

President urges political forces to come together to bring reform processes to new levels, overcome challenges

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Jan — *The following is an unofficial translation of the message sent by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein on the occasion of the 67th Anniversary Independence Day.—Ed*

I would like to convey my warmest wishes to all the national people residing across the country on this auspicious occasion of the 67th anniversary of Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

A retrospective review of our history will reveal that our ancestors have settled on this land and lived under own monarchies and traditions for thousands of years, standing tall and proud in the international community. Myanmar, endowed with rich resources and high cultural standards, both overground and underground, lost its sovereignty in 1885 and became a colony.

Throughout the colonial period, Myanmar had had its resources overexploited, its religion and culture ill-treated, its literature and language restricted, and its national unity hampered by the policy of divide and rule, an administrative system that favoured the bureaucratic mechanism.

Aroused by patriotism and nationalism, all the ethnic groups across the country took up any weapons they could lay their hands on to fight back colonialists and fascists in their respective regions. A span of 67 years has passed since their steadfast determination led to winning back independence.

For our country to be able to continue to stand as a modern, prosperous, sovereign state in the international community, all national races born and bred here must safeguard the hard-won independence and hold in high esteem the national causes such as non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty through successive generations.

It is easy to notice that achievements have been made to some extent in all aspects of ongoing political reform processes. A perfect example of this is a new breed of political culture born out of efforts exerted on national reconciliation and peace talks. That new

political culture is to find a solution through negotiations and has kept democratic transition on right tract to date. Collective participation is of the essence to maintain the momentum.

The government is not the only player in all the efforts that have led to successes in reform processes. Political forces such as parliaments, political parties, the armed forces and the entire people, all are important contributors to this context.

This highlights the importance of all political forces coming together to bring the reform processes to new levels and overcome challenges.

Our country has proved its capability and efficiency of



shouldering the responsibility of the ASEAN chair and implementing political reforms successfully in a short time, a factor that has drawn greater trust from the international community. With favourable conditions and good prospects for national stability and development in place, the entire national people should lend themselves in earnest to nation building.

All nationalities should join hands in deterring possible threats to the security of the country and at the same time make concerted efforts to two public desires—stability and socioeconomic development. Thus, it is incumbent on the entire population to adhere to the four objectives of the 67th anniversary of Independence Day in turning our country into a modern, developed democracy.

These objectives are: all the national people to strive together for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty; all the national people to live together in the Union forever through weal and woe; all the national people to participate in efforts for ceasing armed conflicts and gaining genuine and lasting peace; and all the national people to make great stride in building a developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation.



Meaningful discussion should be based on negotiation and flexibility

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham hosts dinner to ethnic armed group leaders

NAY PYI TAW, 3 Jan — Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham hosted a dinner to armed group leaders who are gathering here to attend Grand Military Review of 67th anniversary of Independence Day.

The dinner at the Hotel Max was joined by the leaders of the KNU, KNU/KNLA(PC), DKBA, UWSA, NDAA, NMSP, ALP, SSPP/SSA, RCSS/SSA, NSC-N(K), ABSDF and PNLO.

Vice president said that it is the time to say Mingalabar during the New Year period 2015; the three years have passed in peace-making processes, reaching a close hand to lasting peace; there have

been certain agreements despite some pending disagreements due to expectation for peace by relevant parties.

Dr Sai Mauk Kham said he is of the view that some discussions were influenced by emotion and desire, instead of sensible and pragmatic approaches, causing underlying issues for conflicts.

He also noted worldly man cannot free from emotions such as enjoyment, sadness, hatred and ignorance resulted from the happenings, saying that, peace talks should not be dominated by emotions.

Vice president remarked a meaningful discussion should be

based on negotiation and flexibility, adding that keeping the view in which one party has to follow other's order would not find a solution for peace.

He then suggested peace-making process should go ahead in 2015 with optimistic views, wider perspectives and high expectations.

Saw Mutu Sae Phoe, chairman of KNU, accepted the presents of vice president on behalf of ethnic armed group leaders.

The dinner was attended by chairman of working committee U Aung Min, U Thein Zaw, union ministers and senior government officials.

MNA



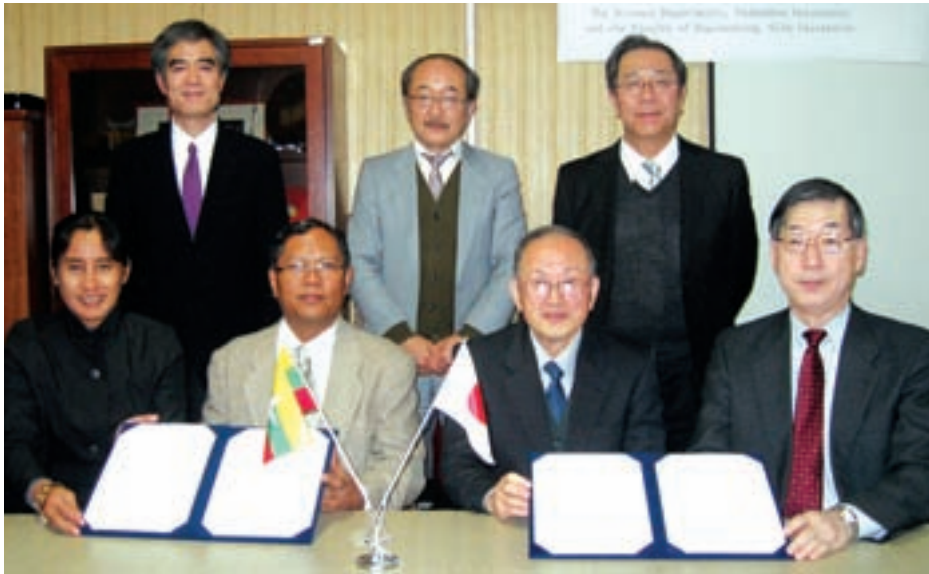
Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham gives presents to Saw Mutu Sae Phoe for the leaders of ethnic armed groups.—MNA

Yadanabon University, Gifu University of Japan sign MoU on exchange of students

MANDALAY, 3 Jan—Yadanabon University in Mandalay Region and Gifu University of Japan signed an MoU on exchange of students and researchers and doing research works at Gifu University in Japan on 16 December 2014.

Rector Dr Khin Maung Oo of Yadanabon University and Vice President Dr Fumiaki Suzhki signed the MoU. Rector Dr Khin Maung Oo, Physics Lecturer Dr Yi Yi Oo and a representative of Meiktila University attended the GIFU UNIVERSITY's GU-GLEE (Global Environment & Energy Course) with the participation of 24 partner universities from 14 countries including the US, Australia and Korea.

After the meeting, they



signed an agreement on promotion of cooperation between partner universities and Gifu University, sending students and researchers to Gifu University and setting up of a research networks among the

universities.

According to the agreement, Gifu University will exchange five Japanese students and five students each from partner universities to confer master degrees on them. Stu-

dents and researchers may apply for Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Zoology and Botany subjects to attend Gifu University.

*Min Htet Aung
(Mandalay Sub-printing House)*

School Family Day kicks off in Mandalay Region



MANDALAY, 3 Jan—The School Family Day of Mandalay Region for 2014-15 academic year was kicked off at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay, on 2 January.

Chief Minister of Mandalay Region U Ye

Myint delivered an address at the ceremony. After visiting the educative booths, the chief minister presented prizes to outstanding teachers and students.

At the ceremony, the chief minister awarded three students who stood first in matriculation ex-

amination in 2014 in Mandalay Region, outstanding school heads for greening schools and environs and Pynnya Tazaung award winners. Officials also gave prizes to the winners in the essay contests to mark the 47th Anniversary ASEAN Day and International Day

of Persons with Disabilities, outstanding awards in English and Mathematics, winners in the National ICT Award 2014 contest.

Students performed dances and Wushu sport skills.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

MCDC, advisory group emphasize development of Mandalay City

MANDALAY, 3 Jan—Mandalay City Development Committee and its advisory group held a coordination meeting 1/2015 at the city hall in Mandalay on 2 January.

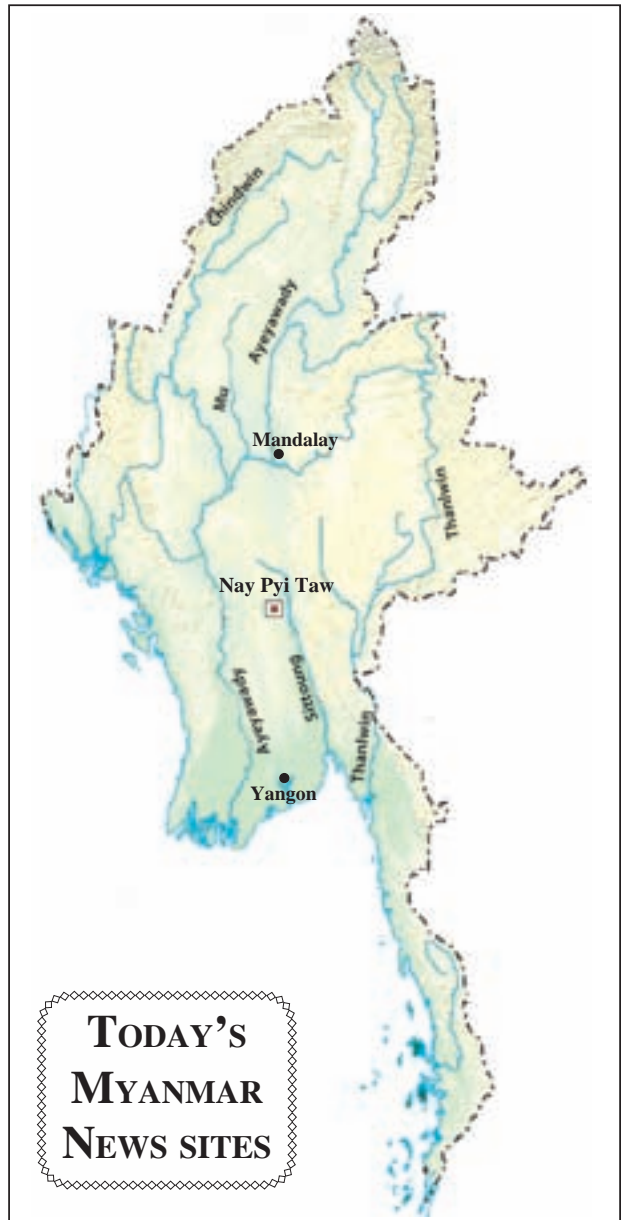
On behalf of the mayor, the secretary of the MCDC extended greetings.

Leader of the advisory group U Po Myint explained progress of the

group in its two-year term and making efforts for development of the city.

The secretary of the committee invited local authorities, supportive committees and social organizations to participate in upgrading the city. He called for taking action against those took bribes.

*Tin Maung
(Mandalay)*



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Plan to hold meeting of UNDP directors in Mandalay

MANDALAY, 3 Jan—Chief Minister of Mandalay Region U Ye Myint received Country Director Mr Toily Kurbanov of UNDP Myanmar at his office on 1 January.

They discussed holding the meeting of UNDP

directors from Asia and Pacific region in Mandalay in February 2015.

It was also attended by region ministers and UNDP region coordinator U Aung Lin of Mandalay.

*Maung Pyi Thu
(Mandalay)*



President confers religious titles on Venerable Monks at home and abroad

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Jan — U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has conferred religious titles on Venerable Monks, Buddhist missionaries and donors of the Four Prerequisites under Notification Number 1/2015 on 4 January 2015. According to the notification, Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title went to five monks; Aggamaha Pandita Title to 14 monks including Bhaddanta Swamdas Parahmaharuz Mingalakyen (Wara Ponna Mahathera), Watpaknang Monastery, Phasikyarein Township, Bangkok, Thailand and Bhaddanta Konnanya, Watsaimong (Myanmar) Monastery, Chiang Mai, Thailand; Maha Dhammakathika Bahujanahitadhara Title to one monk; Dhammakathika Bahujanahitadhara Title to two monks; Agga Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita Title to 13 monks and two nuns including Dr Bhaddanta Dhammasami, Oxford Buddha Vihara Monastery, 356-358, Abingdon Street, Oxford, Britain; Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita Title to nine monks and a nun; Ganthavacaka Pandita Title to 19 monks and three nuns; Abhidhaja

Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Title to 4 monks; Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Title to 23 monks including Ven Dattajeevo Bhikkhu, Wam Parah DhammaKayra Monastery, Patonthani Province, Thailand, Bhaddanta Kitimar, Sasana Hitakari Vipasana Monastery, Sushetwa village, Razolhtawli township, Ringamarti District, Bangladesh, Bhaddanta Ethaka, Sondhara Rama Bramar Vihara Monastery Los Angeles, USA, Dr Bhaddanta Revata, Dhamma Suka Monastery, Norworth, California, USA and Ven Ajahn Khemadhammo, Forest Hermitage, Fulbrook Lane, Lower Fulbrook, Warwickshire CV 35 8 AS, United Kingdom; Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Title to 21 monks and three nuns including Bhaddanta Yin Le, White Horse Monastery, Laoyang Town, Henan Province, the People's Republic of China; Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Title to 32 monks, four nuns and a lay person including Bhaddanta Sasana, Sasana Centre, 26 A, Avalon 19, Taihang Road, Hong Kong, PRC, Bhaddanta Okkansasara, Buddhist Missionary Monastery, F-4, BL-

1, EDIF IAO HEI, 95 RUA KUN IAM TONG, Macao, PRC, Bhaddanta Fu Jue @ Zhi Ru, Da Bei Chan Si Temple, Tian Jing, PRC, Dr Most Ven Thich Nhat Tu, Zuc Ngoc Temple, Ho Chi Ming, Vietnam, Most Ven Bounthan Pounyakamo, Paphonepao Temple, Louangphabang District, Louangphabang Province, Lao PDR, and Dr Vapolar Vimala Nyana, Ginga Rama Maha Vihara, Colombo, Sri Lanka; Agga Maha Kammathanaçariya Title to four monks; Maha Kammathanaçariya Title to three monks; Kammathanaçariya Title to three monks; Agga Maha Thirithudhamma Manijotadhara Title to two lay persons; Agga Maha Thirithudhamma Theingi to five lay persons; Thirithudhamma Manijotadhara Title to three lay persons; Thirithudhamma Theingi Title to three lay persons; Thihathudhamma Manijotadhara Title to two lay persons; Thihathudhamma Theingi Title to four lay persons; Thudhamma Manijotadhara Title to five lay persons; and Thudhamma Theingi Title to 16 lay persons.

