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INVESTMENT APPROVALS

Myanmar Investment Commission gives nods to 17 local, foreign firms in September



A manufacturing plant in Hlinethayar Township, where some industrial zones are located. PHOTO: YE MYINT

Ye Myint

THE Myanmar Investment Commission has given the green light to 17 local and foreign firms to conduct business in the country as joint ventures, locally owned firms or wholly foreign-owned enterprises so far this month, according to a statement issued by the commission this week.

The businesses approved at the commission's 16/2015 meeting include those involved in the manufacturing and marketing of wood-based products, construction materials, hospital equipment, garments, power transformers, footwear, plastic and jet fuel prod-

ucts, marine product processing and production, rearing of oysters and culturing of pearls, hotel services, upgrading of jetties and container terminals, private clinics and diagnostic services.

In a sign of continuing investments in the country's hospitality industry, San Yamon Co., Ltd will build a hotel on 13 acres of land in Nay Pyi Taw's hotel zone while Family Business Group Hotel Limited will engage in hotel services in Yangon.

As part of further expansion of the country's garment industry, three companies—Simon Labels Myanmar, Pathein Just and Able Glad Myanmar—will establish

clothing manufacturing businesses in industrial zones in the Yangon and Ayeyawady Regions. The three firms will be operated as wholly foreign-owned investments.

In addition, Myanmar Sule Terminal Limited will undertake jetty upgrading and construction of a container terminal in Yangon Port as local investment while Bumrungrad Myanmar Company Limited will as a form of joint venture investment provide diagnostic services at its private clinic in Yangon.

Other enterprises operated by an approved manufacturer in Yangon will produce various kinds of

goods including construction materials, hospital equipment, plastic and footwear products and conduct fish and shrimp processing and production.

One of them will establish a manufacturing, installation, repair and maintenance plant for transformers, switchgears and related accessories in Yangon while another company will conduct artificial breeding of oysters to culture pearls in Taninthayi Region.

Among the firms, National Energy Puma Aviation Services Co., Ltd was allowed a temporary permit to be a joint venture with the Ministry of Energy. With its location at No (1) Refinery and

Yangon International Airport in Yangon, the enterprise will conduct management and marketing of jet fuel products including importation, storage, distribution, transportation and fueling.

According to informed sources, the country's manufacturing, telecommunications and hospitality sectors are set to be prioritized in allowing investment permits to local and foreign firms this fiscal year.

Myanmar has a full-year target of USD6 billion FDI for 2015-2016, and has already attracted USD2.4 billion in the first three months of this budget year from 1 April to 30 June.—GNLM

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Property market expected to be active again next year

Khaing Thanda Lwin

THE cooling domestic property market is expected to be active again in early 2016, according to the chairman of Myanmar Real Estate Services Association.

U Khin Maung Than told The Global New Light of Myanmar on Saturday that local skyrocketing property prices are to equalize those in the ASEAN market by the time the ASEAN Economic

Community comes into effect in late 2015, which he described as a single market that will assure a free flow of trade and investment in the ASEAN region.

There has been a significant rise in the demand for office apartments because local and foreign investors have come to show greater interest in the country's property sector, with the chairman quoting a website named house.com.mm as stating that two-thirds of real estate

agents have estimated an eight percent growth in the housing market next year.

Overshadowed by the 8 November election, the estate market is likely to remain unchanged before the end of this year.

The market for detached houses and condominium apartments, whose prices ranging from above K100 million (US\$77,700) to K50 million (\$3,880), is not an exception.

"Land plots and properties in Dagon Myothit township are being sold by 30 % discount," U Khin Maung Than said, adding that the property rental fees have also declined compared to those in 2014."

The property market had boomed over the past years. Prices for apartments, houses and land plots have since then skyrocketed. Since late 2014, the market has been in decline due to low demand.—GNLM

More than 60 works by late art master Kin Maung Yin showcased to public

Aye Min Soe

MORE than 60 works by late art master Kin Maung Yin, regarded as one of the second generation of Myanmar's modern artists, is exhibited at Gallery Sixty Five from Saturday to Monday.

"I collected many of his paintings. Before he died, I made some of his art exhibitions and compiled a copy of his Memory- but, I was not gratified for some accidental error. I did my decision to make next exhibition of U Kin Maung Yin," said U Thein Win, who made the exhibition and a book of Kin Maung Yi-Art of Life.

"What I do hope is for sharing

his works, his ideology, his creation philosophy among art lovers, he said in the book. U Kin Maung Yin died at 73 in June, 2014.

According to U Win Pe, a friend of U Kin Maung Yin and a 74-year-old artist, Kin Maung Yin understood the arts from various "isms" such as Cubism, Impressionism, Abstract and Surrealism.

(U) Kin Maung Yin is especially interested in space vibration as he was an architect and is a man who loved just creating paintings without caring if he would be a success or not, said U Win Pe.

Gallery Sixty Five is located at 65, Yawmingyi Road in Dagon Township.—GNLM



A visitor looks at art works of Kin Maung Yin at Gallery Sixty Five. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Tamil Hindu Foundation (Central) of Myanmar donates to flood-hit delta village

THE Tamil Hindu Foundation (Central) of Myanmar presented donation to flood-hit Gonminseit village in Nyaungdon Township of delta Ayeyawady Region, on Friday.

The foundation's general Secretary U Chit Win accompanied by 30 members, handed over

relief items worth K 11 million at the village's Aung Thiri monastery.

An accompanying member Dr Min Lwin, who also leads the Myanmar-Hindu Doctors' Charity Group, said that his group which included women doctors have come to provide medical treatment

and health education to the village folks. He added that they will continue their charity work.

The medical group comprises 25 members, including four dentists and seven medicinal staff. They treated free-of charge to 358 patients altogether from nearby villages as well.—Soe Win



TAMIL Hindu Foundation (Central) of Myanmar hands over relief items worth K 11 million to flood victims in Nyaungdon Township, Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: SOE WIN

Preventive measures taken against dengue fever

TO MINIMIZE the spread of seasonal dengue fever, local maternal and child care association, other social welfare women organizations, nurses and Bayintnaung

ward elders of Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on Friday, collectively disinfected wells and residential water tanks, and properly seal off drain sieves and

water containers stored at homes of the ward. They will tour to the 1587 homes of the ward, every Saturday according to a ward authority.—Tin Soe Lwin- Tatkon



Dengue preventive measures taken in Tatkon. PHOTO: TIN SOE LWIN

Carlsberg Beer Academy Launches to Support Local Partners

RENOWNED Danish brewery group Carlsberg announced on Wednesday the commencement of its "Carlsberg Beer Academy." The new program is designed to support Myanmar local outlet partners and offer them an added value to raise the bar of the growing consumer expectations and build capacity among service staff nationwide through an educational and practical training module titled: The Best Draught Beer Experience. Stressing its continued commitment to serving the Myanmar market, Birgitte Weeke, Myanmar Carlsberg's

Marketing Director said, "We run the Carlsberg Beer Academy in many countries to make sure that we together with our partners, deliver the best possible beer experience. We know that providing a top quality pint of draught beer requires partnership, and this partnership does not finish when the beer is delivered to our partners. We recognize that our local trade partners are our backbone and we are truly committed to these long-term partnerships by sharing our skills, which are key to ensure Myanmar can enjoy fresh and quality beer."—GNLM



Carlsberg Beer Academy aims at delivering the best possible beer experience. PHOTO: CARLSBERG

Rural Development Department active in digging wells

RURAL Development Department under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development Department in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, spent nearly K400 million to dig wells in 40 villages in the region. Under the

program, the department dug 6 wells in five villages spending K23.76 million.

The program was supervised by U Pyi Phyto Hein, a local businessman.—Pho Shwe Thun (Dawei)



Water wells to supply fresh water to locals in Myanmar southern region, Taninthayi. PHOTO: PHO SHWE THUN

Tatmadaw's role in national politics must be valuable: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with U Aung Kham Hti, Patron of Pa-O National Federation, over peace and development of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone. PHOTO: MYAWADY

THE role of the Tatmadaw in carrying out the national politics must be valuable, said Commander-in-Chief of Defence Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

At a meeting with personnel of local regiments and battalions under the Eastern Command in Taunggyi Saturday, the Senior General urged them to strive for reliability for the people by keeping the disciplines and in obedience to the instructions as they are carrying out the duty of defence and national politics.

