for fiscal 2014 that ended in March.

Responding to the ICJ ruling that also called for considering measures other than catching whales to conduct "research," the

Fisheries Agency said it cut catches of minke whales by two-thirds to 333 and will also conduct visual surveys and collect skin samples, based on its new whaling plan it presented late last month to the International Whaling Commission, an intergovernmental organisation tasked with regulating whaling and conserving the species.

An IWC panel did not reach a consensus on Japan's new whaling plan at its meeting earlier this year.

Environmental activist group Sea Shepherd has said it would head to the Antarctic Ocean, while Australia and New Zealand are among nations that have expressed opposition to Japan's plan. Japan had carried out what it calls "scientific whaling" in the Antarctic Ocean since 1987.—*Kyodo News*

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One in 10 future Australian teachers fail simple literacy, numeracy exam

CANBERRA — Almost one in ten of Australia's future teachers have failed a nationwide literacy and numeracy trial exam designed to weed out those unfit to educate the next generation of Australians.

About 5,000 teaching trainees — who at the time had not graduated — were tested in every state capital earlier this year with the results published yesterday. Of the volunteers who took part, it was discovered that 8 percent failed to show bare

to mould the information-ready brains of Australia's youth.

"We know an essential part of achieving good education outcomes is having skilled teachers working with children in school classrooms," Birmingham said in a statement released yesterday.

"We need to ensure those students graduating from teaching courses can cope with the demands of teaching and have strong literacy and numeracy skills."

"We need to ensure those students graduating from teaching courses can cope with the demands of teaching..."

Simon Birmingham

Australian Minister for Education and Training

minimum requirements for literacy (reading and writing) skills, while a further 10 percent failed to exhibit adequate numeracy (simple maths) skills.

Following the poor pilot results, the Australian government announced that it would roll out a fully-fledged version of the test from 2016 onwards, with all graduating students required to pass in order to take control of a classroom.

Australia's Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said the exam wasn't aimed at shaming trainees, but instead ensuring they were ready

Birmingham outlined his hope that, soon enough, every single teacher in the country would place in the top 30 percent of Australians for literacy and numeracy.

"It is great to see the overwhelming majority of students passed the literacy and numeracy test," Birmingham said.

"Quality education relies on quality teachers, which is why the government is investing in measures like this to put students first and raise teaching standards and the status of the teaching profession in Australia."—*Xinhua*

Indonesia ferry hits trouble on way to Singapore, 97 rescued

SINGAPORE — Almost 100 people were rescued when a ferry sailing towards Singapore from the Indonesian island of Batam hit a floating object and reportedly started to sink, authorities in the city-state said.

Ferry operator Batamfast called out two other ferries that rescued all 90 passengers and seven crew and took them back to the Nongsapura ferry terminal in Batam, Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority said in

an emailed statement.

The authority said early on Monday it had received a report of the incident on the 'Sea Prince' at 9:45 pm on Sunday (1345 GMT). A passenger, Chella Ho, said the ferry started sinking slowly in deep water and passengers were loaded into two inflatable boats but those boats also sank because they were overloaded, TV news network Channel News Asia reported.—*Reuters*



Japanese whaling vessel Yushin Maru (R) and Yushin Maru No.2 are seen before they leave for the Antarctic Ocean at a port in Shimonoseki, southwestern Japan, on 1 December. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Philippines official confident in South China Sea arbitration case

AMSTERDAM — The Philippines on Monday wrapped up a week of arguments before judges in its case against China over the hotly disputed South China Sea, at a hearing boycotted by Beijing.

The Philippines has asked the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague to affirm its right to areas within 200 nautical miles of its coastline, under the terms of a UN convention.

China rejects the court's jurisdiction. It claims an area inside what it calls the "nine-dash line" which stretches south and east of mainland China and covers hundreds of disputed islands and reefs also claimed by the Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia.

The line was first defined in

public by Beijing in 1947. China has never formally sought a legal right to the territory.

It has been transforming low-lying reefs in the South China Sea into islands and building airfields and other military facilities on them.

"We have been able to present all of our arguments ... to support the main thrust of our case that the nine-dash line has no basis in international law," said the Philippines' deputy presidential spokeswoman Abigail Valte.

"We have a good case and we are hoping that after this round we will be able to secure a decision from the tribunal in about six months' time," she told Reuters.

China's assertiveness in

the South China Sea has raised tensions with its neighbours and with the United States, which is a dominant security partner and objects to Beijing's claims.

"It's not about the territory itself, but really for standing up for what is right in the proper forum," Valte added. The Philippines cannot go up against a giant military power like China, but "it is important for us to have something legal in terms of a resolution".

The arbitration court's rulings are supposed to be binding on its member countries, which include China. But the tribunal has no powers of enforcement and its verdicts have sometimes been ignored.

The court has yet to set a date for a ruling.—*Reuters*

Britons vote Thatcher most influential woman of past 200 years



A delegate holds a portrait of Margaret Thatcher during a tribute to the former conservative prime minister on the opening day of The Conservative Party annual conference in Manchester, northern England, on 29 September 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is the most influential woman of the past 200 years, according to a survey of Britons published yesterday which showed men place a higher value on political influence than women do.

Thatcher, who was Britain's first — and, so far, only — woman prime minister, led her Conservative party to three election victories, governing from 1979 to 1990, the longest continuous term in office for a British premier in over 150 years. She died in April 2013.

Thatcher's policies on trade unions, privatisation and the Falklands war left Britain bitterly divided over her legacy, and the survey by British pensions and insurance firm Scottish Widows highlighted the depth of her influence in the country.

With 28 percent of the vote, Thatcher beat scientist Marie Curie into second place with 24 percent. They were followed by the Queen with 18 percent, Diana, princess of Wales with 17 percent

and women's rights campaigner Emmeline Pankhurst with 16 percent.

Nun Mother Teresa, British nurse Florence Nightingale, Queen Victoria, US civil rights activist Rosa Parks and US television host Oprah Winfrey made up the rest of the top 10 most influential women. The results show that royal women are considered more influential than innovators, scientists and politicians, Scottish Widows said.

Scottish Widows, founded in 1815 to support women widowed in the Napoleonic Wars, sought to uncover the factors that people perceive make a woman influential. It found men were more likely than women to equate female influence with political activity. A third of men and only a quarter of women chose Margaret Thatcher as the most influential woman overall.

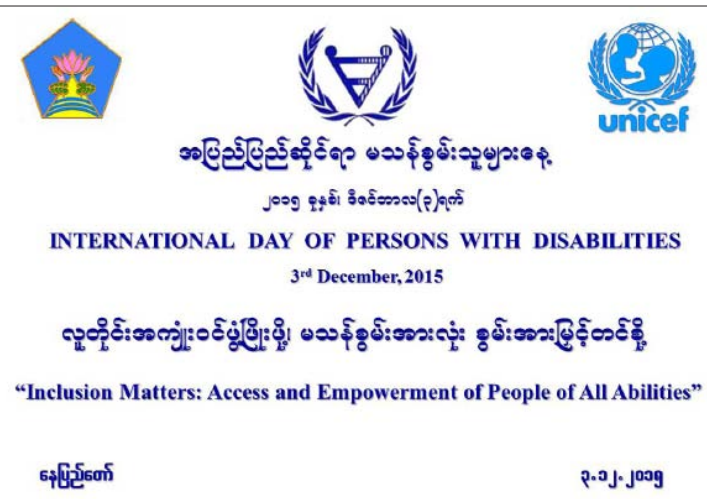
Women were also more likely to emphasize values such as 'demonstrating strong principles and values', 'being strong-willed

and driven' and 'having compassion' as being important, whereas men were more likely to stress values such as 'having charisma' and 'having talent'.