GNLM

A&I minister takes part in broadcast seeding in intensive farming

NAY PYI TAW, 3 Jan — Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing scattered paddy seeds at a modern farm here Saturday, after prize-giving ceremony of composers for the theme of agricultural sector.

At the ceremony, U Myint Hlaing said that government has adopted five reform plans for development of agricultural sector which have turned out fruitful results for local farmers.

He said that modernization of agricultural sector has gained momentum across the country to ensure realization of intensive farming from traditional agriculture during the remaining one year term of present government.

Myanmar has gained agricultural loans and grants from international agencies such as the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Korea International Cooperation Agency, as well as from the partner countries.

The minister thanked artistes and musicians for their roles to support agricultural sector with their songs and music.

U Tin Oo Lay, chairman of Myanmar Music Association (Central), explained preliminary selec-



Union Minister U Myint Hlaing joins broadcast seeding at intensive farming in Pyinmana Township.—MNA

tion of 25 songs that honor farmers; U Toe Kyaw, director of Myanma Radio and Television, clarified launching Farmer Channel and song writing competition.

Union minister then awarded K500,000 for each winning song in the competition, before joining with agriculturalists, farmers and song composers for broadcast seeding for 400-acre of modern agricultural farm.

U Myint Hlaing also visited a rice-mill with a daily output of 100-tonne, and a streamed-rice mill with a daily output of 120-tonne. The minister and parties arrived in Zabuithiri Township to look into implementation of 100-hectre intensive farming which is funded by KOICA.

He then visited the

900-acre irrigated modern farming linked with Ngalite dam in Uttarathiri Township, where vegetable, sugar cane plants and cotton plantation are thriving in the area.—MNA

Union I&P Minister inspects immigration facilitation services at Yangon International Airport

NAY PYI TAW, 3 Jan— Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi inspected immigration procedures at Yangon International Airport on Saturday.

After hearing reports on tourist and flight arrivals, on-arrival visa and e-visa and facilitation services including the use of passport verification machines provided by Australia, the Union minister called for meeting international standards in immigration procedures and

highlighted the importance of the role of immigration officers who are dealing with international visitors and technology and devices for enhancing immigration clearance process.

Next, the Union minister observed handling of passengers and passport verification process at immigration desks.

He also visited an immigration complaint counter being kept open at the airport and left necessary instructions.—MNA

Central Myanmar eye patients get free operations

TAUNGTHAR, 3 Jan—As many as 273 eye patients in central Myanmar have got free treatment and operations between 29 December 2015 and 1 January 2015.

The K30 million-free medical treatments, sponsored by IBTC Foundation, involved ten eye special-

ists and eight special nurses from Yangon, as well as eye specialists from Myingyan, Meikhtila and Kyaukpadaung townships.

Mobile medical teams under this programme arrived at villages in the area, carrying diagnostic tests to 2,475 eye patients, and pro-

viding 1,031 glasses to the vision-impaired persons.

Most of the patients of visual impairment are from rural areas, and they could not afford to get treatment as they are struggling for other basic needs.

Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

Myanmar Fisheries Exhibition concludes with prize presentation for winners in contests



NAY PYI TAW, 3 Jan— Myanmar Fisheries Exhibition and Competition organized by the Ministry of Livestock Breeding, Fishery and Rural Development

for the first time concluded with a prize presentation ceremony on Saturday.

The ceremony held at National Races Village in Thakayta Township of Yangon was graced by Yangon Region Ministers U Soe Min and Col Tin Win, officials of the Fisheries Department and Myanmar Fisheries Federation and guests.

The region ministers and officials presented prizes to winners in fishery product production, fishing

equipment manufacturing and rare fish species contests.

A total of 42 booths were on display at the exhibition opened to visitors from Thursday to Saturday with the aim of ensuring to raise public awareness on fisheries sustainability.

The exhibition welcomed hordes of visitors including faculty members and university students and scouts during the three-day event.

MNA

Search teams in Indonesia find parts of ill-fated AirAsia plane

JAKARTA, 3 Jan — Indonesian and Singaporean search teams have detected two large objects believed to be parts of the Indonesia AirAsia plane that crashed last Sunday into waters off Borneo Island with 162 people on board, a government official said on Saturday.

National Search and Rescue Agency Chief Vice Marshall Bambang Soelistyo told a Press conference that the objects — the larger of which is about 10 metres by 5 metres in size — were detected on Friday morning by sonar from an Indonesian naval vessel, and their presence was confirmed late that evening by two Indonesian geological survey ships and Singaporean naval vessel *RSS Persistence*.

He said it was determined that the two objects, which are close to each other, are “parts of the AirAsia plane we have been looking for” based

partly on their dimensions and on the finding of oil slicks in that same area earlier on Friday.

“We are trying to send an ROV (remotely operated underwater vehicle) to the seabed to get the visual images of the objects,” he said, while noting they are at a depth of about 30 metres. Those efforts, however, have been hampered by high waves.

Soelistyo said the objects were found in the priority search area, a 1,850-square-kilometre zone in which the plane is believed to have come down, determined based on the finding of floating bodies and debris, as well as the oil slicks.

The Singapore-bound *Airbus A320*, carrying mostly Indonesians, plunged into the Karimata Strait between Borneo and Sumatra on Sunday morning, some 41 minutes after taking off from the airport of Indonesia’s second-largest city of Sur-



AirAsia representatives hug the relatives of AirAsia Flight 8501 passengers before receiving their remains at Bhayankara Hospital in Surabaya on 2 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

baya on Java.

The cause of the incident, however, still remains unclear because the aircraft’s black boxes containing the flight data and cockpit voice recorders have not been found.

All 30 bodies recov-

ered by Indonesian and foreign ships have been transferred to Surabaya for autopsies. In white boxes, the latest 12 bodies to be found left Borneo for Surabaya after being given a military salute.

As of Saturday after-

noon, the bodies of five passengers and a flight attendant — all of them Indonesians — have been identified, according to Budiono, chief of the disaster victim identification unit at East Java Police Headquarters in Surabaya.

Speaking at a Press conference, he identified the latest two, both of them passengers, as The Meiji Thejakusuma, 44, identified from her dental records and a red sweater she was wearing, and Hendra Gunawan Syawal, 23, identified from his fingerprints, his blue t-shirt with a lion picture on it and his David Beckham shaved-side hairstyle “which is trending now.”

The plane, captained by a former Indonesian Air Force *F-5* fighter pilot, was carrying 155 Indonesians, three South Koreans, a Malaysian, a Singaporean, a Briton and the French co-pilot.

The pilot last made contact with air traffic control at 6:12 am when he sought a change of flight path and altitude to avoid storm clouds.

Radar contact with the plane was lost 5 minutes later without any distress signal being detected.

Kyodo News

Fire breaks out in spa resort



Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 3 Jan, 2015, shows firefighters extinguishing a fire that broke out at the Kinasaki spa resort in the western Japan city of Toyooka crowded with New Year holiday vacationers. Eight buildings, including houses and shops, burnt down, while four others were partially burnt. One person was killed.

KYODO NEWS

Japan may start working on 70th war-end anniversary statement from March

TOKYO, 3 Jan — The Japanese government is moving to set up a panel of experts possibly in March toward crafting a prime minister’s statement for the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in August, sources close to the matter said on Saturday.

While the government plans to highlight in the statement that Japan will actively contribute to global peace and stability, neighbouring nations will likely be paying close attention to whether it will inherit the 1995 apology and remorse stated by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama for Japan’s wartime aggression in Asia.

Critics say Prime Minister Shinzo Abe could feel uncomfortable about the Murayama statement because of his conservative

historic perceptions that is apparently influenced by his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, a wartime Cabinet member detained as a Class-A war criminal suspect after World War II who later became prime minister.

Abe said in a radio programme shortly after the general election in December 2014 that he hopes to include in his statement “remorse for the past war, the postwar progress and Japan’s future course.” A government source explained that the prime minister meant that the statement will include “positive content.”

The government is likely to select experts to discuss the issue in line with Abe’s view.

On the 50th war-end anniversary on 15 August, 1995, then Prime Minister Murayama said in his

statement that Japan caused “tremendous damage and suffering” to the people of Asia and other countries through its colonial rule and aggression, and expressed “feelings of deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology.”

The wordings were also used in the 2005 statement released by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of the war.

But Abe, after becoming prime minister in December 2012, told a parliamentary committee in April 2013 that he “does not necessarily follow the Murayama statement as it is.” He also said, “There is no clear definition of ‘aggression’ academically and internationally.”

After saying so, he has said he will follow the past

statements in principle.

But he did not mention Japan’s wartime aggression in Asia and feelings of remorse at ceremonies marking the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II in 2013 and 2014, things Japanese prime ministers have done at the annual commemoration since 1994.

A senior official close to the government said Abe did not mention such issues because the event was “a memorial service aimed at a domestic audience.”

As Japan’s perceptions on wartime history and war responsibility could trigger a backlash from China and South Korea that have suffered from Japan’s military aggression, Abe may face difficult decisions in crafting the new statement.

Kyodo News

S Korea asks UN chief for assistance to inter-Korean dialogue

SEOUL, 3 Jan — South Korean President Park Geun-hye on Friday asked UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to provide assistance for resuming dialogue with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Park and Ban, a native South Korean, made a tele-

phone call to exchange New Year’s greetings, according to the South Korean presidential office.

Park said she anticipates Ban’s support to tackle various issues together with the UN, such as the resumption of inter-Korean talks, the fundamental

improvement in inter-Korean ties by resolving the DPRK’s nuclear issue and an expanded assistance to DPRK people for their higher quality of livelihood.

In response, Ban said he will make his best efforts to provide necessary assistance as a UN chief to help

improve situations on the Korean Peninsula.

When South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae proposed a high-level dialogue with the DPRK on Monday, Ban issued a statement of support for the dialogue offer. Park expressed her gratitude for

the statement during the phone call.

In his New Year’s address, top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un made an apparent offer to hold a summit with President Park, saying “there is no reason not to hold the highest-level talks” if atmosphere and en-

vironment are formed.

In response to it, Seoul said it can hold all forms of dialogue with Pyongyang, urging the DPRK to first respond positively to South Korea’s offer on Monday to hold senior-level meetings to discuss all issues of mutual concern. —*Xinhua*

Different tariff-cut goals drag 16 Asia-Pacific nations' trade talks

TOKYO, 3 Jan — Negotiations of a free trade pact involving 16 Asia-Pacific nations remain stuck, with the parties no closer to deciding on a tariff elimination target, several negotiation sources said on Friday.

India, China and South Korea have said they want to scrap tariffs on 40 percent of all imported items as part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership framework, while Japan and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries have called for 80 percent as an initial goal, they said.

The difference in their level of ambition for trade liberalization casts doubt on the likelihood of a compromise being reached by the end of this year as

planned, according to the sources. Six rounds of RCEP negotiations have been held since the ASEAN members plus its six regional partners — Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea — launched the talks in May 2013 based on a November 2012 agreement. The ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

At the latest RCEP talks held in India in early December, the ASEAN bloc proposed eliminating tariffs on 80 percent of traded goods within a 10-year period. But India and China held firm on their desire to remove duties on

only 40 percent, with South Korea voicing its support, the sources said.

A bilateral free trade pact between China and South Korea, which was effectively agreed on by the countries' leaders last November, calls for 66 percent of China's tariff lines and 77 percent of South Korea's to be abolished within 10 years based on trade value.

A Japanese government source has said the 80 percent goal tabled at the RCEP talks would "not be easy for South Korea."

A tariff elimination rate remains yet to be decided in a proposed trilateral free trade agreement between Japan, China, and South Korea.

Kyodo News

Security on agenda as embattled Mexican president visits Obama



Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto gestures during the 37th session of the public national security council in Mexico City on 19 Dec, 2014. —REUTERS

MEXICO CITY, 3 Jan — Mexico's embattled President Enrique Peña Nieto will discuss security and justice with US President Barack Obama in Washington next week amid public anger about how he has handled a probe into the apparent massacre of 43 train-

ee teachers.

