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FIRST 6 COMPANIES HIT YSX MYANMAR LAUNCHES FIRST STOCK MARKET

Ye Myint

MYANMAR'S first-ever stock exchange market was opened yesterday with the announcement of six listed public companies at the Japanese-backed Yangon Stock Exchange.

The listed companies revealed at the grand opening ceremony of the YSX include First Myanmar Investment, First Private Bank, Great Horkham, Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation, Myanmar Citizens Bank, and Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings.

Despite becoming operational today, the start-up of selling shares by the six listed companies is slated for late February or early March next year.

"We don't want to see the listed companies rushed into stock trading on the new stock market," said Dr Maung Maung Thein, Deputy Minister for Finance who is also the chair of Myanmar Securities and Exchange Commission.

"The Yangon Stock Exchange requires and deserves a smooth start. Nothing is going to happen for a few more months until we are confident and ready. Myanmar is (regionally speaking) late to enter the market."

According to the deputy minister, Kanbawza Bank Ltd, which is among 10 securities companies selected to act as players in the



Myanmar's first-ever stock exchange market is launched yesterday at the Yangon Stock Exchange building in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: YE MYINT

capital market, has been licensed to provide services, and the remaining underwriters will be given licenses later.

"We will support the Yangon Stock Exchange until it can stand

on its own feet," said Koichiro Miyahara, President and CEO of the Tokyo Stock Exchange which is a share holder of the YSX.

"Myanmar is forecast to become a large capital market in the

ASEAN region".

The Yangon Stock Exchange, which has been capitalised at 32 billion kyats (over US\$ 32 million), is a joint venture between the state-owned Myanmar Economic

Bank, which holds a controlling share of 51 percent, the Daiwa Institute of Research, which holds 30.25 percent and the Japan Exchange Group which holds 18.75 percent.

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A Myanmar National Airlines's Grand Caravan Cessna aircraft seen at the airport. PHOTO: MYANMAR NATIONAL AIRLINES

MNA to expand flight to Rakhine State

MYANMAR National Airlines (MNA) will spread its wings to local destinations in Rakhine State, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Transport yesterday.

MNA is due to launch the flight journey of Yangon-Manaung-Kyaukphyu-Sittway-Kyaukphyu-Manaung on 25 December, 2015, with its new Grand Caravan Cessna aircraft.

The flight is scheduled for every Monday and Friday.

MNA has also offered charter flights to the destinations, offering aerial views of beautiful beaches in the coastal area.

MNA said the new link is aimed at providing easy travel to the state, where local residents rely on water transport to get between towns in Rakhine State.—GNLM

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to discuss Special Tariff Bill

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday decided to discuss the Special Tariff bill as proposed by the Ministry of Finance.

Deputy Minister Dr Lin Aung proposed the introduction of a special tariff law, calling for the further strengthening of the consumer tax system and the establishment of an indirect tax system.

The Penal Code amendment bill, on which the Amyotha Hluttaw and the Pyithu Hluttaw held different views, came under discussion, with an MP calling for further discussion of remarks made by the two Houses and the Bill Committee.

The Union supplementary budget amendment bill of 2015-16 received parliamentary approval, following a clause-by-clause discussion. —*Myanmar News Agency*



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

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw agrees to discuss three amendment bills

THE Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday agreed to discuss the amendment bills for the Foreign Investment Law, the Myanmar Investment Law and the Myanmar Lighthouse Act, as well as a report submitted by the Bill Committee.

The parliament agreed with reports from the Rights Committee, the Education Promotion Committee and the Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery Development Committee. —*Myanmar News Agency*



U Thar Sein. PHOTO: MNA



U Aung Than. PHOTO: MNA



U Myint Swe. PHOTO: MNA



U Saw Hla Tun. PHOTO: MNA

Internal Revenue Department's reform sees results

THE Internal Revenue Department has planned to establish tax offices with the Self Assessment System for middle-level tax payers in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

The system is currently used for the huge tax paying entities which have opened in the country since April-1 2014.

"Meanwhile, we are planning to implement the Value Added Tax (VAT) or Goods and Services Tax (GST) system next fiscal year," said U Min Htut, Director-General of the Internal Revenue Department.

The department has planned to enact a separate law to tax special goods in attempts to make our tax law similar to the VAT

and GST systems, he added.

After the law is enacted, there will be only two types of goods : one that is not taxed and another taxed 5 per cent under the Commercial Tax.

To make services smoother the department would build a data center in the same fiscal year with the loan given by the World Bank.

The government has seen an increase in revenue, receiving more than K1,500 billion in the 2012-2013 FY to more than K2,700 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, more than K3,580 billion in the 2012-2015 FY and more than K 4,410 billion in the 2014-2015 FY. The government has set a



Director-General U Min Htut hints at the introduction of VAT system.

target of K4,600 billion in this 2015-2016 FY, according to the Internal Revenue Department.—*GNLM*

One amendment bill approved at Amyotha Hluttaw

THE Amyotha Hluttaw session yesterday called for discussion of a bill resent without any amendment by the Pyithu Hluttaw on 3 December.

Bill Committee Chairman U Khin Maung Yi called for the parliamentary approve of the Multipurpose Transportation amendment bill, saying that the bill had been discussed by political, economic and legal experts under the guidance of the Bill Committee.

The Amyotha Hluttaw speaker sought parliamentary approval of the Myanmar Veterinary Council amendment bill, following the clause-by-clause amendment by the chairman of the Bill Committee. —*Myanmar News Agency*



U Khin Maung Yi. PHOTO: MNA

New hydropower station opened at Upper Paunglaung power project in Pyinmana



President U Thein Sein cordially greets local people who attend opening of a hydropower station at the Upper Paunglaung hydroelectric power project. PHOTO: MNA



The aerial view of Upper Paunglaung hydroelectric power project in Nay Pyi Taw council area, Pyinmana township. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF ELECTRIC POWER

THE Ministry of Electric Power yesterday launched a hydropower station at the Upper Paunglaung hydroelectric power project in Nay Pyi Taw council area, Pyinmana township. President U Thein Sein officially opened the station.

The country has seen a 15% annual increase in the demand for power, given the rising number of factories and industrial zones in both rural and urban areas, Un-

ion Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe said, calling for the opening of more power stations to meet growing demand in the future.

Over the past five years the country has constructed 19 power stations with the capacity to generate over 1,577 megawatts in total. Nationwide power consumption accounts for over 11,406 million kilowatt hours, with individual consumption hitting 222

kilowatt hours per year.

To satisfy the annual growth of power needed seven hydro-power stations and three gas-fueled power stations are currently under construction with the union minister calling for efforts to complete the facilities early. The new stations are expected to generate 2,042 megawatts of electricity. The Upper Paunglaung hydroelectric power project was started at the cost of over

K31 billion (US\$24m) in 2004 and completed in November of last year. The new station can generate 140 megawatts and distribute 454 million kilowatt hours per year to the national power grids.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe also spoke of the National Electrification Plan drawn in cooperation with the World Bank as part of the plan for nationwide power distribu-

tion by 2030.

According to the country's Master Plan the demand for electricity is expected to reach 23,594 megawatts in 2030, of which 8,965 megawatts will come from hydropower stations.

President U Thein Sein went on an inspection tour of the Upper Paunglaung hydroelectric power project, with officials briefing him on irrigational facilities.—*Myanmar News Agency*

SME management workshop organised in Yangon

A WORKSHOP on financial tools for managing a small business jointly organised by Young ASEAN Leader Initiative (YSEALI), the Professional Fellows Program and Bella Interiors Co., Ltd was held in Yangon on

Thursday.

Director of the Department for the Development of Small and Medium Businesses Dr Ei Shwe Sin Tun spoke at the occasion. The workshop was facilitated by Director Mr John W Balsam of

the Small Business Development Centre in the US. A total of 70 businessmen and officials from Yangon Region, Ayeyawady Region and Bago Region participated in the workshop.—*Myat Sandi Thin Zaw*

KOICA Vice President to visit Myanmar

KOICA Vice President for Projects Development Coordination Mr. Kwon Tae-myon will make three-day visit to Myanmar from December 10 to 12 to look into the current progress of South Korea's grant projects in Myanmar and strengthen cooperation relationship with Myanmar.

During his visit, Mr. Kwon will pay a visit to meet U Myint Hlaing Union Minister in Minis-

try of Agriculture and Irrigation to have consultation about strategy and future plan for the Korea's grant aid in rural development including Sae-maul Undong(SMU) project.

Later, he is scheduled to attend the Myanmar Economy Seminar which is planned for giving enhanced understanding on current situation in Myanmar economy.

He will also visit sever-

al KOICA project sites, Taikgi Yindikekwin village, one of the pilot villages of SMU project in Yangon, and Communicable Diseases Research Laboratory.

Before Mr. Kwon joined KOICA, he worked as a Foreign Affairs Advisor in the Ministry of Unification, Minister & Consul General at Korean Embassy in the USA, and Ambassador in Costa Rica.—*GNLM*

More than 70 raw jade lots sold out



Jade merchants put tender tickets in the boxes. PHOTO: MNA

OUT of 152 raw jade lots displayed at sales of raw and cut jade in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, 75 lots with a total combined value of K 1.6 billion were sold out through the tender system.

More than 6820 pieces of cut jade are to be sold through a tender system from 10 to 13 December.

More than 1,340 gems merchants are participating in the sales.—*Myanmar News Agency*

KBZ Bank wins three best bank awards for 2015 from World Finance



U Aung Ko Win (Right), Chairman of the KANBAWZA Bank (KBZ), receives Banker of the Year award in Asia 2015 presented by an official of World Finance at London Stock Exchange. PHOTO: KBZ

KANBAWZA Bank (KBZ) has won Banker of the Year award in Asia 2015, Best Commercial Bank in Myanmar 2015 and Best Retail Bank in Myanmar 2015, titles awarded by World Finance.

U Aung Ko Win, Chairman

of KBZ Bank Ltd accepted the Banker of the Year award in Asia 2015 award at a ceremony held at the London Stock Exchange on 3 December.