"The difference that exists between men and women over what makes a woman influential is interesting — it suggests that women believe influence comes from a woman's internal values and drive — i.e. from decisions that they can make about how to be, rather than from characteristics they possess — and men emphasise the opposite," said historian and author Suzannah Lipscomb.

The survey of 2,000 respondents also found that younger people were more likely to value ambition as a factor in women having influence, with 27 percent of 18-24 year olds choosing this as a key attribute, versus just 9 percent of 55-64 year olds.

Older people put more emphasis on compassion, with 25 percent of over-65s choosing this attribute compared with 16 percent of 18-24 year olds.—Reuters



Norway sees sharp drop in asylum seekers due to Swedish border control

OSLO — Stricter border controls in Sweden have led to a sharp drop in the number of people seeking asylum in neighbouring Norway, the Norwegian Immigration Authority (UDI) said on Monday.

Norway last week followed EU-member Sweden in tightening the border controls to try to reduce the number of asylum seekers reaching the country as Europe deals with the surge of refugees from conflicts such as Afghanistan and Syria.

The Nordic country, which has a population of 5.2 million people, received some 968 asylum seekers last week, a drop of 54 percent compared to the previ-

ous week, the UDI said.

"There is no doubt that what has happened in Sweden and especially the border control ... has direct impact on Norway," the head of the UDI, Frode Forfang, said, adding that the number of asylum seekers normally would decline during the winter season.

Norway expects to receive some 35,000 asylum seekers this year, triple what it was last year, but still a relatively modest number compared with Sweden who expects up to 190,000 asylum seekers this year.

Norway is not a member of the European Union but is a member of the passport-free Schengen zone.—Reuters



Migrants receive instructions from a Norwegian police officer at the Storskog border crossing station near Kirkenes, after crossing the border between Norway and Russia, on 16 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

World headed towards 'suicide' if no climate agreement: Pope

THE UN climate conference in Paris is most likely humanity's last chance to thwart global environmental disaster, Pope Francis said on Monday, warning the world was "at the limits of suicide".

The pope, who wrote a major document on the environment last June, made the comment in an hour-long news conference aboard the plane returning him to Rome at the end of a six-day trip to Africa.

The freewheeling conversations have become a trademark of his papacy and the few times he takes direct questions from journalists.

Francis, who visited Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic, also said the continent was "a martyr of exploitation" by wealthy countries who lust after its natural resources and try to impose Western values instead of concentrating on development.

The pope was asked if the UN climate summit in Paris would mark a turnaround in the fight against global warming.

"I am not sure, but I can say to you 'now or never'," he said. "Every year the problems are getting worse. We are at the limits. If I may use a strong word I would say that we are at

the limits of suicide."

He spoke of retreating glaciers in Greenland and low-lying countries at risk from rising sea levels.

"I am sure that the (Paris delegates) have goodwill to do something. I hope it turns out this way and I am praying that it will," he said.

World leaders launched an ambitious attempt on Monday to hold back the earth's rising temperatures, with the United States and China — the world's biggest carbon emitters — urging the UN climate summit in Paris to mark a decisive turn in the fight against global warming.

The pope's last stop in Africa was the Central African Republic, one of the continent's poorest nations.

He made an unscheduled stop at the country's only paediatric hospital, where doctors told him that they did not have oxygen and that most of the children there were destined to die of malnutrition or malaria.

He delivered medicines donated by a Rome hospital.

"Africa is a victim," he said. "Africa has always been exploited by other powers ... there are some countries that want only the great resources of Africa.

"But they don't think about

developing the countries, about creating jobs. Africa is martyr, a martyr of the exploitation of history," he said.

He sidestepped a question about the Church's ban on the use of condoms to stop the spread of HIV-AIDS, saying it was reductive to talk about condoms while African countries were mired in poverty, social injustice, wars and human trafficking.

The pope confirmed that next year he planned to visit Mexico and hoped to be able to visit Armenia.

"But I am old and these trips are heavy," he said.—Reuters

OPINION

Step up efforts to ensure mobility for all

Myint Win Thein

AS the majority of us take going anywhere we want for granted, we sometimes fail to recognise the fact that some people lack personal mobility due to physical disabilities.

Personal mobility allows a person to move freely and at their own will and whim. Meanwhile, people with disabilities lack the same in-

dependence, with many reliant on the goodwill of others to avoid losing out on a great number of opportunities.

Many people with disabilities are denied the right to education simply by virtue of being unable to travel independently. As a result, many cannot achieve their full potential. A lack of education leads to a loss of employment opportunities and denies such people the means to participate in society and their communities in a meaningful way.

It is a grave injustice that some people with disabilities cannot fully enjoy their rights as human beings because they lack mobility – or rather, Myanmar’s infrastructure lacks the necessary elements to enable mobility. Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons

with Disabilities urges countries to take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence. Myanmar must do much more to address this inequitable situation.

Write for us

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

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

Meet Yangon’s most nonchalant lady cab driver

Jacob Goldberg

D AW Htay Htay Win is aware of her gender. She is aware that very few people of her gender share her profession. And she’s aware of the dangers presented by being a lone woman in a field dominated by men. But she doesn’t care.

“This is my job. This is how I get money,” she said matter-of-factly in an interview with Flymya.com.

Htay Htay Win, 48, is one of a handful of woman taxi drivers in Yangon. Various reports by local media over the last few years have put the number of lady cab drivers in the city at as few as five and as many as 29. Since many cab drivers are not registered as such with local authorities, it is difficult to know how many cab drivers of any gender are actually on the street.

After her husband died in 2012, Htay Htay Win quit her abysmally low-paying job as an accountant for the Myanmar Army and began using the car she already owned to shuttle people around Yangon’s busiest city.

“I went from making 5,000 kyats [per day] to making 25,000 kyats per day,” she said.

This is well above Myanmar’s minimum wage of 3,600 kyats per day and is also above-average for a Yangon taxi driver. By her reckoning, this is because passengers feel safe with her.

“I introduce myself to customers who don’t know I’m a taxi driver. Sometimes they are apprehensive about taking a woman taxi driver, but they trust me after I talk to them. They believe I am less likely to steal from them,” she said.

But beyond building trust by

capitalising on popular perceptions of women as trustworthy, Htay Htay Win’s gender seems to play a minor role in her career. She weaves in and out of traffic, cuts off other taxis to reach a customer first and haggles with foreigners in broken English, just like every Yangon cab driver does. She drives around the city until 9pm looking for customers, despite the admonitions of her friends who say being alone at night is dangerous for a woman.

“This is how I dress,” she said, gesturing toward her traditional Myanmar htamein. “They tell me to wear a hat and trousers to look more like a man. But I want to be open about being a woman taxi driver.”

She even drives through South Dagon Township’s Ward No 71, which is notorious among Yangon locals for being a hotbed of violent crime.

“I’m not afraid. I stay on the main road. If there’s a problem, I’ll drive away,” she said.

Three years after she decided to enter the male-dominated world of taxi driving, one of her sons has graduated from university and works as a sailor. Htay

Htay Win says she is very proud of him. Her other son is still in school.

“I am very lucky. I always get passengers on my way home. Driving a taxi is a man’s job, but I have two kids, and I need the money, so I will drive.”



Daw Htay Htay Win stands in front of her taxi, proud and empowered.

PHOTO: JACOB GOLDBERG

Myanmar’s HIV patients shunned despite progress in treatment

Ei Cherry Aung

LONDON — Shortly after Cho’s husband passed away at his parent’s home his family called to tell her he had died of AIDS and said she should get tested.

Cho vividly remembers rushing to a clinic in the sweltering heat to get a blood test. She breathed a sigh of relief when it came out negative. But then she started losing weight and began falling ill more often. In September, the former market stallholder went for another HIV test. It was positive.

“As soon as I found out I had HIV, I felt really sad as well as upset,” the 43-year-old said, wiping tears from her cheeks.