Peña Nieto's standing has been battered by a string of massive street protests following the abduction and likely murder of 43 students by a drug gang working with corrupt police in the southwestern city of Iguala on the night of 26 September. On Monday, Peña Nieto flies to the US capital to meet Obama, and their talks would touch upon areas of common concern, including Iguala, Sergio Alcocer, deputy foreign minister responsible for North America, said on Friday.

"We'll have the opportunity ... to review migration, security and justice," Alcocer told a news conference. Mexico has so far identified the remains of one of the 43 students, but rela-

tives of the missing youths have kept up pressure on the government with strong criticism and protests.

Alcocer stressed that the events of Iguala were just one of a number of violent incidents to affect the two nations, and pointed to recent unrest in the US state of Missouri sparked by the shooting of an unarmed black teenager by a white cop. Peña Nieto will also discuss education and economic competitiveness during his first official visit to the White House since taking office two years ago.

The Mexican government would like to shift focus back on to Peña Nieto's efforts to revive the economy following the controversies that have embroiled him in recent months.—

Britain's Cameron puts economy centre stage in re-election campaign

LONDON, 3 Jan — Prime Minister David Cameron stepped up his drive to be re-elected in four months, opening bill-board campaigning on Friday with assertions that his Conservative party has nurtured Britain's economic recovery.

Narrowly trailing the opposition Labour party in most opinion polls ahead of a 7 May national election, Cameron hopes to convert strong economic competence ratings into victory in what looks set to be one of most closely-fought contests in modern British history.

With the rise of the anti-EU UK Independence Party, the Scottish National Party and others, one



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron speaks as he stands in front of a new Conservative Party poster, after unveiling it at Dean Clough Mill in Halifax, northern England on 2 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

or even two smaller parties could find themselves wielding outsized influence if the Conservatives or Labour have to scramble build a minority government.

Labour accuses Cameron of presiding over what

it calls "a cost of living crisis" and challenges his claims to have brought national debt under control, accusing the government of borrowing much more than planned.

In riposte, the Con-

servative poster shows Britain's red, white and blue Union flag powering down a long road surrounded by green fields with a couple of bumps and the slogan: "Let's Stay on the Road to a Stronger Economy." A sub-heading boasts: "1.75 million more people in work. 760,000 more businesses. The deficit halved." Under Cameron, whose right-leaning party has ruled in coalition with the centre-left Liberal Democrats since 2010, Britain's \$2.5 trillion (1.62 trillion pound) economy has emerged from its deepest downturn since World War Two to enjoy the fastest growth rate of any major advanced economy.

While inflation has

outpaced wages for much of Cameron's five-year term in office and many voters have struggled with rising food and heating bills, the falling cost of oil has now helped take inflation to a 12-year low.

Borrowing an attack strategy from US President Barack Obama, the Conservatives portray Labour, who were in power during the 2007/8 financial crisis, as the party that crashed "the car" and shouldn't be given the keys back.

Acknowledging the recovery is a task only half-done, the Conservatives say only they can "finish the job."

Labour, rated as less competent to manage the economy by most vot-

ers, say the Conservatives have borrowed more than planned and now aim to cut the budget deficit too fast and too deep for purely ideological reasons.

Labour says it would reduce the deficit in a fairer way while reversing tax cuts for high earners.

"Osborne and David Cameron say the election will be about economic competence," Ed Balls, Labour's economics spokesman, wrote in the Guardian newspaper. "But there is nothing competent about borrowing over 200 billion pounds more than planned because of your failure to deliver a recovery that is felt by all working people and not just a few at the top." —Reuters

No nuclear deal between Iran, US: Iranian spokeswoman

TEHRAN, 3 Jan — Iran has not made any agreement with the United States on its nuclear issue, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said on Saturday, denying recent western reports that the two sides have agreed to ship part of its enriched uranium abroad.

"No agreement has been made on the topics of (nuclear) negotiations so far," the spokeswoman said. "The news aims at certain political ends to spoil the climate of talks and to complicate the is-

sue," she added, referring to western reports on Friday that "Washington and Teheran have allegedly come to a step closer to agreeing on shipping part of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile to Russia."

The reports also said that the nuclear talks last December between Iran and the world powers resulted in a "catalogue of areas of potential accord."

On 18 December, Iran's top nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi said the deputy-ministerial-level talks in Geneva, Switzer-

land, were "productive and positive discussions were held."

Araqchi described the atmosphere at the discussions as good, adding that "further meetings will be held." Talks between Iran and the P5+1 group continued on 17 December, weeks after failing to meet a 24 November deadline for a comprehensive nuclear deal.

On Wednesday, the spokeswoman said the next round of deputy-level talks will be held on 15 January.

Xinhua

Madrid's Atocha evacuated after false bomb threat

MADRID, 3 Jan — Madrid's Atocha main train station, the scene of a 2004 bomb attack which killed nearly 200 people, was evacuated on Friday after a bomb warning that turned out to be false.

A man on a commuter train had been threatening to blow up himself, and another passenger pulled the emergency brake, a spokeswoman for the Spanish police said. The police said he had no bomb. Train services were temporarily suspended and will resume shortly. The man was being held for

questioning, she said.

A series of bombs planted on Madrid trains by

violent Islamists killed 191 people in March 2004.

Reuters



A police officer helps passengers as they are allowed back into Madrid's Atocha train station on 2 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

Hungarian protesters keep up pressure on government

BUDAPEST, 3 Jan — Thousands of Hungarians staged an anti-government protest on Friday, maintaining pressure on Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's centre-right administration which has lost about a third of its popular support since October.

Orbán's Fidesz party won a new term with a two-thirds majority in April but its support has waned in the last few months as civic groups organized rallies against its policies, forcing Orbán to back down from a plan to tax Internet traffic.

Despite a 10 percentage point drop in support, according to the latest opinion poll by Szazadveg,

Fidesz' 25 percent backing still eclipses that of the far-right Jobbik which has 14 percent and the Socialists with 11 percent.

Protesters on Friday said they were demonstrating for democracy and against poverty and accused the government of undermining democratic checks and balances, something it denies.

"We feel that democracy has suffered a very serious blow," said teacher Zsuzsa Veress, at the rally in the drizzling rain in the centre of Budapest.

The groups that have organized the rallies have kept their distance from the unpopular opposition



People hold flags and banners during an anti-government protest called by civil groups in Budapest on 2 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

parties. There were no party symbols on display at Friday's rally, called by the MostMi! ("Endow!") movement, and the typical banner was the European Union's starred blue flag.

One protester, Mire Gyongyosi, a haulage entrepreneur in his 40s, said he wanted the civic groups to become an organized force.

"I would like them to get into parliament independently from the other parties, and then we would have people there whom the country accepts because they are not yet tainted and have not sullied themselves in the past decades," he said.—Reuters

Former Greek PM Papandreou sets up new party, complicating election outlook

ATHENS, 3 Jan — Former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou announced the creation of a new political party on Friday, confirming a long-expected split from the centre-left PASOK and complicating the potential outcome of this month's national election.

The new party, dubbed "Movement for Change", has yet to detail policies but they are expected to be similar to those of PASOK, part of the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras's centre-right New Democracy.

"It's time for the next big step of the progressive forces in the country," Papandreou, the son of one of Greece's most prominent political dynasties, said in a post on his Facebook page. "It's time to build, together, a new political home that will house our progressive values, the values that unite us." The latest arrival on an already confused political



Former Greek prime minister George Papandreou

scene comes just over three weeks before the 25 January election called after lawmakers failed to elect a president last month. The result is set to be close with the leftwing anti-bailout party Syriza holding a slim lead.

Papandreou, whose father Andreas founded PASOK, was prime minister when the euro zone crisis broke but was ousted in 2011 over a botched effort to hold a national referendum on Greece's international bailout. He said his new party will be launched on Saturday. PASOK accused Papandreou of betraying his

father's name by engineering an "unethical" split only weeks before an election, motivated by personal ambition rather than any real political disagreement.

PASOK dominated Greek politics for 40 years but now commands less than 5 percent support, according to the latest opinion poll.

Papandreou has spent much of his time outside Greece since being ousted and has been largely sidelined within PASOK by Evangelos Venizelos, the burly foreign minister who is number two in the Samaras government.

A split could take PASOK below the 3 percent threshold needed to hold seats in parliament and there is no guarantee that "Movement for Change" could gain seats either. But its arrival could also draw support away from Syriza and New Democracy, neither of which may be able to govern alone.—Reuters

Venezuelan president's popularity hits new low



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro holds a copy of the country's constitution as he speaks during a news conference at Miraflores Palace in Caracas on 30 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

CARACAS, 3 Jan — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's approval rating has slipped to 22 percent, the lowest of his nearly two-year rule as a result of economic problems, a local pollster said on Friday. Maduro, 52, won election to replace his mentor Hugo Chavez after the latter's death from cancer in early 2013,

but has seen his popularity eroded since as the OPEC nation suffers an economic slowdown, product shortages and soaring prices.

"His popularity has gone down a lot, he's at 22 percent approval. People are waiting for solutions," Datanalisis director Jose Antonio Gil told local TV station Globovision. Recession-hit Venezuela has the worst economic performance of any major nation in the region, with widespread shortages of goods from milk to car parts, and 64 percent annual inflation.

The plunge in global oil prices, with Venezuela's crude worth \$47 a barrel now compared to double that five months ago, has exacerbated the scenario. Maduro blames a US-inspired "economic war" by political foes, but opposition leaders say 15 years of socialism are the cause.

Gil said 60 percent of people did not believe in Maduro's argument.

"Venezuelans' main problem is shortages," he said, confirming what other polls have shown, that product scarcities have overtaken violent crime as Venezuelans' main worry. Opinion polls in Venezuela are divergent and controversial, but Datanalisis is one of the most closely watched and respected. Gil did not say when the latest figure came from or how many people were interviewed.—Reuters

Desperate parents of abducted Nigerian girls say have turned to UN



Dauda Iliya, spokesperson for the Chibok community in Abuja, speaks during a session to review efforts to recover the abducted Chibok girls organized by the Chibok Community Association in collaboration with the #BringBackOurGirls group, in Abuja on 1 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

ABUJA, 3 Jan — Parents of 200 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Islamist rebels in April said they were appealing directly to the United Nations for help after losing hope that the Nigerian government would rescue them.

A group lobbying for government action on behalf of the parents met with UN Women, the head of the UN representation in Nigeria, and with officials of the UN Office for West Africa last month. The group has also appealed to UNICEF,

campaign spokeswoman Bukola Shonibare said.

UN officials were not immediately available for comment. "If the government cannot take action, we are asking for the UN to come in and help and if they reject, we just don't know what to do," Reverend Enoch Mark, leader of the parents, told Reuters. Two of his daughters were kidnapped.

It is not clear what any UN agency could do without Nigerian government approval. More than eight

months since the abduction of the girls from Chibok, in remote northeastern Borno state, parents say they are still in the dark about what the government is doing.

A presidential spokesman said efforts to free them continue but that details of the missions are too sensitive to publish.

On 14 April, Boko Haram militants raided the school while the girls were taking exams. They loaded 270 of them onto trucks. Around 50 escaped shortly afterwards.—Reuters

Palestinians deliver to UN documents to join war crimes court

UNITED NATIONS, 3 Jan — In a move that heightened tensions with Israel and could lead to cuts in US aid, the Palestinians on Friday delivered to UN headquarters documents on joining the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and other international treaties.

The chief Palestinian observer at the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, and UN spokesman Farhan Haq confirmed handover of the diplomatic documents at the world body's headquarters.

"This is a very significant step," Mansour said. "It is an option that we are seeking in order to seek justice for all the victims that have been killed by Israel, the occupying power."

The UN press office issued a statement saying the Palestinians had delivered documentation to join 16 international treaties.

"The documents are being reviewed with a view to determining the appropriate next steps," it said.

While President Barack Obama supports an eventual independent Palestinian state neighbouring Israel, US officials have argued against unilateral moves like Friday's, warning they could set back the peace process.

"We are deeply troubled by Palestinian action regarding the ICC," a senior State Department official said. "It should come as no surprise that there will be implications for this step, but we continue to review," the official said, referring to US aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Washington sends about \$400 million in economic support aid to the Palestinians every year. Under US law, that aid would be cut off if the Palestinians used membership



Palestinian UN Ambassador Riyad Mansour

in the International Criminal Court to make claims against Israel.

The Hague-based court looks at cases of severe war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as genocide.

According to the Rome Statute, the Palestinians will become a party to the court on the first day of the month that follows a 60-day waiting period after depositing signed and ratified documents of accession with the United Nations in New York.

The ICC move paves the way for the court to take jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed in Palestinian lands and investigate the conduct of both Israeli and Palestinian leaders over more than a decade of bloody conflict. Neither Israel nor the United States belongs to the ICC.

Mansour said the Palestinians have also formally requested retroactive ICC jurisdiction "with regard to the crimes committed during the last war in Gaza." He was referring to Israel's 50-day war against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip this past summer.