To achieve the goal of stability and development of the country, armed conflicts should be ceased and activities on the road to democracy and efforts to establish the rule of law in the country should be in conformity with the law, he added.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also urged the personnel of the Tatmadaw to protect the interests of the people and to follow dos and don'ts in order not to cause any wrongs with the peoples in order to secure the unity of the national

peoples and peace.

The Tatmadaw is planning to honour its members who did their duty with loyalty to the country as part of efforts for bringing the country on the path to democracy.

During his visit to the Tatmadaw Hospital in Taunggyi, the Senior General greeted local people who received eye operation there.

He also held talks with U Aung Kham Hti, the Patron of Pa-O National Federation, over peace and development of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone.—GNLM

What they stand for: campaigns aired

All Nationals' Democracy Party Kayah State, Kayah Unity Democracy Party and National Prosperity Party broadcast their campaign speeches on Saturday.

All Nationals' Democracy Party Kayah State



ANDP's Central Executive Committee member U Thel Yel said that his party would emphasise the improvement of transport infrastructure as it could pave the way for socioeconomic development. The party viewed the renewed spirit of fraternity would ensure simultaneous growth in all parts of the country, with the CEC member pledging that encouragement would be given to promotion of education, health, sport, culture and freedom and faith.

Kayah Unity Democracy Party



KUDP's Chairman U Saw Daniel said this party would strive for the emergence of a federal system that could cement national consolidation and guarantee equality. He pledged his party's cooperation with people from all walks of life in a bid to realize a political system that could satisfy the common social needs in health, education, agriculture and transport sectors.

National Prosperity Party



NPP's Chairman U Win Myint Aung pledged his party would initiate a culture of cooperation between the government and the people in the interests of the country and the people. The chairman added that his party had plans to enable the country to be on a par with its neighbours and world's nations in terms of sectorwide development. He assured a society where reciprocal trust, friendship and respect prosper.—GNLM

Union FM discusses elections, signing of nationwide ceasefire agreement, matters relating to migration with UN chief

UNION Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, who is currently in New York, the United States of America, to attend the 70th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), held a talk at the invitation of the Council on Foreign Relations, an American publisher and think tank, in their headquarters in the afternoon of 24 September 2015.

The Union Minister responded in details to the questions on Myanmar's relations with its neighbours, signing of nationwide ceasefire agreement, the current and future role of

Tatmataw, enactment of laws including Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law, social and economic development and flow of foreign investment to Myanmar, among others.

The Union Minister met with the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon in the afternoon and exchanged views on voting rights in forthcoming elections, signing of nationwide ceasefire agreement, matters relating to migration and support to the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.—MNA



Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin and UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon. PHOTO: MNA

Outstanding children of writers honoured by Myanmar Writers' Association

MYANMAR Writers' Association on Sunday honored the outstanding offspring of writers who had passed the previous (2014-2015) matriculation exam with flying colours. It is the association's fourth time of honoring the outstanding children.

Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Information U Tint Swe, who attended the occasion, encouraged the students to follow their dreams, choose their own profession and make it happen with courage.

The association's president U Tin Hlaing (pseudonym -Latwintha-Saw Chit) urged the students to pursue further studies and serve their country and its people. He warned them against

loosing national identities.

The 23 outstanding students across the country, included one student who got six distinctions (all subjects), one five-distinction winner, 4 four-distinction winners, and 4 three-distinction winners.

Donations to the association were also presented at the event, where Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy-Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Yangon Region minister U Nyan Tun Oo and MWA members attended. Besides honoring the outstanding students, the association also holds respect paying ceremonies to doyen writers and opens writing courses to new generation of enthusiasts.—Myat Sandy Thin Zaw

Media slots for three political parties announced

NAY PYI TAW— MRTV, Hluttaw channel, MWD (Variety), Myanmar Radio and Shwe FM will broadcast campaign speeches by representatives from Kachin State Democracy Party, The Kachin National Congress for Democracy and Lisu National Development Party(L.N.P.P) on 27 September.—GNLM

ELECTION COUNTDOWN
Make your voice count. Cast your vote. **42** DAYS

Singapore presses Asia Pulp & Paper for information on forest fires

SINGAPORE — Singapore has called on Asia Pulp & Paper Co Ltd (APP) to check whether its subsidiaries and suppliers have any connection with the recent forest fires in Indonesia, which have caused a thick smog to envelop the city state.

Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) also said in a statement that it has separately sent notices to four other Indonesian companies, accusing them of contributing to the pollution.

Unlisted APP, a member of Indonesia's Sinar Mas group, is a major supplier of paper, pulp and packaging in Asia.

A spokeswoman for APP in Jakarta said it has not received a notice from Singapore to date.

The announcement came after Singapore shut primary and secondary schools on Friday as worsening pollution caused air the quality to deteriorate to what the authorities said were very unhealthy levels. Southeast Asia has suffered for years from annual bouts of smog caused by slash-and-burn practices in Indonesia's Sumatra and Kalimantan islands, but governments in the region have failed to address the problem.

The fires have been exacerbated

this year by the effects of the El Niño weather phenomenon, as a prolonged dry season in Indonesia has parched the top soil, fuelling the flames. NEA said the govern-

ment is currently examining how to apply more economic pressure against errant companies.

"Ultimately, errant companies must know that there is a

price to be paid for damaging our health, environment and economy," the statement quoted Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan as

saying. Singapore passed a cross-border air pollution law last year that makes those who cause haze both criminally and civilly liable.—Reuters



A forest fire is seen from a helicopter operated by the National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) over Langgam District, Riau province on the island of Sumatra on 23 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thai police lead key suspects to Bangkok bomb site for re-enactment

BANGKOK — Police in Thailand led two suspects to the scene of last month's Bangkok bomb blast for a re-enactment of their alleged crimes on Saturday, a day after police said one of the men was responsible for planting the bomb that killed 20 people.

Fourteen foreigners were among those killed in the attack, the worst incident of its kind in Thai history. It dealt a fresh blow to Thailand's important tourism industry, which had just begun to recover after political protests last year.

Police escorted the two men to the shrine and a nearby shopping mall in the Thai capital.

The men, handcuffed and wearing body armour, walked through the re-enactment, a standard Thai police procedure, while bystanders were kept at a distance.

National police spokesman Prawut Thawornsiri said on Friday one of the two men was the same yellow-shirted man seen in security footage placing a backpack at the shrine moments before the blast.

Prawut told reporters at the shrine on Saturday that the first arrested suspect, who has been referred to both as Bilal Mohammed and Adem Karadag, the name on a Turkish passport he holds, was responsible for the bombing.



A Thai police officer stands guard as people pray at the Erawan shrine in central Bangkok, Thailand. PHOTO: REUTERS

"We have now identified him as the one who killed 20 people and injured many others," said Prawut.

Karadag, whose nationality remains unconfirmed, wore a yellow shirt on top of his prison uniform and sat on a bench at the shrine during the re-enactment — the same place the man seen in security footage left the backpack containing the bomb.

The second man arrested, Yusuf Mieraili, used a mobile phone to trigger the bomb, Prawut said without giving further details.

Mieraili, dressed in a dark blue shirt, went through his re-enactment near a shopping mall a stone's throw from the shrine, from where police say he detonated the bomb.

Authorities had earlier said it was unlikely that either of the two men detained over the 17 August blast were the bomber in what has been an often contradictory police investigation.

Police had also said they believed Mieraili conspired in the attack but did not detonate the bomb.

Karadag's lawyer, who says his client's real name is Bilal Mohammed, said Karadag maintains he is innocent and had last visited him on 15 September.

"The appearance of the yellow shirt man [in CCTV footage] and Adem do not match. I do not believe Adem would confess," lawyer Chuchart Kanphai said. The motive for the attack remains unclear.—Reuters

Philippines to lead new climate finance group for most vulnerable countries

PHNOM PENH — The Philippines will lead 19 other countries next month in establishing a group to mobilize funds to help nations most vulnerable to climate change to become more resilient to the effects of global warming, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) said on Friday.

Philippines Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima will chair the inaugural meeting of the Vulnerable 20 (V20) group of finance ministers on 7-8 October in Lima, Peru, ahead of the annual gatherings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Philippines is among the world's 10 countries most affected by climate change-induced disasters, according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2015.