Officials of KBZ Bank Ltd also accepted the Best Commer-

cial Bank in Myanmar 2015 and Best Retail Bank in Myanmar 2015 at the ceremony.

KBZ Bank was chosen as the winner of the Best Commercial Bank and Best Retail Bank for its efforts toward the development of the country with its more than 360 bank branches nationwide and for its contributions to the improvement of businesses with loans and banking services, for becoming a pioneer in Myanmar for modern banking services, for meeting international standards by linking with international banks and for the overall improvement of banking service quality, according to the statement of World Finance.

The statement from World Finance said that KBZ' chairman U Aung Ko Win has performed very well as the head of the business while providing his country with financial assistance as part of their efforts to put the country on the path to development.

Seven bankers from seven different continents were also awarded Bankers of the Year 2015 awards by World Finance during the ceremony.—GNLM

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission issues statement

MYANMAR National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) issued a statement in honour of the historic International Human Rights Day which falls on 10 December 2015, reflecting upon the promotion and protection activities undertaken by the Commission during the course of the past year.

The statement said during 2015, the Commission conducted promotional activities at the grass root level in 31 townships in the country. During 2015, the Commission also conducted human right talks at the training courses held by the Central Institute of Civil Services. In addition, human rights talks were also conducted at the National Defence College. To raise human rights knowledge awareness extensively to the people, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was translated into the Myanmar language and some ethnic languages and were widely distributed. A film script on article 26 of the UDHR (The right to education) was produced and

screened during television programmes, said the statement. With regard to the protection of human rights, from 1 January 2015 to date a total of more than 1200 letters of complaint that were received at the Commission were examined and action taken in accordance with the procedures. Field visits were also conducted on some complaints, prisons and labour camps, said the statement.

The commission also exchanged visits with the National Human Rights Commission of Korea to study human rights activities in 2015, said the statement.

In the statement, the commission pledges to fulfil its vision to create a society where human rights are respected and protected in line with the provisions of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law in cooperation with the relevant organizations.

The full text of the statement is available on www.mnhrc.org.mm.— Myanmar News Agency

Crime News

Illegal teak timber found in car at Bamaw toll gate

A TOTAL of 179 teak timber pieces of various sizes weighing in total 3.3004 tons, were confiscated from a car entering Bamaw District near Sakyin village on the night of 5 December.

The saloon Fuso car was searched at Road Mark 3/2 Toll Gate on No 3 Highway by officials of the Bamaw District Forestry Department and members of the Sagaing Region No 2 Po-

lice Force.

District/Township Forestry Departments in Sagaing Region have been making concerted efforts in conjunction with local police forces and authorities to seize illegal timber crossing the area shifted by black marketers.

The driver of the car ran away while officials were making the inspection. A couple was found in the car with the hidden

undeclared timber. The couple, U Myo Min Tun and Daw Thida Khin from Bamaw town are suspected to be the owners of the timber.

The couple and the driver, U Aye Min, have been charged with Protection of Public Property Act Section 6(1) according to the township Forestry Department.—*Ngwe Oh-Katha*

Landslide kills man in Chauk Township

A LANDSLIDE on a hill in Chauk Township killed a man on 5 December, according to police sources.

The accident happened while about 50 volunteers dug for stones in the 6-ft high hill at around 10pm in Kanyaylay Village in preparation for a road-paving project.

Than Htike Thu, 29, was injured in the landslide and died on the spot.

Local police filed a case and probed the incident.—*Stringer*

Train collides with car at Yamaethin township rail track

THE crossing Mandalay-Yangon No 4 express train collided with a car in Yemaethin township, Mandalay Region, on Monday night.

The Toyota Mark II saloon car, which was travelling at high speed, had crashed onto the closed barrier rail gate in Inngyinkan village and got stuck on the rail track when the train was about to cross the gate. The train hit the car from

behind, causing damage to the front bumper of the train. The cost of the damage was estimated at K 1.2 million.

No one was injured by the accident which occurred at 9:30 pm, according to a local villager. The car driver Soe Lin, 22, of Mogok town has been charged with Public Property Act Section 6 (1) by the Yemaethin Township Police.—*Maung Pyithu-Mandalay*

Myanmar migrant workers shot at in Salapuri, Thailand

A GROUP of Myanmar migrant workers in Salapuri, Thailand were shot at by Thai youths in the late night hours of 4 December, according to the Myanmar Association in Thailand.

Seventeen Myanmar workers who were employed at the Unique Sky Train Plant had been returning from a night out around 11 pm, when they were shot at by unknown Thai youths. Twelve workers were injured.

MAT says the migrant workers were from Yinmabin township, Sagaing Region.

"The injured are being hospitalised and two are in a serious condition. Two are missing and the Myanmar Embassy is inquiring into the incident," said Lawyer U Aung Myo Thant of the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand. He added that further detailed information is not known yet.

About 600 Myanmar migrant workers are attached to the Sky Train Plant in Salapuri.

The incident is currently under investigation but such occurrences are not uncommon in Thailand, according to MAT.—*Soe Win-SP*

Motorcycle collision kills one in Pyigyitagun

A MAN died of injuries sustained during a collision with a high speed motorcycle on Bandoola Road of Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township on the night of 6 December. He was crossing the road when he was struck.

Mason Aye Min Tun, 30, was rushed to the hospital but

succumbed to his head injuries.

The motorcyclist Tun Hlaing, 27, a lathe workshopper, has been arrested by the police and is being charged with (Pa) 39/2015 Crime Act Section 304- ka.

Both men were from Pyigyitagun.—*Maung Pyithu-Mandalay*

Cambodian PM calls for int'l community to stand united against terrorism

PHNOM PENH — The international community has to stand united to fight against terrorism, which is posing a serious threat to countries, regions and the world, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said here yesterday.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the 8th Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), the prime minister said recent incidents including Paris attacks, Russian plane crash in Egypt, and US California shooting, reassured that terrorist and extremist movements remained a serious threat to security and stability in the world.

He said that currently separate anti-terrorism actions taken by each country and country-and-country disputes have become an obstacle to anti-terrorism efforts.

Hun Sen said there is no ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) group in Cambodia; however, the country has to be on high vigilance to avert the group from using Cambodia as a safe shelter to attack other countries.

The 8th APA, running from Wednesday to Friday, brought together parliamentary representatives of 18 countries. It was held

under the theme "Promoting Peace, Reconciliation and Dialogue in Asia." APA's Acting Secretary General Masoud Islami said climate change and environmental degradation, together with extreme violence, terror, and foreign occupation, are ravaging through the fundamentals of security and stability in important parts of Asia.

Cambodian National Assembly President Heng Samrin said that during the 3-day assembly, the Asian parliamentary leaders would discuss and exchange views on building a prosperous and harmonious Asian region.—Xinhua

Australia, SE Asia need to 're-double' efforts to avoid Paris-style attacks

SINGAPORE — Australia and Southeast Asia must re-double efforts to share intelligence and make sure Paris-style terror attacks can't be replicated in the region, Australian Justice Minister Michael Keenan said yesterday.

Hundreds of Indonesian Islamic State sympathisers and some Malaysians and Singaporeans are believed to have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq. Southeast Asia faces the risk of attack when they return, Malaysia has said.

"The fact that the national security situation has significantly deteriorated for all of the countries in the region, including Australia, means we need to re-double those efforts," Keenan, who is also Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter Terrorism, told Reuters in an interview in Singapore.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the deaths of 130 people in attacks in Paris

last month, the deadliest in France since World War II.

Keenan also denounced comments by US Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump who has called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States following last week's massacre in San Bernardino, California, by a Muslim couple.

"That is entirely the wrong response," Keenan said. "When we look at Southeast Asia, we get a good example that we are not somehow at war with a particular religion."

And neither do we need to target Muslim Australians or anywhere else in the world." Australia next week marks the anniversary of a siege in central Sydney in which a gunman with radical Islamist sympathies took over a central city cafe. Two hostages and the gunman were killed when police stormed the building.—Reuters

Thai Chamber of Commerce to set up 'Durian Institute'

BANGKOK — The so-called Durian Institute will be set up by the Thai Chamber of Commerce to see to it that the "King of Fruit" will still live up to quality standards, said a leading executive of the chamber yesterday.

The Durian Institute project is primarily designed to provide business consultations as well as quality control guidelines for all durian dealers, especially those in the eastern provinces of Chant-

aburi and Rayong — the country's largest durian producing area, according to Prachaya Samalabha, head of the Thai Chamber of Commerce's Eastern Economic Development Committee.

He said the qualities of the Thai durian might possibly drop in the face of a continual, sizeable increase in purchase orders from China, the world's largest customer of the Thai durian.

Thailand has exported about

300,000 tons of durian to China, securing up to 350 million US dollars in a year, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Fresh durian, considered a favorite fruit among Chinese high-end customers, has been substantially bought up by Chinese traders who did not only visit durian plantations in Chantaburi and Rayong earlier this year but placed advance orders for next harvest season.—Xinhua

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East Asia's aging working populations could shrink 15pc by 2040: World Bank

BEIJING — Middle-to-high income economies in East Asia could lose as much as 15 percent of their working-age populations by 2040 due to rapidly greying demographics, weighing on economic growth and adding to government spending, the World Bank said yesterday.

East Asia is aging faster than any other region in history, the bank said in a report, which found 36 percent of the world's population aged 65 and over, or 211 million people, live in the region, the largest share among all regions.

"Very fast drops in fertility rates, coupled with rapid extensions of life expectancy beyond age 60, have resulted in unprecedented pace and scale of population aging in East Asia," the report said.

"The rapid pace and sheer scale of aging in East Asia raises policy challenges, economic and fiscal pressures, and social risks," it said, adding that developing countries in the region are "getting old before getting rich".

By 2040, the greying of the population could shrink the number of working-age adults by more than 15 percent in South Korea and more than 10 percent in China, Thailand and



Office workers walk along a street at the fringes of a business district in Tokyo, on 30 October.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan. In China alone, that would translate into a net loss of 90 million workers.

Pension spending in the region could increase by eight to 10 percent of gross domestic product by 2070, it said.