More than 2,100 Palestinians, 67 Israeli soldiers and six civilians in Israel were killed in the July-August war. Regarding the threat of possible US sanctions for joining the ICC, Mansour said: "It is really puzzling when you seek justice through a legal approach

to be punished for doing so."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said President Mahmoud Abbas' action would expose the Palestinians to prosecution over support for what he called the terrorist Hamas Islamist group. He vowed to take steps to rebuff any potential moves against Israel.

"We will take steps in response and defend Israel's soldiers," Netanyahu said in a statement.

Silvan Shalom, Israeli minister for infrastructure and regional cooperation, told Israel's Channel Two TV that the Palestinians' action violated the Oslo agreements, which could lessen Israel's willingness to make any future deals.

Netanyahu himself was an opponent of the Oslo peace process, however, and called the accords deeply flawed.

The other signed treat-

ties the Palestinians delivered to the United Nations include the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, two additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Palestinian government signed the Rome Statute on Wednesday, a day after a bid for independence by 2017 failed at the UN Security Council.

Palestinians seek a state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem — lands Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East War.

Momentum to recognize a Palestinian state has built since Abbas succeeded in a bid for de facto recognition of Palestinian statehood at the UN General Assembly in 2012, which made Palestinians eligible to join the ICC.

Reuters

France wants action on Libya, stops short of African calls for intervention



France's Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

NIAMEY, 3 Jan — French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Friday world powers must tackle instability in Libya but he stopped short of openly backing the military intervention called for by regional powers in the Sahel.

Speaking shortly after meeting Le Drian in Niamey, Niger's president, Mahamadou Issoufou, reiterated calls for an international military intervention in Libya, a position supported by several other African leaders concerned about the impact of the country's lawlessness on the region.

The leaders of Mali and Senegal have called for action by the West in Libya to end to chaos they say stems from the 2011 intervention that helped oust Libya's longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi.

While two rival governments compete for legitimacy in Tripoli, Libya's desert south has become a stronghold for armed groups, some with links to al-Qaeda. "Libya is chaos today and it is a breeding ground for terror-

ists that threaten the stability of Niger and, further afield, France," Le Drian said in Niamey. "We think that the moment has come to ensure that the international community tackles the Libyan problem. I think this is also what President Issoufou believes," he said. Le Drian had on Thursday visited a French military base at Madama, a remote fortress town at a crossroads of desert trade routes in northern Niger, near Libya's border. Under-scoring the scale of the task faced by French troops, the base is some 10 days' drive from Niger's capital and is battered by winds of up to 120 kilometers (75 miles) per hour.

Le Drian said the location of the Madama deployment of some 200 men was key as it would allow troops

to intervene in Niger quickly and efficiently, highlighting how France's intervention against Islamists in Mali in 2013 has mutated into a broader, regional mission to hunt down Islamists across the Sahel. However, France has so far ruled out a direct military action in Libya and Le Drian said nothing to change that position during a trip to visit some of the 3,200 troops in the region this week.

Issoufou said the Sahel was "paying the price" for the political mess left behind after NATO military action helped remove Gaddafi and direct Western action was needed to fix the situation.

"I don't see how armed terrorist militias are going to bring about reconciliation in Libya," he said.

Reuters

At least seven killed in al Shabaab attack at Somali military base

MOGADISHU, 3 Jan — Somalian al Shabaab militants attacked a military base in the outskirts of the town of Baidoa on Friday morning, killing at least seven soldiers, a Somali military official said.

The attack came two days after the United States said it had killed the chief of al Shabaab's intelligence and security wing, Tahliil Abdishakur, in a drone strike. Al Shabaab seeks to topple the Western-backed Mogadishu government and impose its

diers killed three al Shabaab insurgents during the attack.

A spokesman for al-Qaeda-linked al Shabaab said the group had briefly seized the base and killed more than 10 soldiers. Al Shabaab often cites a higher death toll than the number given by officials.

"We fiercely attacked the military base near Baidoa," Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, al Shabaab's military operation spokesman, told Reuters. In a separate incident in central Somalia



Residents evacuate a civilian injured in a car bomb explosion near the Taleex junction of Somalia's capital Mogadishu, on 2 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

own strict version of Islamic law. "Al Shabaab attacked our base unexpectedly, early in the morning today. We lost seven soldiers," Captain Ahmed Idow, a Somali military officer, told Reuters by telephone from Baidoa.

Idow said Somali sol-

on Friday, al Shabaab ambushed a government convoy carrying food aid, killing one soldier, according to Somali officials.

A spokesman for al Shabaab confirmed the group was behind the attack.

Reuters

Saudi king needed help breathing due to pneumonia — royal court

CAIRO, 3 Jan — Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz is suffering from pneumonia and temporarily needed help to breathe through a tube on Friday but the procedure was successful and his condition was now stable, the royal court said. The elderly monarch was admitted to the King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh on Wednesday for tests after he suffered what one source described as breathing diffi-

culties, state media said.

"It became apparent that there was a lung infection that required the insertion of a tube to aid with breathing on a temporary basis this evening," the royal court said in a statement carried by state news agency SPA.

The procedure had resulted in "stability and success," it added. A Saudi source familiar with the affairs of the royal family said the king would most likely

stay in hospital for another week. Markets keep a close eye on the health of the king of the world's top oil producer, a country that also has influence over Muslims through its guardianship of Islam's holiest sites.

King Abdullah, who took power in 2005 after the death of his half-brother King Fahd, is thought to be 91, although official accounts are unclear. He has undergone surgery in the

past few years related to a herniated disc.

Abdullah named his half-brother, Prince Salman, 13 years his junior, heir apparent in June 2012 after the death of Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz. Last year he appointed Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz as deputy crown prince, giving some assurance on the kingdom's long-term succession process.

Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Sunday, 4 January, 2015

Strength for IndependenceBy *Aung Khin*

Independence is freedom from control and influence. No one wants to be controlled or influenced. For independence strength is needed and necessary. The strength can turn out confidence and belief which are motivations behind independence.

Only an independent country could build up a better future of its own with dignity among in-

ternational community. Despite free from control or influence, independence does not mean the lack of faith or trust in other person or community. We need faith, confidence or trust in a person or community, while trust is for reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or society as the world is a global community.

In addition to physical powers, we need to develop confidence, belief, integrity, unity, ability and surety which are fundamentals for strength through positive attitudes necessary for genuine independence.

These internal strengths could help people promote prosperity of the State. Unity is a powerful strength to prevent any external influence or control. It is also a driving force to strive for the development of country.

Union spirit is stronger than material world. National unity can defend the borders and territory. Therefore, independence should be maintained by unity and dignity of national people to show genuine and fundamental power to global community.

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.

Making New Year Resolutionsby *Myo Myint*

Myanmar people do a lot of meritorious deeds like making donations to worthy causes and releasing fish in ponds and lakes to usher in the Myanmar New Year, but they are not used to making New Year resolutions, that is, making promises to oneself to do or not to do certain things in the New Year. In any case, even in the West which has the tradition of making New Year resolutions, people jokingly say that New Year resolutions are made to be broken, and many do not take them very seriously.

In actual fact, for those who genuinely want to improve themselves, making resolutions for the New Year has beneficial effects, especially for young people, because it involves examining oneself critically, thinking of how to remedy weaknesses and what resolutions one should make to improve oneself. This means that one would need to think of one's good habits as well as bad ones. One would have to take stock of one's actions in the past year, good as well as

bad. One would have to examine one's attitudes, both towards oneself and towards others. One also would have to appreciate what others have achieved, and consider how one should emulate them.

One can make resolutions regarding one's bad habits, such as, to make one's bed as soon as one gets up. One can make resolutions about how to remedy one's weaknesses for instance, to stop eating sweet things to reduce weight. One can make resolutions about one's negative attitudes, for example, stop being critical of the way young people dress. One can make resolutions on how to become a more successful person, such as, to spend more time on one's studies.

If one is really serious about making New Year resolutions, one should make a list of what one wants to achieve in the New Year. Then, we need to prioritize them and choose a manageable number. If one makes too many resolutions, one is likely to forget some of them, or may not be able to keep all the promises one has made to oneself. The resolutions should also be noted down and stuck somewhere where one can see so that one does not forget them.

The New Year gives one the opportunity to look at oneself and think of our successes and failures. It also provides the chance to start afresh, with new strength, the things in which one has not been very successful the previous year. It also provides the occasion for parents and teachers to urge their children and students to examine themselves critically, and make them think of ways to remedy their shortcomings. Even if one cannot keep one's resolutions throughout the year, at least, it makes one think of one's defects and what one should do to improve oneself. Therefore, making New Year resolutions is a habit that we should inculcate in our young people, so that they not only feel that the New Year is just a time to celebrate and welcome the hopes and opportunities it brings, and offer good wishes to others, but also to realize a great deal depends on their resourcefulness and hard work to be able to grasp the opportunities and make good use of them. New Year should also be a time for people to realize that for everyone to be happy in the New Year, apart from members of their family, other people also need to be happy, and that among resolutions they make, they need to include resolutions that would assist in enhancing the happiness of fellow living beings and reducing their miseries as much as possible.

FRIENDSHIP*U Kyi Mun*

- A friend in need is a friend indeed.
- A Proverb
- Prosperity makes friends; adversity tries them.
- A Proverb
- Make new friend but keep the old; one is silver and the other is gold.
- A Maxim
- Friendliness is the best relative.
- Good are friends when need arises.
- Dhammapada

Now, let us explore a little the essential characteristics of friendship in the following manner:

F	<i>for</i>	Fellowship
R	<i>for</i>	Respect
I	<i>for</i>	Intimacy
E	<i>for</i>	Empathy
N	<i>for</i>	Neighbouring Spirit
D	<i>for</i>	Disciplined Relationship
S	<i>for</i>	Sincerity
H	<i>for</i>	Helping Hand
I	<i>for</i>	Interest Sharing
P	<i>for</i>	Probity

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship means a feeling of friendship between people who do things together or share an interest. Fellowship is also an organized group of people who share an interest, aim or belief. Fellowship also means camaraderie which can be interpreted as a feeling of friendship and trust among people who work or spend a lot of time together. Fellowship also means com-

radeship or comrades-in-arms which means a friend or other person that you work with, especially as soldiers during a war.

RESPECT

Respect means a feeling of admiration for somebody or something because of your good qualities or achievements. Respect also means polite behaviour towards or care for somebody or something that you think is important. In friendship, mutual respect is essential.

INTIMACY

Intimacy means the state of having a close personal relationship with somebody. In true friendship, the people involved cannot but feel affection and loving kindness for each other. In the Bible, it is earnestly said: **"Thou shall prefer one another"**.

EMPATHY

Empathy means the ability to understand another person's feeling, experience, situation, etc. In friendship, it is necessary to have the attitude of sympathetic joy, and a true friend should be willing to put himself or herself in the other person's shoes.

NEIGHBOURLY SPIRIT

Without a true neighbourly spirit, there cannot be a true friendship. Neighbourliness means a sense of belonging to each other. The spirit of neighbourliness means the same as the spirit of brotherhood or sisterhood. Neighbourliness also means a sense of community.

DISCIPLINED RELATIONSHIP

Friendship means a mutual relationship. In order for the relationship to last and to be sustainable, that relationship must be built on a mutually beneficial basis or on a win-win outcome. So, there should be a disciplined attitude of mutually supporting and helping each other. There should also be a spirit of give and take and an attitude of forbearance and understanding.

SINCERITY

Sincerity means feelings, beliefs or behavior that shows what you really think or feel. Sincerity means genuineness or authenticity. A true friendship must be cemented with straightforwardness and uprightness.

HELPING HAND

What is a friendship for, if not to readily offer a helping hand whenever an occasion arises for help? A friend in need is a friend indeed, isn't it? With regard to forming a genuine friendship, I would like to recommend the SACCA-GRAHA of: **"Love all, Serve all; Hurt never, Help ever."**

INTEREST SHARING

True friends must always be willing to share interest or hobby. Caring and sharing is the spirit that cements a friendship even in adversity. Interest sharing is a true form of comradeship. Friends who share the same interest or aim or beliefs and values are really comrades-in-arms.

PROBITY

Friendship not built upon the foundation of honesty is bound to disintegrate sooner or later. Friends must be basically honest in everything in their relationships. A true friendship must be cemented with loyalty and comradeship. True friends must know each other more clearly and value each other more dearly.

CONCLUSION

Friendship in general should be solidly built on the foundation of:

- Beliefs
- Values
- Practices

U Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAING Group Capital Co.,Ltd.

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Thein Sein

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Jan — *The following are messages of felicitations from foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein, on the occasion of the 67th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.*

From Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Your Excellency,

The people of Brunei Darussalam and my Government join me in sending our warmest congratulation to you and to the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on your 67th Independence Day.

I also congratulate you on Myanmar's successful chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014, and much appreciate your warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for my state visit in March the same year. I look forward to continuing our work together both bilaterally and as partners in the region in further strengthening the much-valued ties enjoyed by our two countries.

With my kindest regards and very best wishes. For your continued good health and happiness.

From Samdech Hun Sen Prime Minister of Cambodia Excellency,

On behalf of the Royal Government and people of Cambodia, I have the great pleasure to extend to Your Excellency and through you to the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, my heartfelt congratulations on the auspicious occasion of the 67th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I am firmly convinced that the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries will be further enhanced and consolidated in the years to come for the mutual interests of our two peoples as well as for the whole ASEAN family.