Within two days, she had admitted herself to a clinic and hospice for HIV patients founded by a member of parliament from the National League for Democracy (NLD). Her family, who live in the impoverished Hlaing Thar Yar township in Myanmar’s main city

Yangon, did not want her to live with them.

Although the virus cannot be transmitted by day-to-day contact, they feared she would infect her younger sister’s child. They support her financially, but would rather she never came home, said Cho, whose name has been changed to protect her identity.

“My 21-year-old daughter has not come to visit me once since I arrived here, but at least she speaks to me on the phone, so it’s not bad,” she told Myanmar Now, an independent news service supported by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The hospice is home to nearly 300 patients, many with similar stories of rejection.

Myanmar has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in Asia. Under reforms by a semi-civilian government since 2011, access to medication has improved compared to a few years ago when cash-strapped clinics had to turn patients away. Some 210,000 people in Myanmar live with HIV/

AIDS, of whom around 160,000 need life-saving antiretroviral treatment (ART) based on World Health Organization guidelines, according to aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

There is no official data on the proportion of patients with access to ART. MSF, long the main provider of HIV treatment in the Southeast Asian nation, says it currently gives ART to 35,000 HIV patients. Treatment is also becoming available at more state hospitals. “Now you can get ART in government-run hospitals in many states and regions,” MSF doctor Soe Yadanar said ahead of World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.

Yet the stigma faced by people living with HIV lingers.

Ignorance and fear surrounding the HIV virus which causes AIDS are among the many challenges that will face Myanmar’s new government, elected on Nov. 8, in overhauling a neglected health system and changing attitudes fed by misinformation and a

conservative culture. A 48-year-old mother from Ayeyarwady Region has a similar tale to Cho. She says her community shunned her family when their HIV status came to light three years ago.

“Since I got HIV, nobody asked me to work at their homes any more,” said the woman, a labourer who looks much older than her years. She and her five-year-old son, also HIV positive, survive on fruits and vegetables from their garden.

“Without a job, we don’t have money. Sometimes it’s really difficult to find food,” she said.

Like Cho, the woman only discovered she and her son had HIV after her husband died and a friend who was worried about her health took her to a clinic.

The boy has little idea of his condition except that he needs to take regular medication, his mother said. But his friends at kindergarten seem to know.

“My friends never ask me to join them when they’re playing.

They stop playing if I’m included,” he said. MSF’s Soe Yadanar said much of the stigma is linked to a lack of knowledge about HIV, and poor families not having anyone to care for people living with HIV.

“We’ve seen cases where if someone looking after a patient with HIV dies while the patient is unwell, other people don’t want to take care of the person with HIV anymore,” she said. Soe Yadanar added that while access to ART is becoming easier, there are still challenges in delivering treatment because of a shortage of staff, particularly doctors. For Cho, who is now on ART, taking care of her health and diet is her main focus. But she has no illusions that her family will ever accept her again.

“My daughter is worried that if she gets married, her husband would use my condition against her,” she said.

“So I think I’m going to spend whatever time that is left of my life in this hospice.” —Reuters

Yangon-Mandalay highway section widened in Meiktila Tsp

A SECTION of the Yangon-Mandalay Highway in Meiktila Township, Mandalay Region, has been widened to ease traffic congestion. The section is part of the No. 1 Asia Express Highway.

The section near the east bank of Meiktila's South Lake in Yandanamanaung ward has been widened to 100 feet. The narrow road section is situated on a 60-foot hill, where two large cars coming from opposite directions could not pass each other easily.

After the completion of the extension project by the Yuzana Construction Co., cars using the road have been able to pass each other more easily.—*Chantha*



Completion of extension of Yangon -Mandalay Highway in Meiktila Township would provide easy passing to cars on the road. PHOTO: CHANTHA

International Exhibition of Construction, Energy and Mining Equipment held in Yangon



Visitors observe equipment at 3rd International Exhibition of Construction, Energy and Mining Equipment. PHOTO: MAUNG PYITHU

THE 3rd International Exhibition of Construction, Energy and Mining Equipment opened at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon on 27 November. It was hosted by the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs' Association and the Myanmar Mining Entrepreneurs' Association.

President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce

and Industry U Win Aung, chairman of the Myanmar Mining Entrepreneurs' Association U Khin Maung Han, deputy chairman of the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs' Association U Kyaw Paing and director general U Khin Maung Win of the Electrical Planning Department delivered speeches at the opening ceremony.

The exhibition showcased numerous items of construc-

tion equipment which are used in the in construction, energy and mining sectors. The machines and electrical equipment were from over 170 companies based in 21 countries, including Germany, France, Italy, the US, Belarus, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, PR China, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam. The three-day exhibition ended on 29 November.—*Maung Pyithu*

New concrete roads built in Mawlaik

OLD dirt roads in Mawlaik Township, Sagaing Region, that were damaged by flood waters of the Chindwin River in July and August will be paved with concrete, according to the township development committee.

Seven dirt roads in the town were to be converted into concrete roads with a budget of K80 million (US\$61,870) from the Union Fund for the 2015-2016 budget year. The construction of the concrete roads was initiated by the Sagaing

Region government.

Phonemyatpyo and Anautmyaukmyotaw construction companies, which won the tenders for the project, began construction on the 528-foot Myanmaranda Road and the 530-foot Myitta Road on 20 November.

Construction materials for the other five concrete roads have been compiled, and construction will begin soon, according to the township development committee.—*Kyaw Pwa-Mawlaik*



Workers construct a new concrete road to replace an old dirt road in Mawlaik. PHOTO: KYAW PWA



Staff of the Agriculture Department harvest rice in a model plot with the use of machinery. PHOTO: KO PAUK (OKKAR MYAY)

Monsoon paddy model plot harvested in Nay Pyi Taw

STAFF of the Agriculture Department and of region, district and township agricultural coordination committees harvested model plots of Paethwe hybrid paddy on a 10-acre farm in Montegwin village, Zeyathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, on 29 November.

Deputy director-general U Naing Kyi Win of the Agriculture Department spoke with local farmers and agricultural staff.

The head of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area Agriculture Department discussed the yield of the model paddy plot and future tasks. The model plot yielded 6,000 kilos of paddy per acre.

Local farmers in the eight townships of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area each grow 10-acres of Paethwe hybrid paddy and compete over who can produce the most.—*Ko Pauk (Okkar Myay)*

Obama urges Turkey to reduce tensions with Russia

PARIS — US President Barack Obama urged Turkey yesterday to reduce tensions with Russia that are hampering efforts to fight Islamic State militants in Syria and stressed that US support for its NATO ally's security remained steadfast.

Obama met Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan in Paris, where they have been attending an international climate summit, a week after Turkish jets shot down a Russian warplane along the Syrian border.

"The United States supports Turkey's right to defend itself and its airspace and its territory," Obama said. "We discussed how Turkey and Russia can work together to de-escalate tensions and find a diplomatic path to resolve this issue."

Obama told Erdogan that the Islamic State militant group, also known as ISIL, was the entity that all sides needed to pursue, echoing a message he delivered to Russian President Vladimir Putin in Paris on Monday.

"We all have a common enemy, and that is ISIL, and



I want to make sure that we focus on that threat," Obama said.

Tensions between Russia and Turkey have complicated US efforts to prod Moscow into steering its military might towards Islamic State rather than the moderate Syrian opposition. Putin supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while

Obama and Erdogan want him to go.

The downed plane incident has been further exacerbated by the strong personalities of the Russian and Turkish leaders. Obama's relationship with Putin is tense but direct. His relationship with Erdogan, whom he referred to by first name, is also not close, though the

two men are in contact frequently.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu called for the opening of communication channels between Turkey and Russia to prevent further incidents like the downing of the warplane.

Putin, who has signed a decree imposing economic sanctions on Turkey over

the incident, has said Turkey shot down the jet because it wanted to protect supplies of oil from Islamic State militants. Erdogan says claims that Turkey buys oil from Islamic State are "slander".

