

President says second five-year plan will target economic growth and investment

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LAYING THE FOUNDATION

President says peace will strengthen new democracy

THE final framework for political dialogue was submitted to President U Thein Sein at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his speech, the president spoke of his government's commitment to ending 60 years of internal armed conflict, stressing that the restoration of peace will provide a solid foundation for a democratic system.

Face-to-face discussions and negotiations erased doubts among the parties involved in the peace talks, further fortifying mutual understanding. The president attributed the armed conflict to differences in political approaches, conceding that the warring parties share the same patriotism.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw unanimously approved the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which the president called a product of mutual trust, adding that the ceasefire agreement is more of a political assurance than a truce.

He pointed out the need to find solutions to armed conflict through political dialogue and make combined efforts to rebuild the Union into a democracy in line with the outcomes of the political dialogue.



See page 3 >> President U Thein Sein and Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham shake hands with representatives of ethnic armed groups. PHOTO: MNA

Historic Dala dockyard eyes corporatisation



A ship under construction at the Dagon Seikkan Shipyard. PHOTO: INLAND WATER TRANSPORT

Aye Min Soe

THE dockyard in Dala Township, Yangon, urgently needs to invite private investment through a joint-venture system in order to upgrade its capacity, which currently accounts for about 50 per cent of repair work on ships owned by the Inland Water Transport.

"To upgrade the dockyard, we need investment and modern technology," said U Soe Myint, the deputy general manager of the Engineering Department of the Inland Water Transport, to *The Global*

New Light of Myanmar.

"We need to upgrade it to change its current trend of mainly repairing old ships to a new trend of building new ships," he added.

The historic shipyard has the capacity to repair 50 to 60 ships and several other major repair projects on average every year.

The efficiency of the historic dockyard, which is about 150 years old, is hampered by old equipment, including some from the WWII-era.

Meanwhile, the Dagon Seikkan Shipyard, also state-owned, was built with an investment of

more than K11.9 billion (US\$9.2 million) in 2013 by the Ministry of Transport.

The newly-built shipyard has the capacity to repair 24 ships owned by the Inland Water Transport under the Ministry of Transport and to carry out major repair work to 46 ships on average per year, with target earnings of about K900 million (\$695,500) for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw enacted the Inland Water Transport Board Law in 2014 in order to corporatise the Inland Water Transport.

Govt, NLD discuss smooth transfer of government duties



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson of the National League for Democracy Party, discusses with participants of the meeting on smooth transfer of government duties. PHOTO: MYANMA NEWS AGENCY

A coordination meeting on transferring the duties of the Head of State and of the government was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meeting, led by National League for Democracy chairperson Daw Aung San Suu

Kyi, included discussions on detailed plans for cooperation between the current government and the winners of the 8 November elections for a smooth transfer.

The government side was led by Union Minister for Infor-

mation U Ye Htut, along with Deputy Director-General U Maung Maung Ohn and Director U Zaw Htay, while the National League for Democracy was represented by U Win Htein, Dr Myo Aung and Dr Aung Thu.—*Myanma News Agency*

Japan-funded ADB project to support small businesses in Mon State

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced yesterday that it will administer a US\$3 million project funded by Japan to ensure job creation and income generation for small businesses in Mon State.

The project aims to support entrepreneurs selling crafts and local food to tourists and residents in four townships—Chaungzonkyun, Kyaikto, Mawlamyine and Mudon—to raise their incomes and to give them new entrepreneurial opportunities, the bank said.

The four Mon townships lie

on a road section that runs through the Greater Mekong Sub-region's East-West Economic Corridor, linking Myanmar to Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.

Under the project, local entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to attend a capacity building programme to help develop business management capabilities and links to suppliers and micro finance providers. Moreover, the project will finance the construction of a market facility in Mawlamyine and a processing centre in Kyaikto.

“The project aims to identify new craft and food product

lines, provide technical, business and management skills to exploit them, and help small businesses, particularly those run by women and the poor, access affordable credit and links to new markets, giving incomes a substantial lift,” said Uzma Hoque, senior social development specialist for the ADB's Southeast Asia Department.

The ADB has acknowledged that tourism in Mon state offers substantial opportunities due to the popularity of the Kyaiktiyo(-Golden Rock) Pagoda in Kyaikto. However, the bank pointed out that a lack of product knowledge, management skills and access to technology hampers small businesses from taking full advantage of this fast-growing industry.

According to the bank, the project will cover 900 households across 12 villages in the four townships, targeting women to comprise 60 percent of the project's beneficiaries.

Along with the ADB's assistance, the Myanmar government and local communities will provide support equivalent to about \$450,000, said the Manila-based bank.

The project is scheduled for completion in December 2019.



A Japan-funded project will give training and support to small businesses to boost their incomes and work opportunities in four townships in Mon State, the ADB says. PHOTO/PROVIDED BY ADB MYANMAR

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw approves amendments to five bills

AT the 19th meeting of the current Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, MPs agreed to amendments proposed by the bill committee to the Pest Control Bill and the Botanical Species Protection Bill, which were returned by the Amyotha Hluttaw with amendments.

The Botanical Species Protection Bill was sent back with 35 amendments by Amyotha Hluttaw, three of which were approved by the Pyithu Hluttaw.

During the meeting, U My-

int Soe, an MP from Pyawbwe Constituency, asked for a plan to invite foreign investment for vehicle manufacturing in Myanmar in order to stimulate the car market with cheaper options.

In response to the question, U Myo Aung, the Deputy Minister for Industry, said an Automobile Policy has been drafted by relevant ministries in April last year. Inviting foreign investment to produce cars at home is included in the draft, the deputy minister added.—*Myanma News Agency*



Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun. PHOTO: MNA



Daw Zar Talan. PHOTO: MNA

Ceremony held at Yangon General Hospital to celebrate free cleft-adjustment surgeries



Yangon Divisional Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe presents cash assistance to patients. PHOTO: MYANMA NEWS AGENCY

THE availability of free operations to correct cleft lips and cleft palates was celebrated at a ceremony at the Training Centre of the Yangon General Hospital on Tuesday. The ceremony was jointly organised by the Regional Treatment Department and the Yangon Region Women's Affairs Organisation.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe said this was the 13th time the programme has been conducted by the Women's Affairs Organisation

since 2001. He offered his best wishes to patients who received the operations. Daw Khin Thet Htay, patron of the Women's Affairs Organisation, received K3,600,000 from donors to the programme in 2015.

After the ceremony, Chief Minister U Myint Swe and his party toured the facility and comforted the patients. This year, 78 patients received free operations at the hospital, up from 53 last year.—*Myanma News Agency*

President says second five-year plan will target economic growth and investment



Myanmar Project Commission Chairman President U Thein Sein chairs second meeting of MPC. PHOTO: MNA

THE Myanmar Project Commission (MPC) held its second meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with MPC Chairman President U Thein Sein urging the Union government to discuss the draft national project law of the 2016-17 fiscal year for submission to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The second five-year National Plan from 2016-17 to 2020-21 and the long-term National Comprehensive Development Plan of 2011-31 should serve as a framework for future projects, the president said.

In the first five-year plan from 2011-12 to 2015-16 the MPC prioritised the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter for the public in line with the changing trends of the country, with the president adding that the commission performed its 5 year plan tasks admirably.

The seventh meeting focused

on matters to be implemented in the remaining three months before the close of its first five-year plan in the 2015-16 fiscal year as well as the second draft of the five-year plan to be implemented in the tenure of the new government.

The 20-year National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP) was framed by the government in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

The NCDP is aimed at increasing the country's GDP to US\$180 billion in 2030-31 and its per capita GDP to \$3,000.

The country developed its Comprehensive Development Vision of 2010-35 with the help of the ERIA and its Industrial De-

velopment Vision in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The second five-year plan is aimed at boosting economic growth by encouraging investments in the public and private sectors to ensure higher local productivity through the process of industrialisation.

President U Thein Sein suggested the realisation of public-private partnership in reaching sustainable development goals in key areas of health, education and electricity provision.

National Planning and Economic Development Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw, Electric Power Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe and Agriculture and Irrigation Union Minister U Myint Hlaing spoke on the implementation of the projects by their respective ministries.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Thein Sein felicitates Bhutan King on Bhutan's National Day

U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, King of Bhutan on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Bhutan which falls on 17th December 2015.—*Myanmar News Agency*

President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to Bhutan Prime Minister

U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Bhutan, which falls on 17th December 2015.—*Myanmar News Agency*

U Wunna Maung Lwin sends message of felicitations to Bhutan Counterpart

U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Damcho Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Bhutan which falls on 17th December 2015.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Govt to submit Union budget for 2016-17 FY

THE government would submit the Union budget for the 2016-2017 FY to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said President U Thein Sein at a third meeting of the Financial Commission in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The government has drawn the Union budget for the 2016-2017 FY based on previous budgets, with the aim of assist-

ing in implementing plans for the country and the people, he added.

The country has possessed the best prospect for development in the region due to good foundations laid down by the government, he said.

The government also set a K100 billion emergency budget.—*Myanmar News Agency*

laying the foundation

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"The onus is on all of us to build a dream Union and bequeath a better legacy to future generations," the president said.

"The people have undergone the painful days of armed conflict and political disagreement, missing good opportunities to put us on a par with the international community," the president said.

He urged all stakeholders to make strong commitments to root out armed conflict and political disagreement while helping the people get rid of their emotional stress.

According to the president, the Union Peace Conference is expected to start in the first week of January.

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham. PHOTO: MNA

Kham also spoke at the event, serving as chairman of the Union Political Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC).

As mentioned in the NCA, the nine-chapter framework was finalised sixty days after the sign-

ing of the NCA by eight ethnic armed organisations on 15 October, according to the vice president.

He attributed the successful implementation of the political dialogue framework to the stakeholders' genuine and solemn interest in the peace process.

He said that the NCA requires the Union Peace Conference to be held within 90 days of the October signing.

Union Minister U Aung Min, representing the government, along with Pado Saw Kwel Htoo Win representing the ethnic armed organisations and U Thu Wei representing the political parties, handed over the framework agreement to the president.—*Myanmar News Agency*

WHO: Reported Malaria Cases reach 150,000 per year in Myanmar

IN Myanmar, reported malaria cases are currently around 150,000 per year, although WHO estimates that number may be higher, according to new estimates from the World Health Organization.

By far the main sources of financial support for national malaria efforts remain the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the United States President's Malaria Initiative and the United Kingdom aid programme, said the media release of WHO. A National Malaria Task Force is currently under development to guide the country's malaria response.

The number of malaria cases

occurring in Asia Pacific countries has dropped by over 45% since 2000, according to new estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO). New data published by the Geneva-based UN health agency reveal impressive regional progress as countries move towards malaria elimination, with prevention efforts saving millions of dollars in health care costs.

The World Malaria Report 2015 presents a country-by-country breakdown of the latest global malaria data. It highlights remarkable Asia Pacific progress to defeat the disease in small and large countries alike.—*GNLM*



New houses for people in flood-affected areas are under construction in Kalay. PHOTO: JUNINE-KALAY IPRD

New houses for flood-victims of Kalay Township to be completed soon

THE construction of 65 new houses for the flood-victims of Kyeegone village, Kalay Township, Sagaing Divisional Region are almost complete, according to a local official. The villagers' original houses were swept away by erosion and unprecedented flash floods during heavy rains in July and August this year.