At the same time, I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, as ASEAN Chair throughout the year 2014, for the great success in hosting the 24th and 25th ASEAN Summits and related Summits, which paved the way for realizing the ASEAN Community in 2015.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration and all my best wishes of personal good health, happiness and greater success in fulfillment of your noble tasks and for the continued prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

From Mr Choummaly Sayasone President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Excellency,

On behalf of the Lao people and on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Your Excellency and the Myanmar people for the warmest congratulations and best wishes extended to me and the Lao people on the occasion of the 39th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

I strongly believe that the traditional friendship and closed cooperation between our two countries will be further strengthened in the coming years for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples as well as for the peace, friendship and cooperation in the region and in the world.

From Mr Thongsing Thammavong Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Excellency,

On behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Your Excellency and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the warmest congratulations and best wishes extended to me and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the occasion of the 39th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

I strongly believe that the good relations of the friendship and closed cooperation between our two countries will be further enhanced in the coming years

with our joint effort for the mutual benefit of our two peoples as well as for the peace, friendship and cooperation in the region and in the world.

From Almu'Tasimu Billahi Muhibbuddin Tuanku Alhaj Abdul Halim Mu'Adzam Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Badlishah Yang di-Pertuan Agong XIV of Malaysia Your Excellency,

On this auspicious occasion of the 67th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The Raja Permaisuri Agong joins Us in extending Our heartiest felicitations and sincere best wishes to Your Excellency and Madame Daw Khin Khin Win, the Government and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

We hope our excellent relations that have been built based on mutual respect could be further improved with the positive development in Myanmar. We also look forward to receiving both of you in Malaysia for a State Visit in the near future.

Our best wishes also for Your Excellency's good health and personal well being. We remain confident that Your Excellency's guidance will provide continued prosperity for the People of Myanmar and the friendly ties between our two countries.

From Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Prime Minister of Malaysia

On the auspicious occasion of the 67th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency, the Government and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I am happy to note that relations between Malaysia and Myanmar have reached new heights, driven strongly by warm political ties, people-to-people contact and substantial economic cooperation in key areas including trade and investment. I also hope that the pending State Visit of Your Excellency to Malaysia will finally be materialised at the earliest opportunity. I believe that the State Visit could further enhance the existing bilateral relations between our two countries.

It is my fervent hope that the existing friendly relations between our two countries will continue to be enhanced in the years to come and I look forward to continue working closely with you to further enhance our existing close bilateral relations for our mutual benefit and within the context of ASEAN.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Truong Tan Sang President, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam Nguyen Tan Dung Prime Minister, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

On the occasion of the 67th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the State, Government and the people of Viet Nam and in our own names, we would like to extend our warmest congratulations to Your Excellency, the Government and the people of Myanmar.

It is our strong belief that under Your Excellency's clear-sighted leadership, and by utilizing great potentials the country are endowed with, Myanmar will continue to record greater achievements in the cause of national reform and development, for a prosperous Myanmar with an ever increasing profile in the region and in the world. We especially congratulate Myanmar on your successful completion of the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2014, which contributing to the furtherance of cooperation within ASEAN and with ASEAN's partners, and at the same time supporting our common efforts in realizing an ASEAN community by the year 2015.

We are very delighted to witness the strong development of the traditional relations of friendship and

multi-faceted cooperation between our two countries, especially in economic, trade, investment, cultural, tourism and agricultural fields. Viet Nam looks forward to expanding and promoting further our find relationship, in the interests of our two peoples and for peace, stability, cooperation and prosperous development in the region.

On this occasion, we wish Your Excellency good health, happiness and successes in your noble position.

From Dilma Rousseff President of the Federative Republic of Brazil Excellency,

I have the honor to present to Your Excellency on behalf of the people and of the Government of Brazil our congratulations on the 67th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Myanmar on the 4th of January, 2015. We, Brazilians, are united in wishing for your beautiful country of brave and worm people a most successful and happy future deeply rooted in the glorious past of your rich civilization.

From Tomislav Nikolic President of the Republic of Serbia Esteemed Mr. President,

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on behalf of the people of the Republic of Serbia on my own behalf, I extend to you cordial congratulations and best wishes for further progress and prosperity of your country and its people.

It is my pleasure to note that the friendly relations and cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar have been developing successfully, I am confident that overall operation between our countries and peoples will be further enhanced and deepened in the mutual interest.

Please accept, esteemed Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Ivo Josipovic, President of the Republic of Croatia Excellency,

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar I am pleased to extend to you and your people my most cordial congratulations and those of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia, as well as best wishes for the prosperity of your country and its citizens.

Accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From His Majesty Willem-Alexander R King of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Excellency,

The celebration of your National Day gives me an opportunity to extend to Your Excellency my congratulations and my best wishes for your personal well-being and that of the people of Myanmar.

From His Majesty Felipe R King of Kingdom of Spain Mr. President,

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to convey, together with the Spanish Government and the people of Spain, My congratulations.

I reaffirm, Mr President, My best wishes for peace and prosperity for the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

With My highest consideration.

From Akihito Empire of Japan His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have great pleasure in sending Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations and sincere good wishes for Your happiness and for the prosperity of the people of Your country.

87% of major Japanese firms expect economic expansion in 2015

TOKYO, 3 Jan — Eighty-seven percent of 111 major Japanese firms polled by *Kyodo News* expect Japan's economy to expand in 2015, showing growing optimism emerging after two quarters of contraction following last April's consumption tax hike. Among the 97 companies expecting an expansion, 90 see moderate growth and seven strong growth. Thirteen project a leveling off, and one firm give no prediction. None forecast a contraction.

Of the bullish companies, 44 cited a nonresidential investment recovery as

a major factor. Forty firms cited US economic improvement and 36 private consumption.

In the poll conducted in early and mid-December, 56 companies said the adverse effects of the consumption tax hike have been greater than expected, while 58 believe private consumption has already recovered or will recover by March. Thirty-seven companies forecast the yen's depreciation will have positive impacts on their operating profits in fiscal 2014, which ends in March 2015, while only nine view the

weakening yen as making a negative contribution to their profits.

Thirty firms have failed to pass raw material price hikes caused by the weaker yen on to their product prices.

But the weakening yen has not discouraged Japanese firms from expanding overseas. Fifty-seven plan to boost the overseas share of their overall sales in fiscal 2015, while 15 intend to keep the share unchanged. Only one firm expects to cut the share.

Southeast Asia was cited as a major overseas in-

vestment target by 56 companies, the United States by 20 and China by 11. As for the dollar's desirable range against the yen, the 100-110 yen range was chosen by 34 firms and 110-120 yen by 18 firms. Only four firms favored an even higher dollar.

On whether they would hike wages in fiscal 2015 as requested by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, 72 companies refrained from a response ahead of annual wage negotiations in spring. Only four vowed to increase basic wages.

As many as 87 firms gave positive ratings to the

government's Abenomics economy-boosting policies, including nine firms that presented very positive ratings.

Asked to specify what they valued about Abenomics, 51 of the 87 firms picked promotion of monetary easing, 36 corporate tax reform and 22 having an economic growth strategy. Among priority policy measures for the government, 49 firms called for a cut in the effective corporate tax rate, 44 for the steady implementation of the growth strategy, 26 for fiscal consolidation, 25 for bold deregulation,

and 19 for the promotion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and other free trade deals.

On Abe's decision to postpone another consumption tax hike planned for October 2015, 45 firms gave a positive rating while 24 were negative.

Fifty-five companies endorsed Abe's plan to implement the postponed hike of the consumption tax from 8 percent to 10 percent in April 2017 irrespective of economic conditions, while 35 called for taking economic conditions into account.—*Kyodo News*

Car sales slump in France, but rise in Spain and Italy

PARIS/ MADRID, 3 Jan — France's floundering economy pushed car sales 6.8 percent lower year-on-year in December, while Spanish sales jumped by 21.4 percent, helped by a subsidy scheme, and also rose in Italy, according to auto industry associations.

The contrasting year-end performance highlights how France has been left out of a fragile recovery in Europe's car sector. Yet the French market did manage to post annual growth in 2014 for the first time since 2009. Registrations for the year rose 0.3 percent to 1.8 million cars, the CCFA auto industry association said.

Car registrations declined to 163,382 vehicles last month, with those of PSA Peugeot Citroen tumbling 9.6 percent. Renault fared better as group domestic registrations slipped 0.8 percent, CCFA said in a



Visitors look at cars displayed at carmaker BMW's showcase on media day at the Paris Mondial de l'Automobile, on 3 Oct, 2014. — REUTERS

statement. Francois Roudier, a CCFA spokesman, said car sales in France were expected to be largely stagnant this year. In Spain, 73,440 cars were sold in December and 855,308 in 2014, up 18.4 percent from 2013 and the best annual

performance since 2010, car makers' association Anfac said.

The government announced it was extending the Plan PIVE scheme that offers price cuts on new low-emission vehicles for the seventh time at the be-

ginning of November.

"The car market ends the year with its strongest annual growth in 15 years, with the Plan PIVE allowing 16 straight months expansion," David Barrientos, head of communication at Anfac said.—*Reuters*

End of life planning does not make cancer patients hopeless or anxious

NEW YORK, 3 Jan — For a small group of advanced cancer patients, using an online tool for learning about end-of-life medical decisions and developing an advance directive document did not lead to psychological distress, according to a new study. "One thing we noticed is that many patients with advanced cancer had not had these conversations," said lead author Dr Michael J Green of the humanities and medicine departments at Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

"When we talked to the oncologists about it, a response we heard again and again is, 'it's not appropriate at this time, it's going to make them anxious, take away their hope'," Green told Reuters Health.

He and his team set out to see if it was true that working through end of life planning took away cancer patients' hope or raised their anxiety levels. They used an interactive decision aid with audio and video elements called "Making Your Wishes Known: Planning Your Medical Future," (MYWK) which is available online.

It includes education modules on common medical conditions that can result in decisional incapacity, as well as medical treatments often introduced in life or death situations. Patients can choose a spokesperson, prioritize values and goals, match treatment options with priorities and generate a printable advance directive document articulating their wishes.—*Reuters*

Ebola fight remains tough but may be won this year: UN mission chief

ACCRA, 3 Jan — The world can stamp out the Ebola outbreak in West Africa by the end of the year but months of tough work remain, the outgoing chief of the United Nations' anti-Ebola mission said on Friday.

The outbreak, first identified in Guinea's remote southeast in early 2014, has struck six West African nations, with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia bearing the brunt of the 20,000 infections and nearly 8,000 dead.

Faced with criticism the world was not doing enough, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon set up the UN Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) mission in September to coordinate global efforts.

"We have not come anywhere close to ending the crisis. We've done a lot in 90 days in a very successful response but we have a long and difficult way to go," Anthony Banbury told reporters in Accra, where the UN mission is based.

"It's going to go on for not just weeks but some months more. But I believe we will do it in 2015 and we're going to do it by working very closely not just with governments of the countries but the communities," he said.

Banbury will be replaced by veteran humanitarian official Ould Cheikh Ahmed of Mauritania on Saturday.

A spike of cases in Sierra Leone meant UNMEER missed its target

of ensuring that by early December 70 percent of all Ebola patients were

being treated in isolation units and 70 percent of all those who died from Ebola

were buried properly. Banbury said there were now enough functioning treat-

ment centres in the region.

The target of 100 percent safe burials by end of January 2015 was on track now that there were some 254 safe burial teams operating in the affected countries.

Six other countries, including Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, the United States, Spain and Britain, have reported cases imported from the worst affected countries.

Last week, a nurse was diagnosed with the virus in Britain upon her return from Sierra Leone.

She is being treated with blood plasma from a survivor of the virus and an experimental antiviral drug, according to the London hospital treating her.

Reuters



Italian Doctor Fabrizio (C) leaves the Spallanzani hospital in Rome on 2 Jan, 2015. Fabrizio, Italy's only Ebola patient is fully recovered and was released from hospital on Friday more than a month after being flown to Rome from Sierra Leone where he worked as a doctor treating others stricken by the disease. — REUTERS

China's deep-sea sub explores Indian Ocean seabed

ABOARD XIANGYANG-HONG 09, 3 Jan — China's deep sea manned submersible *Jiaolong* on Friday carried out the first dive on a mission to study active hydrothermal vent in the southwestern Indian Ocean.

Jiaolong for the first time also took the second batch of pilot trainees in the diving, which was intended to enable the trainees to learn some skills of submersible operation in active hydrothermal vent and collect samples of hydrothermal fluid, sulfide, rocks, sediment and water, said Yu Hongjun, chief commander of the mission. "Besides, they (the pilots) will try to place some biological observation devices in hydrothermal vent," Yu said.

In this dive, *Jiaolong*

will be operated by pilot Fu Wentao and he will teach pilot trainee Qi Haibin in practice.

Scientists are able to see active hydrothermal vent and polymetallic sulfide in seabed and know the exact site and environment of samples when diving with *Jiaolong*, Tao Chunhui, chief scientist of the mission, said.

The information is important for China's future research in the polymetallic sulfide exploration contract area, Tao said.