While both Erdogan and Davutoglu have said they do not want an escalation in tensions with Russia, they have also indicated they have no intention of issuing an apology for the downing of the jet, as Moscow has demanded.

Both Putin and Erdogan are strong-willed leaders ill-disposed to being challenged and playing to domestic audiences who like their pugnacity. Neither

"We all have a common enemy, and that is ISIL, and I want to make sure that we focus on that threat."

Barack Obama

wants to be seen to back down first.

"Putin and Erdogan are two peas in a pod. They're very similar characters," said one top European diplomat.

Erdogan said following the meeting with Obama that tension with Russia was harming both countries.

"The tensions in the region sadden us. It is causing harm to both sides," he said. "Our concern is to not come out badly from this, but on the contrary to turn this into peace and contribute to the peace in the region," Erdogan said.

Obama said the US was eager to accelerate work on its military-to-military relationship with Turkey to ensure its NATO ally was safe and to help resolve the conflict in Syria. In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said similar ties between Russia and Turkey had failed.

"Military channels existed and were meant to not allow such tragedies. These channels didn't work and not through the fault of the Russian side," he said.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV KULNATEE VOY NO (08/15)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KULNATEE VOY NO (08/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

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In unexpected twist, Assad ally may be Lebanon's next president

BEIRUT — Lebanon's political crisis has taken a dramatic turn with the possibility that a friend of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad could become president in a power-sharing deal aimed at breathing life back into the paralysed state.

The idea of Suleiman Franjeh, a childhood friend of Assad, becoming head of state has taken aback many Lebanese, not least because of who tabled it: Saad al-Hariri, a Sunni politician who leads an alliance forged from opposition to Syrian influence in Lebanon. He would become prime minister under the deal.

It is no less startling because of the backing it would require from Saudi Arabia and Iran, rival states that wield decisive influence over Lebanon's competing factions and which are in conflict elsewhere in the region, including in Syria.

As the war escalates in Syria, with Iran and Saudi Arabia increasing their support for Assad and his enemies, a new deal for Lebanon seems unlikely to signal any broader understanding to settle regional



Suleiman Franjeh raises his hands to a jubilant crowd gathered at Central Beirut. PHOTO: REUTERS

conflicts.

But it would point to a desire to preserve a minimal degree of stability in Lebanon. While badly affected by the Syrian war that has triggered militant attacks, driven a million refugees over the border, and fuelled a political crisis, Lebanon has avoided the kind of civil strife some had feared.

Yet the country has been without a president for 18 months and a unity government led by Prime Minister Tammam Salam is barely functioning. The Hariri proposal is the most serious effort yet to resolve that political stalemate.

Ali Akbar Velayati,

a top adviser to Iran's supreme leader who was on a visit to Beirut on Monday said after meeting Salam that hopes for the election of a president had increased.

"We hope to witness in the immediate future the selection and election of a president of the republic," a statement from Salam's office quoted Velayati as saying. But the appointment of Franjeh faces big challenges including resistance from politicians who campaigned against Syrian influence in Lebanon, and winning over other leaders who also covet the post reserved for a Maronite Christian, notably Michel

Aoun and Samir Geagea.

If it fails, analysts believe the chances of a settlement will be even more remote, meaning no imminent end to a crisis of government that has in recent months left trash to pile up in the streets and the army without salaries. Though the proposal has not been made public by Hariri, it has been reported in Lebanon and confirmed by political sources. Franjeh has said the proposal for him to become president is serious, but not official. The deal is expected to include an agreement on arrangements for new parliamentary elections.

Any power-sharing deal needs to reconcile Lebanon's two main camps: the 8 March alliance dominated by the Iranian-backed Shi'ite group Hezbollah, and the Hariri-led 14 March alliance.

The toughest part is winning over other Christians on both sides. Geagea and Aoun are the official candidates of the rival alliances, and a Franjeh presidency risks exacerbating historic rivalries among the Christians.—Reuters

Bank of England plans to make banks hold up to 10bn pounds more capital

LONDON — The Bank of England set out plans yesterday to require banks to hold as much as 10 billion pounds extra capital as the credit cycle moves into a more normal phase, but stopped short of immediate action.

The central bank said credit conditions in Britain had largely recovered from the financial crisis as banks began to lend more freely, and warned that asset prices were vulnerable to a big rise in interest rates

and banking analysts had expected the BoE to raise the CCB this month to 0.5 percent. The BoE also said it expected the banking sector as a whole to hold high-grade tier one equity capital of 13.5 percent of risk-weighted assets by 2019, up from 13 percent now — part of which would overlap with the capital required for the CCB.

The BoE has said it wanted to give banks more clarity about its long-run aims for the

“Following the global financial crisis, there was a period of heightened risk aversion and retrenchment from risk-taking.”

— Bank of England

and emerging market risks.

“Following the global financial crisis, there was a period of heightened risk aversion and retrenchment from risk-taking,” the BoE said. “The system has now moved out of that period.”

The central bank said it now expected banks to hold a so-called counter-cyclical capital buffer (CCB) of 1 percent during normal times, and was in the process of tweaking bank-specific requirements with a view to impose this step-by-step from March.

The CCB aims to rein in risky lending at frothier stages of the credit cycle. It stands at zero currently, but the BoE has already required some banks to hold extra capital due to firm-specific risks. Some econ-

amount of capital they hold, now that credit conditions had largely got back to normal. Banks have complained that in the past, the BoE has unexpectedly piled on extra capital requirements, making it hard for them to lend or decide which lines of business to stay in.

Alongside its half-yearly Financial Stability Report, the BoE also released the results of annual ‘stress tests’ into how lenders would deal with unexpected economic shocks.

This year the focus was on emerging market and trading risks, and Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS.L) and Standard Chartered (STAN.L) both only passed thanks to steps they took to improve their capital ratios mid-way through the testing process.—Reuters

Brazil sues BHP, Vale for \$5bn in damages for mine disaster

BRASILIA — Brazil filed a lawsuit on Monday against two of the world’s largest mining companies for 20 billion Brazilian reais (\$5.2 billion/3.4 billion pounds) to clean up what it says was its worst environmental disaster, caused by the collapse of a tailings dam.

The governments of Brazil and those of two states hit by the damburst sued iron ore operator Samarco and its co-owners, the world’s largest miner BHP Billiton Ltd (BHP.AX) (BHP.N) (BLT.L) and the biggest iron ore miner Vale SA (VALE5.SA) (VALE.N).

Earlier on Monday, President Dilma Rousseff blamed the disaster on the “irresponsible action of a company” in a speech to the COP21 climate change summit in Paris. “We are severely punishing those responsible for this tragedy,” she said.

While they are going to court, Brazilian authorities are looking for a settlement similar to the \$20.8 billion agreement reached by the US government with oil firm BP Plc (BP.L) following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

However, in a civil lawsuit brought by business owners and others, a judge in 2014 ruled that BP was primarily responsible for the spill and had to pay up to \$18 billion in penalties on top of the previous payments made.

The 5 November damburst in Minas Gerais, Brazil’s main mining state, unleashed 60 million cubic meters of mud and mine waste that demolished a nearby village, killed at least 13 people and polluted a major river valley, killing fish and reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

The lawsuit filed in federal



An aerial view of the Rio Doce (Doce River), (bottom) which was flooded with mud after a dam owned by Vale SA and BHP Billiton Ltd burst, at an area where the river joins the sea (top) on the coast of Espírito Santo in Regencia Village, Brazil, on 23 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

court in Brasilia required Samarco to take immediate action to contain and reduce the environmental impact of the damburst, the chief prosecutor of the coastal state of Espírito Santo, Rodrigo Vieira, said.

The lawsuit seeks at least 20 billion reais that would be administered by a private fund over 10 years to pay for the recovery from the environmental disaster and its social impact on communities near the mine and along the Rio Doce river basin.