Agricultural plots and many homes were inundated and destroyed by the devastating, continuous rains.

Rehabilitation works have

been accelerated with the collective contribution by the government, private donors and social welfare organisations. The affected villagers were evacuated and new homes have been established in safer areas for those forced to vacate.

A total of 358 new houses will be built at the new villages in Kalay Township with construction set to be completed by the end of 2015, according to the local official.—*Junine-Kalay IPRD*

Thayet town to celebrate Mother's Day

THAYET town, Magwe Divisional Region is arranging Mother's Day celebrations for the nine year running. Mother's Day will fall on 17 January, according to its convening committee.

The event, led by the township's litterateurs, will include motherhood poetry contests, a pledging ceremony to follow the footsteps of mothers and the paying of respect to mothers, all of which will

be held at the religious building of Shwemothaw Pagoda, Thayet. During the day, with the cooperation of the township authorities, ten impoverished 80-and-above mothers who have no family support will be presented K 20000 each as well as medicines and other gifts. The winners of the poem competitions will also be awarded on the occasion, according to the committee.—*Zaw Htet-Thayet*

Locals of Kawlin Township to have MPT access

THE construction of communication towers for its mobile service by Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications(MPT) is to be completed soon in Myeni, Kotko and Gwetauk villages, Kawlin township of Sagaing Divisional Region, according to a local official.

The cost of the construction, funded by the Union Government, was K 45 million for each tower. The structures have been built by the East Boy Company, he added.

A local said that although MPT towers have been set up for a year at Kyaukpyin, Kantha and Okkan villages in the township, no related communication equipment has been installed yet and locals are unable to subscribe to MPT services. The locals said that it is their wish to be able to use phone services in the near future.—*U Ko Ko Maung-Kawlin IPRD*



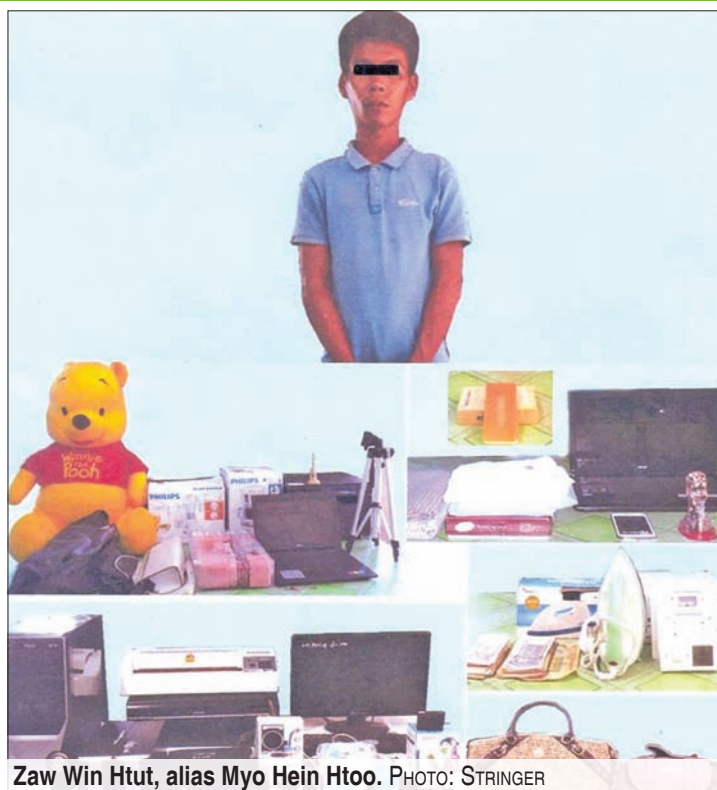
Crime News

Seasoned thief charged with many counts of burglary

POLICE have filed charges against a man on suspicion of theft of property including a laptop, a Cannon Printer and SONY camera.

Zaw Win Htut, alias Myo Hein Htoo, 30, was stopped and interviewed in Dagon-Myothit (North) township on 7 December.

An investigation led to further counts of theft that have been attributed to the suspect. He has been charged by police.—*Stringer*



Zaw Win Htut, alias Myo Hein Htoo. PHOTO: STRINGER

Man charged for burglary

POLICE have filed charges against Thane Tun Moe, alias Ga Don, 35, for allegedly breaking and entering into the home of Thet Naing Htway in Yankin Township and stealing K40,000,000 worth of mobile phones on 15 November.

The suspect was ap-

proached by police but refused to identify himself leading to an investigation and ultimately an admission by Thane Tun Moe that he had committed the crime.

The local police station has filed charges.—*Myanmar Police Force*



Thet Naing Htway. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY MYANMAR POLICE FORCE

6 wheel passenger vehicle plunged down 50 foot hill

A 6 wheel passenger car heading to Mandalay from Kalay, driven by Paung Gyi, 30, lost control and plunged down a 50 foot hill near milepost No. 75/5-

6 between Monywa and Gangaw road. The accident killed the driver and six passengers while three passengers were seriously injured and a 1 year old baby

was also injured.

The driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by the police station in Gangaw township.—*Kyaw Zay Ya*

New Pump Station Opened in Nyaungnabin

YANGON — The new pump station for water transmission and distribution in Nyaungnabin water treatment plant was opened at Nyaungnabin. This is the Lot 1 component of the Grant Aid, “Project for Urgent Improvement of Water Supply System in Yangon City”. The second component of the Project, Lot 2, includes renewal of water distribution pipeline from Kokhine Reservoir to Mayangone Township along Kaba Aye Pagoda Road and water distribution network in Yankin Township. This project is under construction and targeted to be completed in the first half of 2016.

The new pump station was opened by H.E. U Hla Myint, Mayor of Yangon City, H.E. Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, Minister-counselor of the Embassy of Japan and Mr. Keiichiro Nakazawa, Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Myanmar Office and addresses were made by them. The operation of four pumps newly installed was initiated by H.E. U Hla Myint.

Later, pump station and relat-

ed facilities were handed over by Mr. Akihito Takahashi, Infrastructure Business Group of Torishima Pump MFG Co., Ltd to U Myint Oo, Chief Engineer, Engineering Department (Water and Sanitation) of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

The ceremony came to an end with the closing address by U Soe Si, Committee Member of YCDC.

Because of the heavy flood in December 2012, there were some failures in pump station of Nyaungnabin, which led limited water supply to the city. Upon completion of the Project, full water capacity of 45 million gallon per day can be supplied to 1.8 million citizens in the North Dagon, South Dagon, East Dagon, Dagon Seikkan, North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa, Dawbon, Tharketa and Thingangyun Townships.

The Grant Agreement, ceiling amount of One Billion and Nine Hundred Million Japanese Yen (JPY 1,900,000,000) was signed in September 2013 between YCDC and JICA. The construction of the Lot1 part of the Project started in May 2014, and was completed within 20 months



Opening of new pump station by H.E. Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, H. E. U Hla Myint and Mr. Keiichiro Nakazawa.

thanks to strong commitment and continuous effort of YCDC, consultant (TECI) and contractor (Torishima Pump). During the Project implementation, YCDC staffs were able to obtain On-The-Job training (OJT) for pump op-

eration and maintenance in order for them to carry out sustainable operation and maintenance of the pump station in future.

The successful completion of the Project is the result of close coordination between YCDC,

JICA and all other people who are associated with the Project, which further leads to stronger friendship between the people of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Government of Japan.—GNLM

Greater investment in education can help Myanmar secure higher ranking: HDI report

The poverty rate in Myanmar declined from 32 per cent in 2005 to 26 per cent in 2010, and many social indicators saw upward trends.

Khaing Thanda Lwin

MYANMAR’S human development index value increased from 0.034 to 0.536 between 1980 and 2014, but the country still remains in the low human development category, according to the Human Development Index (HDI) report, released this year by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The UNDP officially submitted the 2015 HDI report under the theme of “Work for Human Development” yesterday. Since 1990, the UNDP has organised the publication of the annual report so as to raise awareness about human development worldwide.

Ms Renata Dessallien, the UNDP representative in Myanmar, said: “The country’s HDI value is

expected to be promoted to the medium human development group in coming four or five years if the current development rate continues.”

The HDI report classifies countries into four groups—high, medium, low and very low.

Myanmar has a HDI value of 0.536, ranking 148 out of 188 countries and territories in the 2015 report. The UNDP official said: “The country has made steady progress in human development over the years, but it is the lowest among ASEAN countries.”

The report pointed out that the government needs to make huge investments in the education sector so as to achieve a higher ranking on the HDI list, Ms Dessallien said.

In Myanmar, the poverty rate declined from 32 per cent in 2005 to 26 per cent in 2010, and many social indicators saw upward



UNDP Resident Representative Ms Renata Dessallien discusses the new HDI report with reporters.

PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

trends, she added.

The report said the country’s life expectancy at birth increased by 10.9 years and the expected years of schooling increased by 2.6 years over a period of three decades.

“The employment to population ratio also increased from 54 per cent in 2005 to 57 per cent in 2010, but it is much lower for females and in rural areas,” she said.

According to the joint government-UNDP survey in 2010,

the share of women in the non-agricultural sector was higher for the non-poor (46.7 per cent) than for the poor (40.3 per cent) and marginally lower in urban areas (44 per cent) than in rural areas (44.9 per cent).



Farmers work in onion plantation in Monywa. PHOTO: PO CHAN

Field workers thrive on Monywa onion plantations

FIELD workers on cold-season plantations in Monywa Township, Sagaing Divisional Region, are reportedly receiving stable, adequate incomes. The plantations grow various beans, wheat and onions.

This year, onions fetch the highest returns.

“The price of onions is high, so farmers are mostly growing onions. Eighteen field workers in a group can earn

K130,000 from a one-acre plantation. Women plant, and men do the watering. A male field worker can also be hired for K4,000 per day.

Onions take two months to mature. The fields take another four months to harvest, during which time the field workers earn daily wages in the fields,” says farmer U Win Maung of Kyweye Village.

“In northern Monywa,

Kone and Inn onion strains are planted.

The yield of an acre of Kone onions fetches between 5,390 and 9,240 kilos.

The yield of the Inn onion strain is about 12,320 kilos per acre. We planted mostly onions this year as the price in the market is very high. Field workers are in high demand and earning well,” the farmer added.—Po Chan

ASEAN air safety regulator may still be decades away

BANGKOK/JAKARTA — It could take Southeast Asia, one of the fastest growing air travel markets, two decades to set up a regulatory body to oversee safety in an industry blighted by disasters in recent years, say national regulators and airline executives.

The need for tougher regulations gained urgency following this month's report by Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC) into the crash of an Indonesia AirAsia A320 passenger jet last year that killed

all 162 on board. Investigators found no single cause for the crash, but listed a combination of factors including a glitch-prone rudder component and pilots' response when things went wrong.