The V20 will "enable vulnerable countries to steer a high-level policy dialogue" on climate change and promote climate resilience and low carbon dioxide emissions, according to a statement by the CVF, a platform for vulnerable countries to address issues related to global climate change.

The V20 aims to develop new approaches to climate finance and strategies to improve how public and private funds are disbursed after disasters, the CVF said. It also aims to share best practices on dealing with disasters and their economic impact.—Reuters

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UN sees refugee flow to Europe growing

GENEVA — The United Nations said on Friday it could see no easing of the flow of refugees into Europe, with 8,000 arrivals daily, and that problems now facing governments may turn out to be only “the tip of the iceberg”.

Hungary, which lies in the path of the largest migration wave Europe has seen since World War Two, said it was seeking support to halt an influx from Croatia after sealing its border with Serbia by building a 3.5-metre-high steel fence.

Amin Awad, regional refugee coordinator for the UN refugee agency UNHCR, told journalists in Geneva the body’s past warnings on the scale of the problem had not been taken seriously.

“I don’t see it abating, I don’t see it stopping. If anything, it gives an indication perhaps that this is the tip of the iceberg.”

“This is the big question of the next few days and weeks, I am trying to seek supporters for this.”

— Prime Minister Viktor Orban

Dominik Bartsch, the UN’s deputy humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, said 10 million people were expected to need humanitarian support by the end of the year in that country, where 3.2 million were already displaced.

He said the United Nations was planning for the displacement of 500,000 people from the Iraqi city of Mosul if Iraqi forces launch an attempt to recapture it from Islamic State.

EU leaders have pledged at least 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) for Syrian refugees in the Middle East and closer cooperation to stem migrant flows into Europe at a summit described as less tense than feared after weeks of feuding.

The greater number of asylum seekers reaching Europe, many on flimsy dinghies crossing the Mediterranean or on hazardous journeys hidden in trucks,



Migrants run as they follow a police vehicle on their way to the Austrian border in Nickelsdorf from Hegyeshalom, Hungary on 25 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

are from Syria or Iraq. Others are from Afghanistan, Pakistan and African countries including Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia.

The German interior ministry said around a third of asylum seekers arriving in Germany who claim to be from Syria were probably not actually from that country, though spokesman Tobias Plate added that there were no precise statistics.

The arrival of the refugees, many abandoning

refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan or Lebanon after three years or more, has stirred sharp disagreement between countries on how to ‘process’ and accommodate them. While governments such as Germany have proven more welcoming, eastern European countries have resisted plans for quotas to disperse refugees.

Right-wing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in Vienna that after construction of a steel fence

to stop refugees entering from Serbia, migrants were now entering via Greece and the Balkans from Croatia. That border must now also be secured.

The flow will continue, Orban said, adding that the main question was how it could be stopped on the Croatian border.

“This is the big question of the next few days and weeks, I am trying to seek supporters for this,” Orban told a news conference after

meeting Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann.

For now, thousands of migrants arriving on the Croatian-Hungarian border are shipped every day to the Austrian border.

He said Hungary would make a decision about sealing off its border with Croatia only after consultations to gather support for the move.

Not all refugees enter via eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. In recent days, about 500 refugees per day have crossed the Finnish land border in Tornio, near the Arctic Circle, after a long journey through central Europe and Sweden.

Finnish media reported that demonstrators had thrown stones and launched fireworks at a bus full of asylum seekers arriving at a reception centre in Lahti in southern Finland, late on Thursday.

Between 30 and 40 protesters, one in a white robe like those worn by the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan in the United States, waved the Finnish flag and shouted abuse at the bus.—Reuters

World leaders adopt expansive UN goals to tackle global woes

UNITED NATIONS — World leaders on Friday adopted the most sweeping agenda ever of global goals to combat poverty, inequality and climate change, described by the United Nations secretary-general as “a to-do list for people and planet.”

Adopted in the shadow of the worst refugee crisis since World War II, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, call for shared peace and prosperity and cap three years of debate and discussions.

The ambitious agenda addressing issues from education to the environment is to be implemented over the next 15 years with a big push globally to win public support for the goals.

The 193 UN member nations formally adopted the goals after an address to the United Nations by Pope Francis, who called the adoption “an important sign of hope.”

“Solemn commitments, however, are not enough, even though they are a necessary step toward solutions,” said the Pope as

the Vatican flag flew for the first time outside the United Nations where security was heightened for his visit.

He said world leaders must follow through with “a will which is effective, practical, constant, with concrete steps and immediate measures” to protect the environment and end social and economic exclusion.

“The simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new Agenda for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods,” he said. The objectives replace the previous UN action plan, the Millennium Development Goals, that were adopted in 2000. Supporters say the SDGs go much further by addressing root causes of issues such as poverty and looking at means as well as ends. They also are intended to be universal, not just for the developing world.

“They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success,” said UN Secretary-Gener-



Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General addresses a plenary meeting of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 at United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, New York, 25 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

al Ban Ki-moon after an opening ceremony with performances by Colombian singer Shakira and Benin’s Angelique Kidjo, UN goodwill ambassadors.

Nobel peace laureate Malala Yousafzai, representing youth at the United Nations, urged the gathering of world leaders to “keep your commitments and invest in our future.”

“Promise peace and prosperity,” said the teen, a prominent activist for girls’ education who was shot on a school bus in Pakistan in

2012 by the Taliban for advocating girls’ rights.

Supporters say the hefty task that lies beyond the three-day SDG summit that concludes on Sunday is implementing the 17 goals and their 169 accompanying targets into programs, policies and parliaments in member nations.

Such implementation, requiring trillions of dollars in investment, will be monitored and reviewed using a set of global indicators to be agreed by March 2016.—Reuters

ADB says to double funds for Asia-Pacific climate mitigation by 2020

MANILA — The Asian Development Bank said on Friday it will double to \$6 billion a year by 2020 its financing of projects to help Asia-Pacific countries mitigate the impact of climate change.

“Nowhere is tackling climate change more critical than in Asia and the Pacific, where rising sea levels, melting glaciers, and weather extremes like floods and droughts are damaging livelihoods and taking far too many lives,” ADB President Takehiko Nakao said in a statement.

Six of the 10 nations most vulnerable to climate change are in the Asia Pacific region, the ADB said, making it highly susceptible to environmental shocks and disasters.

The ADB said South Asia could lose 8.8 percent of its annual gross domestic product by 2100, while Southeast

Asia could lose 6.7 percent of its GDP a year, if it fails to combat the effects of climate change.

Out of the \$6 billion financing, \$4 billion will be dedicated to mitigation through scaling up support for renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport, as well as for building smart cities.

The rest will be for adaptation through more resilient infrastructure, climate-smart agriculture, and better preparation for climate-related disasters, the Manila-based lender said.

The ADB said it would also explore co-financing opportunities with public and private partners to help the region adapt to global warming, adding it would adjust its procurement systems to integrate cleaner technology in its projects.—Reuters

Residents of Russian-held isles disputed by Japan await diplomatic resolution

KUNASHIR — Russian residents of an island chain at the centre of a dispute between Japan and Russia that has held up a treaty to formally end World War Two hope a diplomatic solution will lure tourists and investment to help refurbish rickety infrastructure.

Ties have been soured since the waning days of the war, when Soviet forces seized the Pacific islands known in Russia as the Southern Kuriles, but which Japan calls the Northern Territories, and forced out 17,000 Japanese residents.

In an effort to improve relations and narrow differences over the dispute, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to hold a summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly next Monday.

“We need to attract people to this island,” said Gennady Berezyuk, a 63-year-old freelance journalist who lives on Kunashir island, known in Japan as Kunashiri. “We need to build, if not Disneyland, then

something that will make people come.”

Japan calls the island dispute a barrier to closer economic ties. Despite that, trade and investment between the two countries have grown as Japanese firms invest in the resource-rich Russian Far East, although not on the disputed islands.

“We invited Japanese to invest here to create a special economic zone, but they declined because they consider this as their own island,” said a 64-year-old resident of the island, who gave only his first name, Nicolay.

The island lies just 15 km (9 miles) off Japan’s northernmost main island of Hokkaido, which is visible on a clear day.

“It is impossible to resolve the Northern Territories issue without dialogue between leaders,” Abe told reporters on Friday. “I plan to have talks with President Putin at the United Nations and hold a face-to-face discussion on the dispute.”—Reuters

US government finds new emails Clinton did not hand over

WASHINGTON — The US Defence Department has found an email chain that Hillary Clinton did not give to the State Department, the State Department said on Friday, despite her saying she had provided all work emails from her time as secretary of state.

