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COME IN, HAVE A SEAT

UPWC invites Mongla Special Region 4 to Peace Conference

THE Union Peace-making Working Committee and leaders of Mongla Special Region-4 held talks on the peace process on Sunday in Mongla, Shan State (East).

U Thein Zaw, Vice Chairman of the UPWC invited the leaders of the Mongla Special Region (4) to attend the Union Peace conference which is slated to be held on 12 January as special guests, expressing the government's willingness to make peace inclusively.

During the meeting, U Sai Lin welcomed the achievements of the peace making process led by President U Thein Sein, pledging that Mongla Special Region (4) will never secede from the union and will guard the country's sovereignty and follow the peace accord between the two sides.

Union Minister U Hla Tun pledged that the State would assist and cooperate with Mongla Region (4) in boosting the economy in the region. Also present at the meeting were Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe and the Chief Minister of Shan State U Sao Aung Myat, Lt-Gen Yar Pyai of the Ministry of Defence (Army) and Commander of Triangle Region Command while the Mongla side was led by U Sai Lin, the Chairman of Mongla Special Region (4) and Vice-Chairman U San Pae. —*Myanma News Agency*



Meeting between Union Peace-making Working Committee and leaders of Mongla Special Region-4. PHOTO: MNA

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Govt, NLD hold first coordination meeting on systematic handing over of the duty of the Head of State, ministries

THE government's supporting committee for the handing over of the duties of the Head of State and ministries and the National League for Democracy's committee held their first coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The two sides openly discussed plans for holding a ceremony to transfer the duty of the Head of State at the Presidential Palace and steps for handing over ministries to the next government.

A date for the second coordination



Government and National League for Democracy discuss systematic transfer of duties of the government. PHOTO: MNA

meeting will be decided by the two sides.

At the meeting, the government's supporting committee was led by the committee's chairman Union Minister U Hla Tun and members. Union ministers

Central Executive Committee of the NLD, Dr Myo Aung, CEC member of NLD and Dr Aung Thu, a retired rector of Yangon University.—*Myanma News Agency*

U Ye Htut, Director-General of the President Office U Hla Tun, Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Construction U Maung Maung Ohn and Director of the President's Office U Zaw Htay were in attendance while the NLD's committee was led by its chairman U Win Htein, a member of the

Hluttaw

Hluttaw Round-ups

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Round-up

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discussed yesterday the bills amending the Myanmar Mining Law and the Evidence Act, which were sent back from the President with remarks.

In regard to the Myanmar Mining Law, the Joint Bill Committee of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw agreed in three cases out of five recommendations made by the President.

For amending the Evidence Act, the committee agreed to amend according to remarks by the President.

Pyithu Hluttaw Round-up

The bill committee of the Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday discussed reports related to three bills concerned with shops and wages sent back from the Amyotha Hluttaw with some amendments.

The three bills were submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in November.

They are the bills amending the Workshops Act of 1951, the Payment of Wages Bill and the Shops and Worksite Bill.



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

Amyotha Hluttaw Round-up

At the Amyotha Hluttaw yesterday U Steven Tharbeik, MP from Chin State Constituency No 4 asked a question of the

Ministry of Education in regard to the issue of the downward trend in matriculation examination results over three years in Chin State.

In response to the question,

Deputy Minister for Education U Thant Shin said 7,843 education staff have been appointed at 1,372 basic education schools in the state to teach 126,705 students.

He also called for staff of the departments and MPs to cooperate with teachers, students and parents to increase the passing rate in the state.—*Myanma News Agency*

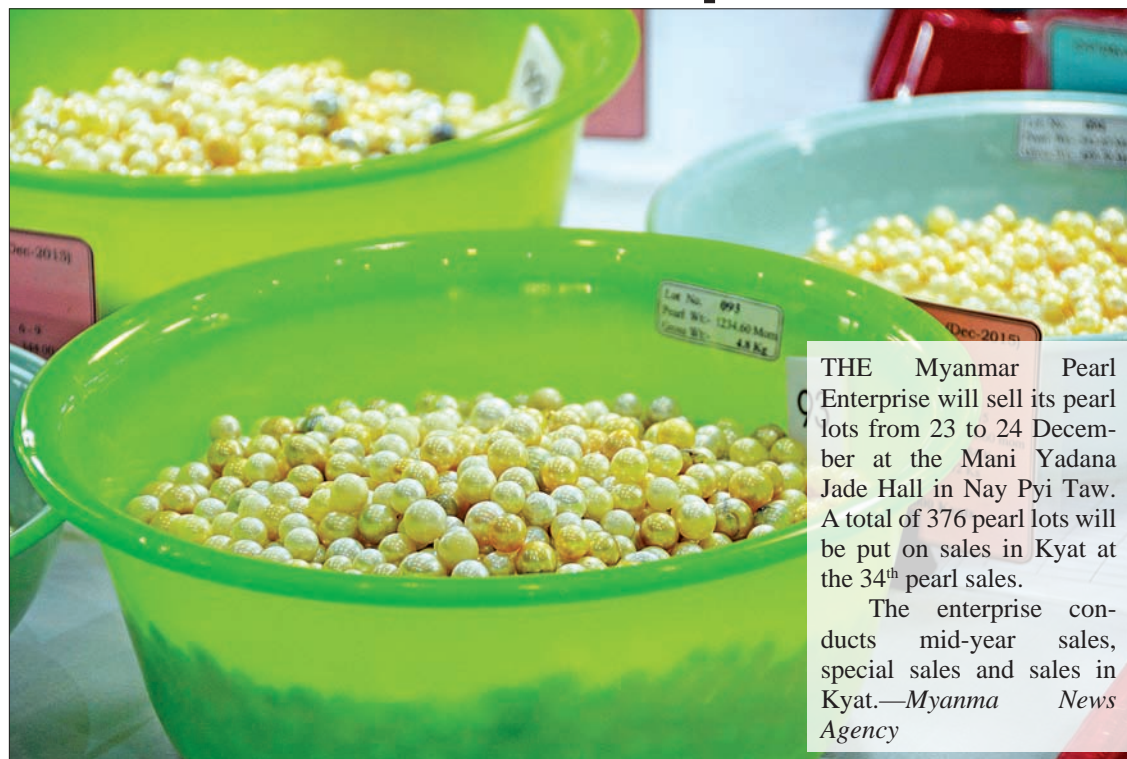
Bills singed into laws

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office announced yesterday that the President signed the following bills into law.

- (1) The Bill Amending the Myanmar Excise Act (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 66)
- (2) The Bill Amending the Foreign Investment Law (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No.67)
- (3) The Bill Amending the Myanmar Citizens Investment Law (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No.68)
- (4) The Bill Amending the Insurance Permission Law (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 69)
- (5) The Bill Amending the Saving Banks Law (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 70)
- (6) The Bill Amending Veterinary Council Law (2015 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 71)

Myanma News Agency

MPE launches its pearl sales



THE Myanmar Pearl Enterprise will sell its pearl lots from 23 to 24 December at the Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw. A total of 376 pearl lots will be put on sales in Kyat at the 34th pearl sales.

The enterprise conducts mid-year sales, special sales and sales in Kyat.—*Myanma News Agency*

Grant Agreement on Programme for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Schools in Flood and Landslide Affected Areas Signed

A GRANT Agreement for the “Programme for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Schools in Flood and Landslide Affected Areas” was successfully concluded yesterday between U Aung Than Oo, Director General, Department of Basic Education, Ministry of Education and Mr. Keiichiro NAKAZAWA, Chief Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Myanmar Office following the signing of Exchange of Notes (E/N) between the two governments of Japan and Myanmar on the same day.

Under this Grant Agreement, JICA will provide up to one billion and five hundred million Japanese Yen (JPY 1,500,000,000) for the program to reconstruct and rehabilitate the schools in flood and landslide affected areas as stated in the recovery and reconstruction strategy of the Ministry of Education with the “Build Back Better (BBB)” principles.

The “Build Back Better” (BBB) principles which ensure 1) Schools that are resilient to future disasters in line with appropriate standards (such as resilient buildings with safe and adequately sized stair-

cases, necessary elevation for schools in delta areas, and improved WASH facilities, etc) and 2) Schools that have better learning environment under ongoing educational reforms (such as additional classrooms for KG in primary schools and post-primary schools, teacher’s room, good-quality classroom furniture, houses for headmaster and teacher with security where necessary, etc.). The said grant will cover about one hundred and seventy thousand (170,000) students in schools who were affected by the floods and landslides, so that they can study without difficulty as early as possible.

JICA has been providing technical support to the Ministry of Education to develop new primary education curriculum and textbooks. The new curriculum intends to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience and to give more focus on various national and global issues in the long term.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expects to strengthen friendship between Myanmar and Japan through the said budget grant project.—*JICA*

Thai court to give verdict in British backpackers murder trial

BANGKOK — A Thai court will deliver a long-awaited verdict this week in the high-profile case of two Myanmar migrant workers accused of the brutal murder of two British backpackers on the holiday island of Koh Tao.

The battered bodies of Hannah Witheridge, 23, and David Miller, 24, were found in September 2014 on a beach on the idyllic island in the Gulf of Thailand that is popular with divers.

The brutality of the murders dented Thailand's image as a happy-go-lucky holiday paradise and raised serious questions about its treatment of migrant workers. A court on Samui island is due to give its verdict on Thursday, court officials said.

Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun, migrant workers from neighbouring Myanmar who were working on the island, were arrested after weeks of pressure on authorities to solve the crime.

Police said the pair had confessed to the killings but both men later retracted their statements, which they said had been made under duress. They face the death penalty if found guilty.

Migrant workers often face discrimination in Thailand and have been used as scapegoats for crimes in the past. Police have denied using force during their interrogation.

Allegations by defence lawyers of police incompetence and evidence mishandling have dominated the trial, which began in



Pictures of killed British tourists David Miller and Hannah Witheridge and a message of support to their friends and families are displayed during special prayers at Koh Tao island in September 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

July and ended in October after 21 days of witness hearings.

Thai police were widely accused of bungling the investigation, including failing to close off the island quickly and allowing potential suspects to escape.

Police said Witheridge was found bludgeoned to death and had been raped. Miller also suffered blows to his head.

A debate over DNA samples

that police say link the two suspects to Witheridge's body has been at the heart of the trial.

Defence lawyers had asked to retest crucial DNA samples taken from the victims' bodies but authorities issued conflicting statements on DNA evidence and, at one point, said that it had been used up. No independent re-testing of DNA evidence has been done in the case.—Reuters

President sends messages of felicitations to Japan

On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2015, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan and His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.—Myanmar News Agency

U Wunna Maung Lwin sends message of felicitations to Japan

On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2015, 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. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.—Myanmar News Agency

Daw Yin Yin Myint presents credentials to president of Poland

Daw Yin Yin Myint, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Poland, presented her Credentials to His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, on 7 December 2015, in Warsaw.—Myanmar News Agency

MNHRC releases news statement on treatment of prisoners in Myingyan Prison

THE Myanmar National Human Rights Commission launched an investigation into the treatment of prisoners who went on hunger strike in Myingyan Prison and reported its findings on the matter on its news release (17/2015) on Tuesday. The complete news release is available at www.mnhrc.org.mm.—MNA

First-time investors need to know share potential—stock analysts

Ye Myint

ANALYSTS have urged potential individual capital investors wanting to enter into the Yangon Stock Exchange to try to fully understand how listed companies work prior to making investments in order to help stabilize the new marketplace.