But the bank said East Asia is better positioned to cope with the challenges as people tend to save more than other parts of the world and they are more willing to work longer.

Philip O'Keefe, lead author

of the report, told a news conference in Beijing that the biggest challenge facing Asian countries will be how to fund pension and health care systems.

"The fiscal pressure is really a serious concern and needs serious policy change," he said, adding that reforms of pension and health care systems could be politically challenging.

The bank recommended that developing countries in East Asia take steps to reform their existing

pension schemes, including gradual increases in retirement age.

The demographic dividend has been a key driver of rapid economic growth in Asia in recent decades.

In October, China announced plans to ease family planning restrictions to allow all couples to have two children after decades of a strict one-child policy, a move aimed at alleviating demographic strains on the economy.—Reuters

Scores dead, wounded in Taliban attack on Kandahar airport

KANDAHAR — Dozens of people were killed and wounded in fighting at the airport in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar after an overnight attack by Taliban insurgents that security forces had not entirely suppressed nearly 24 hours later.

With final mopping up operations continuing late on Wednesday afternoon, at least 37 civilians and members of Afghan security forces had been killed and 35 wounded, the defence ministry said.

In addition, nine Taliban were killed and another wounded with a final survivor still resisting security forces, the ministry said in a statement, adding that the operation had proceeded slowly to minimise casualties.

“Afghanistan’s national army forces are bravely fighting terrorists in airport areas and are trying to act cautiously to avoid harm to civilians,” the ministry said.

The airport in Kandahar, Afghanistan’s second biggest city, has for years been a major hub for operations of international forces, most of whom had withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. A spokesman for NATO’s Resolute Support mission said there had been no reports of casualties among the hundreds of international personnel at the air base but he had no other details.

The raid in one of the Taliban’s traditional strongholds coincided with the start of the Heart of Asia regional security conference in Islamabad, where Afghan Presi-



Afghan security forces stand guard at the entrance gate of Kandahar Airport where, the Taliban attacked on late Tuesday, in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on 9 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

dent Ashraf Ghani made a plea for more regional support to fight the growing Islamist insurgency.

Officials said fighters attacked a perimeter area of the huge and heavily fortified com-

plex on Tuesday evening, initially taking up position in a residential area of the site, which houses both a civilian airport and military base. NATO military personnel, civilian contractors and

Afghan forces are based there.

Earlier, the Taliban said in a statement 150 soldiers had been killed but the militants often made exaggerated casualty claims in the past. —Reuters

South Korean man arrested in connection with Japan shrine blast



Members of a police bomb disposal squad move a blast protection device near the site of an explosion at the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo, on 23 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — A South Korean man was arrested yesterday in connection with a blast last month at Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine for war dead, an official at Tokyo’s Metropolitan Police Department said.

The shrine is seen in China and South Korea as a symbol of Japan’s past military aggression.

The explosion in a men’s washroom at the shrine on 23 November, when more than 100 people were gathered for a harvest ritual, caused no injuries.

Police arrested Jeon Changhan, 27, for unlawful entry. He was detained when he returned to Japan from South Korea on Wednesday morning. Media said he had taken a flight back to South Korea soon after the incident.

He has not admitted to charges, the Metropolitan Police

Department official said.

Yasukuni Shrine honours Japanese leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied Tribunal, along with war dead, and visits by top Japanese politicians there have angered China and South Korea, where memories of Japanese occupation and colonialism before and during World War II still run deep.

South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said its Tokyo embassy had heard about the arrest from the Japanese police, and that the ministry plans to provide necessary consular assistance to the person under arrest. In January 2013, a South Korean court ruled that a Chinese citizen who carried out an arson attack on the shrine could not be extradited to Japan as he had committed a “political crime” and might not get a fair trial.—Reuters

Japan, China agree to continue talks to avoid unintended clashes on sea

XIAMEN — Japan and China agreed Tuesday to continue consultations for the early launch of a maritime communication mechanism between their defence officials to prevent unintended clashes on sea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced.

Senior diplomats and defence and coast guard officials from the two countries held two days of talks behind closed doors in the southern Chinese port city of Xiamen through Tuesday.

Despite lingering tensions over the Japan-controlled, China-claimed Senkaku Islands, the two countries have agreed that they need to accelerate the process of setting up the “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism” between their defence officials.

When Japanese Prime Min-

ister Shinzo Abe held his first meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang last month, both sides also agreed on the need for its early implementation.

The senior officials’ meeting in Xiamen also covered China’s gas field development near the median line between its shoreline and that of Japan in the East China Sea. The Japanese officials are believed to have called on China to stop its unilateral undertaking that runs counter to the spirit of a 2008 accord between Tokyo and Beijing on joint gas development in the area and called for resuming talks on collaboration in tapping undersea resources.

In July, Japan unveiled a map and aerial photographs of offshore structures as evidence of the Chinese action and lodged protest with China.

An agreement was also

reached in expanding the window of dialogue between the Japan Coast Guard and its Chinese counterpart as well as increasing exchanges of people, in light of the Senkaku Island situation.

They also confirmed that they will continue discussing an early conclusion of an accord on maritime search and rescue.

The talks also addressed stepping up cooperation in other issues such as crackdown on smuggling and other crimes, the preservation of maritime biodiversity and the management of garbage disposal. The first meeting of senior officials in charge of maritime affairs was held in 2012 with the view to promoting confidence-building. The latest meeting was the fourth of its kind. The next round is expected sometime in the first half of next year in Japan.—Kyodo News

Chinese military paying ‘close attention’ to US plane deployment

BEIJING — China’s military is paying ‘close attention’ to an agreement between the United States and Singapore to deploy the US P8 Poseidon spy plane to the city state and hopes the move does not harm regional stability, the defence ministry said.

“We are paying close attention to how the relevant situation develops, and hope bilateral defence cooperation between the relevant countries is beneficial to regional peace and stability and not the opposite,” the ministry said in a brief statement late

on Tuesday.

The foreign ministry of China, which is at odds with Washington over the South China Sea, said on Tuesday the move was aimed at militarising the region.

In a joint statement after a meeting in Washington on Monday, US Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen welcomed the inaugural deployment of the aircraft in Singapore from 7 to 14 December.

A US defence official said further deployments in Singa-

pore could be expected. The move comes at a time of heightened tensions in the South China Sea.

China claims almost the entire energy-rich waters, through which more than \$5 trillion of maritime trade passes each year. The Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan have overlapping claims.

The United States already operates P8s from Japan and the Philippines, and has conducted surveillance flights from Singapore’s neighbour, Malaysia.—Reuters

UN urges Jordan to let 12,000 stranded Syrian refugees enter

GENEVA— The United Nations urged Jordan on Tuesday to allow in 12,000 Syrian refugees stranded at the border in deteriorating humanitarian conditions and offered to help reinforce security at registration points.

The Syrians are fleeing escalating air strikes on their battered homeland as well as punishments imposed on civilians by Islamic State militants in the north, including forced marriages, beheadings and floggings, it said.

The number of refugees at Syria's remote northeastern border with Jordan, where many are gathering near an earthen wall or berm, has jumped to 12,000 from 4,000 in recent weeks, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

Human Rights Watch said Jordan was putting many lives at risk by blocking 12,000 refugees, most of whom it said were women and children.

"Jordan should stop stranding people in remote border areas for months on end and swiftly screen them in the country's well-established transit centres," Nadim Houry, deputy Middle East and North Africa director of HRW, said in the statement.

Aid workers and two Jordani-



Syrian refugee children play near their families residence at Al Zaatari refugee camp, in the Jordanian city of Mafraq, near the border with Syria, on 29 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

an relief officials attributed the sudden rise in refugees at the border to Russian bombing of IS-controlled areas in eastern Homs, such as Palmyra, as well as in Raqqa Province and city.

A Jordanian official declined comment.

"It includes elderly people, it includes people who are sick and wounded, it includes children, women and others who are vulnerable and really need help,"

UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming told a briefing.

"We're concerned that women have had to give birth at the berm in very unsanitary and unhygienic conditions," she said.

Respiratory tract infections, gastroenteritis and skin diseases such as scabies have been reported. There are signs of acute malnutrition among children and outbreaks of diarrhea.

The UNHCR is appealing to

Jordan to allow in the most vulnerable cases, Fleming said.

Diplomats say refugee numbers in Jordan have fallen sharply in the last 18 months as tens of thousands have returned to Syria or emigrated while only a trickle are now allowed in.

Jordanian officials have closed scores of unofficial border crossings since May 2013 and say the kingdom has reached its limit in absorbing more refugees.

The numbers entering Jordan have slowed to fewer than 50 a day this year, according to UNHCR. Jordan still hosts 632,228 Syrian refugees, severely straining its infrastructure and economy, Fleming said.

She said Jordan had legitimate security concerns but those could be addressed by properly assessing each case, and UNHCR was prepared to upgrade security of the registration area at Jordan's Azraq camp to allow for comprehensive screening.

"If refugees are not admitted to Jordan and substantial assistance is not provided, the lives of refugees will be at risk in the coming months," Fleming said.—Reuters

"We're concerned that women have had to give birth at the berm in very unsanitary and unhygienic conditions."

Melissa Fleming
UNHCR spokeswoman

US conducting 'serious review' of alleged Iran missile test

UNITED NATIONS — The United States is reviewing and seeking to confirm reports that Iran launched a ballistic missile last month in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power said on Tuesday.

"The US is conducting a serious review of the reported incident," Power told reporters after a meeting of the Security Council on unrelated issues.

She added that if Washington confirmed the reports that Iran tested a medium-range ballistic missile on 21 November in violation of UN resolutions, the United States would bring the issue to the 15-nation council and seek appropriate action.

A Western diplomatic source said last week on condition of anonymity that the test of a Ghadr-110, a spinoff of the Shahab-3 missile, was held near Chabahar, a port city near Iran's border with Pakistan. He said it was a liquid-fueled missile with a 1,900 km (1,180 mile) range and was capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

All ballistic missile tests by Iran are banned under a 2010 Security Council resolution that remains valid until a nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers is implemented.