The correspondence with General David Petraeus, who was commander of US Central Command at the time, started shortly before she entered office and continued during her first days as the top US diplomat in January and February of 2009.

The Defence Department provided the emails to the State Department in “the last several days,” State Department spokesman John Kirby said in a statement. The exchange of 10 or so emails, the existence of which were first reported by the Associated Press on Friday, largely dealt with personnel issues, according to the State Department.

Clinton’s use of a private email account connected to a server in her home instead of a government-issued email address came to light in March.

News of the previously undisclosed email thread only adds to a steady stream of revelations about the emails in the past six months, which have forced Clinton to revise her account of the setup which



US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton answers questions from the audience following a speech in the gymnasium of Moulton Elementary School in Des Moines, Iowa, 22 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

she first gave in March. Nearly a third of all Democrats and 58 percent of all voters think Clinton is lying about her handling of her emails, according to a Fox News poll released this week.

The email arrangement has drawn criticism from political opponents who accused the Democratic presidential front-runner of sidestepping transparency and record-keeping laws and of potentially exposing classified information to hackers.

The controversy has cut into Clinton’s lead in the race for the Democratic nomination for the November 2016 election.

Jamal Ware, spokesman for the House Select Committee on

Benghazi, which wants all Clinton emails concerning the 2012 attack that killed four Americans in Benghazi, Libya, said the committee would not have a detailed comment until it had received and reviewed the emails.

“If indeed this is a sign the stonewalling and political protection effort that was previously being run by the (State) Department is diminishing, the committee welcomes it,” he said. “The proof will be in the production.”

Clinton apologised this month for her email setup, saying it was unwise. But as recently as Sunday, she told CBS when asked about her emails that she provided “all of them.”—Reuters

Pragmatic Catalans cool over independence before vote



Catalan pro-independence supporters hold a giant “estelada” (Catalan separatist flag) during a demonstration called “Via Lliure a la Republica Catalana” (Way of Freedom for the Republic of Catalonia) on the “Diada de Catalunya” (Catalunya’s National Day) in Barcelona, Spain, 11 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

OLOT — Over the past 40 years, Xavier Espuna has made his ham and cold cuts business grow from a small venture in Spain’s north-eastern region of Catalonia into an international business exporting as far away as Japan and Argentina.

Like most Catalans, Espuna is swept up by the movement to

split his region off from the rest of Spain. But he is not worried about the consequences that secession from Europe’s fourth-largest economy would mean for his business.

The reason — he does not think it will happen any time soon.

“I am focused on making

good ham, I am not focused on politics,” said the jovial 61-year-old, whose family-owned company is based in Olot, a pro-independence bastion.

Catalonia, a region that speaks its own language and accounts for about one fifth of Spanish economic output and population, votes on Sunday to

elect a new parliament. Separatist parties running on a joint ticket are expected to win a majority of seats, according to polls. They say they will unilaterally declare independence within 18 months if they win.

Yet the prospect of independence remains a theoretical issue for Catalans, surveys show.

Only 20 percent of Catalan voters actually believe the secessionist campaign will lead to a split, according to an opinion poll in local paper La Vanguardia.

A separate survey from the Centre d’Estudis d’Opinio, a body backed by the regional government, showed the issue ranked only fourth in a list of Catalonia’s main woes, below unemployment, dissatisfaction with politics and the state of the economy.

“I don’t think the elections will have any impact on my business,” said Espuna as he walked around his small ham factory dressed in a white butcher’s coat.

The apparent ambivalence of the Catalan population about independence before Sunday’s vote suggests that, despite the public statements of Catalan politicians, people believe the goal of a separatist drive that began in 2012 is now a more pragmatic effort to win concessions from the central government.

The head of Catalonia’s regional government said this week that only secession remained on the table. The Spanish centre-right government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has ruled out a Catalan breakaway and opposed any attempt to hold a referendum on secession. It has also dug in its heels on a deeper political and economic dialogue with the region.

But talks on a new and more beneficial tax regime for Catalonia are due to start after a national general election in December. Also on the cards are discussions over increased central government spending on infrastructure projects.

Depending on what party or parties will rule in Madrid after the general vote, there could even be a constitutional change that could include recognition of Catalonia as a nation within the Spanish state.

“People are saying they want things to change in Catalonia but at the same time neither they want independence nor they think it’s possible,” said Josep Borrell, a former socialist minister and president of the European Parliament.

“They simply want to have a better bargaining hand with the central government.”—Reuters

Saudi suggests pilgrims at fault over haj deaths, Iran angry

MINA — Saudi Arabia on Friday suggested pilgrims ignoring crowd control rules bore some blame for a crush that killed over 700 people at the haj pilgrimage in the annual event's worst disaster for 25 years.

The kingdom's regional rival Iran expressed outrage at the deaths of 131 of its nationals at the world's largest annual gathering of people, and politicians in Tehran suggested Riyadh was incapable of managing the event. Hundreds of demonstrators protested in the Iranian capital, chanting "Death to the Saudi dynasty".

With pilgrims frantically searching for missing compatriots and photographs of piles of the dead circulating on social media, the tragedy haunted many on the haj day on.

"There were layers of bodies, maybe three layers," said one witness who asked not to be named. "Some people were alive under the pile of bodies and were trying to climb up but in vain, because their strength failed and they dropped dead.

"I felt helpless not to be able to save people. I saw them dying in front of my eyes," he told Reuters.

An Algerian pilgrim told Algeria's al-Shurouk television: "We saw death: People were stepping over the mutilated bodies in front of you, four or five on top of each other." Saudi King Salman ordered a review of haj plans, and

"The world will not accept excuses like the weather was hot or the pilgrims were disorganised."

— Prayer leader
Mohammed Emami
Kashani



Muslim pilgrims pray on Mount Mercy on the plains of Arafat during the annual haj pilgrimage, outside the holy city of Mecca on 23 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Health Minister Khalid al-Falih said an investigation would be conducted rapidly and a final toll of dead and wounded calculated.

At least 863 pilgrims were injured in the disaster, in which two big groups of pilgrims collided at a crossroads in Mina, a few km (miles) east of Mecca, on their way to performing the "Stoning of the Devil" ritual at Jamarat.

The stampede "was perhaps because some pilgrims moved without following instructions by the relevant authorities," the minister said in a statement.

The kingdom's critics were likely to see the statement as an attempt to deflect responsibility. Safety during the haj is highly sensitive for the ruling Al Saud dynasty, which presents itself internationally as the guardian of orthodox Islam and custodian of

its holiest places in Mecca and Medina. The effort to uncover the facts and assign blame was likely to grow more acute and possibly more political.

A pilgrim who gave his name as Abu Abdallah said security forces appeared on high alert after the deaths. "What happened is a tragedy and many people ... are terrified, but in the end we can only pursue our haj duties," he said.

Hakim, from Morocco, said: "It is simply scary to hear how people crushed one another. More frightening is that we do not know how it happened."

The Saudi civil defence service reported on Twitter that a fire had occurred in three storage facilities in Mecca's al-Maaseem neighbourhood, and 10 fire and rescue units were in attendance.

No further details were immediately available.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, in New York to attend the UN General Assembly, echoed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in blaming Saudi Arabia for the incident.

"I ask the Saudi Arabian government to take responsibility for this catastrophe and fulfil its legal and Islamic duties in this regard," Rouhani said in a statement.

Iranian state television said the demonstrators in Tehran were showing their anger at "Saudi incapability and incompetence to run the haj". "The world will not accept excuses like the weather was hot or the pilgrims were disorganised," Tehran Friday prayer leader Mohammed Emami-Kashani was quoted as saying by Fars news agency.—Reuters

Egypt says police killed militants who attacked Italian consulate

CAIRO — Egyptian security forces on Friday killed nine militants who took part in a bomb attack at the Italian consulate in Cairo in July, the Interior Ministry said.

The ultra-hardline Islamic State group, which has supporters based in Egypt's Sinai peninsula, had claimed responsibility for that July attack which killed one person.

The Interior Ministry said three policemen were wounded in an exchange of fire with what it called "terrorists" killed in a raid on a house in Cairo on Friday. It said they were found with weapons, including belts used for suicide bombings.