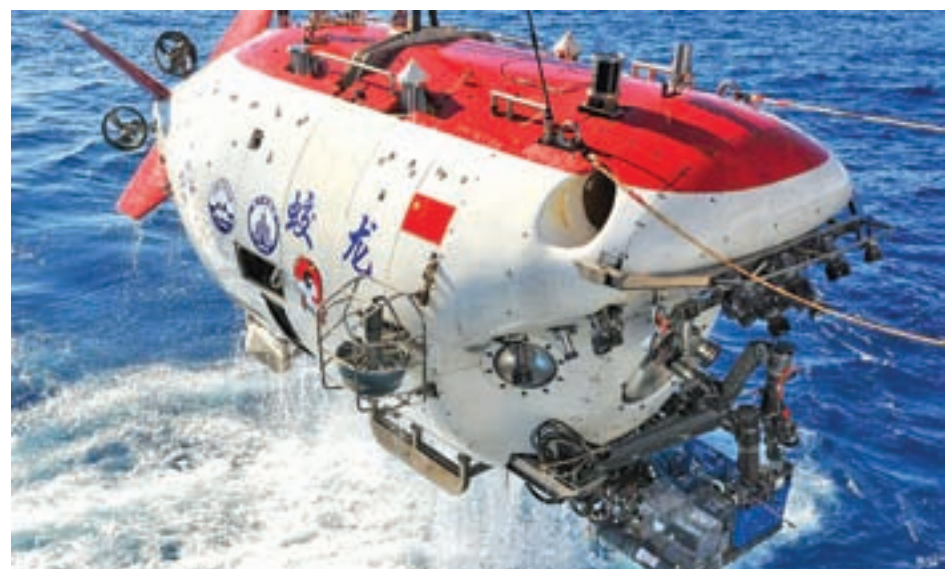
The hydrothermal sulfide is a kind of seabed deposit containing copper, zinc and precious metals such as gold and silver. Those metals formed sulfides after chemical reactions and came to rest in the

seabed in "chimney vents."

The diving area is within China's exploration contract area that was inked by the International Seabed Authority and China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) in 2011 and was 10,000 square kilometres in size.

Jiaolong was expected to dive 20 times to research polymetallic sulfides, biological diversity, hydrothermal microbes and genetic resources in the southwestern Indian Ocean in a 120-day expedition.

Named after a mythical dragon, *Jiaolong* reached its deepest depth of 7,062 metres in the Pacific's Mariana Trench in June 2012 and started its five-year trial period in 2013.—Xinhua



China's deep sea manned submersible *Jiaolong* is lifted out of water in the Indian Ocean, on 2 Jan, 2015. *Jiaolong* carried out the first dive on a mission to study active hydrothermal vent in the southwestern Indian Ocean on 2 Jan. It was the first time for the submersible to take the second batch of pilot trainees in the diving, which was intended to enable the trainees to learn some skills of submersible operation in active hydrothermal vent and collect samples of hydrothermal fluid, sulfide, rocks, sediment and water.—XINHUA

S African city to use new technologies to curb power outages

JOHANNESBURG, 3 Jan — New technologies would be introduced to mitigate the effects of power cuts in Johannesburg, South Africa's largest metropolitan, authorities said on Friday.

This came after areas in the city were experiencing power outages over the past few days as a result of power inefficiency in the country.

The new technologies to be introduced include installing smart metres, which would enable efficient man-

agement of electricity consumption, said City Power, Johannesburg's electricity control centre.

"Expanding the geyser control systems to more residential areas across the city, and the installation of solar water heaters will contribute to the reduction of the cost of heating water," City Power said in a statement.

Eskom, the country's power provider, has requested the City of Johannesburg and all other municipalities

across the country to reduce demand by load shedding their customers over the past two months.

The utility's electricity systems have been under severe strain after a number of its power stations broke down due to poor maintenance since November last year.

Although the lack of demand during the festive season gave the electricity parastatal time to do the maintenance work, power

outages have been reported in many parts of Johannesburg, dampening the festive mood of city residents.

Also on Friday, the City of Pretoria reported power outages as well due to heavy rain that had affected cables supplying the Onderstepoort sub-station, causing power outages in areas of Onderstepoort, Vastfontein and Haakdoornboom.

Technicians estimated repairs would be completed and power restored by mid-

night.

Eskom has warned that the grid will be under pressure again in the second week of January when industries and schools reopen.

This means that load shedding would be implemented again, Eskom said.

Load shedding is implemented as a last resort to balance electricity supply and demand. It is different from a power outage that could occur for several other reasons.—Xinhua

Vuzix says received Intel investment for smart glasses

SAN FRANCISCO, 3 Jan — Vuzix Corporation said on Friday that Intel Corp invested \$24.8 million (16 million pounds) in the company to speed up the launch of Internet-connected eyewear.

Intel bought preferred stock that is convertible into common shares equivalent to 30 percent of Vuzix, Vuzix said in a press release. Rochester, New York-based Vuzix develops computerized, Internet-connected glasses and other video eyewear aimed at consumers, businesses and entertainment. Intel officials were not immediately available for comment.

Intel, which was slow to launch chips for smartphones and tablets, is striving to be at the forefront of future trends in mobile computing and expand into new markets, including smart watches and other Internet-connected "wearables". A month ago, Italy's Luxottica said it was joining forces with the US chipmaker to develop glasses that combine its top fashion brands with technology that could allow wearers to access information about their health or location. Intel has also teamed up with watch retailer Fossil Group and fashion brand Opening Ceremony to develop wearable devices such as fashion bracelets with communications features and wireless charging.—Reuters

Uber loses bid to withhold CEO emails in gratuity lawsuit

SAN FRANCISCO, 3 Jan — A federal judge rejected Uber Technologies Inc's bid that it not be required to disclose emails from Chief Executive Travis Kalanick in a California lawsuit accusing the popular ride-booking service of deceiving customers about how it shares tips with drivers.

US District Judge Edward Chen's order in San Francisco was the latest setback for Uber, which has drawn criticism around the globe over whether its service complies with local licensing and safety laws and whether its drivers have been adequately vetted.

Chen said a 26 Novem-

ber ruling by US Magistrate Judge Donna Ryu that the plaintiff in the lawsuit can receive emails from Kalanick and global operations chief Ryan Graves about Uber's tipping practices was neither "clearly erroneous" nor legally wrong.

"That Judge Ryu's order may require defendant

to review approximately 21,000 documents does not represent an improper burden given the potential role of defendant's CEO and vice president of operations in defendant's challenged conduct," Chen wrote in an order issued on Wednesday night. The emails are to be turned over by 23 January,

court records show.

Jacie Zolna, an attorney for plaintiff Caren Ehret, an Uber customer from Illinois, on Friday said his client looks forward to reviewing "this clearly relevant information."

Uber spokeswoman Kristin Carvell declined to comment.—Reuters

Bad code update triggered Yahoo, Bing search crash

SAN FRANCISCO, 3 Jan — Yahoo Inc and Microsoft Corp search engines temporarily went dark on Friday after Microsoft pushed out a bad code update and then struggled to roll it back, a person briefed on the outages told Reuters.

The outages were not caused by an outside attack, the person said, declining to be named because the discussion concerned internal Yahoo matters.

Microsoft's Bing search engine powers Ya-



Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer delivers her keynote address at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on 7 Jan, 2014.

REUTERS

hoo search under a 10-year deal announced in 2009.

Yahoo was not immediately available for comment. Microsoft confirmed the outage, but declined to comment on the cause.

On Friday afternoon, users who typed search.yahoo.com got an error message saying that Yahoo engineers were working to resolve the issue.

The search engine appeared to be working again later in the day.

After the crash, Microsoft's roll-back proce-

sure failed, forcing it to shut down its groups of linked servers to get back the point where everything worked smoothly, the person said.

Once the problem was resolved, Yahoo had trouble handling the backlog of search requests, the person added. "This morning, some of our customers experienced a brief, isolated services interruption which has now been resolved," a Microsoft spokesman said in a brief statement on Friday.—Reuters

Senior Japan, Russia defence officials vow to continue exchanges

TOKYO, 3 Jan — High-level personnel from Japan's Self-Defence Forces and Russia's military agreed to continue defence exchanges in a series of meetings in mid-December, Japanese government sources said on Friday. The meetings sought to prevent accidental collisions or other emergencies around Japan's airspace, as the number of Japanese Air Self-Defence Force jet scrambles against Russian planes increased by 2.4-fold to 324 in the April-September period amid strained bilateral ties over the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. According to the sources, on 16 December last year the chief of the Japanese ASDF's Northern Air Defence Force went to the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk to meet with the head of air and air defence forces tasked with Russia's Eastern Military District. From 18 to 19 December in Tokyo, Japanese and Russian foreign and defence ministry officials met for an annual consultation on a Japan-Russia accord signed in 1993 to prevent incidents between the countries' aircraft or marine vessels. At both of these meetings, the officials agreed to continue defence exchanges so as to prevent unnecessary friction. In response to tensions over Ukraine, Tokyo maintains the position that it will cooperate with the Group of Seven major nations to seek a resolution to the crisis.

After Russia's annexation of Ukraine's southern region of Crimea in March, Japan joined the United States and European nations in imposing sanctions on Moscow. Efforts to mend Japan-Russia ties through defence cooperation have included joint marine search and rescue exercises in October last year by the Maritime Self-Defence Force and Russian Navy. — *Kyodo News*

Belgrade airport serves record number of passengers

BELGRADE, 3 Jan — Belgrade's Nikola Tesla Airport has served more than 4.6 million passengers in 2014, recording a growth of nearly 32 percent, which places it among Europe's top airports, Acting CEO Sasa Vlasisavljevic said. Vlasisavljevic expressed hope that the number of passengers will increase in 2015 and announced that around EUR 20 million will be invested in expanding the airport capacity. "We will raise the capacity of the airport to 7-7.5 million passengers. The average passenger growth in Europe is 3.6-3.7 percent, and we will certainly exceed four percent in the next four years," said Vlasisavljevic. He specified that over EUR 20 million will be invested in projects such as the expansion of the old and the reconstruction of the old terminal. The cargo transport saw a rise of 24 percent compared to 2013, he added. Nikola Tesla Airport is currently providing services to 26 carriers, or 35 including charter airlines. Serbia's national carrier Air Serbia accounts for some 50 percent of the air traffic.—*Tanjung*

Tokyo aims to quadruple solar power generation capacity by 2024

TOKYO, 3 Jan — The Tokyo metropolitan government has set a goal of quadrupling solar power generation capacity in the capital to 1 million kilowatts by 2024, installing solar panels on the rooftops of buildings including houses and schools, officials said on Friday.

The target will be introduced to promote Tokyo as an environmentally friendly city in the run-up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics to be hosted by the metropolis, they said. As of late March in 2013, Tokyo had solar power facilities capable of generating 260,000 kw in total. About 10 percent of newly built detached houses had such facilities, while the ratio was 0.5 percent among existing housing. It is difficult to set up mega solar power plants in Tokyo due to the lack of land, the officials said.

In fiscal 2015, the Tokyo government is planning to introduce measures to support those who install solar power generation facilities when they renovate their houses. The metropolitan government also aims to roughly double electricity generated by solar power at schools and housing estates it runs from 10,000 kw in 2014 to 22,000 kw by 2020. The government will install solar panels on the roofs of its facilities' parking areas in fiscal 2015 and promote the renting of rooftop space by building owners to solar power generators. "Although Tokyo land prices are high, we'd like to increase solar power generation by utilizing rooftop spaces," a Tokyo government official said.—*Kyodo News*

Gambia arrests suspects after attempted coup: rights groups

BANJUL, 3 Jan — Security forces in Gambia have begun arresting people suspected of having links to an attempted coup this week, sources in the country and international human rights groups said on Friday.

It was not immediately clear how many arrests had been made but Amnesty International and two other organizations called on security forces to respect international law. Gunmen attacked the capital, Banjul, in the early hours of Tuesday, when President Yahya Jammeh was out of the country. Diplomats say at least four attackers were killed and several others are on the run.

Since returning on Wednesday, Jammeh has warned he would not spare anyone involved in the



Gambia's President Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh

attempted coup, which local media said was led by former presidential guard chief Lamin Sanneh. Sanneh's mother and brother were amongst those arrested so far, family members said, asking not to be named. Amnesty International, the Senegalese Human Rights League and Pan African rights group RADDHO issued a joint statement expressing their concern over the

arrests. "While we firmly oppose all accession to power by unconstitutional means, we condemn the arbitrary arrests that are being made in Gambia based solely on people's links to alleged actors and we fear indiscriminate repression with a view to spread terror," the groups said. The groups did not say how many arrests had been made. Gambian authorities have not given any details on arrests.

Jammeh came to power in a coup 20 years ago and has a tight grip on the tiny nation, a slither of land on the Atlantic coast surrounded by Senegal. A failed coup plot in 2006 led to a crackdown and some executions, according to rights groups.

Jammeh has denied any members of his security forces took part

in the clashes that paralyzed the capital, accusing dissidents based in the United States, Britain and Germany of launching the raids with the help of unnamed foreign powers.

Analysts and local media said a number of the attackers were US residents or dual nationals. The US government has denied any involvement. "Nobody can also destabilize this country. So anybody who comes to attack this country; be ready because you are going to die no matter who you are and who backed you," Jammeh said. "We will get to the bottom of this and we will not spare anybody," he said. "Enough is enough. They want to destroy our country. We will destroy them," he added.