Under that deal, reached on 14 July, most sanctions on Iran

will be lifted in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme. According to a 20 July resolution endorsing that deal, Iran is still "called upon" to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons for up to eight years.

In October, the United States, Britain and France called for the Security Council's Iran sanctions committee to take action over a test by Tehran of a nuclear-capable missile that month that they said violated UN sanctions.

So far, no action has been taken by the committee, though Power said council members would be discussing the issue next week. She added that the United States could take unilateral steps against Iran, though Tehran has warned that it would treat any new sanctions as a breach of the nuclear deal.

US Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued a statement condemning what he described as the lack of response to Iranian missile violations.

"Iran violates UN Security Council resolutions because it knows neither this administration nor the UN Security Council is likely to take any action," said Corker.

France said it would pay close attention to ensure Iran respects the ban on ballistic missile tests.—Reuters

Iraq at UN plays down dispute with Turkey over troop deployment



Iraqi security forces stand guard with their military vehicle outside the Turkish embassy in Baghdad, on 8 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS— Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations on Tuesday appeared to play down a dispute between Baghdad and Ankara over the deployment of Turkish troops in northern Iraq, saying bilateral talks between the neighbouring states to end the row were proceeding favourably.

"We are solving it between Baghdad and Ankara bilaterally," Iraqi Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim told reporters after Russia raised the issue of Turkey's deployment during a closed-door meeting of the United Nations Security Council. "We have not yet escalated it to the Security Council or to the United Nations."

"For us, what is helpful is the

bilateral discussion going on right now between Baghdad and Ankara, and it's going extremely well," he said, adding that Moscow had not consulted with Baghdad before raising the issue in the council.

But Alhakim reiterated that Iraq wanted the Turkish troops withdrawn from its territory immediately, saying the deployment was "illegal," and a violation of the United Nations charter.

Turkey has said the deployment was previously agreed with Iraq, a position US Ambassador Samantha Power told reporters was also her understanding. Ankara says its troops are training Iraqi soldiers to fight Islamic State militants, who have seized territory in

Iraq and Syria.

Russia is still seething over a 24 November incident in which Turkey shot down a Russian plane near the Syria-Turkey border. Relations between Moscow and Ankara have nosedived since that incident, which diplomats said was the real reason Moscow raised the issue of the Turkish troops in Iraq.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said the discussion on Turkish military action in Syria and Iraq was helpful, though he suggested he was disappointed that the 15-member Security Council did not issue a statement reaffirming the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

"Our idea was to call the attention of the members of the Security Council to the situation," he said. "We believe that Turkey has acted recklessly and inexplicably, carrying out additional deployments on the territory of Iraq without the consent of the Iraqi government."

He suggested that the Turks were simply following the example of the US-led coalition against Islamic State, which is conducting air strikes against the group on Syrian territory without the consent of the Damascus government.

Moscow has criticized the US-led coalition for not seeking the permission of the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom many Western and Gulf nations want ousted.—Reuters

OPINION

Further steps are important in the peace process

Myint Win Thein

Successive governments in Myanmar held peace talks with ethnic armed groups and reached various agreements. They hailed the agreements as their successes. However, none of them were historic as fighting still continued despite the agreements and new governments had to

deal with the same issue in the same way as the previous government did.

The union government has also hailed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between the government and some ethnic armed groups as one of the achievements of the government. For the NCA to be a historic milestone, the current government said it is laying a sound foundation for the next government as part of its efforts to take further steps to ensure a long lasting peace.

In the past, peace deals with armed ethnic groups were in fact temporary arrangements that contributed nothing to long lasting peace. This was because further steps taken in the process diluted the success of the former.

Therefore it is important that none of the further steps to be taken in the future dilutes the success of the former.

Further steps should strengthen the former and are more important. Only then will the NCA be a historic deal recognised by future generations. All stakeholders in the peace process should be cautious with their steps as thoughtless action can derail the process.

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Melting of polar ice- Myanmar is adversely affected

Bahauddin Foizee

The ice at the earth's polar regions is the largest store of fresh water on the planet and plays an imperative role in maintaining earth's environmental balance. As ice in these regions melts, it affects the ocean height, temperature, and circulation — which, in turn, gradually changes earth's climate. Myanmar is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world due to climate change. Besides its major problem of armed insurgencies, Myanmar's vulnerability to climate change is very alarming. The overall economic development of the country is likely to be troubled to a considerable extent in near future by the adverse affects of climate change.

Among the major impacts of the climate change — particularly of the global warming — the increasing rise in sea-levels every year has been the most alarming one so far, with the possibility of submerging a substantial portion of 'flood-prone' coastal areas of Myanmar under water by 2050 (a prediction made in the 4th assessment report by the International Panel on Climate Change or IPCC). The major cause behind the rise in sea-level is the melting of ice of different regions, mostly of the south and north poles.

Global warming

The global warming is one of the major incentives for climate change. It is a global phenomenon causing much damage to the resources of the globe, making life of the living beings, including human, miserable. Global warming has caused the weather of different regions to change drastically and disproportionately. Ice is melting rapidly in the ice-covered regions because of this global warming. Melting of ice, without any doubt, causes the sea-levels to rise. The effects of the continuation of the rise in sea-levels are deep. It would

submerge many areas around the globe, especially the coastal ones; and perhaps it will not take decades for the coastlines to change.

The rise in sea-levels has been causing more floods, especially during storms. Higher sea-levels have increased the size of the flow of water that the super storms generally bring into inland from the ocean. Some short term impacts of rise in sea-level (especially due to polar ice melting) are regularly experienced these days by many victims around the globe. The Tsunami is an ideal example of what sort of disaster the rise in sea-level, caused by melting of polar ice, could lead us up to.

North Pole

The North Pole is the northernmost point on the globe and located amid waters of the Arctic Ocean. The whole region is generally referred to as the Arctic region, which is warming faster than other areas across the globe. In this region, temperature has increased over the decades by an alarming rate compared to the rest of the globe, and it seems that temperature in this region will continue to increase if measures are not taken to reduce this increasing trend. The warming atmosphere, along with a changed weather-pattern, is causing Arctic ice to melt at such alarming rapidity that a greater portion of Arctic ice will be gone in next two decades, and an ice-free Arctic summer could be experienced by next four decades, as claimed by the experts in this field. The ice of the region is already reduced by as much as 50% compared to the 1950s. The impacts of declining ice-cover in the Arctic are far-reaching, from species endangerment to the weakening of global ocean circulation, to massive rise in sea-levels.

Since the Arctic region was inaccessible because of the layers of thick ice, there were less territorial disputes until the beginning of this century. However, the rapid

melting of ice in the region is making it a more accessible zone for commercial fishing, fresh water, minerals, coal, iron, copper, oil, gas and shipping. Arctic states — Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Russia, Norway and the U.S. — are in rush to exploit all these opportunities. Their rush will only increase the warming of the region through their presence, through the external materials or organisms that they bring into the region with them and through their drilling for energy extraction from the region.

South Pole

While the North Pole is located amid waters of an ocean, the South Pole lies on a continental land mass. The Antarctica Continent and the Antarctic Ocean make up the surroundings of the South Pole, and the region is widely referred to as the Antarctic region. Thousands of tourists and researchers visit the region, especially the Antarctic Peninsula, every year. More scientists, more tourists, more research stations, more countries involved in exploration for mineral and other resources, and greater access to the region in general are making the region increasingly warmer. Moreover, an increase in visitors means more boats/ships, other external materials brought by them, more carbon dioxide and so on. Therefore, the disturbances to the region's fragile environment are ever increasing with these pollutions. The carbon emissions in the far away human inhabited areas are also contributing to the increasing warming of the Antarctic region.

The region is governed by the Antarctic Treaty System, a series of international agreements that regulates research and tourism related to the region. However, such a legal regime is too weak to legally bind countries not to exploit the region. Therefore, there is every possibility that the need for fossil fuels and mineral resources might urge countries to take such actions

in this region that would pollute the cold, yet so clean, Antarctic region.

Impact in Myanmar

Melting of polar ice is scary for many reasons, and the scariest is the rise in sea-level, as mentioned earlier. In long run, the coastline and coastal cities will be lost. But in the short term, it will cause more damage through floods and powerful storms that might bring water into inland with them, causing devastation like that of the Tsunami.

With flat and low-lying landscape, the whole coastal area of Myanmar is highly vulnerable to such floods and storms. A sizable portion of Myanmar's population live in the coastal areas, where majority of the population are affected, directly or indirectly, by coastal floods or tidal flows, salinity, tropical cyclones, erosion of river-bank etc. With the rise of sea-level "even by a metre", Myanmar could lose a substantial percentage of its total coastal landmass under the sea water, turning millions of inhabitants living in the coastal areas of Myanmar into climate refugees.

Moreover, the freshwater sources in the coastal areas of Myanmar face deep intrusion of saline water from the Bay of Bengal during the dry season. The melting of polar ice in its gradual process will only deteriorate the existing situation to a great extent.

Wrapping up

German scholars from Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research warned that if incentives of the global warming, especially the carbon emissions in the atmosphere, are not reduced immediately worldwide, a series of unstoppable events will be triggered, causing dramatic rise in sea-levels and the total annihilation of coastal cities inhabited by millions of people. This of course does not exclude Myanmar. While this is a comparatively long term impact of global warming, or of melting of polar ice to be precise, Myanmar is likely to

experience more 'immediate' adverse impacts, as mentioned earlier. Agriculture, industry, school, hospitals, roads, bridges, livelihoods, marine resources, forestry, biodiversity, human health and other utility services will suffer severely.

All in all, earth's temperatures are rising, the ocean water is warming, polar ice is melting, and sea levels are going up. It is high time for Myanmar to start working on real solutions along with other most affected countries. Myanmar must start addressing these above mentioned concerns with utmost urgency in the global platforms.

About the author

Bahauddin Foizee is the Lecturer at Dhaka Centre for Law & Economics, legal practitioner and regularly writers on global affairs.