Hours before the Interior Ministry issued a statement, officials told Reuters that security forces killed nine members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the same operation. The group, whose top leaders have been sentenced to death in what human rights groups call unfair trials, says it is committed to peaceful activism.

"The Brotherhood members clashed with security forces," said one of the officials, adding that they were meeting to plan what he called "terrorist attacks".

Egypt's government describes militants as terrorists and makes no distinction between the Brotherhood, which renounced violence decades ago, and groups like Islamic State and Al Qaeda, arguing they share the same ideology.

The Brotherhood, which was removed from power by the army in 2013, has accused authorities in the Arab world's largest state of killing unarmed members in raids.

In July, the Brotherhood called for a revolt after police killed 13 prominent members in a swoop on an apartment in a Cairo suburb. The men's families and lawyers said they were unarmed.

Among the dead in that raid was Nasser al-Hafi, a prominent lawyer for the Brotherhood and a former lawmaker. Egypt's Interior Ministry said the 13 men were plotting attacks.

Egypt cracked down on Islamists after then-army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi toppled democratically-elected President Mohamed Mursi of the Brotherhood after mass protests against his rule.

Security forces shot dead hundreds at a Cairo protest camp and arrested thousands of others, drawing widespread criticism from human rights groups. Sisi, who went on to become elected president, declared the Brotherhood a terrorist group and says Islamist militants pose an existential threat to Egypt.—Reuters

15 civilians killed in Boko Haram attack in SE Niger

NIAMEY — Fifteen civilians were killed in an attack by Boko Haram militants on a border village in southeastern Niger, state television reported Friday, the latest deadly raid by the Islamist group.

The attack followed two months of calm in the area and took place as Muslims marked Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, the most important holiday of the Islamic calendar.

"We found a dreadful scene, around 15 people had been executed, four of whom were from Nigeria," Hassan Ardo, an official from the Diffa governorate told the Tele Sahel television station.

The attackers had also torched 22 houses, a car and a mill, he said, and left four others wound-

ed. The station said the attack took place Thursday night and was carried out by around a dozen armed militants who had arrived on foot at the village on the banks of the Komadougou Yobe river on the border with Nigeria.

One of the victims was the village chief, the Afani private radio station reported.

Niger, whose primary source of foreign income is uranium, has joined a regional military alliance, alongside Chad, Niger and Nigeria, to fight Boko Haram, infamous for mass abductions, village massacres and suicide bombings by women and teenagers.

Since February this year, the southern Diffa region has suffered several deadly Boko Haram raids.

In June, 38 civilians were

killed — including 10 children — in a Boko Haram attack targeting two villages close to Diffa.

In July, the Islamists raided Diffa prison in a likely bid to free detained members, killing a guard. The same month Boko Haram militants killed 16 civilians in an attack on a southeastern Niger village.

Diffa lies on the border with northeast Nigeria, where the Islamists have waged a bloody uprising since 2009, leaving at least 15,000 dead and more than two million others homeless.

Thousands of Nigerian refugees have fled to southeast Niger to escape Boko Haram with one of the largest refugee camps about 10 kilometres (six miles) from Diffa.

The enrolment of youths

from Niger in Boko Haram shows radical Islam has gained ground in the country and in July authorities in Diffa banned the full Islamic veil following suicide attacks in the region by women wearing the religious garment.

While Niger gets ready for general elections in 2016, its security forces must also contend with the threat of jihadist movements coming across the border from Mali and Libya.

"Niger is caught in a vice between the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram in the south, the instability in Libya in the north and the precarious situation on the west on the border with Mali," special envoy to west Africa Mohamed Ibn Chambas said earlier this month.—AFP

PERSPECTIVES

One last hope to cling to

Kyaw Thura

AS I finger democracy, what comes to my mind is what Thomas Jefferson once said. The founding father of America, the principal architect of the Declaration of Independence and the third President of the United States, once said that 'the government we elect is the government we deserve'.

Throughout the history of our country nev-

er have the voters been seen enthusiastic about a political reform that will satisfy the common social needs in terms of education, economy and health. With the election 42 days away, the voters have now the chance to use their ballots to get involved in issues that will directly affect their lives and the destiny of the country.

A few moments of quiet contemplation is quite enough even for the people of average intellect to understand that citizens are the key drivers of democracy, which is why their fervent participation is of great importance to reinvigorating the democratic reform of our times.

Our lack of interest in voting on 8 November Election will be tantamount to bequeathing a bad legacy of bondage to posterity. It is one thing to

pay lip service to democratic reform, but it is quite another to display it with the votes. The onus is therefore on all of the voters to advance democratic participation in all areas of life and act on pressing challenges facing the country.

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One Billion Tourists: One Billion Opportunities

Htun Tin Htun

Our planet has many unexploited tourist destinations. Many people around celebrate the United Nations' (UN) World Tourism Day, which is on September 27 each year. The day aims to foster awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic values. World Tourism Day recognizes the importance of tourists and the tourism industry across the globe. World Tourism Day recognizes the importance of tourists and the tourism industry across the globe.

Noteworthy of the significant fact that world tourism is rapidly growing from time to time. The United Nations' World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) invites people worldwide to participate in World Tourism Day on September 27 every year. The UNWTO Secretary-General annually sends out a message to the general public to mark the occasion. Many tourism enterprises and organizations, as well as government agencies with a special interest in tourism, celebrate the event with various special events and festivities.

Building capacity and capability of human resources in tourism sector is of paramount importance. Tourism has experienced continued growth and deeper diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and includes more new destinations for tourists. These dynamics turned tourism into a key

driver for socio-economic progress. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries.

International World Tourism Day reminds us that development of tourism can help reduce poverty and create more employment in both developed and developing countries. The UNWTO decided in late September 1979 to institute World Tourism Day, which was first celebrated on September 27, 1980. September 27 was chosen as the date for World Tourism Day because that date coincided with an important milestone in world tourism: the anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes on September 27, 1970.

Love to travel, meet the people, note the wonders, our world therefore becomes a global village. The UNWTO believes that the date for World Tourism Day is appropriate because it comes at the end of the high tourist season in the northern hemisphere and the start of the tourist season in the southern hemisphere, when tourism is of topical interest to many people worldwide, particularly travelers and those working in the tourism sector.

Nowadays tourism creates more employment, earnings and empowerment and supports environmental preservation. Receipts from international visitor spending on accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, shopping and other services and goods reached an estimated US\$ 1245 billion (euro 937 billion) in 2014, an increase

of 3.7% in real terms (taking into account exchange rate fluctuations and inflation).

The expenditure by international visitors, in macro-economic terms, is counted as exports for the destination country and as imports for the country of residence of the visitor. For many countries inbound tourism is a vital source of foreign currency earnings and an important contributor to the economy, creating much-needed employment and further opportunities for development.

Opportunities are plenty for all citizens if eco-friendly and green tourism develops and expands. International tourism (comprising travel and passenger transport) accounts for 30% of the world's exports of services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. As a worldwide export category, tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and food, and ahead of automotive products, and even ranks first in many developing countries.

Income can be generated through various tourism activities and events. The top four places in both the ranking by international arrivals and by receipts are taken by the same countries, albeit in a different order. In 2014, France continued to top the ranking of international tourist arrivals with 84 million tourists, and came 4th in terms of international tourism receipts with US\$ 55 billion. The United States ranked 1st in receipts with US\$ 177 billion, and 2nd in arrivals with 75 million. Spain was 2nd in tourism earnings worldwide (and 1st in Europe) with US\$ 65



Ngapali beach, one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. PHOTO: YE MYINT (GNLM)

billion in 2014, and 3rd in arrivals with 65 million overnight visitors.

Once we visit, we would like to come again and share the feelings and experiences with our relatives and friends. Most tourists visit destinations within their own region. The large majority of international travel takes place within travellers' own regions, with about four out of five worldwide arrivals originating from the same region. Source markets for international tourism have traditionally been largely concentrated in the advanced economies of Europe, the Americas and Asia and the Pacific. However, with rising levels of disposable income, many emerging economies have shown fast growth over recent years, especially in the markets of Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Long-term outlook of UNWTO is UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030 and an assessment of the development of tourism over the two decades from 2010 to 2030. It is a broad research project, building on UNW-

TO's ongoing work in the field of long-term forecasting which was initiated in the 1990s. This study replaces the earlier Tourism 2020 Vision, which has become a worldwide reference for international tourism forecasts. Key outputs of Tourism Towards 2030 are quantitative projections for international tourism

demand over a 20-year period, with 2010 as the base year, and ending in 2030. The updated forecast has been enriched with an analysis of the social, political, economic, environmental and technological factors that have shaped tourism in the past, and which are expected to influence the sector in the future.