Reuters

Italy rescues another abandoned migrant ship

ROME, 3 Jan — A ship carrying hundreds of migrants has been abandoned by its crew in rough seas in the Mediterranean off Italy's south coast in the second such incident in three days, the Italian coastguard said on Friday.

Coastguards managed to take control of the vessel, the Sierra Leone-flagged *Ezadeen*, after landing on it by helicopter, a statement said. Facing difficult weather conditions, they are trying to take the vessel to an Italian port.

The cargo ship had been drifting powerless after running out of fuel about 40 miles from Italy's southern coast with as many as 450 people onboard. The ship was built almost 50 years ago to carry livestock, a Website tracking maritime movements said.

"We know that it left from a Turkish port and was abandoned by its crew," coastguard spokesman Filippo Marini told SkyTG24 television.

"When we hailed the ship to ask about its status, a migrant woman responded, saying, 'We are alone and we have no one to help us.'" It had been put on a collision course for the Italian coast before running out of fuel, he said.

The nationality of the migrants was not yet known, a coastguard spokesman said, but there are women and children on board. It is the third such migrant ship in the past two weeks as smugglers

turn to abandoning old ships in a shift in tactics.

On Wednesday, about 800 migrants, mostly Syrian refugees, arrived in Italy after they were apparently abandoned by their ship's crew and set on a crash course for the Italian coast. The coastguard also boarded that vessel and took over navigation.

Two weeks ago, the Italian navy went to the aid of an abandoned cargo ship carrying 850 migrants, disembarking them at a port in Sicily.

Civil war in Syria and anarchy in Libya swelled the number of people crossing the Mediterranean last year. Many of them paid smugglers \$1,000 (648

pounds)-\$2,000 to travel.

The United Nations refugee agency says 160,000 sea-borne migrants arrived in Italy by November 2014 and a further 40,000 in Greece. Thousands more have died attempting the journey.

Smugglers have changed tactics because Italy has ended its Mare Nostrum maritime search and rescue mission, which makes a crossing in a small boat more risky, and due to increased fighting in Libya, Carlotta Sami, a spokeswoman for the UN refugee agency, told *Reuters*.

"We have seen increasing use of old cargo ships ready to be dismantled (to smuggle migrants) over the past two months," she

Sierra Leone-flagged Ezadeen vessel, carrying hundreds of migrants, is towed by the Icelandic Coast Guard vessel Tyr in rough seas in the Mediterranean sea off Italy's south coast in this handout provided by the Icelandic Coast Guard on 2 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS



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Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANTRA BHUM VOY NO (946N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S INTERASIA LINES**

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

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

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV NINOS VOY NO (1027W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims 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 CHINA SHIPPING LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

Ecuador tops list of best countries for retirement



A man carries shopping bags in front of a store in Macas on 5 Nov, 2014.—REUTERS

NEW YORK, 3 Jan — Looking for a safe, affordable place for retirement? With its warm climate, affordable housing and generous benefits, Ecuador was named the best country to retire in by InternationalLiving.com.

The South American nation bordered by Colombia and Peru topped the website's annual global retirement index of 25 best countries, scoring high points for affordable cost-of-living, entertainment and amenities.

Next are Panama, Mexico, Malaysia and Costa Rica, rounding out the top five nations in the index that looks at eight criteria to determine the best countries for retirement.

"The world's top retirement havens for 2015 may dot the landscape from Asia to Latin America to Europe, but they share certain assets," said Jennifer Stevens, executive editor of InternationalLiving.com.

"They're safe, offer good value and are places

you can settle with relative ease," she added in the statement announcing the results.

Ecuador scored 92.7 out of 100 points, with top marks for climate, cost of renting or buying property and discounts on flights, public transportation and utilities offered by the government for retirees.

"Although prices have risen slightly in recent years, Ecuador's real estate is the best value you'll find anywhere," said Dan Prescher, senior editor at the website.

Panama is considered the best destination in Central America and offers a Pensionado visa, which is available to anyone with a lifetime pension of more than \$1,000. The visa offers discounts on medical services, entertainment, meals, air fares, as well as electricity and phone bills.

"For under \$2,000, a couple can live comfortably in a country with a well-earned reputation

for being expat-friendly," according to the website.

Malaysia, the top retirement country in Asia, earned high scores for ease of fitting in, entertainment and amenities, as well as low cost of living. A meal with a bottle of wine can cost as little as \$5 and a visit to the doctor just \$15.

In Europe, sixth-place Spain was the top retirement nation thanks to its warm climate and low cost of living compared with other European countries. Spain scored top marks for infrastructure, a health-care system recognized by the World Health Organization as one of the best in the world, and entertainment.

Neighbouring Portugal came in at No 9, followed by Thailand, which won points for low healthcare costs, culture and affordable housing. Seventh-place Malta and Colombia at No 8 completed the top 10.

Reuters



A float carrying students from Japan's northeastern prefecture of Miyagi and US soldiers takes part in the annual Parade of Roses in Pasadena, California, on 1 Jan, 2015.—KYODO NEWS

Over half of firms in Ireland plan salary hike for staff

DUBLIN, 3 Jan — Over half of firms in Ireland plan salary hikes for their staff in 2015, according to employers' group Ibec on Friday.

Ibec, the group that represents Irish business, published the results of a comprehensive new pay survey of 462 companies, which found that 57 percent of companies plan to increase basic pay in 2015.

The median pay increase is set to be 2 percent, which is the same as 2014, according to the survey. In 2014, 49 percent of companies increased basic pay, 50 percent kept pay the same and 1 percent reduced basic pay.

Increases in basic pay

in 2015 are most likely to occur in high-tech sectors, such as medical devices, pharma-chemical, electronic services/telecoms and electronics manufacturing, Ibec said.

Larger companies are more likely to be increasing basic pay in 2015, it said, adding that three out of five companies with more than 50 employees expect to increase basic pay in 2015.

In the survey, Ibec also found many companies remain in survival mode and simply cannot afford pay

risers.

"It is vital that pay demands are moderate, so we don't lose the hard fought competitive gains of recent years. The focus must be on job creation," said Ibec CEO Danny McCoy.

"This year we have the chance to further cut unemployment and attract back migrants that left during the crisis, but we must not repeat past mistakes. If costs spiral and we lose our competitive edge we will pay for it in jobs," he said.

Xinhua

WEATHER REPORT

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 4th January, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin and Chin States, weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Rakhine State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in the Northern Myanmar areas.

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Singer Hayley Williams is engaged

LOS ANGELES, 3 Jan — Rock band Paramore singer Hayley Williams has got engaged to longtime boyfriend Chad Gilbert. The 26-year-old singer shared the news on Twitter. Gilbert proposed to her on Christmas, said *The Hollywood Reporter*.

She posted a photoshopped snap of the happy couple as they might look on their wedding day, along with caption, “Hey guess what?” Gilbert posted about the engagement on his Instagram account. “Popped the question on Christmas Day!” he wrote.

Messages of congratulations soon flowed in from the singing community. Katy Perry and Taylor Swift were among the first to send their best wishes.—PTI



Chad Gilbert & Hayley Williams

NASHVILLE, 3 Jan — Grand Ole Opry star “Little Jimmy” Dickens, the longest-running cast member of country music’s most venerable venue, died on Friday at the age of 94, the Opry said.

Dickens, a pint-sized comical performer measuring just 4-foot-11 inches, died of cardiac arrest in a Nashville area hospital after he suffered a stroke on Christmas Day.

He joined the Opry in 1948 and last performed on its stage on 20 December, the day after his 94th birthday, according to Opry spokeswoman Jessie Schmidt.

Even in his nineties, Dickens remained committed to his duties at the Nashville institution, where his big voice and larger-than-

Grand Ole Opry star ‘Little Jimmy’ Dickens dies at 94



life personality made him a fan favourite.

“I look forward from one weekend to another to get back out on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry and try to entertain people who have come from miles and miles

and state to state to be entertained with country music,” he said recently, according to the Opry. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1983 and inspired some of today’s prominent country stars, such as Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood.

Friends including Hank Williams knew him as “Tater” — a nickname that came from early hit “Take An Old Cold Tater (and Wait).”

Among Dickens’s other classics are “Country Boy,” “Out Behind the Barn,” and “May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose.”

Reuters

U2’s Bono says he may never play guitar again

NEW YORK, 3 Jan — Bono, the frontman of the Irish rock group U2 who was injured in a cycling accident last year, said on Friday his recovery has not been easy and he may never play guitar again.

In a blog on the group’s website, the 54-year-old rocker said he broke his hand, shoulder, elbow and face and described how he “blanked out on impact” during the cycling accident in New York’s Central Park, which he said he could not



Lead singer Bono of the rock band U2 performs during the opening night of the North American leg of their 360 degree tour at Soldier Field in Chicago, in this file photo taken on 12 Sept, 2009. Bono, who was injured in a cycling accident last year, said on 2 Jan, 2015, his recovery has not been easy and he may never play guitar again.—REUTERS

blame on anyone but himself.

“Recovery has been more difficult than I thought,” he said in the message written from his home in Dublin. “As I write this, it is not clear that I will ever play guitar again. The band have reminded me that neither they nor Western civilization are depending on this.”

Bono, who included an X-ray of his elbow in the blog, said he did not remember how he ended up in hospital with the bone in his upper arm sticking through his leather jacket.

“Very punk rock as injuries go,” he added.

Bono’s arm was shattered in six places. Doctors inserted three metal plates and 18 screws to repair the

injury. He required hours of surgery and has had extensive therapy. But he is expected to make a full recovery.

Bono described the cycling spill as a “freak accident” and said the pain it caused did not compare with his disappointment in having to cancel U2’s weeklong appearance on NBC’s “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.”

He added that he will have to concentrate hard to be ready for the U2 tour that begins in Vancouver in May.

“We have some extraordinary ideas up our sleeve for this tour I’ve just got to be rebuilt by 14th May.”

Bono also referred to revelations he made last

year when he told a British talk show host that the reason he always wears his trademark sunglasses was that he has suffered from the eye disease glaucoma for two decades.

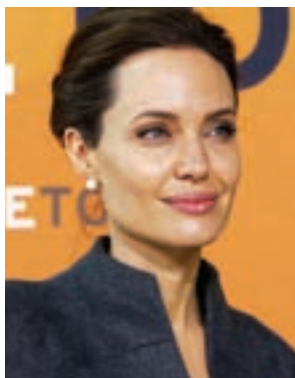
He said the announcement was completely unintentional but added that if not treated, glaucoma can cause blindness.

“I think anyone who reaches 40 should have their eyes properly checked,” he added.

The cycling accident was not the only harrowing event for the rock star in 2014. In November a private plane in which he was traveling from Ireland to Germany lost its rear hatch but the pilot managed to land it safely.

Reuters

Chickenpox was absurd: Angelina Jolie



LOS ANGELES, 3 Jan — Actress-director Angelina Jolie, who has recovered from chickenpox, says the contagious disease was strange and posterous.

The 39-year-old star had to cancel her appearance at the premiere of her latest directorial venture ‘Unbroken’ last month due

to her illness and was represented at the event by her husband Brad Pitt and children, reported E! Online.

“It was so absurd. What was even stranger was, I think, during the day before. I was trying to do interviews and I was like, ‘What’s happening to me? Strange’. “Of course it was really fun that my kids took the mantle. They took it very seriously when I said, ‘You’ve got to represent mom. You’ve got to do this for me.’”

My kids knew and loved Louis, so I was like, ‘You’ve got to do this for Louis, you know? You’ve got to get out there.’ So, they were excited about the mission,” she said.—PTI

Elvis Presley’s personal jets could fetch more than \$10 million



‘Hound Dog II’, a Lockheed Jetstar owned by entertainer Elvis Presley, is displayed at Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee, in this undated publicity photo released to Reuters on 2 Jan, 2015. Elvis Presley’s pair of personal jets, one complete with gilded wash basin and plush sleeping quarters, will go under the hammer in a sealed-bid auction for a piece of mile-high rock and roll memorabilia, Julien’s Auctions said on Friday.

REUTERS

LOS ANGELES, 3 Jan — Elvis Presley’s pair of personal jets, one complete with gilded wash basin and plush sleeping quarters, will go under the hammer in a sealed-bid auction for a piece of mile-high rock and roll memorabilia, Julien’s Auctions said on Friday.

Jets “Lisa Marie” and “Hound Dog II” that the late King of Rock and Roll designed himself will be offered together to bidders and are expected to fetch between \$10 million and \$15 million, the Beverly Hills, California, auction house said.

They are no longer airworthy, but have been on view for visitors at Graceland — Presley’s

Memphis, Tennessee estate — for the past three decades.

Presley bought the Convair 880 jet from Delta Air Lines in 1975, two years before his death at age 42, for \$250,000. He named it “Lisa Marie” after his daughter.

Presley spent more than \$300,000 refurbishing the jet with a penthouse bedroom, executive conference room, bar and videotape system linked to four TVs. He had the plane painted red, white and blue with his motto “TCB” — “Takin’ Care of Business” — on the tail.

He purchased the eight-to-10 passenger “Hound Dog II,” a Lockheed Jetstar, also in 1975 for about \$900,000 while waiting on the refurbishment of the “Lisa Marie.”