The country's first stock exchange was launched early December with six listed companies and one underwriter. The commencement of trading is slated for late February or early March 2016.

U Saw Naing (Applied Economics) called on first-time investors to make a careful study of the marketplace and listed companies before jumping in to buy shares on the exchange.

He stressed the need to choose the companies best suited to the investor and those that have the best growth potential before investing in stocks.

In an interview with the writer, he told The Global New Light of Myanmar daily that investing in the stock market is not 'a business that can reap profit within a

short period of time'.

During his talks on the opportunities and challenges of the Yangon Stock Exchange on Sunday, U Soe Thein, retired deputy director-general of the Ministry of Finance, warned potential traders not to buy shares of companies that they do not know very well.

Among the things one needs to know before investing in the capital market, the market expert highlighted, is the importance of the current profitability of the company and the expected future profitability or potential of that company.

First-time investors must know what a good market portfolio and company outlook looks like before they buy shares, he added.

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

In his address at the launch



The Yangon Stock Exchange is generating a flurry of excitement among potential investors to invest in the country's new businesses. Despite becoming operational since its opening, the start-up of selling shares is slated for late February or early March 2016. PHOTO: YE MYINT

of the YSX, Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein said that the listed companies will not be rushing into stock trading, stressing the need for a smooth start.

Among 10 securities companies selected to act as players in

the capital market, KBZ Stirling Coleman Securities Co., Ltd has been licensed to provide services to the new marketplace for Myanmar.

The Yangon Stock Exchange, which has been capitalised at 32 billion kyats (over US\$

32 million), is being operated by the Myanmar Economic Bank which holds a controlling share of 51 per cent in partnership with the Japan Exchange Group which holds 18.75 per cent and the Daiwa Securities Group which holds 30.25 per cent.

Philippines vice president top contender for president

MANILA — Philippine Vice President Jejomar Binay has overtaken Senator Grace Poe as the top contender to win presidential elections next year in an opinion poll published yesterday.

The survey of 1,800 people, conducted by independent pollster Pulse Asia, showed 33 per cent of voters supported Binay, a former human rights lawyer and the most experienced politician among the presidential hopefuls, compared with 23 per cent who backed the tough-talking, Davao city mayor Rodrigo Duterte. The poll was conducted between 4 to 11 December. Binay was seen as the most likely winner of the 2016 presidential race until June, when opinion polls showed he was overtaken by Poe. A survey published by another pollster, Social Weather Station, on 7 December showed Duterte as the favourite to succeed President Benigno Aquino.

This month, the Commission on Elections disqualified Poe because she failed to meet a 10-year residency requirement.—*Reuters*

10 Indian security force personnel killed in plane crash in Delhi

NEW DELHI — All 10 people onboard a chartered plane of the Border Security Force (BSF) of India which crashed a few minutes after take-off from the Palam airport here yesterday morning, were killed, officials said.

BSF spokesperson V.N. Parashar told the media the Beechcraft Super King plane carrying 10 BSF personnel, was bound for Ranchi, eastern India.

“The tragic news of the BSF plane crash near Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi is extremely painful. Rushing to the crash site immediately,” Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted. The incident took place near the Shahabad railway station at Dwarka in southwest Delhi. TV footages showed a large number of police and security forces were searching for the dead or survivors at the site of the crash, which was a residential area.—*Xinhua*



Rescuers check the crash site of a chartered army plane in New Delhi, 22 December, 2015. PHOTO: XINHUA

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Six arrested over small blast outside Hong Kong legislature



A man walks into the Legislative Council surrounded by barrier fence, in Hong Kong, China on 10 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

HONG KONG — Hong Kong police confirmed yesterday that six men had been arrested in connection with a small blast outside the city's Legislative Council earlier this month.

Five men, aged 18 to 22, were arrested on suspicion of arson on Monday morning and a 24-year-old man was arrested later in the evening, a police spokeswoman said.

The six, who included four college students, were under investigation but no charges had yet been laid.

The small blast followed hours after a contentious copyright bill, which opponents say will restrict freedom of expression, had been listed for debate but was adjourned when not enough legislators turned up. No one was injured.

The South China Morning Post said two of the six were members of a pro-Hong Kong independence group, Valiant Frontier, which had rallied online against the controversial copyright bill.

The bill aims to amend the city's copyright laws by extending the protection of copyright owners to the Internet. Opponents of the copyright legislation worry it could restrict freedom of speech, creativity and political satire in a city chaffing at what many residents see as a gradual whittling away of civil liberties by the Beijing government.

“Hong Kong residents have the right to express their opinion in a legal, peaceful, and rational way, but we can not accept any form of expression which is violent, against the law, and hurting others while causing damage to property,” Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying told reporters late on Monday.

“The SAR government and police will seriously deal with any illegal matter,” Leung said as he left for Beijing.

Last year, tens of thousands of protesters blocked major roads for weeks in a push for full democracy, presenting Beijing with one of its most serious challenges in years.—*Reuters*

China to replace Japan as 2nd-largest funder of UN peacekeeping

NEW YORK — China is set to replace Japan as the second-largest funder of UN peacekeeping operations in the next budget year, according to estimates by the United Nations, as negotiations reach the final stage.

China, which currently ranks sixth with a 6.64 per cent contribution to the UN peacekeeping budget, is expected to provide a 10.29 per cent share in the year starting next July, behind only the United States with a projected 28.57 per cent contribution.

Japan's contribution will drop from 10.83 per cent to 9.68 per cent, making it the third-largest funder ahead of Germany and France in fourth and fifth.

“It is our duty to ensure that Japan's voice and presence are not diminished” despite the country's declining contribution of funds in relative terms, Japanese Ambassador Motohide Yoshikawa said at a recent press conference.

The UN budget approved for peacekeeping operations is \$8.28 billion for the year through June 2016. The decline in Japan's contribution mirrors its decreasing share of the regular UN budget that finances operations on a calendar year basis.—*Kyodo News*

China says more Western countries will follow Britain to improve ties



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — More Western countries will follow Britain in improving ties with China, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was quoted as saying yesterday, describing relations with London over the past year as a “bright spot” in China’s diplomacy.

The British government has moved forcefully to strengthen financial and diplomatic ties with Beijing, with Chinese President Xi Jinping paying a state visit to Britain in October to seal what both call a “golden time” in relations.

Earlier this year, Britain broke ranks with the United States,

its close ally, by signing up as a founding member of China’s new infrastructure investment bank.

“Sino-British relations have been a bright spot this year,” Wang told Chinese media while on a trip to Cyprus, according to a statement released by China’s Foreign Ministry.

“Xi Jinping’s ‘super state visit’ to Britain was enormously successful, and Sino-British relations have entered a ‘golden time,’” Wang added. Britain has said it wants to be China’s strongest supporter and best friend, he said.

“I believe that this important development in reality presages future prospects for China’s relations with Western countries.”

Rights groups have accused Britain of turning a blind eye to abuses in China since the two countries ushered in their “golden time” in relations.

British officials, however, say they can achieve more by raising issues such as human rights behind the scenes than by hectoring Beijing publicly.

Wang said that in addition to the better ties with Britain, there were other signs too that China was becoming more accepted by the international community, including the including by the International Monetary Fund of the yuan into its benchmark currency basket. “China’s international position and influence have achieved an obvious change,” he said.—*Reuters*

Court orders operators to pay damages over tunnel collapse deaths

YOKOHAMA —

The Yokohama District Court ordered a Nagoya-based expressway operator to pay around 440 million yen (\$3.62 million) in damages yesterday to the families of five of the nine victims killed when the concrete ceiling of a tunnel on an expressway collapsed three years ago.

The parents and other relatives of the five have demanded a total of 912 million yen, arguing that Central Nippon Expressway Co. and its Tokyo-based subsidiary had failed to appropriately maintain and repair the aging structure.

The ceiling of the 4.7-kilometre-long Sasago Tunnel — some 80 kilometres west of capital Tokyo, on the Chuo Expressway in Yamanashi Prefecture — had not undergone a major refurbishment since its 1977 opening.

The relatives have also argued the disaster was predictable as a similar accident had happened in the United States.

They said the defendants could have prevented the accident if they had conducted a more detailed examination of the anchor bolts used to secure the steel structure to the tunnel ceiling during checkups three months before the incident.

The defendants have admitted to some responsibility but denied the accident was predictable or that there was any causal relationship between the check-

ups and the accident.

On the morning of 2 December 2012, ceiling slabs came off in a section of the tunnel stretching around 140 metres and fell on vehicles driving through the tunnel.

Nine people were killed and two others injured after three vehicles became trapped in the tunnel.

The five victims in the lawsuit — three men and two women all aged between 27 and 28 — were living together in Tokyo and were on their way to Yamanashi in a station wagon when the disaster occurred.

The relatives filed the suit

in 2013 against Central Nippon Expressway, who were in charge of management of the tunnel, and the subsidiary in charge of maintenance, hoping that the responsibility of the accident will be made clear and that a recurrence of the disaster is prevented.

A series of lawsuits have been filed over the accident and Tuesday’s was the first ruling.

Local police have been investigating the incident on suspicion of negligence resulting in deaths and injuries. The accident has prompted authorities to inspect aging tunnels across Japan.—*Kyodo News*



Relatives of victims killed when the concrete ceiling of the Sasago Tunnel on the Chuo Expressway in Yamanashi Prefecture collapsed in 2012 head to the Yokohama District Court on 22 December.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Junta leader writes new song, leaving Thais to face the music

BANGKOK — Thailand’s junta leader released the lyrics to a new patriotic ballad yesterday, the second song he has written since seizing power in 2014.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who as army chief led the May 2014 coup, first wrote the song “Return Happiness to Thailand”, which is played constantly on television and radio stations as part of a public relations campaign by the junta to win over Thais.

The tune has racked up more than one million views on YouTube but has been mocked by critics of the junta.

His second song, “Because You Are Thailand”, includes lyrics like “If we join hands ... the day we hope for is not far away” and “Because you are Thailand, you will not let anyone destroy you.”

Prayuth told reporters the song was his New Year present

to the Thai people. The junta, or National Council for Peace and Order, overthrew an elected government, putting an end to months of protests in Bangkok led by the middle class and elite who wanted to get rid of the civilian government of populist Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

A military government installed after the coup has largely stifled dissent and has gone hard after critics of the junta and monarchy by using a harsh royal insult law to detain dozens of people, prompting stern criticism from rights groups, the UN and some Western governments.