The 200-page report has been hailed as a potential turning point as pressure grows for stronger regulation to keep pace with rampant growth in aviation in Southeast Asia. AirAsia founder Tony Fernandes has himself led calls for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to forge

a common aviation regulator, saying ASEAN institutions should "step forward, for commonality, and for standardization, and for quality". But the 10-nation group is already struggling to implement an Open Skies initiative, or single aviation market, to liberalise air services by the end of 2015.

That will slip due to differences among the member states, and the difficulty in achieving it illustrates the challenges in taking it a step further and creating common aviation regulatory and safety standards, experts say.

Unlike Europe, ASEAN has no legal or executive body to push through liberalisation or create regional organisations that oversee safety and air traffic control.

This is mainly because member countries are reluctant to give up their sovereign rights, say industry experts.

"Given the (different) speed of development in each country, I don't think it will be done anytime soon and may take at least 20 years to take shape," Chula Sukmanop, director of the Office of Civil Aviation in Thailand, told Reuters.

A lack of consensus among stakeholders is delaying the pro-

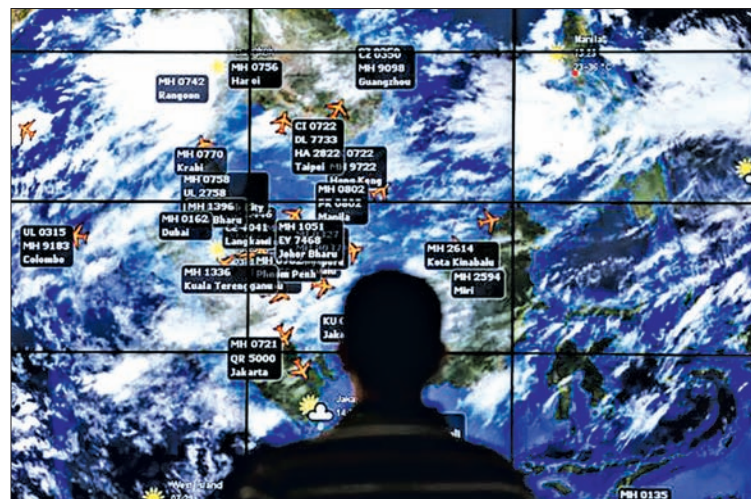
cess, even as more of the region's 600 million population take to the skies, aided by robust growth of low-cost carriers such as AirAsia and Indonesia's privately-held Lion Air. Both airlines have placed record orders with the main plane makers. "Malaysia is open and ready, but some other countries are not ready," a senior Malaysian official involved in the ASEAN talks told Reuters, declining to be more specific.

Airline executives, too, are divided on how to regulate the industry. In contrast with Fernandes' call for a cross-border regulator, Arif Wibowo, chief of the Indonesian National Carriers Association and CEO of flag carrier Garuda, believes aircraft safety should be left to national regulators.

"Each inspector should intensify aircraft maintenance and ensure a high level of scrutiny. Sec-

ond, regulators in each country should be able to check all airlines in an integrated way. There's no need to raise it to the ASEAN level," he told Reuters. Air safety standards have improved in much of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. In 2007, safety standards were so bad that the European Union barred all Indonesian airlines from flying to its member states. That ban was lifted in August 2009 for all the country's airlines except Lion Air.

But Indonesia's airline safety record was highlighted again last year with the AirAsia A320 crash. "In Indonesia, the regulators don't seem to understand the bigger picture," said Gerry Soedjatman, a Jakarta-based aviation analyst. "A lot of the policies that came out this year after the crash have been knee-jerk reactions." —Reuters



A man watches a large screen showing different flights at the departure hall of Kuala Lumpur International Airport in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

"Each inspector should intensify aircraft maintenance and ensure a high level of scrutiny."

Arif Wibowo

Chief of the Indonesian National Carriers Association and CEO of flag carrier Garuda

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Rare tornado rips through Sydney, damaging beachside suburbs

SYDNEY — A rare tornado hit Sydney yesterday with destructive winds above 200 km an hour (125 mph) and cricket ball-sized hail, bringing down trees and power lines, sheering off roofs and walls and causing flash flooding in Australia's largest city.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) issued the rare tornado warning around midday as the dangerous storm swept up the coast from Sydney's south, forcing some international and domestic flights to be diverted to other cities.

A Reuters witness described widespread damage at an industrial park in the hard-hit Kurnell neighbourhood near the southern beachside suburb of Cronulla.

"We really had no warning. The sky just went really black and we had this massive clap of thunder," said Meredith Sullivan, a 48-year-old worker at the industrial park.

"Then the gusts of winds were just horrific, you could hear the roof starting to lift and debris was starting to fly around. All the cars were pretty much destroyed," she said.

Kurnell, which is close to Sydney's airport, was closed to all but emergency services, who

were assessing the damage. Wind gusts as high as 213 kmh (132 mph) were recorded there.

"There is obvious evidence that we have had a tornado go through Cronulla today," BoM meteorologist Alan Sharp told Sydney media.

Social media was swamped by pictures of the huge, dark storm as it engulfed the harbour city, plunging a 25 degree Celsius (77 Fahrenheit) summer's day

into darkness.

A shopping centre in Sydney's eastern suburbs was also evacuated after part of its roof collapsed in the storm, media reports showed, and one woman suffered minor injuries.

Some 6,000 homes were reportedly without power south of the city and rescue services received more than 200 calls for help in the city.

"The tornado risk has now

subsided but there is a very good chance of more thunderstorm activity for the rest of today," said BoM senior meteorologist James Taylor.

Australia is experiencing an El Niño weather pattern, a phenomenon associated with extreme droughts, storms and floods, which is expected to become one of the strongest on record, the UN weather agency said earlier this year. —Reuters



Residents from Sydney's southern suburb of Kurnell assess the damage from a house's roof which had blown down the street following a rare tornado, on 16 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

Tokyo confab ahead of G-7 summit calls for universal health coverage

TOKYO — An international conference hosted by Japan called Wednesday for building a global health system that ensures all people have access to essential medical care ahead of the Group of Seven summit next May, where the country plans to highlight the issue.

The conference at a Tokyo hotel, attended by about 300 people, focused on how to spread “universal health coverage” as Japan is considering announcing measures to help spread basic medical care in developing countries as one of its foreign policy priorities when it hosts the summit of major nations next year.

At the start of the conference, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called on international organisations and communities to “work together toward a common goal of strengthening health systems.”

The achievement of UHC was included in Japan’s guidelines for global health policy set

in September as well as in the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted the same month.

Participants including World Health Organisation Director General Margaret Chan and Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates, also co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation charity, discussed how to raise funds and train personnel to deal with emergencies such as the Ebola virus outbreak.

On Thursday, a preparatory meeting will be held to discuss fundraising from 2017 to 2019 for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which supports developing countries by providing vaccines and drugs for infectious diseases.

Leaders of the G-7 countries — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — are scheduled to gather in Mie Prefecture, central Japan, in late May.

Meanwhile, Abe met with Gates on the sidelines of the



Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shakes hands with Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates in Tokyo on 16 December. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

conference and said Japan is aiming to “put emphasis on health discussions” at the upcoming G-7 summit.

Abe told Gates he is hoping to “further enhance cooperation” with the co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation charity. Gates said he appreciates

that Japan will be putting priority on health issues at the summit while also expressing thanks for the country’s effort toward polio eradication, Japanese officials said.

Abe also met with Chan and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.—*Kyodo News*

Cambodian opposition ends parliament boycott

PHNOM PENH — Cambodian opposition party lawmakers ended a parliamentary boycott yesterday in a bid to ease a feud between their self-exiled leader and the country’s prime minister that threatens to reignite festering political tensions.

The Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) has boycotted parliament since October in response to the beatings of two lawmakers, after a pro-ruling party demonstration, which almost shattered a fragile truce between the rival political forces.

The rally led to the removal of CNRP vice president Kem Sokha as deputy house president in a vote that the CNRP boycotted, arguing it was unconstitutional.

“We go back to parliament as part of the culture of dialogue and to strengthen the legislature,” CNRP lawmaker Nhem Ponhearith told Reuters.

The “culture of dialogue” refers to a deal the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) struck with CNRP last year to end a year-long house boycott over a disputed 2013 election.

They agreed at the weekend to return to the assembly to jointly review draft laws, in particular, trade union legislation key to governing a crucial but turbulent textiles manufacturing sector.

“CNRP met with representatives of the unions and we need to take their opinions up for discussion in parliament,” CNRP lawmaker Mu Sochua told Reuters.

CNRP leader Sam Rainsy has been in self-imposed exile since an arrest warrant was issued for him on 12 November over an old defamation case for which he had already been pardoned.

Critics have accused Prime Minister Hun Sen of orchestrating the revival of that case.

Sam Rainsy is also charged with forgery and incitement over a Facebook posting alleging Hun Sen’s government had ceded border land to Vietnam. The charges carry a 12-year prison sentence.

Television personality Soy Sopheap, who has acted as a peacemaker between the two leaders, said returning to parliament was the right move.—*Reuters*

Conservative South Korea backs unwed couples, single parents to lift birth rate



People cross a zebra crossing in a business district in central Seoul, South Korea, on 15 December.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SEOUL — South Korea wants to root out age-old prejudices against single parents and unmarried couples who live together, encouraging more people to have children in the battle against its stubbornly low birth rate and rapidly aging population.

The social pressure has proved a drag on a birth rate that ranks the lowest among rich nations, and coupled with a slug-

gish economy, has helped make first-time South Korean mothers the world’s oldest.

As policy-makers scramble to avoid the complications a dwindling population has brought to neighbouring Japan, South Korea’s finance ministry is taking aim against social and regulatory prejudice in its economic policy plan for next year.

“We plan to change the so-

cial perception on various family forms to boost the birth rate,” the ministry said in a statement released yesterday, although it did not give details.

“We want to expand support for single mothers and also launch campaigns that will change people’s perceptions of couples living together,” said a finance ministry official, who declined to be named as he was not

authorised to speak to media.

South Korea’s birth rate of 1.205 children per woman is the lowest among the rich nations of the OECD grouping, where it is also aging the fastest. Its working age population will start shrinking in 2017.

Young people are compelled to delay marriage and having children by a sluggish economy that has pushed up youth unemployment. A shortage of day care and the high cost of raising and educating children are other deterrents.

The average age of first-time South Korean mothers is the world’s highest, at 30.7 years, says Statistics Korea.

It will be tough to alter attitudes in a country where young couples living together before marriage is almost unheard of, and where just 1.9 percent of children are born out of wedlock.

That compares with Sweden, where unwed mothers accounted for 54.4 percent of births in 2013, and the birth rate is 1.89 percent.

Job-seekers in South Korea are often asked their family status, which can penalise single parents, and children of single parents are often stigmatised, even into adulthood. Single parents living alone with children pay higher taxes than married couples with children and a similar income.—*Reuters*

OPINION

When does a true politician's campaign period start?

Myint Win Thein

FOR politicians, elections are held every four or five years, according to the local law, and their election campaign periods start and end on the dates announced by the bodies that are responsible for holding elections in their countries. Therefore, it is

common to see politicians who try to vie for votes just before the election or during their campaign periods. Few such politicians succeed.