Reuters

Second floodgate installed in Panama Canal expansion project

PANAMA CITY, 3 Jan — Workers on Friday installed the second floodgate as part of the ongoing expansion of the Panama Canal.

The Panama Canal Authority said installing the gate on the Atlantic Ocean side of the waterway's new lane took around four hours.

Like the first expansion-phase floodgate installed on 15 December, the 10-metre-by-30-metre second gate weighs more

than 3,000 tons, and can slide back and forth on rolling wheels, something the old hinged floodgates cannot do. In total, the new lane will have 16 floodgates, eight on the Pacific Ocean side, and eight on the Atlantic side.

The expansion project was due to be completed by 2014, in time for the centennial celebration of the Panama Canal, but the Panama Canal Authority now

hopes to have the new lane operational in early 2016.

According to the authority, the expansion work, which began in 2007 with an initial investment of 5.25 billion US dollars, is 85 percent finished.

On 22 December, construction began for the inter-oceanic Nicaragua Canal, which, once completed in 2019, is expected to compete with the Panama Canal.—Xinhua

990 bln euros lost in EU due to lack of political action

BRUSSELS, 3 Jan — The European Union (EU) lost at least 990 billion euros (1192 billion US dollars) of untapped economic growth potential due to lack of political action, a report said on Friday.

The Cost of Non-Europe reports, issued by the European Parliamentary Research Service, showed that there is an efficiency loss of 990 billion euros to the overall economy due

to the absence of common action at European level.

The report contributed to the identifications of areas where inefficiencies or dysfunctions exist or where economies of scale could be achieved via better EU level cooperation.

The report also noted the bad shape of the EU economy, saying recovery remains fragile and subdued. The report said that Labour markets have improved only mildly and weak growth has compounded disinflationary trends. The persistence of high structural unemployment has become a serious

concern in the EU because of its severe social consequences and because it hampers growth prospects and the sustainability of public finances, the report said.

The report underlined the link between EU's investment plan and economic growth potential.

For investment plan, if action is taken, and identified problems removed, general business environment and trust would be improved, contributing, in turn, to boosting economic activity and private investments, the report said.

Xinhua

Liverpool losing 'red heartbeat' in Gerrard, says Benitez

LONDON, 3 Jan — Liverpool will be losing their "red heartbeat" when captain Steven Gerrard quits the club at the end of the season, 2005 Champions League-winning manager Rafa Benitez said on Friday.

"After hearing the news today that Steven will leave Liverpool ... I wanted to wish him all the best for the future and thank him for all his hard work during the time I was at Anfield," the Napoli boss said on his website (www.rafabenitez.com). "Liverpool FC is not just losing a great athlete or a great footballer. The club is losing its red heartbeat. Steve, remember, you'll never walk alone."

Benitez said the remarkable penalty shoot-out victory, after his side trailed 3-0 after 45 minutes

against AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final in Istanbul, would not have been possible without Gerrard.

"Steven inspired the team that night, refusing to believe it was an impossible job at halftime," explained the Spaniard.

"He led the charge with a wonderful headed goal and showed the determination needed to win a penalty for our third goal. It was the perfect stage for him to showcase his talents.

"If I could think of one word to describe Steven Gerrard it would be 'passion'," added Benitez. "He was my captain at Liverpool for six seasons and we worked closely together.

"He nearly always thrived on the big occasion, producing one of the great



Liverpool's Steven Gerrard controls the ball during their English Premier League match against Burnley at Turf Moor in Burnley, northern England on 26 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

FA Cup goals as we beat West Ham at the Millenium Stadium in Cardiff," he said of the 2006 final.

"The partnership he developed with Fernando Torres produced some of the most exciting attacking football the Premier League has ever seen."

Reuters

Gerrard, 34, who has made 695 appearances and scored 180 goals for Liverpool since joining the club as an eight-year-old schoolboy, said earlier on Friday that he would be moving to an unnamed foreign team at the end of the season.

Aoyama Gakuin wins 1st Hakone Ekiden title

TOKYO, 3 Jan — Overnight leader Aoyama Gakuin University won the 91st running of the Tokyo-Hakone collegiate ekiden on Saturday, earning the school's first championship in the classic road race.

A day after winning the opening leg for the first time in the school's history, Aoyama Gakuin clocked 5 hours, 25 minutes, 29 seconds over the final 109.6 kilometres to win the return leg for the first time as well.

Komazawa University, which led most of the first day until overtaken in the grueling uphill fifth stage by Daichi Kamino on Friday, finished second, 10:50 off Aoyama Gakuin's pace. Komazawa, looking for its first championship in seven years, started the return leg from the resort town of Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture, to Tokyo's Otemachi district in fourth place.



Yuya Ando, anchor of Aoyama Gakuin University, finishes first in the Tokyo-Hakone collegiate ekiden in Tokyo on 3 Jan, 2015. The university earned the school's first championship in the classic road race.

KYODO NEWS

Last year's champion, Toyo University, finished third.

Aoyama Gakuin began the day with a 4:59 lead over Meji University.

Kyodo News

Moscow to probe into attack on Russian journalists in Kiev

MOSCOW, 3 Jan — A criminal investigation was launched into the attack on Russian TV LifeNews' journalists in Kiev, a spokesman for the Investigative Committee (IC) said on Friday.

"A criminal case has been open on obstruction of the lawful activities of a TV LifeNews' female journalist in the city of Kiev and also into the open theft of her belongings," Vladimir Markin said.

The IC was aware that the law enforcement authorities of Ukraine have also launched an investigation into the case, but doubted that this action could be "a mere formality", according to Markin.

Ukrainian Internal Affairs Ministry said earlier on its website that a suspected attacker had been detained under the charges of robbery and interfering with professional journalism activities.

Early Friday morning,

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova accused the attack as "a gross violation of the fundamental principles of freedom of speech and a manifestation of inaction of Ukraine's authorities."

Zakharova called on international journalistic community, human rights activists, as well as any related international organizations, to react to the incident by giving a proper assessment of the attack.

"Silence in this case is an act of compliance," RIA Novosti news agency quoted Zakharova as saying.

LifeNews said late Thursday night on its website that the channel's female correspondent and her cameraman have been attacked when reporting a march in Kiev, while some of their equipment were taken away or damaged by attackers.

Xinhua

Chicago police officer injured by driver of stolen van

CHICAGO, 3 Jan — A Chicago police officer was injured on Thursday afternoon after being struck by a stolen van, local media *Chicago Tribune* reported, citing police.

Police pulled over a van on the south side of Chicago and the driver of the van struck one of the them as they were investigating, police said.

The 26-year-old officer sustained non-life-threatening injuries to his left leg and a possible concussion, according to police. One offender was arrested at the scene, and a second person was being sought.

The police did not mention the colour of the injured police and the driver of the van. —Xinhua

<p>MRTV Entertainment Channel (4-1-2015, Sunday)</p>	<p>6:30 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honour Song of Alinka Wutyi
	<p>6:50 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game for Children
<p>6:00 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travelogue Programme 	<p>7:25 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing & Enjoy
	<p>8:50 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Myanmar Movies

<p>MITV MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL (4-1-15 07:00 am~ 5-1-15 07:00 am) MST</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * World News * Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Decision" * Local News * The Prayer Halls and Buddha Images (Part-1) * World News * Tea Leaves * Local News * Ar Khar New Year Festival * World News * The Photographer: Kyaw Kyaw Winn * Local News * ID Show "Education" * World News * Trishaw Man * Local News * Myanmar Entrepreneur "U Nyan Lin" * World News * In the Studio "Lann Sa" (Part-2)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Local News * Today Myanmar "The Lake, Inle" * World News * Art Students : Theatrical Art * Local News * Continuation In Rural Tradition * World News * Kayah Style * Local News * The Land of Silver Mountains (Kayah State) * World News * Sagaing: Youth Leader * Local News * Chinlone & The Dreams of the players

Djokovic eases into Abu Dhabi final



Serbia's Novak Djokovic shakes hands with Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland after he beats him on the second day of the Mubadala World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on 2 Jan, 2015. Djokovic won 2-0.—XINHUA

ABU DHABI, 3 Jan — the tennis exhibition in Abu Dhabi after beating World No 1 Novak Djokovic raced to the final of Swiss Stan Wawrinka 6-1, 6-2 in the second semi-final on Friday. Playing his first

match this year, the Serbian tennis ace demonstrated that he is ready to maintain the same high level of quality that brought him seven titles in 2014 and the year-end No 1 spot in the Emirates ATP Rankings.

Djokovic won points easily until the seventh game of the second set when he failed to convert his first match point on Wawrinka's serve, but clinched the win on the second match point in the next game.

Next up for Djokovic is the final clash on Saturday against Great Britain's Andy Murray, who defeated Spaniard Rafael Nadal in straight sets in the first semi-final earlier today.

Tanjung

Moyes says struggling Sociedad can floor Barca

BARCELONA, 3 Jan — Real Sociedad coach David Moyes faces his biggest La Liga challenge yet when second-placed Barcelona visit on Sunday and says his players have shown they are capable of beating the best.

The former Manchester United manager took charge of the relegation-threatened club in November. Since then they have lost only once but also have just one victory from five league matches. Moyes wants to win a place in Europe next season although Sociedad are down in 14th place, two points off the relegation zone.

The Basque club have proved this season they can rise to the occasion against stronger sides, having beaten Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at home before Moyes took over.

Barca also have a poor record in Sociedad where they have not won in the last four visits. They lost there last season. "If we can play as well as we did in those two games (against Real and Atletico) we have a good chance of winning," Moyes told a news conference on Friday. "We face a very good team who are very competitive but the players have shown they can beat Barcelona and they need to do it again. "We want to have a great start to the



New Year and beat Barca and do all we can to start moving up the table," said Moyes. "I know the Barcelona players from when I was in England. I watched them play the 2011 Champions League final against Manchester United at Wembley. They are a great team and (Lionel) Messi is very special but they have household names in all positions."

While Sociedad have looked more solid at the back in recent games, it has come at a price as they are struggling to create chances going forward. "We will go out looking to be hard to beat and then when we have the ball we will look to cause Barcelona damage," said Moyes.

"They are undoubtedly a very good side and we respect that but they have to come to Anoeta and we need to make it difficult for them."

Reuters

Podolski on brink of leaving Arsenal for Inter

LONDON, 3 Jan — Germany forward Lukas Podolski looks set to leave Arsenal for Inter Milan after the Italian side posted photographs of the player holding their club scarf above his head as he arrived at Linate Airport in Milan on Friday.

Podolski joined Arsenal from Cologne in 2012 but has struggled to earn a regular starting place and said in October he might leave the London club before his contract expires in 2016 because he is not playing enough.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on

Thursday the club had received an increased offer for Podolski from Inter.

"The first proposal was farcical," said Wenger. "After, when they come back a bit more seriously, then you will see what happens now."

Asked whether it was inevitable that Podolski would move to Inter, Wenger replied: "Inevitable? In the transfer window that's very difficult to say but we'll see what happens".

The 29-year-old German has won more than 100 caps for his country.

Reuters



Arsenal's Lukas Podolski celebrates his second goal against Galatasaray during their Champions League Group D match at Ali Sami Yen Spor Kompleksi in Istanbul on 9 Dec, 2014. —REUTERS

Pardew leaves Newcastle to manage Crystal Palace

LONDON, 3 Jan — Alan Pardew has left Newcastle United to become manager of Premier League rivals Crystal Palace, the clubs confirmed on Saturday.

The 53-year-old has signed a three-and-a-half year contract at struggling Palace and replaces Neil Warnock, who was sacked last Saturday after four months in charge.—Reuters



Crystal Palace's incoming manager Alan Pardew (L) arrives in the stands with Crystal Palace chairman Steve Parish (C) to watch their team's English Premier League soccer match against Aston Villa at Villa Park in Birmingham on 1 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

Yoshida gets new 3-year-deal with Southampton

LONDON, 3 Jan — Japan defender Maya Yoshida has concluded a three-year contract that will keep him with Premier League club Southampton for another three seasons, the team said on Friday.

The Saints, who are enjoying a surprising run of form this season, sit in fourth place in the league, trailing league heavyweights Chelsea, Man City and Man United. The 26-year-old Yoshida joined Southampton in August 2012 from Dutch first-division side VVV Venlo. He completed the deal before departing for Australia to join his Japan teammates ahead of the upcoming Asian Cup.

Yoshida, who has been a central defender for most of his career, has three goals in 60 Premier League games, but this season has also spent time on the right side.

He announced the signing on his twitter account, writing: "Very glad to see all of you guys on the Twitter and announce that I've just signed another three years..."

Saints manager Ronald Koeman praised Yoshida's versatility, according to the club's website.

"He's doing well, he's an important player," Koeman said. "We have a lot of competition with the centerbacks in the de-



Southampton's Maya Yoshida

fence, but he's doing very well and I'm very happy, very pleased about his new contract."

"It's always good for the coach to have players who can play in different positions, he's shown that this season. He played rightback and centerback and it's very good to have these kinds of players because then you can change positions."

"The African Cup and the Asian Cup mean you lose some players, okay, we knew that a long time before. We have to deal without Maya for I hope three weeks, but maybe longer."—Kyodo News

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