POEM:

Water is life, but

Water is the elixir of life,
But is scarce for safe drinking
In many parts of the
unfortunate world.
The oceans roar with
great fury
But safe drinking water seems
to be a distant dream.
While some can afford
the elixir
Whereas for the unfortunate
others
It is a poisonous concoction,
Contaminated with toxins and
poisons.
In the unequal world that
we share
The elixir of life is not
available to all
Safe life giving water is for the
rich and the fortunate
while elixir of life remains an
elixir for the less fortunate.

Saikat Kumar Basu

Yangon Region chief minister attends human rights event

A CEREMONY to mark the International Human Rights Day organised by the Myanmar Human Rights Commission was held at the Panda Hotel in Yangon yesterday.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe delivered a speech at the ceremony.

Present was the Chairman of the Myanmar Human Rights Commission U Win Mra, Senior Officer Mr Andrew Mac Gregor and Executive Director of Equality Myanmar U Aung Myo Min who also spoke at the occasion.

After the ceremony the chief minister presented prizes to winners of essay competitions commemorating the event.—*Myanma News Agency*



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe and dignitaries visit booth set up to mark International Human Rights Day in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

Tour Guide Course to be opened

THE Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has invited applications to an upcoming Basic Tour Guide course which will be held from 1 February to 25 March 2016 in Yangon.

The course entrance application forms are to be submitted to No. 485/ 460, Tourism Training Centre on the corner of Mahabandoola Road and 31st Street, Babedan Township, between 14-12-2015 and 24-12-2015, according to the Ministry.

The entrance examination for the course will be held at the No(6) Basic Education High School at the corner of Anawrahta Road and Theinphyu Road on 3 January 2016.—*Myanma News Agency*

Carpentry and Masonry Course opens in Lewe Township

THE Lewe Township Rural Development Department opened a basic carpentry and masonry course to provide local youths with work skills in Thaw Mhaw village of Lewe Township in Nay Pyi Taw.

The basic course will provide theory and practice training to twenty trainees from 2 December to 16 December.—*Shwe Kokko*

Farmers earn extra money selling parrots



Parrots are seen at a recreation place in PyinOoLwin. PHOTO: THET NAING

FARMERS in Shan State (North) have begun earning extra income by capturing and selling parrots as part of the celebrations of the rice harvest season.

“We catch the parrots which come to our rice farm to eat our paddies and then sell them for K3,500 each to visitors

at pagodas and recreational areas around PyinOoLwin. They can then keep them as pets,” a farmer said.

A farmer can capture 20 to 30 parrots per day.

Parrots leave their natural forest habitat to feed when rice fields ripen.—*Thet Naing (Pyin Oo Lwin)*

Experts meet to discuss safety of nuclear waste from 7 to 11 Dec



Deputy Minister for Science and Technology Dr Aung Kyaw Myat and dignitaries pose for photo at opening of a Meeting on Establishing Radioactive Waste Management Infrastructure. PHOTO: MNA

THE Ministry of Science and Technology and IAEA are jointly holding a meeting on Establishing Radioactive Waste Management infrastructure in Nay Pyi Taw.

The five-day meeting is being attended by 19 representa-

tives from IAEA, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Nepal, Palestine, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar.

Myanmar has upgraded its facilities for the safe storage of

radioactive wastes following the guidelines of IAEA, said Deputy Minister for Science and Technology Dr Aung Kyaw Myat in his opening remarks. The meeting was launched on 7 December and will end on 11 December.—*Myanma News Agency*

World AIDS Day marked in Pyinmana

A CEREMONY to mark World AIDS Day 2015 was held at the hall of Mingala Kandaw in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, Pyinmana Township on Monday.

Professor Dr Paing Soe, head of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area

Health Department delivered a speech and presented prizes to winners of essay, painting and cartoon competitions that were held as part of the event.

Dr Hla Hla Kyi, director of the Public Health Department in

Nay Pyi Taw, township administrators, NGO working groups and medical superintendents as well as officials of Nay Pyi Taw Council joined the ceremony and an exhibition aimed at raising awareness.—*Min Min Latt*

Greek police put migrants stranded at Macedonia border on buses for Athens



Greek police officers direct buses carrying hundreds of migrants, who were stranded on the Greek-Macedonian border and blocked rail traffic, after a police operation near the village of Idomeni, Greece, on 9 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

IDOMENI — Greek police yesterday loaded hundreds of migrants who have been stranded for three weeks at the Macedonian border onto buses bound for Athens, a police official and a Reuters witness said, ending their hopes of reaching northern Europe.

Scuffles broke out but not on the scale of recent clashes between police and the roughly 1,200 people — mostly men from Pakistan, Morocco and Iran — stuck near the town of Idomeni, after Macedonia began filtering migrants by nationality.

Some 30 men resisted police and were taken to a police station but were later put on the Athens-bound buses as well.

At the other end of the country, 12 migrants drowned

when their boat sank off the small Greek island of Farmakonisi, close to Turkey, in the early hours of Wednesday, a coastguard official said, while 26 were rescued and 12 more were missing.

The UN refugee agency said those rescued included a 7-year-old child both of whose parents were missing. Six other children were among those drowned.

Migrants continue to attempt the perilous crossing despite the onset of winter weather, mounting obstacles in Europe and increased efforts by Turkey to crack down on people smugglers. Hundreds of thousands of people have streamed into Europe this year, mostly through Greece. Balkan states began blocking passage last

month to all but Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans, who are considered as refugees because they are fleeing war zones.

Some of those stranded near Idomeni began hunger strikes and a handful sewed their lips shut to dramatise their demands. A Moroccan man was electrocuted to death last week on a railway line which the migrants had been blocking. Another was seriously burnt when he climbed on top of a train to try to cross the border.

The police official said the migrants would be taken to migration centres in the Athens area before being sent home. Another police source said some would be housed at a sports hall used for taekwondo during the 2004 Olympic Games.—Reuters

Russia casts doubt on possible 18 December Syria meeting in New York

UNITED NATIONS — Russia's UN envoy cast doubt on Tuesday on US plans to hold a third meeting of world powers on Syria next week, saying the process to try to end the four-year civil war would be devalued if certain requirements were not met first.

Following two meetings in Vienna, US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday the aim was to hold a third round of talks in New York on 18 December, although that could hinge on efforts to unite Syrian opposition groups.

Russian UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said that before a third meeting could be held, a list of "terrorist organisations" in Syria needed to be agreed on, along with a list of opposition groups to participate in talks with the Syrian government.

"We don't think the situation

is ready yet, I don't rule it out ... but we have not seen those requirements that I have just outlined being met and we are not sure when they are going to be met," Churkin told reporters.

"In our view to have one meeting after another without implementing the agreements which were reached previously within the Vienna format is probably going to devalue the Vienna format," he said. "We think that now we need to focus on the substance rather than setting another meeting."

Russia, the United States, European and Middle Eastern countries agreed in Vienna last month on a two-year timeline leading to Syrian elections, but left many questions unresolved, most notably the fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The countries involved in the talks, which also include Saudi

Arabia, Iran and Turkey, laid out a plan including formal talks between the government and opposition starting in January.

To achieve that timeline, Saudi Arabia is hosting a conference this week to try to unite Syria's divided rebel and opposition groups, which are trying to forge a common platform to be able to negotiate with the Syrian government. Churkin said Russia believed UN Syria mediator Staffan de Mistura should be taking the lead on bringing together the Syrian opposition.

Churkin also said Russia was working with the United States to draft a "big resolution on fighting terrorism" and the aim was for the 15-member UN Security Council to adopt the text on 17 December at a council meeting of finance ministers, which will be chaired by US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

India attaches highest importance to relations with Russia: Modi

NEW DELHI— India has asserted that it attaches the highest importance to its strategic partnership with Russia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed this to visiting Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Rogozin in the national capital Tuesday.

"Prime Minister conveyed that India attached the highest importance to the strategic and privileged partnership with Russia," a statement by the In-

dian Prime Minister's Office said.

Modi also told the Russian Deputy Prime Minister that he looked forward to his visit to Moscow for the annual summit with President Vladimir Putin.

The Indian prime minister also expressed confidence that the summit would help raise the bilateral relations between the two countries to a new level, the statement said.—Xinhua

Belize rejects plan to allow Cuban migrants to pass through its territory

SAN JOSE — Belize has rejected a plan to allow thousands of Cuban migrants stranded on the Costa Rican border with Nicaragua to pass through its territory on their way to the United States, Costa Rica's foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

The Costa Rican plan contemplated sending the roughly 5,000 Cubans stuck in Costa Rica on private flights to the tiny Central American nation of Belize, from where they would travel through neighbouring Mexico.

The Cubans have been stranded in Costa Rica since the Nicaraguan government shut its border last month and declined to let them pass through its territory.

"We're deeply disillusioned with Belize's decision. Without doubt, this greatly complicates the situation," Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said in a statement.

Last week, Guatemala also refused to allow the Cubans to pass through its lands.—Reuters

US-Japan funded Raytheon SM-3 missile aces second test: Pentagon

WASHINGTON — The United States and Japan on Tuesday conducted a second successful test of Raytheon Co's new Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA missile that is being jointly developed by the two countries, the US Missile Defence Agency (MDA) said. During the test off the coast of Southern California near Malibu, the missile opened its new sensor seeker in space for the first time and used new altitude

control rockets to target a star, said a source familiar with the test, who was not authorized to speak publicly.

No intercept was planned for this test and no target missile was launched, but several intercept tests will follow in coming years, MDA said in a statement.

The agency said programme officials would evaluate the missile's performance based on telemetry and other data from the test.—Reuters

Suspected militant allegedly admits killing of Japanese in Bangladesh

NEW DELHI—Bangladeshi police said Tuesday that a man belonging to a banned Islamic militant outfit has admitted to the fatal shooting of a Japanese man in early October in the northern district of Rangpur, according to media reports.

The Rangpur police reportedly have not revealed in detail what the man said or what the man's motive was in the killing of Kunio Hoshi, a 66-year-old agricultural worker.

The man, Masud Rana, is a member of the Jamaat-ul-Mu-

jahideen Bangladesh, the reports said. The militant group was behind the series of bomb explosions in Bangladesh in 2005.