In fact, people cast their votes bearing in mind everything they encounter in their daily lives. In the mind of the voter, elections are not organised by election commissions; they are happening all the time.

As a result, it is often too late for some politicians to vie for votes just during the campaign period. A true politician should consider every day of his or her entire life as part of the campaign period. They should avoid mistakes throughout their working lives.

Often, candidates' careers are ruined by revelations about things they did in their early lives. Though they happened in the distant past,

they matter politicians throughout their lives.

An election commissions may announce the start of a campaign period, but this is always too late for true politicians. Their campaign periods began when they were born.

Write for us

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

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

Apocalypse is Just Around the Corner

Khin Maung Myint

WHEN we were young children, we were scared that the world would come to an end when seven suns appeared in the skies, because people commit sins. Those were the bedtime stories or fables intended to scare the young children not to commit petty sins, such as telling lies, stealing or killing small insects. We had believed and were worried that would really happen. I remember this many times. I used to look up early in the mornings to see how many suns there were in the skies and was relieved when I saw only one. As we grew up those worries disappeared, as we came to realize they were just threats to make us behave.

However, though there are not seven, but only one sun, our world is getting warmer and is gradually heading towards destruction. I am not a doomsday cultist, but just a person who is obsessed with the adverse consequences of the climate change. The scientists and environmentalists had been trying to advocate the importance of maintaining the temperature rise at less than 2°C above the pre-industrialization average temperature. In my opinion, they are losing the battle as the temperature rise is nearing 3°C by some estimates. The ice glaciers at the polar regions and elsewhere are melting and vanish-

ing at alarming rates. These melted ice would cause drastic rises in the water levels in the oceans and seas, which would inundate low-lying areas. The land masses would decrease, shrinking the habitable spaces for human and animals alike. These conditions would drive the people out of their homes and eventually out of their countries and force them to migrate en masse to other places.

Even now, the consequences of the climate change had caused massive migrations almost everywhere in the world. Because of the severe climate changes, the El Nino and the La Nina conditions are becoming stronger and affecting the agricultural and the fishery industries very badly. They have grave impacts on the economy, especially the macroeconomic sectors. The epidemic diseases, such as malaria and dengue haemorrhagic fevers are on the rise. They are also giving rise to social issues and unrests. The most significant is the mass migrations due to starvations, lack of habitable space and arable land for livelihoods in their own countries that are hardest hit by the effects of the climate change. In some places, rivers and streams had disappeared and the lush green pastures where livestock once roamed had turned into deserts, while some places are flooded. Thus the livestock are dwindling due to lack of enough animal feed and the agriculture is

on the decline because of the lack of arable land and the extreme temperature. These situations lead to starvations, causing people to migrate to greener pastures.

According to the experts, if the temperature rise could not be maintained below the 2°C limit and if it should reach above 3°C, the situations would spiral out of control. Should the temperature rise continue and reach 4°C, there wouldn't be any ice at the poles or anywhere else and the rain forests would turn into deserts. The oceans would reach far into the continents. As the land masses shrunk and the arable lands become scarce due to the flooding and the desertification, people would struggle to settle on whatever habitable land left. The summers would be too hot to grow anything. There wouldn't be anything to buy, as there would be nothing to sell. Such situations could lead to unrests and conflicts and eventually into wars everywhere. The worst case scenarios would be the wars, plus the starvations and the epidemic diseases, which could become rampant with looting and plundering that would plunge the world into uncontrollable chaos and turmoil.

The soaring temperatures could also give rise to increased level of Methane (CH₄) gas, produced from the ocean and sea beds. The Methane gas is one of the greenhouse gases and it is 20 times more potent than the Carbon Diox-

ide (CO₂) gas. The Methane explosions, caused by the slightest thunder strike coming into contact with the burst of Methane Hydrate escaping with force from the ocean beds and shooting out high above the water surface could be more devastating than a nuclear bomb. If that should happen, a 5°C rise in temperature would be unavoidable. Underwater volcanic eruptions in the oceans would also occur producing the Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) gases, which would endanger the marine lives. By then most of the life forms would have vanished. A further one degree rise above that would wipeout every life form from the face of the earth. Thus the **apocalypse is just around the corner**, waiting to happen if we couldn't put a stop to the rising temperature and bring it down below the 2°C level.

To avoid such situations, each and everyone of us should contribute to the reduction of the greenhouse gases, which are the main causes of the global warming that led to the climate change. What we should do is: do every imaginable that would reduce Carbon emission and reduce the global warming.

I would like to suggest some ways and means that could reduce Carbon emissions. Growing more trees is the easiest and every able persons can do it. The trees absorb the CO₂ and sequester it to release the Oxygen back into the atmos-

phere. Recycle every recyclable things so that it would reduce production and contribute to the reduction of Carbon emissions. Replace light bulbs with power saving bulbs, such as LEDs, that would cut down Carbon emissions. Eat more vegetables instead of meat, especially beef, as the production of meat involves Carbon emissions. Reduce the use of water as the waste water treatments increase the Carbon emissions. Substitute the fossilized fuels with clean or renewable energy. Reduce the number of motor vehicles that run on fossilized fuels, as much as possible. Avoid the use of firewoods and char coals for cooking purposes. Stop slash and burn agricultural practices.

It is the responsibility of all the people to fight the climate change and the temperature rise, as they are the worst enemies for all living things. We must keep our fingers crossed and hope that a viable solution could emerge from the COP21 convening in Paris. Those who do not abide by the resolution passed by that conference should be held responsible and if necessary this issue should be taken to the United Nations Security Council or a tribunal no less than a war tribunal, as they are no better than the war criminals or may be even worse. These perpetrators are not only endangering the lives of all living things, but they are also destroying our planet.

One nation, united in peace

Hla Maung

LET Myanmar be a Buddhist nation: I do not mean a nation where all people go to Buddhist monasteries and cets and bow before Buddhist monks, but a nation that follows deeply the Buddha's teachings of love and compassion for all beings.

Did not the Buddha teach that all the people that we see and meet, have, at one time or another, been related to us as mother or father, or as son or daughter, or as brother or sister? For we have gone through countless lives throughout Samsara, the endless cycle of life, death and rebirth. Did not the Buddha teach

that we should all treat other people as we would like others to treat us? Did not the Buddha teach that hate is never ended by hate returned, but that hate can be ended only by love? Love has the power to change hate to love, and the power to change misery to joy.

We are a nation of many eth-

nic races, with different cultures and beliefs, but we can be united in love and compassion, for the Buddha's core teaching of love and compassion is shared by all the world's major religions. Let us therefore unite in love and compassion. Let us put aside petty differences and hate and distrust and divisive talk. Let us all treat one another as members of one large family, with kindness and generosity.

Did not the Buddha teach equality? The Buddha treated all people as equals. He treated kings as he treated beggars, with kindness and respect.

He respected the rights of women. Let love and compassion and respect and equality for all be in the very air that we breathe. Let us march forward together towards peace and harmony, prosperity and happiness.

How Can Rapidly Aging East Asia Sustain Its Economic Dynamism?

Axel van Trotsenburg

IN the last three decades, East Asia has reaped the demographic dividend. An abundant and growing labor force powered almost one-third of the region's per capita income growth from the 1960s to the 1990s, making it the world's growth engine.

Now, East Asia is facing the challenges posed by another demographic trend: rapid aging. A new World Bank report finds that East Asia and Pacific is aging faster – and on a larger scale – than any other region in history.

More than 211 million people aged 65 and over live in East Asia and Pacific, accounting for 36 per cent of the global population in that age group. By 2040, East Asia's older population will more than double, to 479 million, and the working-age population will shrink by 10 per cent to 15 per cent in countries such as Korea, China, and Thailand.

Across the region, as the working-age population declines and the pace of aging accelerates, policy makers are concerned with the potential impact of aging on economic growth and rising demand for public spending on

health, pension and long-term care systems.

As the region ages rapidly, how do governments, employers and households ensure that hard-working people live healthy and productive lives in old age? How do societies in East Asia and Pacific promote productive aging and become more inclusive?

While it is tempting to resort to quick fixes for aging-related challenges, we believe the best way forward is a womb-to-tomb approach that addresses the life cycle of the population, from child care, education, labor market policies, health care, and social security, to hospice care.

This effort will require strong leadership to build a social consensus on how to move forward, and make policy choices that are politically challenging. Done right, a comprehensive approach can increase labor force participation, encourage healthy behaviors, boost productivity, reform social security, and ensure that public services are effective and affordable.

The good news is that East Asia starts in a strong position. East Asians already work longer than their counterparts in other regions. They have high savings

rates across all ages, rapidly rising education achievements, and social security systems with fewer costly legacy entitlements.

Several policy reforms are key to managing aging-related risks. In the labor market, for example, countries can raise female labor force participation by making child care available and providing subsidies to make it affordable.

Pension systems face the dual challenge of improving sustainability while expanding coverage. This will require challenging reforms, such as gradual increases in retirement ages in several countries, as well as policy and financing innovations to expand coverage to workers in large informal sectors.

In the health sector, with rapid aging and an increased incidence of non-communicable diseases, there is a need to shift health systems from a hospital-centric model to one more focused on primary care. To manage the costs of aging and chronic illnesses, efficiency improvements will also be needed in how health providers are paid, pharmaceuticals are procured, and health technology is managed. As with pension reforms,

the commitment to universal health coverage would require more contribution from the general budget.

Meanwhile, aging is also creating a rapidly growing demand and market for long-term care. As traditional family networks become increasingly stretched, innovation is urgently needed to build community and home-based care models that can balance needs, delivery capacity and cost.

Given that the share of older people in the population varies across countries, policy makers need to pursue different strategies to make the process manageable and affordable. The wealthiest countries, including Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, can tackle the decline in the size of the labor force by increasing female labor force participation, continuing to extend productive working lives through flexible work arrangements, and increasing the immigration of young workers.

Rapidly developing middle-income countries, such as China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, are also aging quickly. We believe it's important for these countries to sustain high productivity growth, and to do so,

they need to undertake structural reforms of pensions, social security, health and long-term care, and labor market policies.

The third group, including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste, are still young, with an average of only 4 per cent of the population over 65. We recommend that these countries take steps to raise productivity and maximize youth employment to boost economic development. They can also learn from the experience of richer countries and ensure that they adopt sustainable pension and health policies, so they are in a better position to address rapid aging in coming decades.

As with any other development issue requiring long-term planning, policy makers must anticipate future possibilities and develop strategies to protect future generations. We are optimistic that the East Asia and Pacific region can manage rapid aging while sustaining its economic dynamism.

Axel van Trotsenburg is the World Bank Vice President for East Asia Pacific

MIC approves 5 new firms, expects 1,600 new jobs

Ye Myint

THE Myanmar Investment Commission has given the green light to five local and foreign firms to begin operations in Myanmar, expecting approximately 1,642 new jobs to be created by the businesses approved in the second week of December.

The commission is encouraging newly-approved domestic and overseas enterprises to spur job growth in the country.