The junta has repeatedly delayed planned elections, claiming the country is not yet stable enough to hold a poll.

Prayuth comes from a musical family. His daughters enjoyed brief fame in Thailand as a pop duo called BADZ.—*Reuters*

Cambodian protesters attack police, injuring 2 officers

PHNOM PENH — Striking Cambodian factory workers in two special economic zones (SEZs) in eastern Svay Rieng province’s Bavet town pelted security forces with stones and injured two military police officers yesterday morning, a senior official confirmed.

“Thousands of workers at the Manhattan and Tai Seng SEZs continued their protests this (Tuesday) morning, and they threw rocks at our security forces and fire trucks,” Svay Rieng provincial deputy governor Hou Rattanak told Xinhua. “Two military police officers were injured and one fire truck was badly damaged.”

The police fired water cannon to disperse them and did not arrest any protesters, he said, denying local media reports that police had used smoke bombs on protesters.

Hou Rattanak said the clash broke out when protesters made their way to other factories to intimidate other workers to join their protests, but were blocked by riot police.

He said police are investigating who is behind the protests, as trade unions denied their involvements.

It was the second consecutive-day skirmish between police and protesters.

On Monday, police used water cannon on those protesting workers, detained 58 for education and released them in the evening after they agreed not to use violence or damage property in the future.

Thousands of factory workers at the two SEZs staged protests since Wednesday last week to demand a 20 US dollars raise to the current monthly rate of 128 US dol-

lars, 8 US dollars more than the 140 US dollars figure mandated for 2016 by the government in October.

The Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) said Monday that some 45 factories with more than 30,000 workers at the two SEZs “have suffered serious economic damages, for instance, property damage and complete production loss” due to the protests.

Garment and footwear sector, the kingdom’s largest foreign currency earner, are comprised of nearly 1,100 factories with some 700,000 workers, according to the government figures.

The sector exported products worth 3.3 billion US dollars in the first half of 2015, accounted for about 80 percent of the country’s total exports.—*Xinhua*

Some heed Pope Francis's call to succour refugees, others look away

VATICAN CITY — One Catholic parish in Germany tore out its pews to make space for refugees. Franciscan monks near Rome took a family into their hill-top convent.

But in northern Italy, a rural priest faced hostility when he asked his flock to shelter Muslims.

Four months after Pope Francis appealed to the parishes and religious communities of Europe to each take in one family of refugees, the response is decidedly mixed.

Arms have opened wide in some places but indifference, bureaucracy, fear, and xenophobia have reared their heads elsewhere, particularly after the attack by Islamist militants who killed 130 peo-

ple in Paris last month. Around a million migrants arrived by sea in Europe in 2015, with some 3,700 dying, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

Some of them, if Francis is heeded, should be heading to safety among the roughly 120,000 Catholic parishes in Europe.

But in Italy — which with more than 25,000 has the largest number of parishes — only about 1,000 have responded, according to Father Giancarlo Perego, head of the Church-affiliated Migrants Foundation. Another 1,500 families had offered to host refugees.

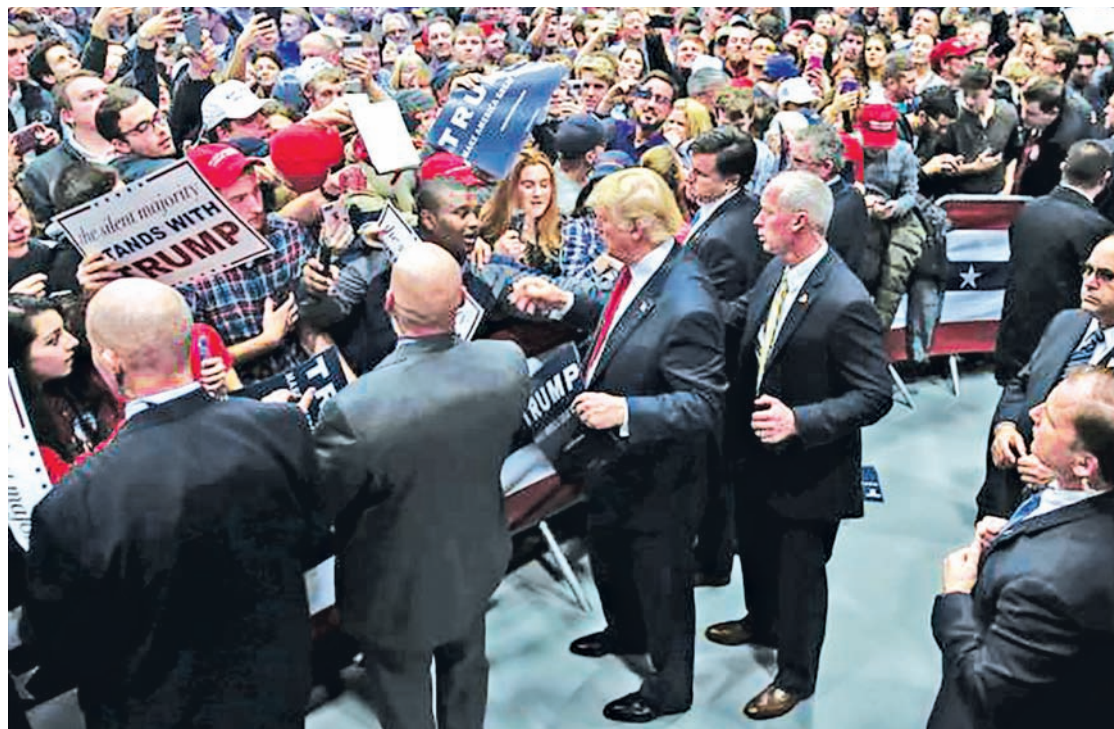
Perego and other Church officials pointed out, however, that many Catholic parishes were already supporting refugee services

well before the pope's appeal.

Italian bishops have published a "How To" booklet for parishes, dealing with everything from how to prepare parishioners for the arrival of refugees, legal issues, and a glossary explaining terms such as asylum and repatriation.

When Francis announced the initiative on 6 September, he set the example by welcoming two families into the Vatican's own two parishes. Many of the migrants entering Europe have headed to Germany, where the Catholic Church is one of the richest in Europe, partly because of a Church tax on members, and which has an institutional tradition of helping refugees.—Reuters

Young protesters heckle Trump during Michigan speech



US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump greets the crowd during a campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan on 21 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

GRAND RAPIDS — Protesters heckled Donald Trump at a 9,000-person rally here on Monday, interrupting his speech more than 10 times with shouts before security guards ejected them from the event.

Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, alternated between criticizing the hecklers and asking the guards leading more than a dozen people out of the room to "be gentle."

The interruptions sapped some of the energy Trump often builds during his speeches, but did not dampen the enthusiasm of his supporters.

The crowd cheered Trump's pledge to build a border wall, his searing criticism of political opponents and repetition of his campaign slogan "make Ameri-

ca great again."

At rallies this month in South Carolina and Nevada and a luncheon in New York, protesters have interrupted the candidate, attacking his controversial proposal to ban all Muslims from entering the United States and other statements of his they say are racist or discriminatory.

Most of the people ejected from the speech appeared to be student-age.

"I said Trump you don't represent us, as in black people, and also I'm a Muslim," said Mai Eltahir, 19, a student at the University of Michigan in Flint who travelled to Grand Rapids.

She said she shouted at Trump as he described his plan to build a wall along the US-Mexico border.

At one point, after halting

remarks on trade to wait for hecklers to be ejected, Trump suggested they protesters might be "drugged out."

He chided another group for being "so weak" they would not resist security guards' directions to leave. Trump also said he wondered why the protesters would bother standing up and drawing attention to themselves "in a group of 9,000 maniacs that want to kill them," referring to the crowd.

One audience member punched a protester, a young man alone near an exit, before a guard came to lead him away.

Many Trump fans booed the protesters as they left. One of the candidate's supporters, Beth Carroll, 39, said the demonstrators "didn't change my mind. Trump has my vote."—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan's ambulance response time worst on record in 2014

TOKYO — The average time taken to transport a patient to hospital by ambulance following an emergency call was 39 minutes and 24 seconds in Japan in 2014, the worst on record, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said yesterday.

The time was six seconds longer than the 2013 average, according to the agency. The number of ambulance dispatches was a record 5.98 million in 2014 or roughly one every 5.3 seconds.

Ambulances carried 5.41 million people to hospitals in 2014, an increase of about 60,000, reflecting the aging of the society and a rise in the number of people living alone, the agency said. Some 55.5 percent were 65 years or older.

By prefecture, the time was by far the longest in Tokyo at 51 minutes and 48 seconds, followed by Saitama's 45 minutes and 30 seconds. The shortest was 30 minutes and 6 seconds in Fukuoka.—Kyodo News

Thirteen killed in Guinea gold mine collapse

CONAKRY — At least 13 people died when an old gold mine they were working in collapsed in eastern Guinea, a local official said on Monday.

The accident happened in a mine run by informal workers in Kintinia, about 800 km (500 miles) northeast of Conakry, an area which holds some of the West African country's largest gold reserves.

"They were artisanal miners who took up work in a structure that had been closed," Cheick Diallo, the prefect for Siguiri province told Reuters. "We have counted 13 bodies since the collapse a few days ago."—Reuters

34 militants killed, 10 injured in Afghanistan: official

KABUL — About 34 Taliban militants have been killed and 10 others wounded as Afghan security forces carried out cleanup operations in different provinces within the last 24 hours, the country's Defence Ministry said yesterday.

"The raids were conducted by Afghan army, police and intelligence agency personnel in Helmand, Logar, Kunar, Nangarhar and Kunduz provinces. The joint forces also seized weapons and defused several landmines," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement that provides daily operational updates also confirmed the loss of six army personnel during clashes across the country over the same period.—Xinhua

19 injured as gas cylinder blast hits children hospital in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD — At least 19 people were injured when a gas cylinder exploded in a children hospital in Pakistan's northwest district of Swat yesterday morning, local media reported.

Urdu News channel Samaa reported that the injured people included seven children who were under treatment in the hospital, eight attendant women and four hospital staff members.

The incident happened in the hospital located in Saidu Sharif town of Swat, a district located in the country's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.—Xinhua

Ruling leftists to win Slovak election but will need coalition

BRATISLAVA — Prime Minister Robert Fico's leftist Smer party looked set to win Slovakia's national election on 5 March but would need a coalition partner to form a government, a Polis opinion poll showed.

Smer, in power with a majority government since 2012, has three times the support of its nearest rival, the centrist party Siet, the poll, released late on Monday, showed.

Fico's Smer, with 40 per cent, would win 72 seats in the 150-member parliament. In the election three years ago, Smer won 44 per cent of the vote.—Reuters

UN mulls 'light' options to monitor possible Syria truce — envoys

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations is mulling “light touch” options for monitoring a possible ceasefire in Syria that would keep its risks to a minimum by relying largely on Syrians already on the ground, diplomatic sources said.