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Hla Htut OO

Additional Emergency Assistance to Myanmar in Flood Response

ON Wednesday, September 24, the handover ceremony of mosquito nets for the flood affected people was held at Yangon International Airport. H.E. Mr. Tateshi HIGUCHI, Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan handed over the relief goods to Dr. Than Win, Deputy Director General, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health. Officials of the Embassy of Japan and JICA Myanmar

Office were also present at this handover ceremony.

The Government of Japan decided on September 17 to provide 10,000 mosquito nets (LLIN: long lasting insecticidal net) as emergency relief goods to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in response to the appeal from Myanmar following the recent floods.—GNLM

Myanmar, Asia-Pacific scout associations meet

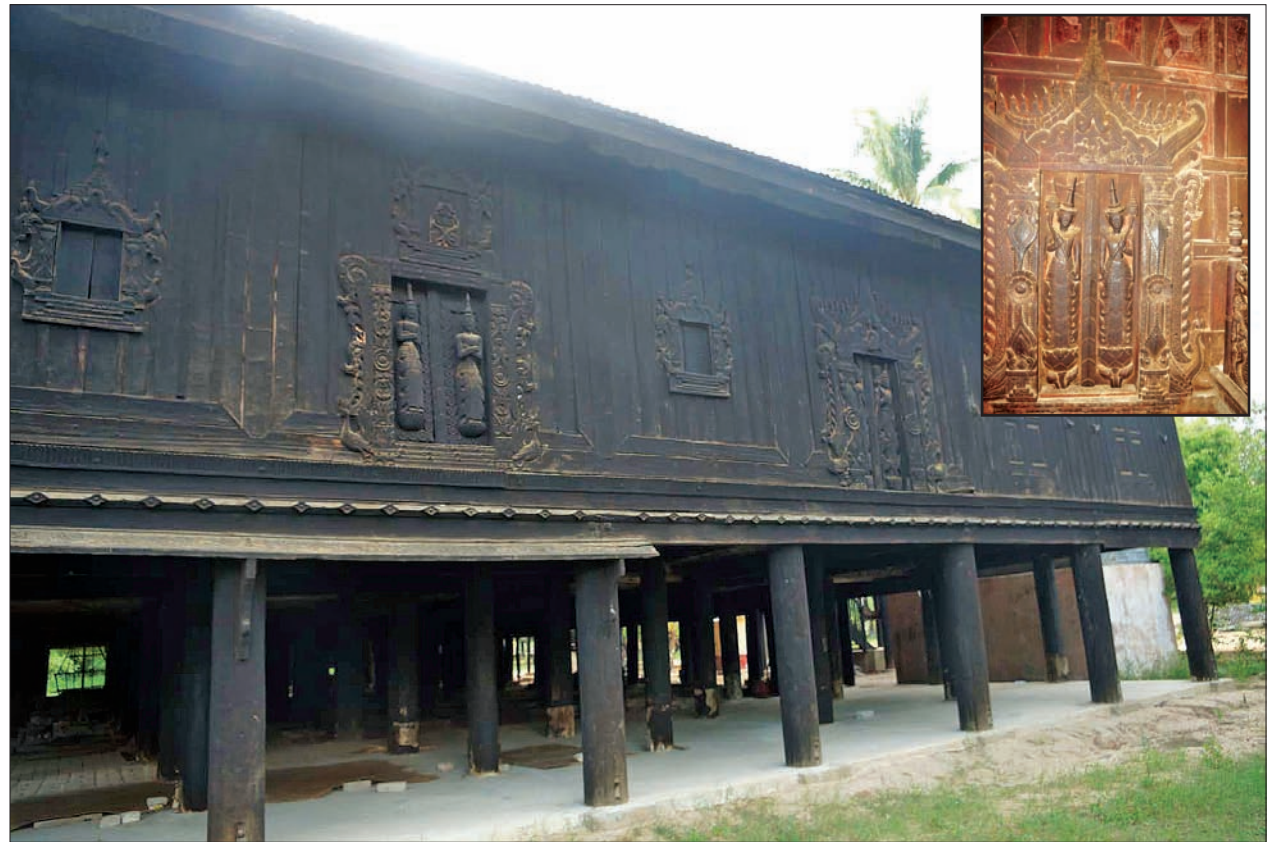
THE Myanmar Scout Federation and the Asia-Pacific Scout Region (World Organization of the Scout Movement) had a joint coordination meeting on Saturday in Yangon.

The MSF explained its scouting movements, organizational structure and functions to Asia-Pacific Regional Director Mr J Rizal C Pangikinan.

They visited No.1 Basic Education High School in Dagon Town-

ship to observe the scouting skills and activities including first-aid services, methods of joining ropes and materials made by the school's scouts. The meeting continues on 27 and 28 September at University of Yangon, with plans to visit the Practising High School at the Yangon Institute of Education, the University of Yangon and No.2 Basic Education High School in Kamayut Township.—MNA

Ancient monastery in Htihlaing (East) village conserves Myanmar's heritages



An ancient monastery in Htihlaing (East) village, Wundwin Township, Meiktila District, houses antiques of the time of Myanmar kings. PHOTO: CHAN THA

A monastery in Htihlaing (East) village, Wundwin Township, Meiktila District, was built over 140 years ago. The monastery is shouldered by 124 wooden posts and its interior is

decorated with Myanmar crafts. It also houses ancient bronze bell donated by West Hall Queen of King Mindon Ashin Thiri Maha Thu Sandar Yadana Devi, according to the abbot of the

monastery. Ancient empty wooden box on which the English numerals 1794 were carved can be seen at the monastery. Moreover, the monastery conserves a conch use in the times of

Myanmar kings, and boxes which kept ancient palm leaf inscriptions. Before 2010 the monastery was one of the tourists' attractions but after 2010 it was forgotten.—Chantha (Meiktila)

Firefighters complete training

COURSE completion ceremony was held in Longlon, Daweik District in Taninthayi Region on Friday. As now is a time ushering into the

open season, preemptive measures are being taken to prevent fire. The firefighters practiced military drill at the course which covers firefighting, search

and rescue and life-saving at sea. The course lasted nearly one month from 31 August to 25 September.—Pho Hwe Thun (Dawei)



Prevention is better than cure: Firefighters in Launglon concentrate on life saving at sea. PHOTO: PHO SHWE THUN

The lost sheep return home



Awareness on human-trafficking should be raised among the public. PHOTO: MIN MIN LATT

MYANMAR Police Force held a ceremony to hand over the two teenage girls to their parents in Pobbathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw. As the two girls have not returned home on 18 September after the school, their parents made a complaint

at Kyidaungkan Police Station. The police members led by Inspector Kyaw Min Htoo left no stone unturned in searching the lost sheep. Finally they have received news that the girls were in Yangon to seek jobs. The police contacted their col-

leagues in Kamayut Township Police Station and on Wednesday the girls were taken back to their homes. At the handing over ceremony the police inspector warned against the human trafficking.—Min Min Latt (Mandalay University)

Seminar to focus on future of Myanmar's property industry

Khaing Thanda Lwin

PROPERTY website House.com.mm will host a real estate conference on 10 October at the Union of Myanmar Federation of

Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) in Yangon to discuss the current and future prospects of the country's property market.

"The aim of the

seminar is to promote investment in the real estate industry and create more links between businesspersons," said Managing Director of House.com.mm Mr Balaji Ramaswami.

Research on the latest market trends and the effects of the shift online for the real estate industry, Myanmar's mortgage loan system and future of affordable housing and fu-

ture development plans of Yangon will be discussed during the conference, which is free to attend.

Managing Director of Construction Housing and Development Bank

U Win Zaw and Director of Urban Planning of the Yangon City Development Committee Dr Toe Aung will share their knowledge and insights with conference attendees.—GNLM

Dollar higher after Yellen points to rate hike

NEW YORK — The US dollar picked up strength Friday after Federal Reserve chief Janet Yellen said a first rate hike is still likely by the end of the year.