Samarco would be required to set up the fund to be managed independently by non-governmental groups, such as a committee of inhabitants of the river basin and Instituto Terra, a local environmental nonprofit started by world renowned photographer Sebastian Salgado.

“If Samarco does not have the financial resources to cover payments over 10 years, Vale and BHP will be held responsible for providing their shares,” Vieira

told Reuters by telephone.

BHP, whose shares have fallen 20 percent since the dam burst, said yesterday it would consider the matters raised in the court documents “in due course”.

Vale and BHP announced last Friday that they would create a fund with Samarco to help in the clean-up of the Rio Doce and its tributaries affected by the disaster. They did not detail the size of the recovery fund.

Samarco has already been fined 250 million reais by Brazil’s environmental agency, Ibama, for the disaster, which covered the flood plain in mud for 80 km. Drinking water supplies for a quarter of a million people had to be closed off.

Brazil hopes to sit down with the miners and settle out of court, Vieira said. “The big oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a good precedent of how to agree on funds for environmental and socioeconomic recovery,” he said. “That’s our goal.”—Reuters

Target website stumbles on Cyber Monday, rivals out of stock

CHICAGO — US shoppers seeking to avoid the holiday crowds at bricks-and-mortar stores and snare deals on Cyber Monday came face-to-face with traffic jams and product sellouts, with some customers of Target Corp forced to wait in a virtual line.

Sales on Cyber Monday, traditionally the busiest day of the year for Internet shopping, were expected to finish up 12 percent from a year earlier at \$2.98 billion, according to Adobe Digital Index, part of Adobe Systems Inc, which provides digital marketing and media services to merchants. As of 10 am ET on Monday, sales registered at \$490 million.

But 13 out of 100 product views returned an out-of-stock message Monday morning, more than twice the rate on an average day, according to Adobe.

“Consumers are hyped for

Cyber Monday, with social buzz more positive than what we saw on Black Friday, but they need to brace themselves for the highest out-of-stock rates of the season so far,” said Tamara Gaffney, principal analyst at Adobe Digital Index.

Website outages and slow checkouts during the five-day shopping spree that started on Thanksgiving were reported at luxury retailer Neiman Marcus, Wal-Mart Stores Inc, L Brands Inc’s Victoria Secret and Foot Locker Inc. Slow service was also reported at payments processor PayPal Inc. The data underscores the ongoing shift in shopping online, which makes up for slowing spending in stores. But product shortages raise broader concerns about inventory planning by retailers during the most crucial time of the year.

Adobe tracked 80 percent of

all online transactions from the top 100 US retailers and said sales are on track to meet its expectation of a record \$3 billion by the end of Monday.

Retail stocks including Amazon, Wal-Mart, Target and Macy’s Inc fell between 1 and 3 percent on Monday. Data from RetailNext showed overall in-store sales from Thursday to Sunday fell 4.7 percent, with customer traffic down 5.1 percent.

Data from ChannelAdvisor, a retail technology and services firm, showed marketplace sales at Amazon, which account for more than 40 percent of Amazon’s total revenue, grew 22.4 percent, Google Inc’s Google Shopping marketplace grew 14.34 percent while eBay Inc rose 1.9 percent from midnight to noon Eastern time on Monday.

On Target’s website, www.target.com, some shoppers look-

ing for bargains were greeted with an error message: “So sorry, but high traffic’s causing delays. If you wouldn’t mind holding, we’ll refresh automatically & get things going ASAP.”

A Target spokeswoman said that as the website witnesses spikes in traffic it places some guests in a queue, while millions of others shopped on the website. She said Target’s volume was already twice as high as its busiest day ever.

Most US retailers like Wal-Mart, Target and Best Buy began offering some of the season’s best online deals, which traditionally had been reserved for Cyber Monday, several weeks in advance.

Between Thanksgiving day and Cyber Monday, \$11 billion will have been spent online, a 15 percent increase from 2014, Adobe said. Mobile devices, which include smartphones and tablets,

drove 28 percent of online sales, Adobe said.

Mastercard, which tracks spending in its card network as well as other forms of payments, said its data also showed a double-digit jump in e-commerce sales from Thanksgiving to Sunday, above its expectations for an 8 percent rise.

Mastercard said spending overall was brisk. It said specialty apparel retailers saw sales pick up during the four-day period as colder weather unleashed pent-up demand for winter clothing but that revenue for department store chains and electronics retailers remained subdued.

IBM has predicted that Cyber Monday online sales would grow by more than 18 percent compared with 2014. IBM said e-commerce sales rose 26 percent on Saturday and Sunday compared with a year earlier.—Reuters

Turkish newspaper faces tax inspection after journalists arrested

ISTANBUL — Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, whose top two journalists were arrested last week on charges of espionage and terrorist propaganda, is facing an investigation into its tax accounts, its chief executive said.

A court last Thursday ordered the arrest of Can Dunder, the paper's editor-in-chief, and senior editor Erdem Gul over the publication of footage purporting to show the state intelligence agency helping send weapons to Syria.

The case against the journalists has revived long-standing criticism of Turkey's record on press freedom under President Tayyip Erdogan with the United States saying it was "very concerned" about the arrests.

"They informed (us) that they will once again inspect *Cumhuriyet* newspaper's 2010 accounts, 2-1/2 years after fully inspecting them before," the newspaper's chief executive, Akin



Demonstrators attend a protest outside the headquarters of Cumhuriyet newspaper whose editor-in-chief Can Dunder was arrested on charges of espionage and terrorist propaganda, in Istanbul, Turkey, on 29 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

Atalay, wrote on Twitter on Monday.

The tweet was accompanied by a photocopy of an apparent corporation tax inspection report dating from mid-2013 regarding the company's 2010 accounts. Officials were not

immediately available to comment.

The video footage at the heart of the court case, released in May, purported to show Turkish police opening crates of weapons and ammunition bound for Syria on the back of trucks

said to belong to the MIT National Intelligence Organisation.

Publication of the story at the time prompted Erdogan to vow revenge, saying those behind it endangered security and would "pay a heavy price".—*Reuters*

Venezuela arrests three for killing of opposition candidate

CARACAS — Authorities arrested three people on Monday suspected in the murder of an opposition leader that shook Venezuela and drew international condemnation in the run-up to this weekend's election for a new legislature.

Opposition leaders blamed last week's shooting of Luis Diaz, 44, a candidate for the Democratic Action party in central Guarico state, on the ruling Socialists.

But President Nicolas

Maduro's government has furiously denied that. Officials say Diaz was a well-known criminal caught in a gang dispute linked to unions in Guarico, whose death was being manipulated to discredit the Socialist Party.

The Prosecutor General's Office named three men, aged between 22 and 28, whom it said were arrested on Monday morning in the town of Altigracia de Orituco where Diaz was killed at a rally.

"The three men will be

accused in coming hours for their presumed link to Luis Manuel Diaz's death," the office said, without giving further details.

Diaz's murder has heightened Venezuelans' fears of volatility around Sunday's vote for a new National Assembly, which polls show the opposition could win for the first time in 16 years in the South American OPEC member.

Venezuela's economic crisis, including the world's highest inflation

and widespread shortages from eggs to electronics, has battered the popularity of Maduro, who won election in 2013 after the death of his far more popular predecessor Hugo Chavez.

Though various polls show the opposition Democratic Unity coalition ahead on nationwide voting tendencies and anti-Maduro leaders are confident, electoral district geography and superior campaign resources favour the ruling party.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

S Korea, US, Japan to hold nuclear talks

SEOUL — South Korea, the United States and Japan will hold talks on Thursday in Washington to discuss matters related to ending North Korea's nuclear weapons development programme, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesman said yesterday.