He is separate from three other men, including a supporter of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, who police said in early November may have been involved in Hoshi's death. A group claiming to be a branch of the Islamic State extremist organisation earlier claimed responsibility over the Internet for the crime.—Kyodo News

Apple releases first Arabic version of Siri

SAN FRANCISCO — Apple Inc on Tuesday released a version of its virtual personal assistant Siri for Arabic speakers in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, potentially making its iPhones more attractive in a largely affluent market of more than 30 million people.

The move, part of Apple's latest software updates, means people in those countries will be able to use Siri in their native tongue on iPhones, iPads and the Apple Watch. It follows Google, whose Android phones' voice search function already offer some support in Arabic.

"This is part of the consumerization and personalization of IT-based services that we're seeing at all levels of the industry," said Paul Black, director of telecoms and media at IDC Middle East, Turkey and Africa.

Apple and its primary smartphone competitor, Google, have saturated the United States and Western Europe with their devices, leaving markets such as the Middle East, China and India as some of the prime places to grow.

Apple already boasts strong brand awareness in the Middle East, particularly among high-end consumers, analysts said. The opening of two retail stores in the UAE in October whipped fans into a frenzy, local media reported.

Smartphone shipments in

the Middle East and Africa climbed 66 percent in the first quarter of 2015 and are expected to reach 155 million units for the year, according to IDC.

However, much of the growth has been driven by users buying phones for less than \$200, a price where Google's Android operating system is dominant. Apple's share of the market stands at 17 percent in the Middle East, compared with Android's 80 percent, IDC found.

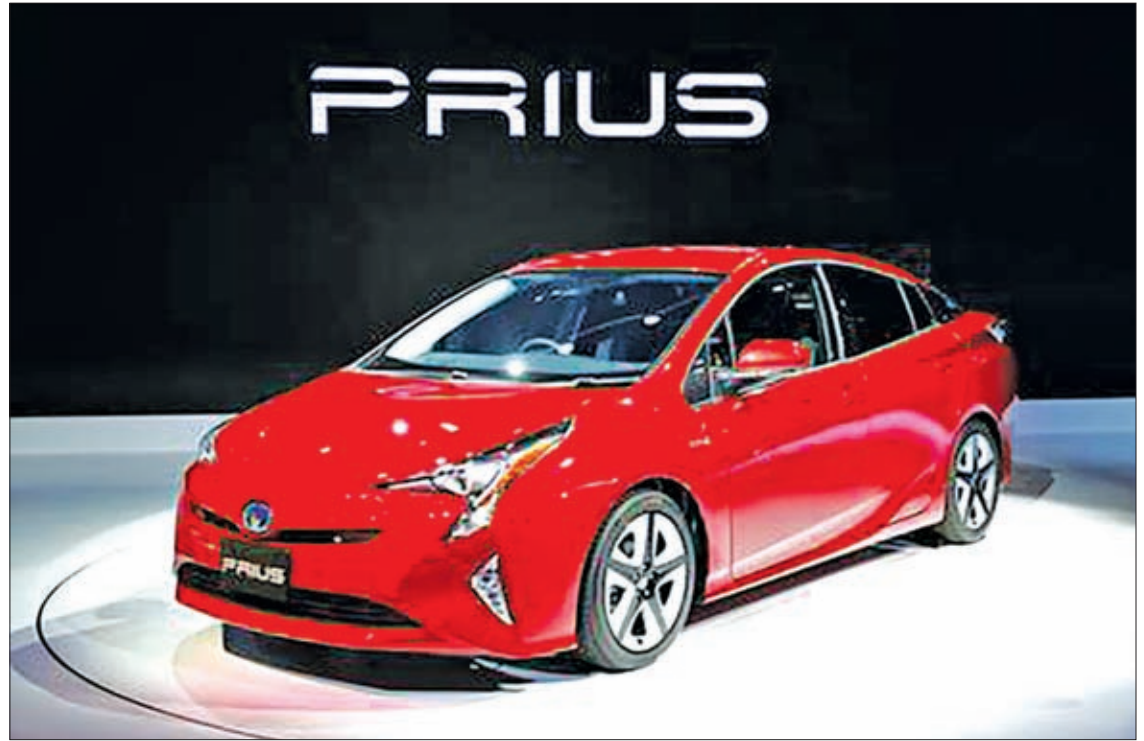
The availability of Siri in Arabic may make some consumers more receptive to Apple software, said Ken Singer, managing director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology at UC Berkeley.

"These devices are incredibly personal," said Singer, who has counseled entrepreneurs in the Middle East. "(Consumers) are going to want to feel like the device is designed for them."

Apple has steadily broadened Siri's reach since the first edition was released in 2011, and the digital assistant now supports 18 languages spoken in 31 countries.

Arabic speakers outside Saudi Arabia and the UAE will be able to use Siri, though it will not be tailored to their dialect. Arabic has been a challenging language for tech companies, with strong regional variations. "Siri has her work cut out for her," said Singer.—Reuters

Toyota rolls out new Prius in Japan with better fuel efficiency



Toyota Motor Corp.'s new Prius hybrid, which has undergone its first full model change in six years.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Toyota Motor Corp. rolled out yesterday the latest model of its Prius hybrid, underscoring the world's top-level fuel efficiency in its class.

The Japanese carmaker fully remodeled the flagship gas-electric vehicle for the first time in more than six years. The fourth-generation Prius, priced at about 2.4 million to 3.4 million yen (\$19,500 to \$27,700), achieved the fuel efficiency with 40.8 kilometres per liter of gasoline, Toyota said.

Toyota set a monthly sales target of 12,000 units in Japan.

It also introduced a four-wheel drive type of Prius, expecting demand in snowy areas.

"It's a car that symbolizes the beginning of our challenge to produce better cars in the years to come," Toyota Executive Vice President Mitsuhiro Kato told an event in Tokyo.

The automaker improved its hybrid system that includes an engine and electric motor, making the system smaller and lighter while redesigning the vehicle to reduce air resistance and achieve better fuel efficiency.

The new Prius is the first

model built under the Toyota New Global Architecture strategy to cut development and production costs by sharing components across models.

The Prius first went on sale in Japan in 1997 as the world's first mass-produced hybrid car and was subsequently introduced worldwide. The remodeling came as Japanese carmakers are struggling with weak domestic demand as a result of the country's consumption tax hike as well as ownership tax increase for minivehicles with engines no larger than 660 cc.—Kyodo News

Cartier's watches lose their sparkle in China

ZURICH — The gold and diamonds of Cartier jewellery are so popular with women that the brand founded in Paris in 1847 is finding it difficult to market watches to men.

The world's biggest jewellery and watch brand in terms of combined sales generates more than two thirds of profits for Swiss parent Richemont, but watch revenues have dwindled relentlessly while jewellery sales have boomed.

Like other high-end watchmakers Cartier is suffering from a drop in demand in big markets such as Hong Kong, mainland China, Russia and the United States. But some of Cartier's problems are specific to the brand, setting up a challenge for Cyrille Vigneron when he takes over the leadership next month.

Improving Cartier's image as a watchmaker in China, where wealthy women love its red boxes but men prefer pure watch brands such as Rolex, Patek Philippe or Vacheron Constantin, may be top

of his to-do list.

"Cartier is popular among fashion-focused customers in Hong Kong. Consumers will regard it as a piece of jewelry when they hear the brand, it is particularly popular among ladies," said Lam Tung-hing, general manager of the Hong Kong retail operations of Oriental Watch Holdings Ltd.

"For men, first time luxury watch buyer will choose to buy Rolex, which is practical and good looking."

Cartier and Richemont declined to comment on the brand's strategy to improve watch sales.

Richemont said last month that watch sales were down mid-single digits in the six months to September, dragged down by its biggest markets, Hong Kong and the United States. It had already stated a similar decline for Cartier watches in the full year to March. Shares have fallen over 12 percent this year. Comparisons with competitors are hard to make. Rolex is

privately owned and at LVMH, watch and jewelry sales rose 10 percent during the first nine months but it does not give a separate watch figure.



The "Ballon Bleu" watch model by Cartier is pictured during an exhibition in Geneva, Switzerland. — PHOTO: REUTERS

Swatch Group shares have fallen 18 percent, partly due to competition from smartwatches and the drop in demand from Chi-

na. Watch exports from Switzerland, where Cartier and other watches are made, fell 3.2 percent during the first ten months of 2015 with shipments to Hong Kong down 22.7 percent and rising just 0.1 percent to the United States.

Pierluigi Fedele, who is responsible for watchmaking at the Swiss union Unia, downplayed any talk of a crisis.

"There is no real crisis in the Swiss watch industry today. Exports are down a bit, but probably still above 20 billion Swiss francs for the whole year," he said.

But he noted the subdued Asian market was causing problems for some companies and a few had laid off staff. Cartier said last year it introduced shorter working hours for some employees and would not say if the measure was still in place. Some analysts estimate that the high-end watch market in mainland China is down 60 percent since its 2012 peak. This is partly due to the gov-

ernment's crackdown on the tradition of gifts-for-favors which often involved watches. Richemont also highlighted difficulties in Macau where the casino industry is suffering from the crackdown on corruption, the weak yuan and Chinese government restrictions on travel.

The strong franc has made Swiss exports more expensive while Tiffany & Co forecast a bigger fall in full-year profit than previously expected as a strong dollar kept tourists from spending in its showpiece US stores.

Last month's terrorist attacks in Paris are also expected to further dent tourists' travels to Europe to buy luxury goods during the pre-Christmas period which, for some brands, represent up to a quarter of annual sales. But for Cartier, whose sparkling creations adorned royal heads around the globe in the early 20th century and more recently Kate Middleton's at her wedding to Prince William, the challenges are bigger than for most.—Reuters

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Dated 10 December 2015

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Brazil's Congress names impeachment panel stacked against Rousseff

BRASILIA — The lower house of Brazil's Congress voted on Tuesday to appoint a committee stacked with opponents of President Dilma Rousseff to study whether to impeach her for breaking budget rules, in a blow to the leftist leader battling for political survival.