The dollar rose to as much as \$1.1117 per euro before pulling back to \$1.1202. It pushed to 120.49 yen and to \$1.5190 per pound.

In her first comments since 17 September when the Fed again put off the long-flagged first rate increase in over nine year, Yellen said late Thursday that US economic conditions supported the move.

Most of Fed monetary policymakers “currently anticipate that achieving these conditions will likely entail an initial increase in the federal funds rate later this year, followed by a gradual pace of tightening thereafter,” Yellen said.

She nevertheless hedged her comments, say-



Traders are pictured at their desks in front of the DAX board at the stock exchange in Frankfurt, Germany on 23 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

ing that “if the economy surprises us, our judgments about appropriate monetary policy will change.”

Boris Schlossberg of BK Asset Management called Yellen’s speech

“much more hawkish” than her news conference comments after the Federal Open Market Committee policy meeting last week. “It may have been also an attempt by

Ms Yellen to clarify the FOMC position and make sure that the market fully appreciates that the Fed intends to normalize policy over the near term horizon,” he said.—AFP

Facebook rebrands free Internet service, expands

WASHINGTON — Facebook has changed the name of its programme offering free Internet to developing countries to “Free Basics” and added more services.

It used to be a service within Facebook’s broader Internet.org initiative, which seeks to expand online access around the world.

It comes after criticism because of the limited service for the free programme — which some say flies in the face of Facebook’s commitment for “net neutrality,” or equal treatment for all online services.

Earlier this year, Facebook opened the initiative to outside applica-

tions after news organisations in India withdrew their websites.

In a statement late Thursday, Facebook said that with its latest update, “more than 60 new services are available across the 19 countries where free basic services are available.”

Facebook has said it would be impractical to offer the entire Internet for free through the programme, which works through mobile carriers in various countries.

But it said that the programme can provide important services for health, education and jobs to as many as one billion people in the 19 countries where it is available.—AFP

Apple under fire for factory conditions as iPhone launches

HONG KONG — A labour rights group marked the launch of Apple’s latest iPhone Friday with a report accusing one of the smartphone giant’s Chinese suppliers of exploiting factory workers.

Hong Kong-based Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour

an after Lens Technology’s debut on the Shenzhen stock exchange in March.

As the iPhone 6 went on sale in markets including Hong Kong, Japan and mainland China on Friday, SACOM called for Apple to “apply immediate measures to rectify exploitations in its supply chain”.

water and chemical substances are common problems on the shop floor,” it added, with management “ignoring if workers were well-protected”.

It sent undercover workers into factories, as well as interviewing workers off-site.

SACOM was to deliver its new report on Friday to Apple and Lens Technology, which is based in the southern Chinese province of Hunan.

Around 10 protesters gathered outside one of Apple’s largest stores in Hong Kong on Friday morning, holding giant phones with the slogan “Throw Away The Bad Apple”. But the supplier denied any wrongdoing, saying overtime is not mandatory, and that it strictly limits overtime to two hours a day and workers take at least one rest day per week.

It also denied failing to

pay social security and said it carries out regular inspections of the working environment.

“Lens Technology is a listed public company and has always complied with the laws and regulations, as well as strictly following the parameters set by our clients,” the company said in an email to AFP.

“During peak season there is indeed overtime but it is not forced... Many employees actually raise their hands to work overtime to earn more.”

The hundreds of customers who had pre-ordered one of the new phones were largely oblivious to the allegations.

“I think bad conditions happen to all brands,” said James Leung, 30, who was waiting to pick up a rose-gold phone for his wife, which he said cost him HK\$5,000 (\$645).

“For me, I need a phone, so I’ll get a new phone.” Lens Technology

also supplies Samsung and other leading tech firms. SACOM spokeswoman Liang Pui-kwan said the group was not only targeting Apple.

“But Apple is the richest and has the biggest ability to make change and bring the industry forward,” she said. Apple was not immediately available for

comment. The iPhone 6S features a new “3D Touch” feature that allows users to differentiate between a light touch and a harder tap, with the phone reacting differently to each. In Asia-Pacific, the phone was launched in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore on Friday.—AFP

“Apple is the richest and has the biggest ability to make change and bring the industry forward.”

—SACOM spokes woman Liang Pui-kwan

(SACOM) say Lens Technology, which makes touchscreen glass, used forced overtime, withheld wages and risked workers’ health after a months-long investigation into three of its factories.

Company founder Zhou Qunfei, herself a former factory worker, became China’s richest wom-

“We urge Apple Inc to fulfil its corporate responsibility... to give workers a workplace with dignity and respect,” a statement said. The allegations involve employees working for a month without a day off, wages being withheld for weeks and the company failing to pay social security. “Dust, noise, polluted



A customer holds an iPhone 6s during the official launch at the Apple store in central Sydney, Australia on 25 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BlackBerry unveils Android phone in new reboot effort

WASHINGTON — BlackBerry announced plans Friday to sell an Android-powered smartphone, in the latest reboot effort from the faded star of the sector.

The Canadian firm said it would begin selling “Priv,” describe as “a flagship handheld device that

will run on the Android operating system with BlackBerry security,” expected to be available later this year.

“Priv combines the best of BlackBerry security and productivity with the expansive mobile application ecosystem available on the Android platform,” said John Chen, executive chair-

man and chief executive.

BlackBerry said however it “remains committed to the BlackBerry 10 operating system, which enables industry-leading security and productivity benefits.”

The company said it “will continue to develop and enhance the BlackBerry 10 operating system and is

confirming plans to release platform updates focused on security and privacy enhancements,” in March 2016. The BB 10 operating system was unveiled in 2013 as part of an effort to regain market share lost as consumers around the world shifted to devices running on Google Android and Ap-

ple’s iOS.

But the operating system share has fallen further, and now represents less than one percent of smartphone users.

BlackBerry, one of the early pioneers of smartphones, has been struggling for years. It has made several efforts to find new cus-

tomers niches, with low-cost devices, tablets and by shifting its emphasis to software and services. In releasing its quarterly results, BlackBerry said it swung to a profit of \$51 million for the three months to August 29, compared with a loss of \$207 million in the same period a year ago.—AFP

Tax on sugary drinks favored by most New Zealanders

WELLINGTON — New Zealanders are rapidly developing a taste for a tax on sugary drinks to offset the public health costs of obesity, according to research out Friday.

The findings from two large-scale, nationwide surveys indicated most New Zealanders now supported a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), said Dr Gerhard Sundborn, of the University of Auckland's School of Population Health.

"A significant shift has occurred in New Zealanders' appetite for a tax on SSBs, if the funds collected [from the tax] are to be used to prevent childhood obesity," Sundborn said in a statement.

In the first of two polls, 18 months apart, in February last year, 44 percent of respondents supported a tax on sugary drinks, and in the second poll in June this year support was up to 52 percent — provided the funds from the tax were used to address childhood obesity.



PHOTO: XINHUA

"That's an 18-percent relative rise in favor of a tax," Sundborn said.

"Interestingly, there was an even stronger drop in people who opposed a tax on SSBs.

Opposition to a SSB tax decreased relatively by 35 percent from 49 percent in February 2014 to 32 percent in June 2015," he said.

"This indicates a significant shift in public attitude towards the taxation of SSBs, because a quarter of respondents moved to a more supportive, or less opposed, stance about the

introduction of an SSB tax."

The speed at which public opinion has shifted in favor of an SSB tax indicated that New Zealanders were increasingly aware of the harms SSBs posed to health, especially for children.

"Strong media attention around SSBs may have facilitated this change as over the last two years, the harm that SSB intake poses to health, and the notion of a tax on SSBs, has been profiled regularly in mainstream media," he said.—Xinhua

Rare 'supermoon' eclipse to unfold Sunday night

CAPE CANAVERAL — Sky-watchers around the world are in for a treat Sunday night and Monday when the shadow of Earth casts a reddish glow on the moon, the result of rare combination of an eclipse with the closest full moon of the year. The total "supermoon" lunar eclipse, also known as a "blood moon" is one that appears bigger and brighter than usual as it reaches the point in its orbit that is closest to Earth.

"There's no physical difference in the moon. It just appears slightly bigger in the sky," planetary geologist Noah Petro, with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in Greenbelt, Maryland, said. If skies are clear, the phenomenon will be visible from North and South America, Europe, Africa and parts of West Asia and the eastern Pacific. In the United States, the eclipse begins at 8:11 pm EDT. The total eclipse starts two hours later and lasts for one hour and 12 minutes.