In the upcoming talks, South Korea will be represented by Hwang Joon Kook, special envoy for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, the United States by Sung Kim, special representative for North Korea policy, and Japan by Kimihiro Ishikane, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, according to Cho Joon Hyeok.—*Kyodo News*

Over 120 ISIS members return to Kosovo

BELGRADE — Presently in Kosovo-Metohija, there are around 120 returnees from the so-called Islamic State, Kosovo police spokesperson Baki Keljani said on Monday as reported by Pristina-based media.

These people took part in the fights in Syria and Iraq on the side of the Islamic State since 2011, reads Pristina-based daily *Zeri* as reported by Radio and Television of Serbia.

The daily's sources say that relevant institutions, including the Kosovo police, the Kosovo Intelligence Service and other mechanisms, are monitoring closely the activities of Kosovo people, who stayed in Syria and Iraq in different periods, and then returned to Kosovo.—*Tanjug*

6 children killed in fire at Turkish school

ANKARA — Six children were killed and three others injured in a fire at a school teaching Quran in south-eastern Turkey yesterday, private Dogan news agency reported.

The fire broke out in the residential Quran Course building in Karaagac village in Kult town of Diyarbakir province early yesterday morning.

An investigation into the incident is underway.

Turkey's Anadolu news agency said an electrical heater may have caused the fire.—*Xinhua*

Palestinian shot dead for alleged stabbing attack in West Bank

JERUSALEM — Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian man Tuesday after he allegedly tried to stab Jewish commuters at a busy junction in the West Bank, Israeli officials said.

A military spokesperson said that the Palestinian man, armed with a knife, attempted to stab Jewish civilians at the Gush Etzion Junction, a major crossroad in a Jewish settlement bloc. The soldiers opened fire and killed him at the scene, police said, giving no additional details on his identity.—*Xinhua*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR BIAK VOY NO (452N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BIAK VOY NO (452N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV HONOR PESCADORES VOY NO (6)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HONOR PESCADORES VOY NO (6) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S TOKO KAIUN KAISHA LTD.
Phone No: 2301191/2301178

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (070N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (070N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S WAN HAI LINES PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

US Marine jailed in Philippines for killing transgender woman



US Marine Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton (C) is escorted by US security officers into a court in Olongapo city, north of Manila, on 1 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

OLONGAPO CITY — A Philippine court found a US Marine guilty of killing a transgender woman yesterday, jailing him for six to 12 years in a case that has reignited debate over the American military presence in its former colony.

The Olongapo City regional trial court also ordered Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton to pay more than 4.5 million pesos (63,215 pound) to the family of Jennifer Laude, who was found dead last year in a hotel outside the former US navy base northwest of Manila.

Pemberton will serve a minimum of six years and a maximum of 12 years in jail. He had been charged with murder but was con-

victed of the lesser offence of homicide, which does not require malicious intent.

He can appeal against the verdict and sentence.

"This is not quite a victory," Laude's sister, Malou, told Reuters. "We expected a murder conviction but instead got homicide. We are not contented with the decision."

Pemberton had earlier admitted in court to choking, but not killing, Laude. He said he had acted in self-defence after he discovered that a man was giving him oral sex, not a woman.

Protesters outside the Hall of Justice carried placards saying "Justice for Jennifer Laude! Justice for

the Filipino people", "Jail Pemberton in the Philippines".

Pemberton was due to be held in the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa, south of the capital, until the Philippines and US government agree on where he should serve his sentence as prescribed under a visiting forces agreement. But a lawyer for the victim said there was a brief dispute with US officials about where Pemberton should go that was resolved when the judge ordered he be held at a Philippine army base for five days while a permanent solution was found.

"This is a sad day for the Philippines. It shows the US gets what it wants,"

said lawyer Harry Roque.

The case has stirred debate over the presence of American soldiers on Philippine soil after senators voted two decades ago to kick out US bases because of social issues, such as crimes committed by servicemen.

The United States has raised military aid to the Philippines this year as tension rises in the region over China's new assertiveness in the South China Sea. The two allies are waiting for the Philippine Supreme Court to approve a pact allowing the US military to store supplies at Philippine bases for operations related to maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disasters.—Reuters

Suspect in Colorado clinic shooting faces murder charges

COLORADO SPRINGS — The man accused of killing three people and wounding nine in a shooting rampage at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs was told he faces first-degree murder charges during his first court appearance on Monday. Robert Lewis Dear, 57, appearing by video link from jail, spoke only to tell a judge he understood and had no questions. There was no discussion of the motive for the Friday shooting during the brief hearing, and formal charges will be filed next week.

Police records from North Charleston, South Carolina, showed that Dear was charged with rape there

in 1992, although Reuters could not determine in court records how the case was resolved.

Planned Parenthood has said reports that Dear told investigators "no more baby parts" after his arrest showed he was acting on an anti-abortion agenda.

Chief Judge Gil Martinez told Dear, who was in handcuffs and leg irons and strapped into a padded vest, apparently for his own safety, that if convicted, he faces a minimum sentence of life without parole or a maximum of death.

District Attorney Dan May said prosecutors had 63 days after Dear's arraignment to decide whether to

bring a death penalty case. Documents in the investigation were ordered sealed by the court on Monday.

For his appearance by closed-circuit camera from the jail where he is being held without bond, Dear was flanked by Dan King of the state's public defender's office. A handful of victims sat in the front of the packed courtroom, watching Dear on a screen. The rampage blamed on the South Carolina native is believed to have been the first deadly attack on a US abortion provider in six years.

The Colorado Springs center has been the target of protests by anti-abortion activists.—Reuters

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The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

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For **Santen Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.**,
C/o Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd.,

Level 8A, Union Financial Centre (UFC),
Corner of Mahabandoola Road and Thein Phyu Road,
Botahtaung Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 2 December 2015

Imm@kcyangon.com



Myanmar Auto Corporation (Tender Notice)

- 1) Myanmar Auto Corporation (MAC) will sell following Equipment as it is : **KOMATSU DOZER (D85ESS-2), 2012Year, 1 UNIT**
Equipment location : Manoyong, Boakpyin Township, Tanintharyi Region
- 2) Selling Method : **Tender (Closing date : 17:00 Dec. 28. 2015)**
- 3) Remarks : Tender Documents shall be collected at Yangon Head Office

Contact (MAC Yangon Head Office) : 09-49317989, 09-421128015

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With 'Star Wars' movie due to land, old toys go galactic

THORNABY — Vintage toys linked to the “Star Wars” film franchise are moving faster than a swirling lightsaber, sending prices of many of them soaring into hyperspace.

With the latest in the series — “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” — due to open in December, auctioneers in the northeast England town of Thornaby have sold one for a colossal 18,000 pounds (\$27,000), 35 years after it went for 1.50 pounds in the shops.

This was not a historic piece of trivia like the movie-prop blockade-runner spaceship that California-based auctioneers Profiles in History sold for \$450,000, or Princess Leia’s actual slave costume, which went for \$96,000.

What collectible toys specialist Vectis Auctions Ltd sold in January on behalf of British collector Craig Stevens was a small plastic replica of bounty hunter Boba Fett, a cult character from “Star Wars” sequel “The Empire Strikes Back” (1980).

With the proceeds of that, and mainly other toys anyone could have purchased for pocket money at the time, Stevens and his wife bought a house — for cash.

“I’d like to say I had some kind of vision but I didn’t, I collected for myself,” Stevens told Reuters, adding that some items he had collected had been about to be thrown away. Various collectors’ hoards of “Star Wars”



Artist Artur Kashak paints graffiti depicting stormtroopers characters in Star Wars movies, on a wall of a building in central Moscow, Russia on 25 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

memorabilia, from robots, to spaceships, “Death Star” pencil sharpeners and on to packaged figurines, are piled up in Vectis, which will hold another in a series of online auctions of about 700 pieces on 8 December.