The UN Security Council on Friday unanimously called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to draw up within a month options for monitoring a ceasefire in Syria. It is the second time since the Syrian civil war broke out in March 2011 that the council backed a plan for peace talks and a truce.

The talk about the UN's role as monitor has gained urgency along with a new push for a ceasefire in Syria to take effect as early as January, in parallel to talks between the government and opposition.

More than a dozen major powers, including the United States, Russia and major European and Middle Eastern powers, have drawn up a road map for Syria peace talks.



People stand behind a police tape near a site hit yesterday by what activists said were airstrikes carried out by the Russian air force in Idlib city, Syria, on 21 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

UN planning for truce monitoring will seek to avoid repeating the “disaster” of a mission sent to Syria in 2012, diplomats said. That operation failed because the warring parties showed no interest in halting the fighting, they said.

Under the light-touch mechanism under consideration, the United Na-

tions would rely on Syrian actors — “proxies” — on the ground to report violations. This could possibly involve a small group of non-uniformed UN officials in Syria to carry out investigations of ceasefire violations, diplomats said.

“There’s the idea of proxy-ism, where they were going to look at who would be credible on the

ground to get information and to create a reporting mechanism from them to the UN,” a diplomatic source said.

To make the proxy approach work, major powers would need to agree on who is considered a credible Syrian actor.

“Who is it who’s responsible for the credibility of the information?” one

diplomatic source asked. “The Syrians on the ground or the UN, which receives the information?”

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations will likely present an option to put UN peacekeepers on the ground. But that approach likely will be ruled out immediately, given the brutal war that has claimed more than a quarter of a million lives. Diplomats on the council, which would be asked to approve any monitoring plan, also say that option is impossible.

Diplomats say they want to avoid a heavy UN footprint in Syria. A large number of UN officials on the ground in Syria would require a large security detail to protect them.

“If we have a big security contingent, all of a sudden it looks like a full-scale mission,” one diplomatic source said. “And any UN presence will be targeted in Syria.” Another tool for aiding verification work, another diplomatic source said, could be the use of unmanned surveil-

lance drones, a technology the UN has begun using in peacekeeping missions in Africa.

The UN had to suspend operations once before in Syria. After deploying some 300 unarmed “blue beret” monitors in April 2012, it was forced by August of that year to end the mission after the moderators became the target of angry crowds and gunfire.

The Security Council had sent in monitors after it endorsed then-UN-Arab League mediator Kofi Annan’s six-point peace plan for Syria calling for talks and a truce.

At that time, death toll estimates for the Syrian civil war were about 10,000 — a fraction of today’s estimate of at least 250,000.

“The UN team that went in back then were very courageous and pushed their mandate as far as they could,” said Richard Gowan, a professor at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.—*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PHUONG NAM 68 VOY NO (10-2015)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PHUONG NAM 68 VOY NO (10-2015) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T-3 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

Bank Holiday

All Banks will be closed on 25th December (Friday) Christmas Day 2015, being public holidays under the Negotiable Instruments Act. Central Bank of Myanmar

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Iraqi troops storm into centre of Islamic State-held Ramadi

BAGHDAD — Iraq’s armed forces stormed the centre of Ramadi yesterday to try to dislodge Islamic State militants who have held the western city since May, a spokesman for the counter-terrorism units, Sabah al-Numani, said.

The operation to recapture Ramadi, 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad, began early last month after a months-long effort to cut off supply lines to the city, whose fall to Islamic State was a major defeat for

Iraq’s weak central government.

“Our forces are advancing toward the government complex in the centre of Ramadi,” Numan said. “The fighting is in the neighbourhoods around the complex, with support from the air force.” Iraqi intelligence estimates the number of Islamic State fighters entrenched in the centre of Ramadi, capital of Western Anbar province, at between 250 and 300. — *Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DIA DUONG QUEEN VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DIA DUONG QUEEN VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-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 BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE LTD.
Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (14-2015)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (14-2015) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-2 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 SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.12.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P/A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

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

OPINION

Pointing fingers is not the way to build unity

Khin Maung Aye (KMA)

IT is undeniable that unity matters most for national development. Unity has become more important for a country like Myanmar, which is made up of many different cultural and ethnic groups. Exactly speaking, there are 135 diversified national races. Such a diverse country ought to be dependent upon a more natural or broader understanding of 'unity' that holds us together irrespective of race, religion or lines on a map. In fact, unity is built upon the principles of love, kindness and loyalty to one another.

What is ideal is that people sharing the same religious faith and sharing the same cultural mores have an easier, built-in basis for unity. In this juncture, it is worth noting that shared interest is also extremely important because such

ideals aid unity in both good times and bad times. In retrospect, if one casts a brief glance at the history of Myanmar, one will find that Myanmar was able to free itself from under the yoke of the British Empire in 1948 because the entire popular mass of Myanmar was united in driving out the common enemy despite the existence of significant differences between and among the ethnicities. It would not be inappropriate to say that this was the initial driving force that brought unity among all the nationalities in the country. But what will happen in the absence of common interest?

Although it cannot be created out of thin air, those in power can create the conditions under which common interests can evolve on their own. Everybody must understand that we are still one nation and we can only succeed together.

If one casts a glance at Singapore, one will see that the common interests of its citizens include healthy business practices. Such being the case, its leader and its people focus their society to a large extent on business practices free from corruption i.e avoidance of cronyism. Today, their common interests results in benefit. They have also matured with rules and regulations to avoid much of the intense social strife that can be found in neighboring counties.

Even if we cannot create a common interest

we ought to have fair rules and regulations that will bring benefit to the common people. If we have the rules and regulations that foster common interests among us all, we can be quite certain that Myanmar will stand tall in the region.

Currently, what is our country's common interest? Democracy? National Reconciliation? Federalism? Act 436 to amend that constitution? Peace? Economic Development? Poverty reduction? So many questions are without answers.

Mired in stubbornness and outmoded concepts, Myanmar is still losing its way. How do we go forward? The Global New Light of Myanmar encourages all stakeholders to ponder over these questions.

Write for us

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

Illogical reasons and Platitudes about price-hike and job opportunities in Myanmar

Tommy Pauk

MYANMAR is an agro-based country with large arable land areas. It abounds in poultry, meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, fresh water resources, rice, sea food, cereal crops and other perennial crops. Myanmar soil is so fertile that every crop can thrive in almost every area in the country. Incredibly, the ordinary people of Myanmar have been struggling with uncontrollable price-hike of commodities for decades. The grass roots levels of people suffer the effect of rising prices a lot. The prices have been exorbitant and never-dropping although Myanmar has not encountered natural disasters like famine or drought for decades. There is not a scarcity of food in Myanmar. Furthermore, the total population in Myanmar is actually not big compared to our two neighboring countries—China and India. There are plenty of fresh water fish in various wide and long rivers flowing down from north. Rice, our staple food, is sufficient for the current population indeed. It is one of the export food items. The greedy rice dealers increases the normal selling price, giving illogical reasons. The customers and consumers are never satisfied with the dealers' excuses and reasons for raising prices of commodities. The successive governments of Myanmar have tackled the price-hike problem, but still they cannot stabilize the

daily commodities of prices in the markets. The fluctuation of prices occurs in some countries because of unavoidable circumstances e.g the scarcity of food or natural disasters. In Myanmar, once the price of a certain item of commodity is increased, it never drops to its reasonable price. People who earn low-income or who are casual laborers or wage-earners are suffering from high prices of daily food or basic commodities. The sky-rocketing prices of the basic commodities, meat, fish and other kitchen items are becoming daily issues for ordinary people as well as the grass roots. However, those elites and a handful of the rich and the corrupt public officials do not care about the extremely high expensive prices. The domestic profiteers are not sympathetic for the majority of consumers. They always raise the prices giving lame excuses and this make people fed up with them. The greedy and selfish profiteers neglect the people who are facing appalling hardship. The authorities concerned had created toll free markets or tax free markets in which the kitchen commodities, meat, fish and vegetables were sold at reasonable prices in some cities for the ordinary people. The governments, domestic merchants and dealers are the ones who are responsible for stabilizing the prices of commodities. The government should be able to handle this constantly and effectively in order to ease the public suffering. The dealers should charge the reasonable prices

and take reasonable profit on the goods they sell in domestic market. The vast majority of people in Myanmar being faced with the unpleasant situation of price-hike for daily meals. The cost of living is also rising steadily, whereas Myanmar per capita income is low. The price-hike has become an unsolved issue in Myanmar. Although Myanmar does not encounter food shortage or severe natural calamity, the general public have been moaning and groaning with the negative effect of unreasonable price-hike. The dealers or sellers of basic commodities always say that they have to increase the prices on commodities because of increased taxes, increased transportation charges, bad weather conditions, fuel prices etc. In reality, the fuel prices are stable and transportation is smooth. Sometimes, the deliveries of goods are delayed for a certain length of time. In this case, the dealers or merchants raise the prices and do not reduce the prices when the situation is back to normal. Thus, the prices are always up for no reason. People have to buy the essential commodities and they cannot bargain the prices of the commodities.

Occasionally, some of the politicians give speeches to public concerning job opportunities in Myanmar. They usually say that they are creating job opportunities for the able citizens those who are university graduates, and/or diploma holders. Normally, in Myanmar, citizens have to register with

labor department under Ministry of Labor to ensure that they are willing, able and ready to apply for the posts fallen vacant at the government organizations or factories or at few private-owned companies. Another channel is the Public Services Commissions which recruits the qualified candidates and appoint them to serve as public services personnel. The number of domestic job seekers is much greater than the number of vacancies in the state-owned institutions, factories, organizations and government offices. Although the government is creating job opportunities in the country, the jobless rate is still high in Myanmar. The speeches of politicians are full of platitudes and empty promises on the unemployment issue in Myanmar. Some university graduates seek job opportunities abroad with the support of their wealthy parents. With the introduction of the market-oriented economy, Myanmar has opened up to the foreign investors, but still there are numerous Myanmar citizens working abroad officially or unofficially. However, those immigrant workers of Myanmar citizens in foreign countries are being used as cheap labor. Even then, they are being exploited and tortured by the local people in those countries. Helplessly, they lose human rights and labor rights in those countries. So the political leaders, Ministry of Labor and Ministry of National Planning for Economy should constantly and ardently tackle the unemployment

issue in order to prevent the brain drain. The political leaders are responsible for tackling price-hike issue in Myanmar as well. The unemployment and price-hike must be deeply considered to be hot issues. These two issues have affected the general public directly. Myanmar people want stabilized commodity prices and decent jobs. The general public are frustrated with the platitudes of the speeches given by the successive political leaders regarding price-hike and unemployment issues in Myanmar. Nowadays democracy is going to flourish in Myanmar shortly and socio-economic development is already on the track. Instead of making speech of platitudes, the political leaders must find the practical and effective means and ways to solve the problems of price-hike and unemployment. It is the best way that the Leaders, workers, peasants, intelligentsia and merchants must cooperate and coordinate in dealing with stabilizing prices and reducing unemployment rate in.