The firms approved this month will be involved in agricultural and marine food production and in the processing, manufacturing and marketing of fertiliser and industrial displays, said the commission.

Myanmar Agri Food Co. Ltd, one of the five companies, focuses on frozen food processing, production and marketing. The company was granted permission to set up a plant on a plot in Pynmana Township, Nay Pyi Taw, as a joint-venture investment.

In a sign of further investment in the country's livestock and fisheries sector, Texchem Marine Labutta Ltd has also been granted permission to operate as a joint venture. It will be engaged in the processing and marketing of marine products such as soft-shell crabs, prawns and clams with the establishment of its facility in Labutta Township, Ayeyawady Divisional Region.

Other newly-permitted firms include Capital Development Ltd, Kenstar Display Co. Ltd and Myanmar Awba Group Co. Ltd.

The companies will build facilities to manufacture and distribute industrial displays and fertiliser in Bago and Mandalay regions. The industrial display manufacturers and fertiliser producers will be running their businesses either as wholly foreign-owned or locally-owned companies.

Twelve local and foreign businesses were approved by the MIC in November, the same month as Myanmar's general election. The MIC expects the newly permitted firms to create 6,175 new jobs.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Before I begin, let me offer my heartfelt congratulations to U Khin Maung for his very revealing, truthful and comprehensive requirements in the qualities of all judges and Magistrates of an Independent Justice System which has the power to give even life and death sentences. May I also emphasize his Maxims and Principles which deserve to be translated into our own Language for better understanding and unwavering guidance at all times, not only for judges and Magistrates but also for our two remaining Organs of State Power.

In this connection, I contributed an article in my Letter to the Editor. However, unfortunately, without a caption, although you were kind enough to publish it in your newspaper around the 25th March 2015. It was regarding the Supreme Court's reply to a query in Pyithu Hluttaw saying "... and that Judges imposing unlawful decisions are punished regarding the severity of the wrongful verdicts..." since this kind of response had been unprecedented so far, I offered my congratulations to the Supreme Court for such meritorious action which would support our Government's reforms towards our new, secure way of life in future democratic society.

Next, I suggested to the Supreme Court to go deeper in its investigations and expose those who are also guilty of being part and parcel of any wrongful verdicts. Unscrupulous legal advisors who do not abide by their Sworn Oaths of Office, corrupt witnesses, influential individuals and organisations, etc, must all be exposed and punished to stop others from doing the same. However, for this difficult step to be successful, the Supreme Court must have the cooperation and coordination of other individuals and organisations which must also do their duty towards our country with full understanding: I also mentioned that most Judges appear to be very slow, or perhaps neglect on purpose, to visit the places of dispute or crime which will help them to visualize the real on-the-spot situation when witnesses are examined, or even think of Summary Disposals, thereby reducing the load of cases in courts. There are also many other failings. In fact "delays for one reason or the other" seem to be the order of the day.

To conclude, our present Justice System, needless to say, is not favourably accepted at home or abroad, requiring effective reforms if we are really striving for a Democratic System in which no individual or organisations are regarded as "UNTOUCHABLES",

With my complete trust in the forthcoming New Government.

Thanking you,

Sincerely,
(A Patriot)



A small container yard by the Hlaing River in Hlaingthaya Township, which houses a number of industrial zones that are generating employment opportunities. PHOTO: YE MYINT

Iran's October missile test violated UN ban

UNITED NATIONS — Iran violated a UN Security Council resolution in October by test-firing a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, a team of sanctions monitors said, leading to calls in the US Congress on Tuesday for more sanctions on Tehran.

The White House said it would not rule out additional steps against Iran over the test of the medium-range Emad rocket.

The Security Council's Panel of Experts on Iran said in a confidential report, first reported by Reuters, that the launch showed the rocket met its requirements for considering that a missile could deliver a nuclear weapon.

"On the basis of its analysis and findings the Panel concludes that Emad launch is a violation by Iran of paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 1929," the panel said.

Diplomats said the rocket test on 10 October was not technically a violation of the July nuclear deal between Iran and six world pow-

ers, but the UN report could put US President Barack Obama's administration in an awkward position.

Iran has said any new sanctions would jeopardise the nuclear deal. But if Washington failed to call for sanctions over the Emad launch, it would likely be perceived as weakness.

Diplomats said it was possible for the UN sanctions committee to blacklist additional Iranian individuals or entities, something Washington and European countries are likely to ask for. But they said Russia and China, which dislike the sanctions on Iran's missile programme, might block any such moves.

The panel's report was dated last Friday and went to members of the Security Council's Iran sanctions committee in recent days. The report came up on Tuesday when the 15-nation council discussed the Iran sanctions regime.

It said the panel considered ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons to be those

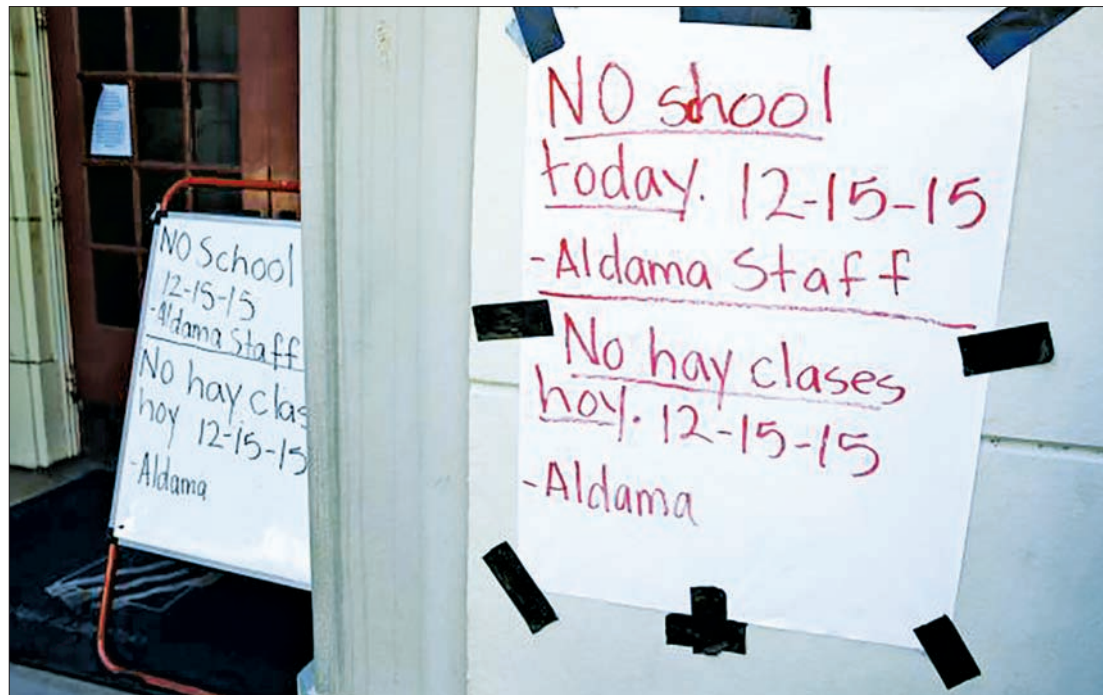
that can deliver at least a 500-kg (1,102-pound) payload within a range of at least 300 km (185 miles).

"The Panel assesses that the launch of the Emad has a range of not less than 1,000 km with a payload of at least 1,000 kg and that Emad was also a launch 'using ballistic missile technology,'" the report said.

Iran's UN mission did not respond to a request for comment. In October, Tehran disputed the Western assessment that the missile was capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

The panel noted that Iranian rocket launches from 2012 and 2013 also violated the UN ban on ballistic missile tests. The chair of the Iran sanctions committee, Spanish Ambassador Roman Oyarzun, told the council the Panel of Experts had concluded the attempt by Iran to procure titanium alloy bars earlier this year also violated UN nuclear sanctions.—Reuters

Gun and bomb attack threat closes Los Angeles schools in likely hoax



A sign announcing no school is pictured at Aldama Elementary School in the Highland Park neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California on 15 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles shut more than 1,000 public schools on Tuesday over a threatened attack with bombs and assault rifles, sending hundreds of thousands of students home as city leaders were criticized for overreacting to what authorities later said was apparently a hoax.

The emailed threat, which authorities said was routed through Germany but likely originated locally, was made nearly two weeks after a married couple inspired by Islamic State killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at a county office building 60 miles (100 km) away in San Bernardino.

"Based on past circumstance, I could not take the chance," Los Angeles School Superintendent Ramon Cortines told a news conference early in the day.

But federal officials, who asked not to be identified, echoed an assessment by New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton that the decision in Los Angeles was an "overreaction." New York had received an almost identical threat that was quickly deemed not credible.

After more than 1,500 school district sites had been inspected by nightfall, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti conceded that the

message appeared to have been a hoax.

"We can now announce the FBI has determined that this is not a credible threat," Garcetti said, adding that the incident required further investigation but "what we do know is, it will be safe for our children return to school tomorrow. Despite that determination, Garcetti and Police Chief Charlie Beck stood by the decision to close the schools.

They said New York officials had more time to assess the threat, which was sent to both districts from the same IP address.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia says Syrian opposition fighters supply it with air strike targets

MOSCOW — Over 5,000 Syrian opposition rebels are fighting against Islamic State alongside government forces and are supplying Russia's air force with targets for air strikes, Russian news agencies quoted Russia's General Staff as saying

on Tuesday.

More than 150 Syrian opposition groups are helping support the land operation conducted by the Syrian government army, the RIA news agency said, quoting a senior member of the Russian General Staff.—Reuters

South Africa puts aside \$154m for university fee freeze

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa will set aside 2.3 billion rand (\$154.32 million) to fund a shortfall resulting from its decision to freeze tuition fees at universities next year, the Presidency said on Tuesday.

The government said the money would go towards addressing a 4.6 billion rand short-

fall in a national student funding scheme.

In October hundreds of students across the country protested against the fee increases. A march to President Jacob Zuma's offices descended into violence, before Zuma capitulated to demands to freeze hikes in tuition fees.—Reuters

France arrests three over Islamist attacks on Paris

PARIS — French police arrested two men and a woman on Tuesday in connection with deadly Islamist militant attacks on Paris last month and in January, judiciary officials said.

In a separate event that highlighted the knock-on impact of tensions over Islamist violence, a teacher who claimed to have been stabbed by a man on Monday acting in the name of Islamic State militants was hospitalized after admitting to police that he had invented the story, prosecutors said.

Islamic State, which claimed responsibility for the 13 November attacks, has stated that teachers in France's secular state-schooling system should be killed for promoting what it called the evils of secular life, music and drawing.

France remains on top security alert since at least eight gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people at cafes, a concert hall and near a sports stadium in Paris on 13 November — the deadliest attack on French soil since World War II.—Reuters

Afghan forces seize 2 tonnes of explosives in Kabul

KABUL — Afghan security forces have seized and destroyed two tonnes of ammonium nitrate, an ingredient of improvised explosives, foiling dozens of potential bomb attacks, the intelligence agency said yesterday.