The most valuable toys are those that are sealed in their original packages from decades ago, having never been used, Kathy Taylor, Vectis’s “Star Wars” expert, said, adding: “It’s not a normal retail situation we’re in here.”

“It isn’t anything that’s just a toy,” she said. “It’s actually a way of life and a cultural thing. People even look at some of these cardbacks that we sell as works of art.”

One of the oddest items at Vectis is an inch-long (2.5-cm) piece of plastic that is a prototype for a Boba Fett rocket, never pro-

duced, and estimated at 800-1,200 pounds. “We’ve been blown away by some of the prices,” said Vicky Weall, the managing director of Vectis, which is stacked to the rafters with collectible toys of all sorts, including dolls, stuffed animals, toy trains and the increasingly valuable “Star Wars” items. The company makes a 20 percent commission on sales.

“Once you get two people who are desperate for an item, then where do you stop?” she said.

What’s happened to the “Star Wars” collecting market is that it has gone from being unfashionable, when Stevens was able to pick up cases of stuff for peanuts, to becoming the source of some of the most sought-after items in the collector galaxy.

“‘Star Wars’ memorabilia ranks at the upper echelon, it runs at the top, alongside ‘The Wizard of Oz’, ‘Citizen Kane’, and ‘Casablanca’,” Brian Chanes of Profiles in History, the California auctioneer, told Reuters.

Even Sotheby’s auctioneers, renowned for dealing in multi-million dollar paintings, is in on the act, offering the “Star Wars” miscellany of a Japanese collector on 11 December.

Chanes said most of his buying customers are “private individuals with deep pockets”, but Bryan Goodall, chairman of Vectis, said his clientele come from all walks of life - from people who may spend a few hundred pounds to others who will spend thousands.

He said many are reliving their youth, and regardless of whether the new series of “Star Wars” movies is a hit, the market for collectibles will keep growing.

“I’m sure it will be a big hit because I’m sure everybody will love it, but it won’t make any difference to us other than more people coming to the market,” he said.—Reuters

Adele leaves Bieber, One Direction in dust on Billboard chart

NEW YORK — Adele beat all comers on the US Billboard 200 album charts on Monday with a record-breaking debut for “25,” leaving other top acts like Justin Bieber and British boy band One Direction looking like also-rans.

The British songstress sold 3.48 million copies in the first week of release for “25,” making it the biggest-selling album of 2015 and the only album to surpass 3 million sales in one week since Nielsen began tracking sales in 1991, Nielsen Music said.

Adele’s success pushed Bieber’s “Purpose” into second place, with 290,090 sales in its second week, while One Direction had to settle for third with sales of 108,445 units of its release “Made in the A.M.,” also in its second week.

Sales of “25” comprised 41 percent of all US album sales last week, Nielsen said.

Adele’s Grammy-winning 2011 album “21” also saw a boost, rising to ninth place on the Billboard 200 from 25th the week before.

But Bieber had the upper

hand on the Digital Song charts, which measure online download sales. His single “Sorry” unseated Adele’s “Hello,” for the top spot, five weeks after both were released. The Canadian pop singer’s “Love Yourself” also took the No.3 spot ahead of Adele’s new single “When We Were Young.”

The only other Top 10 newcomers to the Billboard 200 charts were American rapper Jadakiss, whose album “Top 5 Dead or Alive” debuted at No.4 with just over 66,000 sales, and Irish singer Enya’s comeback album, “Dark Sky Island,” which landed at No.8 with 47,700 units sold.

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



Singer Adele. PHOTO: REUTERS

South Korean rapper Psy releases new album



PHOTO: REUTERS

SEOUL — South Korean rapper Psy, who catapulted to fame in 2012 with hit song “Gangnam Style”, released his latest album on Monday, which includes a song featuring American rapper will.i.am.

“This album is basically based on dance music and includes genre elements such as EDM (electronic dance music), hip hop, funk, medium tempo, and trap, which is popular these days,” Psy told a news conference.

“I also tried to draw on all sorts of emotions including joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, love, hate, and greed.”

Psy also spoke about his song “ROCKnROLLBABY”, which features will.i.am.

“... His part was recorded in 2013, a long time ago,” he said. “At that time, we met a lot and decided to exchange each other’s songs.” Psy also said he felt the huge success of “Gangnam Style” had become a burden.

“I would like to politely decline comparing the new album to ‘Gangnam Style’. It’s too heavy a burden for me,” he told reporters.

“I hope you listen to ‘Napa Baji’ and ‘Daddy’ as they are,” he added referring to his new songs.—Reuters

Pirouettes and plenty of pink at Gaza's only ballet school



Palestinian girls take part in a ballet dancing course, run by the Al-Qattan Center for Children, in Gaza City on 25 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

GAZA — The group of girls, ponytailed and dressed in pink, stretched their arms out to the sides and pivoted onto their toes, trying desperately to hold still. Eagle-eyed, the instructor surveyed Gaza's latest crop of would-be ballerinas.

Fifty girls aged five to eight are now enrolled in the ballet

school at the Al-Qattan Center for Children in Gaza, making it one of the most popular classes the arts institute runs, under the watchful eye of a Ukrainian teacher.

Amid the chaos and destruction that has shattered Gaza so often over the past five years, with repeated wars between Is-

rael and Hamas, the school is a haven of calm and order, one many parents are eager for their children to enjoy.

"The ballet project was a dream for many families," said Heyam Al-Hayek, the head of Qattan's cultural activities. "They had been asking for ballet courses but we couldn't find

trainers. It was difficult to bring an instructor from abroad."

The dream began to take shape when they found Tamara, a Ukrainian married to a Palestinian and living in Gaza, who had studied dance and was qualified to teach. She asked not to give her family name.

They started a pilot programme in the summer, not sure how many parents would sign up given that Gaza is a conservative society and ballet is hardly a common pastime. Before they knew it, 50 children, all girls, were registered. There is now a waiting list that runs into the hundreds. In the tiled hall, 14 pupils lined up in unison along the wall, one hand clutching a long metal barre. As Tamara showed them the steps, they copied precisely, angling their feet, bending their knees, one arm outstretched, chins held high.

Some of the children have lived through four wars in their short lifetimes, with Gaza on edge since the Islamist group Hamas seized full control of the enclave in 2007. Since, Egypt and Israel have maintained a blockade on the territory, carefully monitoring the flow of goods and people to and fro.

For parents, the chance for a

child to participate in something so removed from regular Gaza life is both educational and psychologically uplifting. The mother of six-year-old Maria said ballet had helped her daughter get over years of trauma.

"She had been suffering since the 2012 war and her condition got worse after last year's war," said Manal Abu Muamar, describing Maria's nightmares and a fear of going to sleep.

"After the first ballet class, she came home as happy as a bird. She did the moves she had learnt and she was going around the house like a butterfly."

Almost half of Gaza's 1.8 million people are aged under 18 and UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimates that 400,000 of those need some form of psychological care.

But as well as an escape and a chance to try out what they may only have seen on TV, there are several students who the teacher described as "excellent" and "strong girls", with a desire to go further with their dancing.

"I used to imitate ballet dancing that I saw on television or on YouTube," said eight-year-old Bana Zuarub.

"Now I am learning it for real and I just love it."—Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(2-12-2015 07:00 am ~ 3-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	19 Hours
07:50	Am	Sightseeing in Yangon: Inya Lake
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Myanmar Childhood Games (Episode-1)
08:35	Am	SHWE SETTAW (Minbu)
08:53	Am	Myanmar Puppet
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	A Snake Catcher
09:37	Am	MONASTERY (Bargayar Kyaung)
09:52	Am	Guiding Star of Song Birds
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Ep-1)
		Mingalar Byuha
10:51	Am	Orchid Lover

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Tuesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - TodayRepeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	To The Land Of Countless Temples - Bagan Trip (EP-1)
07:51	Pm	Delicacies From Magwe
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP- 3) The Sphinx Of Egypt And The Manousiha Of Myanmar
08:41	Pm	Up Against The Tide

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - TodayRepeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Tuesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - TodayRepeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

The beautiful commute on Sydney's ferries



Commuters ride on the rooftop deck of a Sydney ferry at sunset en route to Rose Bay in Sydney's eastern suburbs. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — On the ferries that crisscross Sydney's harbour, passengers sit inside hunched over their smartphones, ignoring the gorgeous scenery afforded by what many people think is the world's most beautiful commute. But not Nina Leatherday.