By secret ballot, lawmakers voted 272-199 for a list of committee members drawn up by the opposition and pro-impeachment members of the centrist Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), the biggest party in Rousseff's governing coalition.

It was a clear defeat for Rousseff in the first battle of an impeachment process started last week, which threatens to paralyze Congress for months, distracting policymakers from Brazil's worst recession in decades.

Controversy over the vote descended into chaos on the floor of the house, as lawmakers outraged by the secret ballot smashed an electronic voting urn, while pro-impeachment parties waved a flag in celebration of the win.

Rousseff's supporters in Congress appealed to the Supreme Court in protest of the voting procedure. Several newspapers reported near midnight local time that a Supreme Court justice had suspended im-



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff rides her bicycle outside the Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, Brazil, on 8 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

peachment proceedings for a week. Court representatives could not be reached immediately for comment.

The vote was a slap in the face for the leader of the PMDB party in the lower house, Leonardo Picciani, who has backed Rousseff since she appointed two ministers from his wing of the party to secure support and fend off impeachment.

Picciani's embarrassment in the high-profile secret vote underscored the deep divisions within his party, which has veered away from the government in recent months as the economy plunges and a vast corruption scandal rattles the capital.

The sweeping investigation into bribery at state-run oil company Petroleo Brasileiro SA threatened to further strain Rousseff's fragile coalition on Tuesday, as a veteran lawmaker in jail was reported to have decided to negotiate a plea bargain.

Senator Delcídio do Amaral, Rousseff's point man on economic affairs, hired a lawyer to write up a plea deal, reported the websites of newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo and news magazine Veja, without saying how they got the information. Amaral and billionaire Andre Esteves, the former controlling shareholder and chief executive

of investment bank BTG Pactual SA, were arrested last month and accused of obstructing the probe into the oil giant known as Petrobras.

House Speaker Eduardo Cunha, who has been charged with corruption and money laundering in the Petrobras probe, outflanked Rousseff's allies with Tuesday's secret vote and postponed an ethics hearing into his activities for another day.

Amaral, Esteves and Cunha have denied any wrongdoing. Lawyers for Amaral could not immediately be reached following the reports of a plea deal.—Reuters

Afghans, Pakistan hold firm on ties; India 'extends hand' to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD -- Leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan held firm to positions on their troubled ties at a conference on Afghanistan's future on Wednesday that risked being overshadowed by a Taliban attack in Afghanistan's biggest city.

The "Heart of Asia" meeting, an annual gathering of Asian and other countries to pledge support to Afghanistan, comes months after the first, inconclusive talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, also attending the conference in Islamabad, said she was extending India's hand to old rival Pakistan and both countries should show the maturity and confidence to improve ties.

US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken, also at the conference which began on Tuesday, has called for Pakistan to use its influence with the Afghan Taliban to push for Afghan reconciliation.

But hope for a resumption of Afghan talks appeared even more remote as Taliban militants and Afghan security forces battled at the airport in the southern city of Kandahar into a second day on Wednesday. At least 18 people had been killed, Afghan officials said.

Cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is seen as essential for Afghan peace but hopes for ties after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was inaugurated last year were quickly dashed, largely because of a series of

bomb attacks in Kabul.

Ghani told the conference "enemies" had unsuccessfully tried to divide Afghanistan but they had been foiled. He blamed "regional and international terror groups" for the violence in his country.

"In the past, there has been the temptation to use non-state actors as instruments of foreign policy," he added, in a clear reference to Afghan assertions that Pakistan supports the Taliban to maintain influence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan denies that.

"I have had to become a war president, because an all-out war has been imposed on us," Ghani said.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stressed his commitment to "an Af-

ghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process", a reference to the talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, hosted by Pakistan, that foundered after one round in July after news leaked that Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar had been dead for two years.

Omar's deputy, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, took over as leader but violent splits have emerged in the militant group.

Sharif also spoke of Pakistan's aim to repatriate the 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, some of whom have been in Pakistan for decades.

"The massive cross-border movement of refugees constitutes a security risk," Sharif said.—Reuters

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AKB48 marks 10th anniversary with concert on home ground



Members of the Japanese all-girl pop group AKB48. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — The Japanese all-girl pop group AKB48 marked its 10th anniversary Tuesday with a concert at its home theater, where at their initial performance in 2005 they only had an audience of seven people, celebrating with fans the long way they have come after debuting under the concept of “idols you can go meet.”

The special concert was joined by such “graduates” — former members who had left the group to pursue a solo career — as Atsuko Maeda and Yuko Oshima to the fans’ delight.

AKB48 had their first performance at AKB48 Theater in Akihabara, Tokyo’s electronics district and subcultural hub, for which AKB is supposed to stand.

Their “girl-next-door” image appealed to those men who liked cheering for particular girls among the group’s dozens of members trying hard at singing and dancing. Some women also felt close to the members.

Masayoshi Sakai, a visiting researcher at the International University of Japan’s Centre for Global Communications who is well versed in idol culture, said AKB48 is “a definitive edition (of idol groups) in showing fans the development process of immature members, well blending the genes of Takarazuka (all-female musical theater troupe) and past idols.”

In an era of sluggish CD sales, AKB48 have churned out

a host of million-seller singles. They have also produced a number of sister groups in and out of Japan, such as those based in Nagoya, Osaka, Jakarta and Shanghai.

But some in the entertainment industry are critical of the group’s marketing tactics of combining their CD sale with fans’ access to its popularity contests or “handshake events.” Many AKB48 hardcore fans buy dozens or even hundreds of copies of the same CD for the extra ballots to help boost their favourite member’s ranking in the contests, or for more lottery tickets to win a chance to attend a handshake event to meet that favourite member in person.—*Kyodo News*

Andrew Lloyd Webber gets Broadway rocking

NEW YORK — Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber has Broadway rocking as his new musical the “School of Rock” officially opened on Sunday.

The composer of “The Phantom of the Opera” and “Cats”, announced last December he was bringing the 2003 hit comedy to the New York stage about wannabe rock star substitute teacher Dewey Finn, who forms a band with his young pupils. The opening brought out stars including actresses Laverne Cox and Helen Mirren. The show features songs from the movie, new music by Lloyd Webber and a book by “Downton Abbey” creator Julian Fellowes.—*Reuters*

‘Big Short’ goes long on comedy to look at 2007-09 financial crisis

LOS ANGELES — It is not easy to find the humour in the financial crisis that hit the US economy eight years ago, but the “The Big Short” uses comedy as a lens to examine the intricacies and failures of Wall Street.

The movie, starring Christian Bale, Brad Pitt and Steve Carell and out in New York and Los Angeles on Friday, takes a quirky look at the mortgage-backed security debacle that led to the US sliding into recession from 2007, and the money managers who bet against the financial might of the US economy.

And it had nothing to do with short people.

“I wanted to show that (the

financial collapse) was more about a system than it was about individuals,” director Adam McKay told Reuters. “We need banking. Banking is not, in essence, bad ... we just need not corrupt banking.”

McKay, the filmmaker behind raucous Will Ferrell comedies such as “Talladega Nights” and “Anchorman,” said he had friends and colleagues on Wall Street and therefore knew not to joke about its people.

Instead, he adapted financial journalist Michael Lewis’ best-selling book “The Big Short” by taking audiences on a farcical journey into the little understood world of high finance

‘Transparent’ returns with family wedding but few happy endings

NEW YORK — How do you follow up an award-winning first television season about an elderly man transitioning to a woman?

Make season two even riskier, says Jill Soloway, creator and director of “Transparent”, which arrives on Amazon.com’s streaming platform on Friday.

The drama-comedy starring Jeffrey Tambor as a divorced father of three adult children who comes out as transgender kicks off the new season with a big family wedding.

But not everyone in the extended Pfefferman clan is happy.

“In this season, people are facing consequences a little bit,” Soloway said. “They are getting everything they ever wanted and are realizing it’s not that simple.”

Maura Pfefferman (played by Tambor) struggles with reactions from the wider world to her transition, confronts people from her past and finds a new love interest, played by Angelica Huston.

Life also is far from breezy for Maura’s children, with a new baby on the way, ruptured marital ties and their own sexual identities to explore.

“One person transitioning in a family makes it so everybody has to begin a journey of becoming themselves,” Soloway said. “One person might be left out, who isn’t moving as quickly as everybody else. One person might be way ahead of everybody.”

“Transparent” took popular culture by storm when it was first streamed in 2014, winning multiple Emmy and Golden Globe awards. Although the acclaim sur-

prised Soloway, whose show was inspired by the transition of her own father, it only encouraged her to try new things, including flashbacks to the Berlin of 1933.

“The fact the show has resonated with so many people - people who don’t even think about queerness or who aren’t Jewish or who are just loving the show because it’s funny and about a family - is totally wonderful and feels very surreal,” Soloway said.

“If we were trying to replicate ... it would have been nerve-wracking. Instead we took all the positive regard and said, ‘OK, we have to keep being in our risk space... What is scary? What will feel new? What feels shocking? What feels like I’m learning?’” she said.

The casting of Tambor, rather than a transgender woman, in the lead role has been criticized by some in the trans community but Soloway defends the choice.

Since Tambor, the actor, is not going to take hormones, future seasons of “Transparent” may help cast light on the challenges of those who transition in later life.

“There are a lot of late transitioners, in their 60s or 70s, who actually don’t do surgery, don’t do hormones, who never pass and come off more as gender queer or gender non-conforming rather than as a woman, and that may be Maura’s plight because of the casting of Jeffrey,” Soloway said.

“It doesn’t mean they are not beautiful, they’re not human beings, or that they shouldn’t be able to use the bathroom when they go to the mall.”—*Reuters*



Cast members Brad Pitt and Ryan Gosling pose on the red carpet at the premiere of ‘The Big Short’ in New York on 23 November. PHOTO: REUTERS

that led to the recession and some 8.7 million Americans losing their jobs.

“The Big Short” film follows real-life ‘shorts’ — investors that bet against rising stock and bond prices - portrayed by Bale, Pitt, Carell and Ryan Gosling.