The discovery in the Budkhak area in the east of Kabul on Monday evening came two days after Taliban insurgents attacked a guest house attached to the Spanish embassy in a heavily protected neighbourhood in the Afghan capi-

tal. "The material is used for car and suicide bombings and this discovery will prevent dozens of bomb attacks," said an intelligence agency official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the press.

The National Directorate of Security, the country's main intelligence agency, said the material was hidden in 20 bags sent by the Haqqani network from neighbouring Pakistan.—Reuters

Protest at Sri Lanka's airport cause international flights to be delayed

COLOMBO — A strike staged by customs officials at the country's main international airport resulted in several international flights being delayed from Colombo yesterday, local media reports said here.

Sri Lanka's national airline carrier, Sri Lankan Airlines, said that its flights to London, Beijing, Singapore and Lahore were

delayed due to the strike which had been staged due to bags belonging to customs officials being checked upon their arrival at the Bandaranaike International Airport.

The strike however was called off by Wednesday afternoon and Sri Lankan said flights will operate as scheduled.—Xinhua

Yemen's Houthis, government trade accusation of truce violation

CAIRO — Yemen's dominant Houthi group and President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government have accused each other of violating a ceasefire aimed at facilitating UN-sponsored peace talks, although the truce appeared to be largely holding yesterday.

The seven-day truce began at mid-day on Tuesday as representatives of Hadi's government and the Iran-allied Houthis began talks in Switzerland to try to end nine months of fighting that has killed nearly 6,000 people and dragged in foreign powers.

Brigadier General Sharaf Luqman, a spokesman for Yemeni forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is allied with the Houthis, said a "serious escalation by land, sea and air is taking place by the alliance in various areas", according to the Houthi-controlled Saba news agency.

Luqman said strikes

from the sea were taking place on the Red Sea port city of Hodaida, while ground forces continued to carry out attacks on Taiz city, in southwestern Yemen, while air strikes by the Arab coalition had not stopped.

"We will not stay hand-tied but we will respond strongly towards the breaches that are taking place by the alliance and their mercenaries," Luqman said.

The Hadi-run sabanew.net news agency said five fighters from a force known as the Popular Resistance and three civilians died as a result of Houthi shelling in Taiz in the six hours after the ceasefire began.

The agency quoted a medical source as saying 17 people were wounded.

The Saudi-led coalition spokesman, Brigadier General Ahmed al-Assiri, said the alliance was committed to the ceasefire but was ready to respond to



Houthi militants ride on the back of a patrol truck at the site of a gathering held by tribesmen loyal to the Houthi movement, in Yemen's capital Sanaa on 14 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

any violation by the Houthi, according to the Saudi al-Riyadh daily.

Speaking in Egypt,

where he was accompanying Saudi deputy Crown Prince and Defence Minister Mohammed bin Salman

on an official visit, Assiri said the strategic objective of the coalition's military operations was to restore

security and stability to Yemen by restoring the legitimate government to power. —Reuters

Russia, US clear way for Syria meeting after Kerry Moscow talks

MOSCOW — Russia and the United States see enough common ground on Syria for world powers to meet on the troubled country's peace process in New York on Friday, but views on the future of President Bashar-al Assad still diverge.

Secretary of State John Kerry went into meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday not knowing whether Moscow would veto a third round of international talks on Syria on Friday after the Kremlin spoke of preconditions needing to be met.

But speaking afterwards, he said the talks would definitely take place after the two countries agreed to try to accelerate the peace process and a potential political transition.

"We will meet this Friday, 18 December, in New York with the International Syrian Support Group and then ... we will pass a UN resolution regarding ... the next steps with respect to negotiations and hopefully a ceasefire," said Kerry.

He said the two sides had found some common ground, while agreeing to put their differences to one side for now.

Lavrov confirmed Rus-

sia now backed the meeting.

"Despite our countries' differences, we have demonstrated that when the United States and Russia pull together in the same direction, progress can be made," Lavrov told a news conference.

He called the talks with Kerry "substantive," saying the two countries were now moving in the same direction on Syria.

Russia, one of Assad's staunchest allies, has launched a campaign of air strikes it says are aimed at Islamic State militants but which also support Assad's forces.

It has long disagreed with Washington over Assad's fate, insisting that only the Syrian people, and not external powers, should determine his future. The United States believes Assad must step down as part of any transition.

Kerry said the transition period in Syria — according to the 2012 Geneva agreement — would be about six months.

But in Tuesday's talks, the two sides did not focus on their differences or what could or could not be done immediately about Assad, said Kerry, but on the political process.

Some progress was made when it came to

agreeing which Syrian rebel groups should be regarded as terrorist organisations and which should take part in the peace process, he said.

Before the talks, the Russian Foreign Ministry had issued a statement saying Washington needed to rethink its policy of "dividing terrorists into good and bad ones".

"We reached some common ground today in agreement with respect to the complexity of this issue of terrorist groups," said Kerry.

"We certainly narrowed down our own thinking about the complexity of how one can manage that, we obviously agree that ISIL/Daesh (Islamic State) and al-Nusra are absolutely outside of this process no matter what."

Moscow and Washington have also been at odds over the targets of Russian air strikes in Syria. Kerry said he had told Putin the Kremlin needed to direct its fire on "the real threat" of Islamic State rather than on the moderate opposition.

"I am pleased to say President Putin took that under advisement," said Kerry, who said Putin himself had stressed the need for military coordination to avoid possible problems.—Reuters

US to charge Venezuela's National Guard chief with drug trafficking

WASHINGTON — US prosecutors are preparing to unveil drug trafficking charges against the head of Venezuela's National Guard, according to people familiar with the case, as the United States investigates the suspected involvement of senior Venezuelan officials in the cocaine trade.

Nestor Reverol, the former head of Venezuela's anti-narcotics agency and a long-time ally of late socialist leader Hugo Chavez, is named in a sealed indictment pending in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, according to the people.

Reverol would be one

of the highest-ranking Venezuelan officials to face US drug charges. He could not be reached for comment by Reuters.

In recent years, he has rejected US accusations that Venezuela has failed to curb illicit drug shipments and has touted the government's success in cracking down on the flow of cocaine from neighbouring Colombia.

Also named in the US indictment is Edylberto Molina, a former deputy head of the anti-narcotics agency and currently a military attache posted in Germany, a person familiar with the matter said.

The National Guard,

which is the branch of the armed forces that controls Venezuela's borders, did not respond to an email seeking comment on Reverol and a National Guard press official contacted by telephone declined to comment.

But the National Guard did issue a series of Tweets in Reverol's defence on Tuesday night using the hashtag #NestorReverol-SoldierOfTheFatherland and saying he should be praised for capturing more than 100 drugs bosses.

"We reject the campaign from the fascist right against our Commander General," one said. —Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (17/2015)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-059(15-16)	Spares for HDD Rig Model 11-046 (HK 250 T) (3 Items)	US\$
(2)	IFB-060(15-16)	Spares for ZJ 70L SR - 2 Rig (5) Items	US\$
(3)	IFB-061(15-16)	Spares for Niigata Transmission and Reduction Gear Box Ex TM 3500 Drilling Rig (55) Items	US\$

Tender Closing Date & Time - 11-1-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 16th December, 2015 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph +95 67 - 411097 / 411206

EU adopts tougher rules on tracking jetliners

BRUSSELS — The European Union yesterday adopted new rules to make it easier to track jetliners, stepping up international efforts to prevent a repeat of the disappearance of a Malaysia Airlines jet with 239 people on board.

The move is the first change in core legislation by a major regulator since last year's unresolved disappearance of Flight MH370 and is expected to provide impetus to efforts by the United Nations' aviation agency to set new global standards.

It also incorporates recommendations from French investigators into the crash of an Air France jet in the Atlantic in 2009, whose wreckage took two years to locate.

Under the new rules, airlines will be given three years to install a means of tracking aircraft when flying in normal conditions outside radar coverage, over oceans or remote land.

They must also have a system for more frequent updates in the event of an



Children write messages of hope for passengers of missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) outside Kuala Lumpur. PHOTO: REUTERS

emergency: one that is robust enough to prevent a technical malfunction or someone switching it off, as some investigators suspect happened on the missing Malaysian jet.

"That would make the re-occurrence of scenarios

such as (Air France) AF447 or (Malaysia Airlines) MH370 technically impossible," a European Commission spokesman said.

A global industry task force originally proposed that existing tracking technology should be intro-

duced by 2016, but airlines had lobbied international regulators for a delay, citing the need to ensure systems worked automatically.

The new EU legislation stops short of specifying the interval between updates, an issue with cost implications

that has also divided some regulators and airlines. That will be for Europe's Aviation Safety Agency to decide after consultations.

But it fits with plans by the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation to impose a 15-minute stand-

ard for normal flight tracking by November 2018, while leaving the door open to tighter rules favoured by some European officials in future.

European regulators have said they would ideally like a jetliner to report its position every three minutes, noting that the four-minute gap in signals from the Air France jet in 2009 left an Atlantic search area of 17,000 square kilometres.

Flight recorders or 'black boxes' will also be improved. The maximum length of cockpit voice recordings will be increased to 25 hours from the current two hours, a long-term measure designed to cover the most extreme situations, such as the lengthy uncharted disappearance of Flight MH370.

Recorders must either be 'deployable,' or ejected from an aircraft in distress to prevent them being lost, or easier to find by tripling the pinger battery life to 90 days and lowering the frequency to one easier for military vessels to spot.—Reuters

Greece mounts late push to assure EU before migration summit

ATHENS — In a last-minute drive to assure European Union partners that it is getting to grips with a mass influx of refugees, Greece released aerial photographs on Tuesday of new registration centres for migrants on its northern Aegean islands.

The move is part of Athens' efforts, ahead of an EU summit starting on Thursday, to rebuff criticism by Germany and other EU governments that it has done too little to manage the flow of hundreds of thousands of

people arriving on its shores.

The biggest migration crisis in Europe since World War II has provoked strains and recriminations between EU governments. North European officials complain that for months, Greece did little more than wave new arrivals through the country as quickly as possible, without registering most of them.

"We have been accused of not doing enough, but we have done miracles given the number of refugees arriving on our islands and given that it is winter," a

government official said.

Video footage and pictures gave a bird's eye view of the so-called "hotspot" and temporary shelters on the island of Lesbos. On the island of Chios, a row of prefabricated homes for migrants has been set up outside an abandoned factory.

On the island of Leros, another entry point into Europe from Turkey, dozens more prefabricated homes have been erected outside a former psychiatric hospital.

Greece's five EU-assisted hotspots on Lesbos,

Chios, Leros, Kos and Samos, due to be operational this month, will also provide temporary shelter to 7,500 people. So far, only Lesbos is operational, mainly due to lack of funds and know-how, government officials said. But Athens wants to speed up construction.

Just before heading to Brussels for the summit, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras will visit Chios and Leros to inspect construction work at the centres.

On Thursday, EU leaders are expected to take stock

of the progress made by debt-laden Greece, which is a main gateway into the EU and has received more than 800,000 migrants — mainly Syrians and Afghans — this year. Athens this week launched a subsidised rental scheme, backed by the EU and the UN refugee agency, to provide accommodation to 20,000 asylum seekers and people waiting to be relocated. It aims to boost capacity to more than 30,000 places by next month.