Eating a breakfast of hot oats before sunrise, Leatherday braves 9 degree C (48 F) mid-winter temperatures on the outside deck of a ferry from Manly to Circular Quay.

The Michigan native, who is accustomed to harsh winters, was the only passenger sitting on the outside deck of Sydney's most famous ferry service recently, while others huddled in the heated cabin.

The bracing wind and salty spray are refreshing, she said,

and afford her the only opportunity to experience the outdoors en route to a long day's work in a biscuit factory.

In this water-centric city, conversation inevitably steers to the scenic harbour — backdrop of countless tourist pictures. The arrival in 1788 of British Captain Arthur Phillip's 11 convict ships in Sydney Cove and subsequent discovery of a freshwater stream led to what is now Circular Quay ferry port and, in many ways, the birthplace of modern Australia.

Would those 'first settlers' even be able to imagine 225 years later the transformation from humble beginnings to a bucket list locale for most travelers? Lattes and smartphones aside, one thing would have been familiar: Sydney's commuters

sail to work on ferries named after those in the first fleet. The Friendship, Charlotte and Golden Grove among others.

Sydney's ferry system has been its lifeblood since the mid 1800s, transporting more than 15 million individual passenger journeys each year, according to the Bureau of Transport Statistics. From fast-food employees to finance industry executives, more than 40,000 trips are taken every day.

Corporate affairs executive Jake Krausmann took up his position on the bow of a city-bound ferry from Manly, performing a daily stretching and exercise routine in the shadow of the Sydney Opera House and Harbor Bridge. The Manly ferry has been Krausmann's preferred commute for 10 years. He travels on the outside decks in any weather and says he never gets sick of the trip.

As winter turns to spring, the passengers come out of their cabin 'hibernation' and soak up Australia's burning sun and fresh air. Cool water sprays the face of financial services worker Hugh Dive as he sits on the rear deck on his way home to the exclusive suburb of Rose Bay. In the warmer months Dive rides his racing bicycle into the city in the morning and catches the ferry back home to beat the clogged and narrow streets of Sydney's older eastern suburbs.—Reuters

Leopalace21 Myanmar Open aims to test mettle of local golfers

A total of 114 international players, including 12 Myanmar golfers, will participate in the tournament

Khaing Thanda Lwin

THE 2016 Leopalace21 Myanmar Open will be hosted in Yangon next February with a record prize purse of US\$750,000, U Ko Ko Aye, the chairman of the Myanmar Golf Federation, said at a press conference yesterday.

Asian Tour and the Japan Golf Tour Organisation, in co-operation with the MGF, will jointly organise the international tournament. It is scheduled to take place from 4 to 7 February at the Royal Mingaladon Golf and Country Club in Mingaladon Township, Yangon.

U Ko Ko Aye said the purpose of the contest is to inspire young golfers to excel in the professional game as well as to develop the country's tourism industry.

Japanese company Leopalace21 became the title sponsor of the Myanmar Open following the signing of a three-year agreement.

The Myanmar Open has



Twelve Myanmar golfers will compete in 2016 Leopalace21 Myanmar Open will be hosted in Yangon next February along with international players. PHOTO: KHAING THANDAR LWIN

been staged on 13 occasions on the Asian Tour since 1996, with the last competition held in 2013, when it was won by Thailand's Chawalit Plaphol.

Former champions include Asian Tour stars such as Boon-

chu Ruangkit and Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand, Lin Keng-chi from Taiwan and Japanese ace Tetsuji Hiratsuka, while international players who have won in Myanmar include South Africa's James Kingston, American An-

thony Kang and Australian Kieran Pratt.

Altogether, 114 international players from at least 25 countries, including 12 Myanmar golfers, will compete in the contest, which will be played over 72

holes (4 rounds) of stroke play.

Asian Tour chairman U Kyi Hla Han said: "Every playing opportunity counts, but it is only through high-level competition that players get to develop and prove themselves."

Milner eyeing first trophy with improving Liverpool

LONDON — Liverpool have hit form at the right time ahead of a season-defining month with a first trophy possible under new manager Juergen Klopp, midfielder James Milner has said.

The Merseysiders, who have won six of their last seven games in all competitions, play seven times in December and kick-off the hectic schedule away to Southampton in the quarter final of the League Cup on Wednesday. "This is always a crucial period. The league table always looks so much different at the beginning to mid-January than what he does at the start of December," Milner was quoted as saying by British media.

"You see suspensions and injuries taking hold and teams losing and gaining form. It is a great time to be in good form going into this Christmas period and hopefully we can keep it going." Liverpool's last trophy was the 2012 League Cup and the former Manchester City midfielder said he was optimistic the club, who are sixth in the Premier League, could end their wait for silverware. "It is a talented squad of players, we have a great mix of youth and experience and obviously a new manager. It is exciting times for everyone," Milner said.—Reuters

Higuain brace takes Napoli top with win over 10-man Inter

MILAN — Napoli striker Gonzalo Higuain scored twice to put them top of Serie A with an extraordinary 2-1 win over Inter Milan who twice hit the woodwork in stoppage time after playing the entire second half with 10 men on Monday.

The moody Argentina forward, now the league's leading scorer with 12 goals, fired the hosts ahead after 64 seconds and Inter were in more trouble in the top-of-the-table clash when Yuto Nagatomo was sent off in the 44th minute.

The contest seemed to be over when Higuain struck again on the counter just after the hour but Inter were not finished.

Adem Ljajic quickly pulled a goal back in the 67th before Stevan Jovetic headed against the post and Miranda's header was somehow tipped on to the upright by Napoli keeper Pepe Reina in an unforgettable finale. Earlier, Fiorentina, who had started the day in joint second with Napoli, were held 1-1 at Sassuolo.

Napoli, who took only two points from their opening three games, lead the table with 31 points from 14 games after winning nine and drawing two of their last 11 matches. Inter have 30 points and Fiorentina are third with 29. The match in Naples

was billed as a battle between Napoli's more refined style and Roberto Mancini's dour and physical Inter side. Barely a minute had passed when Lorenzo Insigne caused havoc in the Inter penalty area and the ball fell to the feet of Higuain, who fired past Samir Handanovic with a shot on the turn. Jose Callejon and Marek Hamsik missed further chances for Napoli while Fredy Guarin and Ivan Perisic were close for the visitors.

Inter suffered a severe setback when Nagatomo was given a second booking for a clumsy, mistimed tackle on Allan. The home side's second strike stemmed from an Inter goal kick.

Napoli defender Raul Albiol headed Handanovic's punt straight back over the Inter defence to Higuain, who held off

defenders to blast the ball into the far corner.

Ljajic gave Inter hope when he replied five minutes later, managing to get in a shot despite being surrounded by three defenders, to deny Napoli an eighth successive clean sheet in all competitions.

Inter found a new lease

of life, forced a succession of free kicks and corners and were desperately unlucky not to take a point as Jovetic headed against the post with Reina well beaten before Miranda was foiled by the keeper in successive attacks.

In the other game, Borja Valero gave Fiorentina a fifth minute lead at Sassuolo and Sergio Floccari headed the hosts level just before halftime.—Reuters



Inter Milan's Ivan Perisic in action against Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly during Italian Serie A at San Paolo, Naples, Italy, on 30 November. PHOTO: REUTERS