About the author

Freelance Management and Development Consultant, Former International UNV UNCHS/ILO/UNIDO Cooperative and Small Business Specialist in Malawi and Kiribati /UNDP Community Empowerment and Development Specialist in Bangladesh

Vocational Training Course to be opened in January

VOCATIONAL training course No. 3/2015-2016 will begin at the Centre of Vocational Training, Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on 5 January 2016, in Yangon.

The three-month training course is intended for disabled people aged between 18 and 45. The courses will include tailoring, photography, silk printing

and basic computer skills.

The trainees who want to attend the courses can register at No 65, Kyaik Waine Pagoda Road, Mayangone Township.

The course will provide teaching materials, trainees and also remote trainees who will receive payment for transportation charges and monthly wages during the training.—*Zaw Min Latt IPRD*

Seasonal phet flowers selling well in Tatkon



Phet flowers are on sale at a local bazaar in Tatkon. Photo: Tin Soe Lwin

VENDORS of flowers from the wild phet plant that naturally grows in rural areas around Tatkon township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, are seeing high turnover.

“We pick the flowers early in the morning. We then string ten flowers together with thin bamboo strips. We sell the flowers around the area and at the town’s market usually fetching K300 during the early season.

Later when the flowers are plenty we can still make K150 per ten flowers,” said a village vendor who earns about K3000

to K4000 daily from selling the popular flowers.

She added that as there was not much rain this year in the township the flower harvest was less. The medicinal flowers are a traditional seasonal garnish in Myanmar meals. They are eaten as a salad which is good for insomnia, local belief holds.

The flowers, when dried, can also be cooked with dried fish or with pork which is a family favorite, says a housewife from the town’s Bayintnaung ward.—*(Tin Soe Lwin-IPRD)*

Kalay-Pyintha Road in Kalay upgraded

THE Kalay-Pyintha Road, which was damaged by flooding this past rainy season, has been upgraded, according to local authorities.

The Irrigation Department

has reconstructed the road.

The completion of the road has restored transport availability to the local people, assisting in business and personal transport.—*J Thin Gyone*

More transformers installed in Linkhe District to supply power to townships

THE Townships of Linkhe District in south Shan State have begun to receive sufficient electricity after more transformers were installed in late November.

With an allotment from the 2015-2016 budget of Shan State, the district Myanma Electrical Power Enterprise constructed a 11/.4KV,200KVA TA and installed two 200 KVA transformers at Linkhe town in late November, said district EPC engineer U Aung Naing Oo.

“At Maukmeai township a 1600 ft 11-KV cable and 200 KVA -TRI have been installed and the 400 V wooden posts were changed into concrete posts. At Mongpan township, 11/.4,200KVA, and 200 KVA transformers were installed,” he added

From December the locals of the townships of Linkhe District are getting sufficient electricity, the official said.—*(Saung Hnin Latt-IPRD)*



A transformer installed in Linkhe District to supply power to townships in southern Shan State. PHOTO: SAUNG HNIN LATT-IPRD

Crime News

12 year old girl dies following fall

A girl fell from a 6th floor balcony in Sanshaung Township on Monday. She was pronounced dead upon arrival at hospital due to the severe head injuries suffered.

According to the investigation, the 12-year old house keeper was hanging washing on a balcony at the time when she lost her balance and fell.

The Sanshaung police station is yet to finish its investigation.—*Yangon Police Force*



A building where a 12-year old girl fell. PHOTO: YANGON POLICE FORCE

Police save eight women from prostitution in Tachilek

TWO women were arrested in Tachilek, Shan State, for involvement in human trafficking on Saturday, according to the anti-human trafficking force. The police received information that eight women were being detained in the house of Myint Myint Aye, 48, for the purpose of prostitution.

According to police the victims claim that Moe Moe Thet, 29, enticed eight women from various states with the promise of finding them work overseas.

Upon arrival to his home, however, the suspect imprisoned the women who were forced to prostitute themselves, apparently on the understanding that they would be paid for their services.

Those payments, the victims say, were never made. They were instead threatened with being sold as slaves in Thailand if they did not submit. Local police have charged Moe Moe Thet under the anti-human trafficking law.—*Myint Moe (Tachilek)*

Police stop attempted rape in Dagon Myothit

POLICE have arrested one of two suspected men who allegedly robbed and attempted to rape a woman in Dagon Myothit Township on Sunday.

According to police the two men approached a couple on their way home from work and asked for their assistance in a matter as a ruse. The two suspects allegedly trapped and handcuffed the cou-

ple at a discreet location before attempting to rob and sexually assault the female. Local police discovered the crime in progress while on patrol and managed to capture one Zaw Min Oo, 39, on the spot. The local police station is holding the man for charges while searching for the second suspect, Kyi Su who managed to escape from the scene.

Two dead, 32 passengers injured following car accident in Aung Lan Township

A 6 wheel truck heading to Aung Lan from Hlaywin village being driven by one Zaw Linn,35, lost control near milepost No. 243/7 between Aung Lan and Taung Dwin Gyi road on Sunday. The accident killed Khine Zaw, 40

and Ma Than Mar, 32 while the driver and 32 passengers were injured.

The driver was found to be guilty of careless driving by the Kopin Police Station.—*Police RPID*

Apple criticises British plans to extend online surveillance

LONDON — Apple has raised concerns about British plans to give security agencies extra online surveillance powers, saying a planned law could weaken the security of personal data for millions of people.

Britain unveiled proposals for sweeping new powers last month, including the right to find out which websites people visit, that it said were needed to keep the country safe from criminals, fraudsters and militants. Critics say the Investigatory Powers Bill gives British spies powers be-

yond those available in other Western countries, including the United States, and it is an assault on freedoms.

Apple said it was opposed to proposals in the bill that would weaken encryption, such as the explicit obligation on service providers to help intercept data and hack suspects' devices.

The California-based company, which uses end-to-end encryption on its FaceTime and iMessage services, said the best way to protect against increasingly sophisticated hacking schemes

and cyber attacks was by putting into place increasingly stronger — not weaker — encryption.

“We believe it is wrong to weaken security for hundreds of millions of law-abiding customers so that it will also be weaker for the very few who pose a threat,” the iPhone maker said.

“In this rapidly evolving cyber-threat environment, companies should remain free to implement strong encryption to protect customers.”

As well as being able to carry out bulk interception of com-

munications data, the bill would also allow the security services to perform “equipment interference”, whereby spies take over computers or smartphones to access their data.

In its submission to the draft bill, Apple criticized any such requirement to create “backdoors” and intercept capabilities that could weaken the protections built into Apple products.

“A key left under the door-mat would not just be there for the good guys,” it said. “The bad guys would find it too.”

Apple also said the proposals would attempt to force non-UK companies to take actions that violate the laws of their home countries, and would likely be the catalysts for other countries to enact similar legislation.

Since the extent of US and British surveillance was laid bare in media reports based on documents stolen by Edward Snowden, Western governments have debated the balance between protecting privacy and countering the threat from Islamist militants.—Reuters

UK consumers a bit more confident in December, wary about 2016



A woman shops at a Sainsbury's store in London, on 3 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — British consumer morale in December edged up from a six-month low in November, but households remain more worried about the economy than they were at the end of last year, a survey showed yesterday.

Market research firm GfK said its monthly consumer sentiment indicator rose to +2 in December from +1 in November, marginally stronger than a median forecast of +1 in a Reuters poll of economists.

“This is the first time since the Consumer Confidence Barometer started in 1974 that the Index has remained positive for an entire calendar year,” Joe Staton, Head of Market Dynamics at GfK, said.

But optimism about the economy over the next 12 months was stuck at its lowest level since July 2013 at -6. In December of last year, the reading was a slightly less weak -5.

Staton said he was unable to comment on the reasons for the

weak outlook.

Britain was the world's fastest-growing big, developed economy last year and has grown more quickly than most of its peers again in 2015. But while earnings are rising faster than almost non-existent inflation, growth in pay is much slower than it was before the financial crisis.

The GfK survey showed consumers were a bit less willing to spend on big-ticket items than in November.—Reuters

McDonald's mulls sale of some stake in Japanese unit

TOKYO — McDonald's Corp. is considering selling part of its stake in its Japanese unit, sources familiar close to the matter said yesterday.

The US fast food chain, which owns roughly 50 percent of McDonald's Holdings Co. (Japan), is apparently seeking to weaken its control over the Japanese unit, with potential buyers including investment funds, the sources added. The potential sale

could generate 100 billion yen (\$825 million).

Capitalised at around 390 billion yen, McDonald's Holdings has morphed into one of the leading fast food chains in Japan since its establishment in the country in 1971. But some industry observers believe the company is overvalued in terms of profitability.

McDonald's Holdings has been struggling to win back customers since a series of safety

scandals emerged in recent years, and is closing unprofitable stores in Japan as part of restructuring.

The Japanese unit's delay in catering to diversifying customer needs has been partly blamed on McDonald's influence on management policy.

For the current business year through 31 December, McDonald's Holdings is expecting a group net loss of 38 billion yen.—Kyodo News

Japan adds Kobe beef, Yubari melons to list of protected brands

TOKYO — The government added Kobe beef and Yubari melons yesterday to a list of food items accorded government protection as regional brands to enhance their branding and sales.

Under the government's “geographical indication” system, special markings can be affixed to the packages of designated food items. They signal the products' quality and offer consumers an opportunity to spot quality foods that have eluded their attention.

The seven food items added to the list yesterday are Kobe beef from Hyogo Prefecture, Yubari melons from Hokkaido, Tajima beef from Hyogo, Edosaki pumpkins from Ibaraki Prefecture, Aomori cassis from Aomori Prefecture, “Yame den-to hon gyokuro” green tea from Fukuoka Prefecture, and “Kagoshima no Tsubozukuri kurozu” black vinegar from Kagoshima Prefecture.

The list comprised only liquor items prior to yesterday.

Japan is aiming to improve the international competitiveness of its farm and fisheries sectors as the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which was concluded this year with 11 other countries, could flood Japan with cheaper imports.

Farm minister Hiroshi Moriyama told a press conference earlier in the day that the government aims to expand demand for food items in and outside the country by further promoting the region-specific designations.

The ministry has received about 50 applications for such designations, including those for the seven items added to the list yesterday. The government has set penalties for unauthorised use of the markings and sales of food items using the names of designated products.—Kyodo News

Samsung Electronics to start making new chips for AMD in 2016: Electronic Times

SEOUL — Tech giant Samsung Electronics Co Ltd will start making new chips for Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) Inc next year, South Korea's *Electronic Times* reported yesterday citing unnamed sources.

The paper said Samsung's foundry business and Globalfoundries will jointly start producing a central processing chip as well as a graphics processing chip for AMD next year using their 14-nano-

metre technology.

Samsung has been trying to increase its external client base in recent quarters for its components businesses as it seeks to offset the earnings decline for its smartphone division.