The EU's executive Commission said on Tues-

day, in a progress report, that there was "still work to be done" by Greece. It separately proposed to nearly treble spending on protection of the bloc's external frontiers, to be provided by a new European Border and Coast Guard. Pressure for more stringent controls has increased since Islamic State militants killed 130 people in Paris last month. Two of the attackers are suspected to have travelled across the continent via Turkey and Greece under cover of the refugee flow.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KULSAMUT VOY NO (12/15)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KULSAMUT VOY NO (12/15) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W-1 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S KULNATEE CO LTD.

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV THAI BINH-688 VOY NO (11/2015)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH-688 VOY NO (11/2015) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W-7 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S G-LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV NOBLE BREEZE VOY NO (021)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV NOBLE BREEZE VOY NO (021) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

A year on, Pakistan massacre survivors say waiting for aid, justice

PESHAWAR — Families of children killed or wounded in Pakistan's worst militant attack accuse the local government of breaking its promises of medical treatment and justice, a year after Taliban gunmen massacred 134 students in a Peshawar school.

Victims' relatives say they will attend the official anniversary commemoration on Wednesday, but vowed to pressure the authorities to deliver on their commitments.

The government promised it would help with medical expenses above an initial Rs400,000 (\$3,800) grant, but only 22 of approximately 60 families who applied have received any funds, said Akbar Khan, who represents 124 families of those wounded.

"There are many children who were disfigured, or crippled, who need continuous long-term treatment. And above all, they need psychological rehabilitation," said Khan, whose 17-year-old son Umar was shot in his left arm during the attack.

Muhammad Ibrahim, a provincial health official in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of which Peshawar is the capital, said not all funds had been disbursed because of delays in families submitting receipts for the money they spent.

Khan is among the parents who have also asked the government to facilitate treatment of their children abroad, as it said it would, but have not heard back.

"I have been shot twice in my arm. I have had three or four surgeries, but still need further treatment. And



Shahana Ajoon, mother of Asfand Khan, sits beside a picture of her son in Peshawar, Pakistan on 11 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

we cannot get that treatment in Pakistan," said Syed Ansar Ali Shah, 16, who has a metal plate holding his left hand together.

According to Khan, just two children, Ahmed Nawaz and Ibrahim Afridi, had received government assistance for treatment abroad so far. Ibrahim disputed the figure, saying at least six people had been sent overseas with government funding.

The provincial health department is now demanding that the unspent portion of the Rs400,000 grant people received be returned, some families of the wounded say.

"These parents say that their children are not recovered: they cannot sleep, they cannot move properly, and some of them even have bullets still lodged in them," said Akbar Khan.

Health official Ibrahim confirmed that some families had been asked to return funds they had not used.

Azhar Mehmood, 15, was shot four times and has difficulty walking. He still

"I was shot in both my hands, and I wasn't able to write (the exam). I was in hospital at that time."

Obaid Sajid

The ninth grade student

attends the Army Public School where the massacre occurred, but says months of surgery have adversely affected his education.

Mehmood was among several students who complained that the government broke a promise to delay board exams for those children wounded in the attack. As a result, they say, they have lost a year of study.

"I was shot in both my hands, and I wasn't able to write (the exam). I was in hospital at that time. When the exams started, my hands were both in plaster," said Obaid Sajid, 16, who has to repeat the ninth grade.

For the families of

the 134 pupils and 16 staff members who were killed, the primary concern is that justice is done.

On 2 December, Pakistan hanged four men tried in secret military courts for their involvement in the massacre. All four were said to have confessed to facilitating the attack, the military said in a statement.

Shahana Ajoon, whose 15-year-old son was killed, said she had no faith in the investigation, because it took place behind closed doors and no evidence was made public.

"We do not know who those people were. We should have been taken into confidence. We should have been shown why these were the people who were the culprits," said burqa-clad Ajoon, who sobbed while speaking of her son.

Ajoon and her husband run an organisation that provides support to parents of the 134 slain students. Many members said they were still traumatised by events a year ago.—Reuters

Japan-US nuclear disaster drill held at Yokosuka base

YOKOSUKA — Japan and the United States held a joint nuclear disaster drill yesterday at the US Navy's Yokosuka base in Kanagawa Prefecture near Tokyo.

The drill was conducted under an assumption that approximately 300 liters of coolant water containing a small amount of radioactive substance leaked from the nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan.

About 160 officials from 11 organisations including the US Navy, the US Embassy in Japan, Japan's Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry and the secretariat of the Nuclear Regulation Authority took part in the drill, which was the ninth of its kind since 2007.

It was the first drill of its kind using the Ronald Reagan, which arrived at Yokosuka in October, replacing the George Washington.

"It was important to see if we would be able to coordinate after the vessel was replaced," Yokosuka Mayor Yuto Yoshida said.

Following a joint agreement between the US Navy and the municipal government, the participants confirmed procedures on bilateral information sharing. They also checked the level of contamination in the exercise. Because the drill was aimed at facilitating information transfers among relevant organisations, citizens did not participate in the exercise.—Kyodo News



Japan Coast Guard officers take part in a drill at a US naval base in Yokosuka, southwest of Tokyo, on 16 December, 2015, simulating the discharge of cooling water containing a tiny amount of radioactive substances from the nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 25th DECEMBER 2015 (Christmas Day), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV HERBILAN SUCCESS VOY NO (HS 007)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HERBILAN SUCCESS VOY NO (HS 007) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MOROTAI VOY NO (278YFR)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MOROTAI VOY NO (278YFR) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

'The Force Awakens' premiere honours 'Star Wars' creator

LOS ANGELES — With Stormtroopers and lightsabers, Disney's much-anticipated "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" made its debut with a star-studded premiere on Monday, and the attention was all on one man at the centre of it all - creator George Lucas.

The man who created the entire "Star Wars" world received a standing ovation from the audience at a Hollywood movie theater as he sat next to his longtime collaborator Steven Spielberg.

"None of us would be here tonight without the miraculous creation of one man. George Lucas, from the bottom of my heart, on behalf of everyone involved in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens,' thank you sir," said J.J. Abrams, the film's director.

Out in theaters on Friday, "The Force Awakens" follows tenacious scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley) as her fate becomes intertwined with that of rebel Stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) and a ball-like droid named BB-8.

Set 30 years after "Return of the Jedi", which came out in 1983, the film also sees the return of franchise veterans Han Solo



Star Wars creator George Lucas and director JJ Abrams pose at the premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in Hollywood, California on 14 December.

PHOTO: REUTERS

(Harrison Ford), General Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher), and Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill).

Skywalker's glaring absence from the film's marketing is intentional to avoid giving away a crucial plot twist.

Lucas sold "Star Wars" to Disney in 2012 for \$4.05 billion dollars, and "The Force Awakens"

is the first of a new trilogy and new standalone films from the studio.

Abrams, a self-described "Star Wars" fanboy, told Reuters he was feeling the pressure of releasing the film into the world.

"There are certainly nerves showing the movie to 1,000-plus people tonight but I feel very confident in the work that was done by the actors. So, if nothing else, I know people will enjoy watching their performances," he said.

Hamill said the new film can't live up to the expectations of the devoted "Star Wars" fan base.

"It's only a movie and if you think you're going to go into the movie and recapture your childhood you're setting yourself up for disappointment," he said.

Reviews of the new film are embargoed until Wednesday but at the premiere screening, the audience were in high spirits, often cheering when familiar faces popped up on screen.

Early reactions on Twitter were positive, with Los Angeles Times reporter Glenn Whipp saying "Quite simply: This is the STAR WARS movie you're looking for."—Reuters

Asian animal welfare charity criticises Angelina Jolie?

LONDON

Actress-filmmaker Angelina Jolie has reportedly been blasted by an animal welfare charity after her kids had a elephant ride in South East Asia.

The 40-year-old Oscar-winning actress is an outspoken critic of ivory poaching in Africa is due to helm a film about an elephant protector.

Five of her six children went elephant riding near the Cambodian city of Angkor Wat during a break in filming on her latest movie, reported Female First. Elephant Asia Rescue and Survival Foundations apparently said, "Seriously Angelina Jolie? Are you that uneducated about the brutal methods of taming and exploitation of elephants in tourism in Asia?"

According to insiders, Jolie was recovering from a stomach bug while minders took the children — Maddox, 14, Pax, 12, Zaharah, ten, Shiloh, nine, and Knox, seven — on the ride.

"She was furious when she found out because she hates animal cruelty," a source said.

Jolie and husband Brad Pitt are currently in Asia filming "First They Took My Father", which centres on the brutal Khmer Rouge regime.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Scarlett Johansson in talks for 'Move That Body'

LOS ANGELES — Actress Scarlett Johansson is in talks to star in Sony's R-rated comedy "Move That Body".

The comedy comes from "Broad City" writers Lucia Aniello and Paul W Downs, said The Hollywood Reporter.

Downs also co-stars in the film and Aniello is in the director's chair.

The movie centres around five friends who rent a Miami beach house for a bachelorette weekend and accidentally kill a male stripper.

The co-writers, who are executive producers of the Comedy Central show, will produce the film through their Paulilu banner with Matt Tolmach and Dave Becky.

Tolmach has produced a long history of R-rated comedies, including "Zombieland", "Step Brothers" and "Superbad".—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Recording songs by the Beatles at Abbey Road gave Milos 'tingles'

LONDON — Montenegrin classical guitarist Milos Karadaglic says he felt "tingles" when he recorded tunes from the Beatles songbook at the Abbey Road Studios where they laid down the tracks 50 years ago.

"When you are here, you are surrounded by the energy of those people because they reinvented pop, they reinvented music — without the Beatles, the musical world would be a very different place," said Milos, 32, who goes by his first name. "When I was in that studio where most of that music came alive, recording my own versions, I always got tingles, I always got little special things come to me."

The guitarist, whose albums of music from the classical repertoire have won rave reviews and prizes, spoke to Reuters at a launch event for "Blackbird", to be released on Mercury Classics in January.

As the title suggests, it is a compendium of Beatles songs, arranged for the classical guitar, but with Milos getting a little help from his friends.

One of the most arresting tracks features Milos playing a cover of the trippy "Lucy in the Sky Diamonds" with sitar player Anoushka Shankar, the daughter of Ravi Shankar. He partners with cellist Steven Isserlis on "Michelle," but because words are as important

as tunes in Beatles songs, jazz vocalist Gregory Porter joins him on "Let It Be" and singer-songwriter Tori Amos does the honours on "She's Leaving Home".

Milos said he saw the Beatles tunes as being every bit as "classic" as what he usually plays. And he said everything about the album, from the partner musicians to recording at Abbey Road, to the use of the Beatles' microphones, was by design. "When I was making this album I thought, 'Okay, I'm not going to just do an album of classical guitar playing Beatles, I'm going to do something really bloody good'," he said.