The ‘shorts’ — traders who

are despised by ‘long’ investors who cheer markets to ever-rising financial heights — correctly saw that the housing boom of the 2000s was largely fueled by aggressive lenders who suckered people into borrowing more money than they could afford.—*Reuters*

Giovanna d'Arco opens La Scala season under high security

MILAN — The deadly attacks in Paris were not behind the choice of Giovanna d'Arco (Joan of Arc) for La Scala's season opener, but were on the mind of many watching the story of France's patron saint who died following God's call to fight for her country.

For the first time ever, visitors to the black-tie gala were screened with portable metal detectors and had their bags searched after Milan's opera house was named by the FBI as a possible target of militant attacks after the Paris bloodshed.

However, Italy's business and political elite would not let the 13 November attacks keep them away from one of the most important events on Europe's cultural agenda, even with around 750 police agents deployed to monitor the situation.

"We will not let what happened in Paris force us to stay at home," Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said during the intermission. "That would have been the wrong reaction."

The opening night of La Scala's 2015-16 season won an 11-minute ovation, especially for Riccardo Chailly, who took over as principal conductor in January, and the show's protagonist, performed by Russian so-

prano Anna Netrebko.

La Scala executives chose to return one of Giuseppe Verdi's less known and more difficult to stage works to the Milan opera after a 150-year absence to reconnect with history and make Italian opera more prominent in its programme.

"Giovanna d'Arco was essential for Verdi's future," the Milan-born Chailly said. "Verdi was a master at recounting internal distress"

The four-act work, loosely based on Friedrich Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans*, tells the story of a peasant girl who believes that God has chosen her to lead France to victory in its war with England, but dies prematurely.

Chailly said Verdi's seventh opera, admired and deplored alike, is rarely performed as it presents many vocal challenges for its singers. Staging it can be equally testing and did not convince everyone.

"Chailly conducted Verdi with extreme attention but the stage directors were not at all clear in their ideas," said Gino Vezzini, president of the Amici del Loggione association, which watches every show from the top gallery of the opera house.

The Belgian-French direc-



Italian police officers conduct a security check inside Milan's La Scala opera house before the opening of the 2015-16 opera season with Verdi's *Joan of Arc*, on 7 December, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

tor duo of Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier placed Giovanna in her room where the tormented maiden gives her imagination and visions free rein.

"You can feel their emotional engagement from every-

one present tonight and that's very particular for a premier," said Roberto Bolle, a ballet dancer who regularly performs at La Scala.

La Scala is again heading for break-even this year and did

not benefit, as expected, from the additional performances added for visitors of the EXPO world fair over the summer months. Giovanna d'Arco will be performed at La Scala until 2 January.—Reuters

Artifacts from 1708 Spanish shipwreck are Colombian heritage



Artifacts found in the wreckage of Spanish galleon *San Jose* are seen in this undated handout photo provided by the Colombian Ministry of Culture on 5 December, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BOGOTA — The 307-year-old remains of a sunken Spanish galleon found off Colombia's Caribbean coast are the heritage of Colombians, President Juan Manuel Santos said on Tuesday, after Spanish officials expressed interest in the artifacts.

The *San Jose* galleon, thought by historians to be lad-

en with emeralds and precious coins, sank in 1708. It was discovered at the end of November by a team of international experts near the island of Baru. Since the discovery, Spanish authorities have said they want to explore their rights to the ship's remains in negotiations with Colombia.

"The galleon is the heritage of Colombians for Colombians," Santos said during the opening of a highway outside the capital, Bogota.

"Now many owners are appearing. No sirs, this is Colombian heritage."

"Of course, it is also the heritage of humanity and we are willing to share," the president said.

Colombia plans to build a museum to house finds from the wreck in nearby Cartagena, a popular tourist destination.

Sonar images have so far revealed bronze cannons made specifically for the ship, arms, ceramics and other artifacts. Some 600 people died in the shipwreck.

The *San Jose* was the subject of a legal dispute between Colombia and Sea Search Armada (SSA), a US-based salvage company. SSA said in 1981 it had located the area where the ship sank.

The company and the government agreed to split any proceeds from the wreckage. But the government said later any treasure would belong to Colombia, a view backed by a US court in 2011.—Reuters

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(10-12-2015 07:00 am ~ 11-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Travelogue "Chaug Tha at its peak period"
07:40	Am	Paper Products... Plain but Pretty
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	YUFL
08:40	Am	Mobile House
08:51	Am	Myanmar Masterclass: Artist Khin Maung Zaw
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	"Myanmar's Traditions and Culture" Tea
09:52	Am	The Pride of Myanmar "Traditional Handicraft"
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Kayah Style
10:35	Am	Natural Mineral Water
10:50	Am	Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Decision"

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:25	Pm	A Trip To The City Of Rakkhita, Rakhine
07:45	Pm	Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Innovative Handiworks Based On The Art of Line Drawing
08:44	Pm	Now in Yangon
08:50	Pm	Director: Maung Myo Min (Yin Twin Pyit)

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Wednesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

Birthday boy Sterling helps Man City finish top of Group D

MANCHESTER — Raheem Sterling celebrated his 21st birthday with two goals as Manchester City scored three times in the last 10 minutes to sink Borussia Moenchengladbach 4-2 and finish top of Champions League Group D on Tuesday.

City, without several first-team regulars including captain Vincent Kompany and striker Sergio Aguero, took the lead in the 16th minute when Sterling fed David Silva with a clever backheel in the box and the Spain playmaker drove home a bullet shot.

Gladbach, in confident mood after inflicting Bayern Munich's first Bundesliga defeat of the season at the weekend, then took command with their slick-passing style and were 2-1 up by halftime.



Raheem Sterling celebrates after scoring the third goal for Manchester City during UEFA Champions League Group Stage Group D at Etihad Stadium, Manchester, England on 8 December.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Julian Korb equalised with a right-foot shot in the 19th minute, after a surging run from Fabian Johnson, before Brazilian Raffael scrambled the

ball home from close range in the 42nd following another neat passing move. City, who had never finished top of a Champions League group before, perked

up after the break and it was no surprise when Sterling converted from close range after overlapping right back Gael Clichy pulled the ball back from the

byline in the 80th minute.

A minute later substitute Wilfried Bony set Sterling up and the former Liverpool forward provided a delightful curling effort from 16 metres.

Bony made it 4-2 from a left-wing cross by Aleksandar Kolarov in the 85th minute as City, who had already clinched their place in the knockout stages, ended the group stage with 12 points from six games.

Juventus, beaten 1-0 at Sevilla on Tuesday, also qualified for the Champions League last 16 on 11 points.

Europa League holders Sevilla ended up with six points and again go into Europe's second-tier club competition after finishing in third place. Gladbach were bottom of the group with five points.—Reuters

World heavyweight champion Fury stripped of IBF title

LONDON — World heavyweight champion Tyson Fury has been stripped of his IBF title, one of three he won by beating Wladimir Klitschko, after agreeing to a contracted re-

match with the Ukrainian instead of fighting the IBF's mandatory challenger.

"It's true he's been stripped of his IBF belt," Lindsey Tucker, IBF championships chairman,

told the BBC on Tuesday.

"Our challenger was Vyacheslav Glazkov, but instead Fury's gone and signed a rematch clause with Wladimir Klitschko."

The 31-year-old Ukrainian Glazkov has a 21-1 record.

Fury beat Klitschko, who had reigned as world champion for 11 years, on points on 28 November to take his unbeaten record to 25 professional fights.

The contract for last month's title fight in Dusseldorf included a rematch clause, which 39-year-old Klitschko said last week he had decided to exercise.

A date and venue have yet to be confirmed.

The win earned Fury three versions of the heavyweight crown — the WBA, WBO and IBF — with American Deontay Wilder holding the WBC belt.—Reuters



Tyson Fury poses with his belts. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ronaldo sets goals record for Champions League group stage



Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo in action with Malmo's Anton Tinnerholm during Champions League Group Stage Group A. PHOTO: REUTERS

MADRID — Cristiano Ronaldo set a record for goals scored in the group stage of the Champions League of 11 when he netted four against Malmo in Group A on Tuesday.

The Portugal forward made it 3-0 to Real six minutes before halftime at the Bernabeu and added three more goals in the 47th, 50th and 59th minutes.

Ronaldo, who has reached double figures for a fifth consecutive Champions League campaign, extended his all-time Champions League scoring record to 88 goals.

He is the first Real player to score four goals in a Champions League match, with the overall record of five held by Barcelona's Lionel Messi and Luiz Adriano, who achieved the feat with Shakhtar Donetsk but now plays for AC Milan.

Ronaldo's first goal on Tuesday improved his surprisingly poor record at free kicks.

It was only the third free kick the FIFA Ballon d'Or holder had netted from in his last 97 attempts in all competitions, according to Spanish Twitter statistician @2010MisterChip.—Reuters

Van Gaal struggles to understand United's European exit

WOLFSBURG — Manchester United's 3-2 Champions League defeat at VfL Wolfsburg on Tuesday was difficult to understand, said manager Louis van Gaal after they crashed out in the group stage for the first time since 2011.

United went into the game needing a win to guarantee a place in the last 16 but were outplayed for long stretches and, having clawed their way back into the match, conceded a late goal to finish third in Group B and qualify for the Europa League.

The irony for a shell-

shocked Van Gaal was his team finally found their scoring touch, after two goalless draws in their last three games, but fell apart in defence.

"The result is difficult to understand," the Dutchman told a news conference. "I am happy we have scored and not happy we have two times in two minutes given a goal away."

"I have to analyse why that is happening. Normally we are very good in that aspect."

The result will further increase the scrutiny on Van Gaal who has been heavily criticised for a perceived negative style

of play.

As well as frustrated supporters, there have also been no shortage of pundits willing to put the boot in.

Within minutes of United's defeat on Tuesday, former United and England defender Rio Ferdinand described their Champions League exit as "embarrassing".

"If you strip it back this squad needs a hard look," he said on BT Sport. "There is no pace or power. People are looking around at each other rather than saying, 'I will drag you through'."—Reuters