The firm already makes chips for companies such as Apple Inc and Nvidia Corp. Samsung did not immediately comment, while AMD could not be immediately reached for comment.—Reuters

Healthcare costs a top concern for Republican and Democratic voters

NEW YORK — Americans want to know what the next US president will do to lower their rising healthcare costs, a priority shared by Republican and Democratic voters and second only to keeping the country safe, according to a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll.

In all, 62 per cent of people surveyed said they would want to know about a presidential candidate's plan for reducing healthcare costs, according to the on-line poll conducted 14-18 December.

While Republican and Democratic candidates are worlds apart on how to address healthcare, poll results show roughly the same proportion of Republican voters, or 62 per cent, view it as a priority compared with 67 per cent of Democrats, highlighting their frustration with rising drug prices, insurance premiums and deductibles ahead of the 2016 vote.

The only topic that attracted more interest was national security, as 67 per cent wanted to know more about how presidential candidates planned to keep the country safe.

Fifty-four per cent wanted to know their plan for creating more jobs, 42 per cent were interested in plans for education reform and 31 per cent in how they would deal with climate change.

US employers have been shifting more health coverage costs onto workers, particularly through high deductible health insurance plans, which can reach \$6,600 in out of pocket costs for an individual and \$13,200 for a

family before insurance kicks in. Many of these changes have been ushered in with President Barack Obama's signature healthcare law, as well as recent sharp increases in some prescription drug costs.

"I'm on Obamacare, and it's a horrible situation," said Fred Voeltner, 64, who was laid off in 2009 and now pays for his own insurance. He is frustrated by how far he has to travel for care and how much more he has to pay each visit. "I'm open-minded," he said. "But I expect to vote for a Republican."

About 40 per cent of people polled by Reuters/Ipsos said their healthcare costs rose in the past year, compared with 46 per cent who said the costs were about the same and 13 per cent who saw a decline. More than 30 per cent spent more on prescriptions than last year.

"The growth in out of pocket costs, especially the gradual growth in deductibles, comes at a time when their wages are flat," said Drew Altman, president and CEO of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which found that the average deductible for individuals was \$1,318 this year compared with \$917 in 2010.

Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont have vowed to remedy rising drug prices in their campaigns. Republican candidates have emphasized plans to repeal Obama's Affordable Care Act, which they blame for raising premiums and other costs.—Reuters

Premature babies run greater risk of developing autism



New research found that premature babies are five times more likely to develop autism. PHOTO: REUTERS

STOCKHOLM — Babies born very prematurely run a significantly higher risk of developing autism than those who are born after a full pregnancy, Swedish researchers said on Monday.

Babies who exit the womb 13 weeks or more ahead of schedule are more likely to have developed signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) by the time they reach six years of age, researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm said in a statement.

"We were surprised by how many — almost 30 per

cent — of the extremely pre-term-born children had developed ASD symptoms," Ulrika Aden, a researcher at Karolinska Institutet, said in a statement.

"Amongst children born after a full-term pregnancy, the corresponding figure is 1 per cent," Aden added.

The study, published in the journal *Cerebral Cortex*, tracked the development of 100 babies who had been born prior to week 27 of their mothers' pregnancies.

Before they had been diagnosed with ASD, the affected

children showed signs of diminished growth of the part of the brain that handles social interaction, empathy and language acquisition, the researchers said.

Aden said the results show that autism, which has been attributed to genetic factors, may stem from environmental factors surrounding one's birth.

"The brain grows best in the womb, and if the developmental environment changes too early to a life in the atmosphere, it can disrupt the organisation of cerebral networks," Aden said.—Xinhua

Wild bee populations dwindle in main US crop regions



Bees land on a sunflower to gather pollen. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — Wild bees, crucial pollinators for many crops, are on the decline in some of the main agricultural regions of the United States, according to scientists who produced the first national map of bee populations and identified

numerous trouble spots.

The researchers on Monday cited 139 counties as especially worrisome, with wild bee numbers decreasing while farmland for crops dependent on such pollinators is increasing.

The counties included agri-

cultural regions of California such as the Central Valley, the Pacific Northwest, the upper Midwest and Great Plains, west Texas and the southern Mississippi River valley.

The counties grew crops such as almonds, pumpkins, squashes, blueberries, watermelons, peaches and apples that are highly dependent on pollinators, or had large amounts of less-pollinator-dependent crops including soybeans, canola and cotton.

Taylor Ricketts, director of the University of Vermont's Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, said the 139 counties represent 39 per cent of the pollinator-dependent crop area of the United States and most likely will face inadequate pollination in the future.

"Wild bee declines may increase costs for farmers and, over time, could even destabilise

crop production," Ricketts said.

Some crops such as corn and wheat do not need pollinators.

The study estimated that wild bee numbers diminished in 23 per cent of the continental United States between 2008 and 2013 in a trend driven by conversion of their natural habitat into farmland including corn for biofuel production.

Pesticides and diseases were cited as other factors behind the declines among the roughly 4,000 US species of wild bees.

"Wild bees help pollinate many of our most nutritious crops, support natural ecosystems and contribute over \$3 billion to the US economy each year," Ricketts said.

Their decline may prompt greater dependence on commercial honeybee colonies for polli-

nating crops, but honeybee numbers also are falling, added Gund Institute researcher Insu Koh, the lead author of the study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"Our results highlight the need for strategies to maintain pollinator populations in farmland, and the importance of conservation programmes that provide flowering habitat that can support wild bees and other pollinators," said Michigan State University entomologist Rufus Isaacs, who heads the US Department of Agriculture-funded Integrated Crop Pollination Project.

The study followed a 2014 memorandum by President Barack Obama creating a task force to study pollinator losses.

The task force in May called for preserving wide swathes of pollinator habitats.—Reuters

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မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း
ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရေးကော်မရှင်
အမှတ် ၂၄၉၊ သိမ်ဖြူလမ်း၊ မင်္ဂလာတောင်ညွန့်မြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။

ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရေးကော်မရှင်သည် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း (ဗဟို)အလုပ်အမှုဆောင်အဖွဲ့ (၂၀၁၆-၂၀၁၈) ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကို ပွင့်လင်းမြင်သာမှုရှိပြီး တရားမျှတမှုရှိစေရန် ဆောင်ရွက်လျက်ရှိပါသည်။ အဆိုပါ ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကို ၂၀၁၆ခုနှစ် ဇန်နဝါရီလ ၁၆ ရက် စနေနေ့ (ဦးဝန်နာရီမှ ၁၆:၀၀) နာရီထိ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ ဆရာဝန်အသင်း ခန်းမဆောင်(ဘီ)၌ ကျင်းပမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

၁။ ဆန္ဒမဲပေးပိုင်ခွင့်ရှိသူများ၏အရည်အချင်းသတ်မှတ်ချက်များ -

(က) ပြည်ထောင်စုသမ္မတ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်၏ နိုင်ငံသားဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ခ) မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း၏ ရာသက်ပန်အသင်းဝင် (သို့မဟုတ်) အသင်းဝင်ကြေး အကြွေးမရှိသည့် အသင်းဝင် ဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ဂ) ပြစ်မှုကင်းရှင်းသူ ဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ဃ) ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ လုပ်ထုံးလုပ်နည်းစည်းကမ်းများကို တိကျစွာလိုက်နာနိုင်သူဖြစ်ရမည်။

၂။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း (ဗဟို)အလုပ်အမှုဆောင်အဖွဲ့ဝင်အဖြစ် အရွေးချယ်ခံမည့်သူများ၏ အရည်အချင်း သတ်မှတ်ချက်များ -

(က) ပြည်ထောင်စုသမ္မတ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်၏ နိုင်ငံသားဖြစ်ပြီး မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတွင် နေထိုင်သူဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ခ) သက်တမ်းရှိ(ဆ) လက်ဝယ်ရှိသူ (သို့မဟုတ်) မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆေးကောင်စီ၏မှတ်ပုံတင် လက်ဝယ်ရှိသူဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ဂ) မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း၏ ရာသက်ပန်အသင်းဝင် (သို့မဟုတ်) အသင်းဝင်ကြေး အကြွေးမရှိသည့် အသင်းဝင် ဖြစ်ရမည်။

(ဃ) ပြစ်မှုကင်းရှင်းသူ ဖြစ်ရမည်။

(င) မိမိဆန္ဒအလျောက် ဆရာဝန်အသင်း၏တာဝန်များကို ထမ်းဆောင်နိုင်သူ ဖြစ်ရမည်။

(စ) နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီတစ်ခုခု၏ဗဟိုအလုပ်အမှုဆောင်ကော်မတီတွင်လည်းကောင်း၊ လွှတ်တော်တစ်ရပ်ရပ်တွင် လွှတ်တော် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်အဖြစ် တာဝန်ထမ်းဆောင်နေသူ လည်းကောင်း မဖြစ်စေရ။

(ဆ) မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်းမှလည်းကောင်း၊ အသင်းနှင့်ဆက်သွယ်နေသည့်လုပ်ငန်းများမှလည်းကောင်း၊ ပုံမှန်လစာ နှင့်ပုံမှန်ချီးမြှင့်ငွေ ခံစားနေသူ မဖြစ်စေရ။

(ဇ) မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဆရာဝန်အသင်း၏ ဖွဲ့စည်းပုံအခြေခံစည်းမျဉ်းစည်းကမ်းများကို လေးစားလိုက်နာသူဖြစ်ရမည်။

၃။ ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရာတွင် လျှို့ဝှက်မဲပေးစနစ်ကျင့်သုံးမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး မဲအရေအတွက် အများဆုံးရရှိသူ(၂၀) ဦး ကိုရွေးချယ်ပေးမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဗဟိုအလုပ်အမှုဆောင်အဖွဲ့ဝင်အဖြစ် ရွေးချယ်ခံရန် ၁၅-၁၂-၂၀၁၅ မှ ၄-၁-၂၀၁၆ ရက်အတွင်း ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ကော်မရှင်ရုံးခန်းတွင် နေ့စဉ် နံနက် ၁၀:၀၀ နာရီမှ ညနေ ၄:၀၀ နာရီအတွင်း (ရုံးပိတ်ရက်များအပါအဝင်) ဆန္ဒပြု လွှာပုံစံနှင့် ကိုယ်ရေးမှတ်တမ်းပုံစံကို လာရောက်ထုတ်ယူ၍ ၄-၁-၂၀၁၆ ညနေ (၄:၀၀)နာရီ နောက်ဆုံးထားပြီးလျှောက် ထားနိုင်ကြောင်း အသိပေးအပ်ပါသည်။

ဗဟိုအလုပ်အမှုဆောင်အဖွဲ့ဝင်အဖြစ် ရွေးချယ်ခံမည့် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းစာရင်းနှင့် ၎င်းတို့၏ကိုယ်ရေး မှတ်တမ်းများကို ၉-၁-၂၀၁၆ ရက် နံနက်ပိုင်းမှစတင်၍ ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲ ကျင်းပရေးကော်မရှင်ရုံး၌ ကြေညာထား မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ထို့အပြင် ရွေးချယ်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာမူဝါဒနှင့်ပတ်သက်၍ မရှင်းလင်းသောအချက်များရှိပါကအပတ်စဉ် တနင်္လာနေ့မှ ဗုဒ္ဓဟူးနေ့ထိ မွန်းလွဲ ၁:၀၀ နာရီမှ ညနေ ၄:၀၀နာရီအတွင်း ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲ ကျင်းပရေးကော်မရှင်ရုံးခန်းတွင် လာရောက်တွေ့ဆုံ မေးမြန်းနိုင်ပါသည်။

ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ
ရွေးချယ်တင်မြှောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရေးကော်မရှင်

Britain to deploy military personnel to Afghan Helmand Province

LONDON — Britain said yesterday it had sent military personnel to the southern Afghanistan province of Helmand following reports that the district capital Sangin was on the verge of falling to Taliban forces.