The album's release will be part of a comeback launch for Milos's concert career, since he has had to take a break due to a thumb injury. "It's the same like when a footballer kicks too many balls — I plucked too many bass strings with my thumb, I strained the mechanism of my thumb," he said, adding that he had sought treatment from a sports physiotherapist.

He said he found out that other guitarists had similar injuries, but were reluctant to speak publicly, for fear of damaging their careers.—Reuters



Montenegrin classical guitarist Milos. PHOTO: REUTERS

Artist U San Hlaing (Pyapon)

Independence Mawgun Award Winner (Second Class)

Patron of Myanmar Traditional Artists & Artisans Organisation (Central)

Patron of Transparent Watercolour Movement Association (Myanmar)

Age (93) yrs

Son of late U Khant and late Daw Tint and beloved husband of late Daw Tin Aung residing at Pyapon, beloved father of late U Myint Than, Author & Poet Myay Chit Thu and Daw Aye Aye Thauing, Daw Tin Tin Win, U Win Myint and Daw Myint Myint Aye, late U Nay Aung, late U Aye Aung, late U Maung Maung Win, late U Maung Maung Naing, U Ko Ko Lwin and Daw Thet Thet, grandfather of U Myo Thaw, U Kyaw Zay Ya, Daw Su Aye Mon, Daw Tharaphi Ko, Daw Thiri Ko, U Ye Nanda, Daw Thinzar Ko, Artist U San Hlaing passed away at Bahosi Special Hospital at 7pm on Tuesday, 15 December 2015. Funeral service will take place at Yayway cemetery at 1pm on Saturday, 19 December. Buses will leave home at 11am to Yayway cemetery.

The memorial service will be held at No 55, Bogalayzay Street (Lower Block), Botahtaung Township on Monday, 21 December.

Bereaved Family

Margaret Thatcher's power suits, handbags go on sale



An employee arranges a burgundy wool tweed suit, part of the collection of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher during an auction preview at Christie's in London, Britain, on 11 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sirius XM signs new five-year deal with Howard Stern

NEW YORK — Satellite radio company Sirius XM Holdings Inc and “shock jock” Howard Stern have renewed their five-year deal for his popular “Howard Stern Show,” ending the uncertainty around the fate of the decade-long association.

The news comes after years of Sirius, majority owned by billionaire John Malone, and Stern locking horns over compensation, with the celebrity radio jockey even suing the company.

Sirius did not disclose

the financial terms of the deal, under which Stern will continue to produce and host the show.

Sirius has also signed a 12-year deal with Stern's production company to enter video programming. Sirius will get access to Stern's audio and video library spanning his over 30-year broadcasting career.

Stern was also a judge on NBC's television reality show “America's Got Talent” from 2012 to 2015.

The deal is expected to help Sirius attract new

subscribers and retain existing ones, the company's spokesman Patrick Reilly said.

The deal could be a step up from \$500 million, Macquarie Research analyst Amy Yong said, referring to the amount Sirius had agreed to pay Stern when he began airing the show on its satellite radio in 2006 after decades of being on traditional radio.

Stern renewed his contract for another five years in 2010 for a reported \$400 million, but sued Sirius for \$330 million within months, alleging that the company had refused to pay him promised stock awards.

However, a New York state appeals court threw out Stern's lawsuit in 2012, declining to revive it in 2013, saying that his original deal with Sirius was “unambiguous.”

New York-based Sirius had about 29 million subscribers at the end of September.—Reuters



Radio personality Howard Stern. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Handbags, clothes and jewelry owned by the late British prime minister Margaret Thatcher are to go on sale on Tuesday, with some items expected to fetch up to 180,000 pounds (\$273,000).

Up to 350 “historic and personal lots” related to Thatcher are on offer, and include Britain's only woman prime minister's wedding dress, her red prime ministerial dispatch bag and a figure of an eagle given to her by former US president Ronald Reagan.

Also in the auction is the blue woolen suit she wore when she delivered the famous “no, no, no” speech in parliament against greater central control in Europe 25 years ago.

One part of the sale,

with 150 of the items, will be held at auctioneer Christie's London showroom, with estimates ranging from 200 to 180,000 pounds. A separate online sale with another 200 items, which began on 3 December will run until Wednesday. Known as the “Iron Lady”, Thatcher was Britain's longest-serving prime minister of the 20th century.

She favoured well-cut suits in strong colours, smart handbags and silk scarves, which became synonymous with term “power dressing.”

Her handbags were an essential part of the ensemble and even entered the political vocabulary of the time as figurative accessories to her uncompromising approach, especially where European

leaders were concerned. The term “handbagging” was coined by fellow Conservative Member of Parliament Julian Critchley to describe her style in cabinet meetings, the Oxford English Dictionary says, defining it as an action by a woman to “verbally attack or crush (a person or idea) ruthlessly and forcefully”. Thatcher's jewelry will also be up for auction, including an emerald and diamond necklace and a diamond flower brooch which she often wore on official outings. The auction was announced after London's Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), Britain's main repository of historic clothes, said that talks about adding items from her wardrobe to its collection had led nowhere.—Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(17-12-2015 07:00 am ~ 18-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Between the Beaches: Chaung Tha Vs Ngwe Saung
07:36	Am	The Wachuset Jivitadana Sanga Hospital
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Kyeikhteeyoe: Welcome All
08:32	Am	Those Who Never Give Up (Ep-1) Aung Tamar Di Gold Shop
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Myanmar Handicrafts
09:56	Am	Black Gold (Part - II)
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Unique Pattern of Myanma ... A Trend of Chin Traditional Dress
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(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Wednesday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	A Day In Bagan
07:46	Pm	Amazing: Magician Sak Kaw Ma
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Exquisite Myanmar Silk
08:44	Pm	Chef Life: Avi Bitton (Israeli Chef)

(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.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(17-12-2015, Thursday)

6:00 am	8:35 am
• The Mirror Images of the Musical Oldies	• Myanmar Video
6:20 am	9:20 am
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• Musical Programme
6:35 am	9:30 am
• Nay Ma Win Ah Hla Myar	• Pyi Thu Ni Ti
7:00 am	9:45 am
• TV Drama Series	• ASEAN Japan Cultural Show
	10:00 am
	• Myanmar Video

Serena accepts Sportsperson of Year, eyes more slams



Serena Williams of the US poses with her trophy after defeating Maria Sharapova of Russia in their women's singles final match at the Australian Open 2015 tennis tournament in Melbourne, on 31 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Serena Williams added to one of the longest resumes in sports by collecting the Sportsperson of the Year award from Sports Illustrated, becoming only the third individual woman to claim the honour since its 1956 inception.

Williams, 34, won the first three grand slam singles titles of 2015 after taking last year's US Open to hold all four crowns at once for her second career 'Serena Slam'. She logged a 53-3 record, reigned as world number one every week for the second successive year and took her total of grand slams to 21, one less than Steffi Graf for most in the Open Era, at an age when most players have been long retired.

"I've been doing what I do for over 20 years professionally and that's a long time to be playing," Williams told Reuters before Tuesday's awards dinner. "And this is the first time I was ever recognised as Sportsperson of the Year. "So it really, really meant a lot to me. And being a woman and being only the third to be recognised is pretty awesome."

Williams said that joining

gymnast Mary Lou Retton and speed skater Bonnie Blair on the list of women to claim the award motivated her to succeed on court next year and target even more milestones.

"There's numbers," she said at the awards dinner, referencing Graf's 22 slams and the 24 singles titles won by all-time leader Margaret Court of Australia.

"I never looked at numbers until recently. I want to at least try to reach a couple of numbers that I won't mention. Just go one at a time and hopefully will be there one day." Williams won out over such strong contenders as NBA star Stephen Curry, golfer Jordan Spieth and racehorse American Pharoah, the first to win the US Triple Crown in 37 years, who won the magazine's readers poll for the award.

Her Sportsperson cover photo for the magazine, picturing her in a black leotard and high heels lounging on a golden throne, also generated a lot of buzz as well as delighting Williams.

"The cover I thought was really amazing," she said. "You can never be too hot." —Reuters

China on track to top medals table at Rio Games

SYDNEY — China is on track to return to the top of the medals table at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics next year ahead of the United States and Russia, according to a benchmark study released by the Australian Olympic Committee on Wednesday.

The annual study, which analyses the results in Olympic events at world championships and other elite events, gave China 39 gold medals based on the performances of its athletes in 2015.

The United States, table-toppers in London in 2012, would have won 35 gold medals ahead of Russia (25) with Japan the best of the rest behind the three sporting superpowers on 18.

Rio hosts Brazil, meanwhile, would have finished outside the top 20 on the medals table with just three golds.

Britain, which benefited from the traditional host nation bump to finish third in London, would have been joint fifth with neighbouring France on 15 golds, while Australia and Germany tied for seventh on 13 in the study.

That tally would nearly double Australia's tally of seven golds in London, where a 10th place finish on the medals table gave the sports-mad country one of its most disappoint-

ing Games of recent years.

Kitty Chiller, Australia's Chef de Mission for Rio, was encouraged by the data and said the AOC's target of a top five finish next year was a viable, if tough, goal.

"We have moved from a total of seven gold in London in 2012 to 13 gold this year," she said in a news release.

"Overall we've had a better year, the gold medal tally is a tremendous improvement and the signs are good for Rio.

"Fifth to eighth position on the medal tally is extremely tight and we are still aiming for that fifth spot in Rio if everything goes our way."

The study showed Australia's traditionally strong swimming team, which produced just one gold medal in a chaotic London campaign, would have won seven golds.

Russia's tally included two golds from track and field. The Russian Athletics Federation (ARAF) was suspended last month following a report that exposed widespread, systematic state-sponsored doping and related corruption. Russian athletes are therefore set to miss the World Indoor Athletics Championships in the United States in March and face a race against time to be cleared to compete in the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in August. —Reuters

Hiroshima give River Plate a game but fall short of final

OSAKA — Lucas Alario's header midway through the second half sent River Plate to the Club World Cup final as the South American champions edged Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1-0 yesterday.

In Sunday's final at Yokohama, River will face either Barcelona or Guangzhou Evergrande, who square off in the other semi-final on Thursday.

As Hajime Moriyasu expected, Copa Libertadores winners River poured it on from the start and had Sanfrecce buried in

their own half.

The Argentines bullied the J-League champions on the ball but Hiroshima, to their credit, persevered to keep River off target and the scoreboard throughout the opening half.

After half an hour, Sanfrecce acclimatized to the pace and began creating a few chances through Yusuke Minagawa, who forced River captain and goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero into making two reflex saves to deny Moriyasu's men the opener.

The 0-0 halftime scoreline gave Hiroshima a measure of hope for the second half, when River grew increasingly frustrated with their inability to find the net.

But in the 72nd minute, River won a free kick down the right wing that Carlos Sanchez launched for the far post. Jonathan Maidana just beat Sanfrecce keeper Takuto Hayashi to the ball, which fell back to Alario who nodded in the lone goal of the game. —Kyodo News



Lucas Alario of Argentine club River Plate and Sho Sasaki of Japan's Sanfrecce Hiroshima fight for the ball during their Club World Cup semi-final soccer match against in Osaka, on 16 December. PHOTO: REUTERS