Helmand's governor said on Monday Afghan police were holding out against Taliban fighters who had surrounded their compound and the district governor's building in Sangin but roads into the town were completely controlled by the Taliban.

He warned the situation risked slipping entirely out of control. Britain, which ended combat operations in Afghanistan last year but has about 450 troops there to mentor and support the Afghan army and security forces, said a small number of personnel had been deployed to Helmand in an advisory role.

London's Times newspaper reported that a unit of about 30 soldiers from Britain's elite Special Air Service (SAS) and up to 60 US special forces had been sent to bolster the Afghan forces to defend the town, but the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said the team would not be engaged in fighting.

"These personnel are part of a larger NATO team, which is providing advice to the Afghan National Army," an MoD spokeswoman said. "They are not deployed in a combat role and will not be deployed outside the camp."

Helmand, a major centre of opium cultivation and a traditional Taliban heartland, has been the scene of fierce fighting for months as the insurgents ramp up attacks.

British and American forces struggled for years to control the volatile province, and many of the more than 450 British servicemen and women killed in Afghanistan lost their lives fighting there. Last week, the Pentagon warned of deteriorating security in Afghanistan and assessed the performance of Afghan security forces as "uneven and mixed".

Six American troops were killed in Afghanistan on Monday when a suicide bomber on a motorbike struck their patrol near Bagram air base.—Reuters



An Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers drive at an outpost in Helmand Province, on 20 December . PHOTO: REUTERS

MGJEA congratulates **KBZ BANK / KBZ GROUP** on the latter's receiving of international awards in 2015



The following awards are presented by World Finance, England.

- (1) Best Commercial Bank in Myanmar 2015**
- (2) Best Retail Bank in Myanmar 2015**
- (3) Banker of the Year in Asia 2015 (Mr. Aung Ko Win - Chairman, KBZ Bank, Myanmar, Asia)**



Business Initiative Directions from Spain has presented the following award in Geneva, Switzerland

- (4) International Star Award Geneva 2015, KBZ BANK - Myanmar**



The Banker from England has presented the award

- (5) Best Bank of the Year in Myanmar 2015**



ASEAN Business Awards (Winner for the whole ASEAN)

- (6) Woman Entrepreneur of the Year 2015 for Vice Chairman Daw Nan Than Htwe**



The Asian Banker

- (7) Best Core Banking Implementation Project for Emerging Bank**



United Nations
Global Compact

The Global Compact Asian Banker

- (8) A member of the United Nations Global Compact**



Asian Banking and Finance Institution from Singapore also presented

- (9) Best Domestic Retail Bank of the Year in Myanmar 2015**
- (10) Best Credit Card Initiative of the Year in Myanmar 2015**



Euromoney from England presented the following awards

- (11) Best Bank in Myanmar 2015**
- (12) Euromoney Achievement Award for CSR 2015**

MGJEA takes great pride in **KBZ BANK / KBZ GROUP's receiving of the aforesaid awards.**



Chairman and Working Committee
Myanmar Gems and Jewellery
Entrepreneurs Association (MGJEA)

Actor Nicolas Cage returns stolen dinosaur skull he bought

NEW YORK — Hollywood actor Nicolas Cage has agreed to turn over a rare stolen dinosaur skull he bought for \$276,000 to US authorities so it can be returned to the Mongolian government.

The office of Preet Bharara, the US attorney in Manhattan, filed a civil forfeiture complaint last week to take possession of the *Tyrannosaurus bataar* skull, which will be repatriated to Mongolia.

The lawsuit did not specifically name Cage as the owner, but Cage's publicist confirmed that the actor bought the skull in March 2007 from a Beverly Hills gallery, I.M. Chait.

The "National Treasure" actor is not accused of wrongdoing, and authorities said he voluntarily agreed to turn over the skull after learning of the circumstances.

Alex Schack, a publicist for Cage, said in an email that the actor received a certificate of authenticity from the gallery and was first contacted by US authorities in July 2014, when the Department of Homeland Security informed him that the skull might have been stolen.

Following a determination by investigators that the skull in fact had been taken illegally from Mongolia, Cage agreed to hand it over, Schack said.

Cage outbid fellow movie star Leonardo DiCaprio for the skull, according to prior news reports.



Actor Nicolas Cage. PHOTO: REUTERS

The I.M. Chait gallery had previously purchased and sold an illegally smuggled dinosaur skeleton from convicted paleontologist Eric Prokopi, whom Bharara called a "one-man black market in prehistoric fossils."

The Chait gallery has not been accused of wrongdoing. A representative did not return a request for comment on Monday.

It was unclear whether the Nicolas Cage skull was specifically connected to Prokopi, who pleaded guilty in December 2012 to smuggling a *Tyrannosaurus bataar* skeleton out of Mongolia's Gobi desert and was later sentenced to three months in prison.

As part of his guilty plea, Prokopi helped prosecutors recover at least 17 other fossils.

Assistant US Attorney Martin Bell, who prosecuted Prokopi, was also the lead government lawyer in the Cage case, according to court records.

The *Tyrannosaurus bataar*, like its more famous relative *Tyrannosaurus rex*, was a carnivore that lived approximately 70 million years ago.

Its remains have been discovered only in Mongolia, which criminalized the export of dinosaur fossils in 1924.

Since 2012, Bharara's office has recovered more than a dozen Mongolian fossils, including three full *Tyrannosaurus bataar* skeletons.

"Each of these fossils represents a culturally and scientifically important artifact looted from its rightful owner," Bharara said last week.—*Reuters*

Adele spends fourth week atop Billboard chart, earlier album sees boost

LOS ANGELES — British singer Adele extended her reign atop the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart for a fourth consecutive week on Monday, and saw a resurgence in sales for her previous album as well.

Adele's record-setting "25" album sold another 728,000 copies, 297,000 songs and was streamed 8.4 million times in the past week, totaling 825,000 units according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan. Adele's 2011 album "21," with which the singer swept six Grammy awards, climbed four spots to No. 10 this week with sales of 49,000 units.

The soaring popularity for the 27-year-old singer's music comes

as tickets for her 56-date North America tour, her first in five years, sold out in minutes when they went on sale last week. No new entries cracked into the top 10 of the Billboard 200 albums chart this week, as Adele's "25" outsold other artists including Justin Bieber's "Purpose," which climbed one spot to No. 2, and Coldplay's "A Head Full of Dreams," which dropped from No. 2 to No. 7.

On the Digital Songs chart, which measures online sales of singles, "Mary Did You Know" by Jordan Smith, the winner of NBC's reality singing show "The Voice," topped the chart with 161,000 downloads, pushing Adele's ballad "Hello" to No. 2.—*Reuters*

Katy Perry would have been a fashion stylist if not singer

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Katy Perry says if not a singer she would have loved to work as a fashion stylist.

The 31-year-old "Roar" hit-maker still loves dressing up her friends and desires to work in the fashion industry, reported *People* magazine. "I'd probably want to work in the fashion industry. I would probably be a stylist. I love creating looks; I do it with all my girlfriends," Perry said.

When it comes to her looks the songstress likes to go bold.

"I like to play and have fun. When I create a look it's a really big look, usually," she said.—*PTI*



PHOTO: REUTERS



Taylor Swift shares video of 1989 world tour concert film

LONDON — Fresh off of her 1989 world tour, Taylor Swift has released a new film documenting the spectacular concerts.

1989 World Tour Live hit Apple Music website and two teaser clips have emerged online, reported Digital Spy.

One is footage of an epic solo piano version of her song "Wildest Dreams" from a show.

The next shows Swift backstage with her two cats Meredith Grey and Olivia Benson.

She unsuccessfully attempts to make Olivia sit on a stool like a dog, while both very subtly plot an escape from their owner's arms, with Meredith trying to bite her and meowing loudly.

Swift recently opened up about the downside to fame.

The singer recently finished her 1989 world tour in Melbourne.—*PTI*

Finding the 'Joy' in Jennifer Lawrence

NEW YORK — Award-winning director David O. Russell's latest movie "Joy" is about a woman finding happiness in life despite everyday obstacles.

But the word might also be used to sum up Russell's relationship with Jennifer Lawrence, the actress he calls his muse, who has starred in his last three movies.

Russell, who directed Lawrence in her 2012 Oscar-winning role as a young widow in "Silver Linings Playbook" and in 2014's "American Hustle," said that as an actress and a person, she inspires him to take risks with filmmaking.

"She wants to go to places that are scary for her and do things that haven't been seen. She is smart and challenging but she also inspires me to make something better. I am happy to explore things the way she wants to do them, and she also will trust what I want to do.

"It's a deal we make together that we're going to jump off this waterfall and give it everything we've got," Russell told Reuters.

"Joy," out in US movie theaters on 25 December, is expected

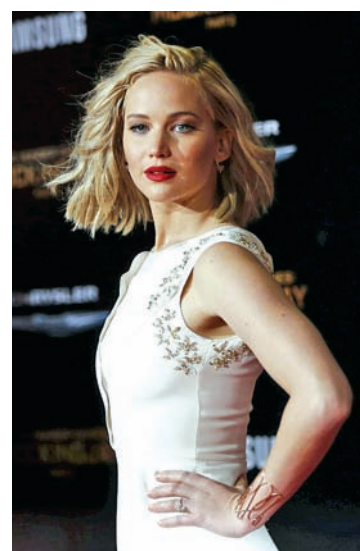


PHOTO: REUTERS

to bring Lawrence a fourth Oscar nomination in as many years. It's inspired by the true story of Joy Mangano, the New York inventor of the Miracle Mop who overcame an early divorce and life as a single mother to become a successful 1990s businesswoman.

The movie is the first time Lawrence, or any female character, is front and center of a Russell

film, and the first time the 25-year-old star plays someone who is not crazy.

"It was a challenge for her to play somebody who had become so powerless for the first half of the movie, when you're caring for others but have lost yourself.

"This is a very inspiring story that we don't have in the world right now, of a woman that is ordinary, that carries dignity and power in this way. We thought that was cool and kind of bad-ass. So we said, 'Yeah, let's do that,'" Russell said.

The movie also reunites Russell with Bradley Cooper and Robert De Niro for a third time. Russell says all three actors are muses of sorts for him — but Lawrence has something extra special.

"I find her to be very real and unpretentious and alive and messy. Somebody who really, really loves life, is very passionate about it," he said. "I will always want to think of some (project) for her, but you've got to let it happen when it's supposed to happen and be magical."—*Reuters*

Paris retailer settles with Beyonce, Rihanna, others over image rights



Singer Rihanna, pictured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute Gala 2015 in Manhattan, on 4 May 2015, is on this year's best-dressed list. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — A Paris clothing retailer said it had settled a right of publicity dispute with Beyonce, Rihanna, Kanye West, Jay Z and Pharell Williams, although the terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

The pop stars jointly sued ElevenParis in October, ac-

curring the firm of "brazenly" selling shirts, hats, backpacks, mobile phone cases and other items featuring their faces without permission. ElevenParis, which owns a small chain of shops, said in a statement that an "amicable agreement" had been found.—Reuters

Santa Claus, out of the red, set to get more visitors

HELSINKI — Santa Claus can expect a flood of visitors to his Lapland home in Finland over Christmas after a new owner cleared an outstanding tax bill, saving the company that runs him from bankruptcy.

A sharp drop in visitors from recession-hit Russia had suggested that Dianordia Oy, the company behind the Santa Claus Office attraction, might be forced out of business.

But since Lapland Safaris, which organises reindeer and snowmobile safaris, stepped in with a share-buy and rescue package last August bookings to visit Santa have surged, suggesting a bumper season this Christmas, tourist officials said.

Around 80,000 visitors are expected to visit the office in Rovaniemi, which declares itself Santa's official hometown, in the six week high season around Christmas, up from about 65,000 last year. The attraction offers a chance to be photographed with Santa and is a central site of several Christmas-themed businesses in Rovaniemi. It had some 300,000 visitors overall

last year and revenues of about 2 million euros (\$2.18 million). "It looks like the unpleasant incident turned into a boost and a very good season," Sanna Karkkainen, managing director in Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing, said.

"We lost some Russian travellers, something like 30 percent in total. But we managed to get new customers from Asia, for

example from China, Singapore, Australia, and Japan." The biggest European customers are Britons, Italians and French.

Lapland tourism is a rare bright spot in Finnish economy, which has contracted for three years in a row and is currently performing worse than any other euro zone country except Greece.—Reuters



General view of the Santa Claus Office in Rovaniemi, Arctic Circle, Finland, on 20 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

mitv Myanmar International

(23-12-2015 07:00 am~ 24-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

- 07:03 Am News
- 07:26 Am Image Of The Monks
- 07:42 Am Shop Shop Shop - Bogyoke Market
- 07:54 Am Will you feed the pigeons?
- 08:03 Am News
- 08:25 Am Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-3)
- 08:37 Am Products Of Myanmar - Seashells Products
- 08:55 Am Goldsmith
- 09:03 Am News
- 09:26 Am Horse Cart Driver
- 09:35 Am Shrinking Footprints
- 10:03 Am News
- 10:26 Am School For the Blind (Kye Myin Dine)
- 10:52 Am A Nun's Creation in Fruit Carving

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

Prime Time

- 07:03 Pm News
- 07:26 Pm A Journey To Southern Shan State (Ep-1)
- 07:47 Pm Maha Waiyan Bontha, Communal Temple
- 08:03 Pm News
- 08:26 Pm Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP- 2) Myanmar Chinthe (Myanmar Lion)
- 08:40 Pm Young Artist: Maw Thu Da Nu
- 08:46 Pm Diary of a Fisherman

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

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

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(23-12-2015, Wednesday)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 am • Pritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw 7:35 am • Money Talk Myanmar 8:35 am • People's Talks 9:35 am • Science and Technology Programme 10:35 am • Meet The Successful 12:50 pm • TV Drama Series 1:30 pm • TV Drama Series 2:10 pm • Classical Song 2:35 pm • Myanmar Traditional Boxing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3:35 pm • Money Talks Myanmar 6:35 pm • Real Story Real Movie 7:15 pm • TV Drama Series 8:00 pm • News/ International News/ Weather Report 8:35 pm • Documentary 8:50 pm • Documentary (ASEAN) 9:00 pm • News • TV Drama Series • Fine Arts- Bosom of Dramatic Performance |
|---|--|

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(23-12-2015, Wednesday)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 am • Songs Of Yester Years 6:25 am • Pyi Thu Ni Ti 6:40 am • Fashion Show 7:00 am • TV Drama Series 8:35 am • Musical Programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:45 am • Catch Asia News (Part-22) 8:55 am • Pyi Thu Ni Ti 9:15 am • Orchestra Concert Myanmar 9:45 am • Myanmar Movie (Black & White) |
|--|--|

Vancouver invest millions to protect historic buildings in Chinatown

VANCOUVER — The city of Vancouver in western Canada has recently approved a plan to invest millions of dollars into the city's Chinatown in a bid to preserve the community's past and future.

Among the rehabilitation plan are 12 of the most important heritage buildings in Chinatown in the east part of downtown Vancouver.

Vancouver City Councillor and acting mayor, Raymond Louie, told Xinhua on Monday that he was busy with helping to lead the project with community organisations and donors. According to Louie, many buildings in Chinatown are in dire need of repairs and many Chinese businesses and residents have moved elsewhere. "It's lost the vibrancy and the energy it once had in terms of both the young, the old, and the commerce that would interact on a daily basis here," he said.

Many of Chinatown's most important buildings and businesses are owned by social and cultural organisations, called benevolent societies. Some of these societies were created by the immigrant Chinese more than a century ago to provide social services to their own clans and to others in the community.—Xinhua

Wenger calms title talk as Arsenal beat Man City

LONDON — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said it was too soon to talk about his team winning the Premier League title after they beat one of their principal title race rivals, Manchester City, 2-1 on Monday.

Goals from Theo Walcott and Olivier Giroud before half-time allowed Arsenal to move to within two points of surprise leaders Leicester City and four clear of City ahead of the busy holiday fixture list.

With champions Chelsea seemingly out of the picture after a calamitous start, Manchester United wobbling and Liverpool

also off the pace, talk of a first Premier League title since 2003-04 is rife in north London.

Wenger, however, is not getting ahead of himself.

“It’s too early to say we can win the league, but it strengthens our belief,” he told reporters.

“You realise you earn your right to win these games and for us it is important that we realise that we have to be ready to fight like that in every single game.

“But it is a significant game because when you look at Manchester City and the quality they have on the pitch, we know at the end they will be there fighting for

the championship.”

He revealed that Mesut Ozil, who set up both Arsenal’s goals, had barely trained all week because of illness.

“He had a chest infection for the week and was in bed basically,” Wenger added. “So for a guy that could not prepare or work well he has done well physically.”

He also praised the German playmaker’s growing influence as he returns to the kind of form he displayed when he first signed for the Gunners from Real Madrid in 2013.

He has been provided more assists (15) than any other player

in England so far this season.

“He is much more mature, much more keen to take responsibility, I personally believe he has developed his physical attributes, his physical commitment. You see his desire to win,” Wenger said.—Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

New design picked for 2020 Olympics stadium following cost dispute



Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games emblems are displayed at Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building in Tokyo, on 24 July 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — A proposal by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma has been selected as the new design for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics main stadium following the scrapping of the initial design by an Iraqi-British architect, the government announced yesterday.

It said Kuma’s team has received the green light for its “Plan A” blueprint, which cites a total construction cost of 149 billion yen (\$1.23 billion), far below the estimated 265.1 billion yen for the controversial scrapped design by Zaha Hadid.

The three-tier, 80,000-seat stadium will be built by a joint venture led by construction giant Taisei Corp., which won the bid

to erect the facility.

In August, the Japanese government had put a 155 billion yen cap on the cost of the new Olympic stadium after abandoning Hadid’s plan amid an outcry over the estimated cost, which had nearly doubled from the initially projected 130 billion yen.

Kuma is planning to keep his budget under control and speed up project delivery with a simple construction method and work efficiency.

He said he had an athlete-first mindset when determining the location of the auxiliary track and locker rooms, stating he wanted to design a stadium that would last 100 years.

“I want to get opinions from athletes and others, and make this a stadium for everyone,” the 61-year-old Kuma said.

Kuma, who is currently a professor at the Graduate School of Architecture at the University of Tokyo, has won numerous international architectural awards. Among his major works in Japan are the Nezu Museum (Tokyo), Suntory Museum of Art (Tokyo) and LVMH Group Japan headquarters (Osaka).

“We feel very honored to have won priority negotiating rights for an extremely important national project,” a Taisei Corp. spokesperson said.

After a panel of seven Ja-

pan Sport Council members met Saturday for hearings with two bidders, they gave Kuma and his partners 610 points out of a perfect 980, while the other bidder — a three-way joint venture between Takenaka Corp., Shimizu Corp. and Obayashi Corp. — scored 602 points for “Plan B.”

Evaluation was based on nine categories associated with cost, construction period and execution plan.

Kuma’s proposal features a facility that is 5 meters lower in height than rival architect Toyoo Ito’s, with a plant-covered facade. It has been designed to maintain harmony with the natural landscape of the neighbouring Meiji Jingu Gaien area.

According to Plan A, construction work is planned for completion by November 2019, two months earlier than the deadline given by the International Olympic Committee.

“Since the withdrawal (of Hadid’s design) in July, the panel has taken a leading role in the new development process,” Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said.

The prime minister called the winning design a “wonderful proposal” that will “meet our demand for construction cost and schedule.”

Abe also voiced his hopes that the new facility would “leave a proud legacy for the next generation.”

Ito’s rejected design included walls formed by 72 Japanese-made wooden pillars spaced evenly around the stadium, with a construction cost estimated at 149.7 billion yen.—Kyodo News

Watford should be wary of Chelsea, says Ake

LONDON — Watford should not get carried away with their recent strong run and be on their toes when they travel to Stamford Bridge to take on champions Chelsea in the Premier League on Saturday, defender Nathan Ake has said.

The Hornets have won their last four league games and that form has propelled them to seventh in the table just a point off the European spots. “This season has been crazy. Our position is deserved because we’re playing well, we’ve worked really hard to be here and we just have to keep going,” Ake, who scored his first senior goal in Sunday’s 3-0 win over Liverpool, told British media.

“We’ve got a lot of confidence now but we can’t get too much confidence and play easy, like we’re a bigger team.

“I think Chelsea are still Chelsea, they’re a top team. We’re still on the bottom, and need to play like that as well.”

Ake agreed to a season-long loan spell with the Hornets in the close-season due to lack of first-team opportunities with parent club Chelsea, who are languishing at 15th spot. The 20-year-old believes a change of manager at Chelsea, after Guus Hiddink took over from Jose Mourinho, will not see his loan spell cut short.—Reuters