It has been more than



A supermoon rises over Glastonbury, southern England 9 September, 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

30 years since a supermoon combined with a lunar eclipse, said NASA. The next total lunar eclipse will not be until 2018. The next supermoon-lunar eclipse combination will not happen until 2033. For more than an hour Sunday night, Earth's shadow will blanket the full moon as the planet passes between the sun and the moon. The brilliant white glow of the moon will slowly transform into a dim red. The coloring is caused

by Earth's atmosphere scattering sunlight into the shadow. Because the moon is not perfectly round, its distance from Earth varies by about 31,000 miles (49,900 km) as it circles around the planet every 27 days. At its closest point, known as perigee, the moon comes as close as 225,622 miles (363,104 km) from Earth. At apogee, the most distant point, the moon is 252,088 miles (406,696 km) away.—Reuters

I'm all ears: fossils reveal human ancestors' hearing abilities

WASHINGTON — Two-million-year-old fossils including the three tiny bones of the middle ear are helping scientists figure out the auditory abilities of early human ancestors at a time when they were beginning to hear more like a person and less like a chimpanzee.

A study published on Friday involving two species from South Africa, *Australopithecus africanus* and *Paranthropus robustus*, showed they boasted better hearing than either chimps or people in a frequency range that may have facilitated vocal communication in a savanna habitat.

Both species featured a mixture of ape-like and human-like anatomical traits and inhabited grassland ecosystems with widely spaced trees and shrubs, as opposed to the forests of earlier members of human lineage.

In both species, maximum hearing sensitivity was shifted toward slightly higher frequencies compared to chimpanzees, and both had better hearing than chimps or humans in the range from about 1.0-3.0 kilohertz, paleoanthropologist Rolf Quam of Binghamton University in New York said.

Sounds in that range include vowels and some con-



The lateral view of the *Paranthropus robustus* skull SK 46 is shown from the site of Swartkrans, South Africa. PHOTO: REUTERS

"I want to be clear that we are not arguing that these early humans had language, which implies a symbolic content."

—Paleoanthropologist Rolf Quam

sonants, Quam said.

"It turns out that this auditory pattern may have been particularly favorable for living on the savanna.

In more open environments, sound waves don't travel as far as in the rainforest canopy, so short-range communication is favored

on the savanna," Quam said.

The human lineage split from chimps roughly 5 to 7 million years ago, Quam said, and our ancestors' hearing abilities began to adapt to lifestyle changes.

To assess the two species' hearing abilities, the researchers studied fossils

including tiny middle-ear bones called the ossicles (the malleus, incus and stapes) and created virtual computer reconstructions of the ear's internal anatomy. Our species, *Homo sapiens*, which arose about 200,000 years ago, is distinct from most other primates in having better hearing across a wider range of frequencies, generally from 1.0 to 6.0 kilohertz. This range encompasses many sounds emitted during spoken language.

"I want to be clear that we are not arguing that these early humans had language, which implies a symbolic content," Quam said. "Certainly they could communicate vocally.

All primates do. But human language emerged during our evolutionary history at some time after the existence of these early humans."

Paleontologist Juan Luis Arsuaga of Spain's Universidad Complutense de Madrid said their hearing abilities indicate their voices "would sound strange, half chimp-like, half human, to us. Or in other terms, not completely human."

The research appears in the journal *Science Advances*.—Reuters

Arizona prison sicknesses caused by salmonella

PHOENIX — A salmonella-tainted salad served at a northeastern Arizona prison caused 241 inmates and three employees to become ill this month, a spokesman said on Friday.

Health officials determined lettuce or cabbage served on 31 August, to inmates inside two units at the Arizona State Prison Complex-Winslow was responsible, said corrections department spokesman Andrew Wilder.

"We are confident now that this wasn't a cleanliness issue and came from a product that was brought into the kitchen," said Wilder, adding that operations returned to normal last week.

Prison officials said inmates began feeling the first symptoms of the bacteria on 1 September in the Kaibab unit and the next day in the Coronado unit. The illnesses continued for another five days, and three prison employ-

ees were among those who got sick, officials said.

Inmates reported suffering from nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, chills and fever and were treated at the prison, Wilder said.

They were restricted to their housing quarters as a precaution, officials said.

Outside visitation was canceled during the busy Labor Day weekend and the units were scrubbed with bleach, and off-site work details for minimum-security inmates was halted, officials said.

No one died from the outbreak, officials said.

Normal operations at the two units, which house more than 1,400 inmates, resumed on 16 September, Wilder said.

Overall, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 1.2 million people become ill annually from salmonella, with about 450 cases resulting in death.—Reuters

Booming Ivory Coast faces elections with confidence

ABIDJAN — From Abidjan airport's packed arrivals hall to the hotels and plush villas mushrooming across the city, Ivory Coast is booming, a rare African bright spot as the world's biggest cocoa producer bounces back from years of turmoil and civil war.

With elections due in a month, many Ivorians had expected a pause in the post-conflict growth spurt, but such is the confidence in a smooth vote and a second term for incumbent Alassane Ouattara that the expected blip has not materialized.

The government is predicting growth of 9.6 percent this year, making the former French colony the stand-out performer on a continent being hammered by a slump in commodity prices, capital outflows and tumbling currencies.

The International Monetary Fund's assessment is only marginally less bullish, while the bustle on the streets of the commercial capital attests to the turnaround in the four years since the nation's second civil war in less than a dec-

ade killed 3,000 people. "There are many European businessmen arriving these days," airport taxi driver Fabrice Toha said with a smile. "All the taxi drivers can see that the country is doing well and many of us think that Ouattara has a good chance of another term."

The airport had 1.3 million passengers in 2014, double the tally from four years ago.

A stone's throw away, dozens of construction workers swarm around the inside and outside of the 261-room Radisson Blu Abidjan, one of several high-end hotels due to open before the end of this year.

Kome Cesse, the entrepreneur behind the project, said the investment was based as much on faith in the government's record since the war as the rosy outlook for Francophone West Africa's largest economy.

For Cesse, fears of any repeat of the mayhem that followed 2010 elections, when then-president Laurent Gbagbo — now in The Hague accused of crimes against

humanity — refused to accept defeat at the hands of Ouattara, are overblown.

"All over Africa, whenever there are elections, there's tension," he said, raising his voice

over the din of construction work. "But for African investors like us, we are used to it and we deal with it."

Elsewhere, in the capital's chic Cocody neighbourhood,

Sofitel's lavish Hotel Ivoire — the pre-eminent symbol of Abidjan's post-colonial 1960s heyday — has undergone a face-lift. Its rooms, starting at over \$250 per night, are regularly fully booked.—Reuters



Supporters of President Alassane Ouattara queue to enter a pre-election gathering for Ouattara in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 13 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukraine bans Russian airlines as part of war sanctions

KIEV — Ukraine is banning flights by Russian airlines from 25 October as part of a wave of sanctions against Russia over its support for separatists in the east of the country, the government said on Friday.

Kiev said last week it was imposing restrictions on more than 90 companies or groups, mostly from Russia, and including airlines Transaero and Aeroflot, the national flag carrier.

Spelling out the details of the sanctions, Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk told a government meeting: "In accordance with a decision by the Security Council, the government of Ukraine is adopting a decision to ban flights by Russian companies, primarily Aeroflot and Transaero, to Ukraine."

The government website quoted him as saying: "Russian planes with the Russian tricolour have no business in Ukrainian airports." He added that any Russian planes carrying military hardware or troops had also been banned from flying over Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian aviation authority later said the ban would be enforced from 25 October.

Ukraine has accused Russia of sending arms and troops to help pro-Moscow separatists fighting its soldiers in the east of the country, in a conflict which has killed nearly 8,000 people since April 2014. Russia denies involvement.

Ukraine has also imposed sanctions on around 900 individuals for what it calls reasons of national security. Aeroflot said it had not received formal notifica-

tion of the decision from Ukraine.

"Only when and if Aeroflot receives official notification from the aviation authorities of Ukraine that flights have been cancelled will the company inform passengers and explain the rules on ticket reimbursement," it said in a statement. The Ukrainian government statement also forbade Ukrainian state companies from using Russian software, particularly from the Russian anti-virus giant Kaspersky Lab.

Ukrainian state organisations were banned from using goods or services produced by sanctioned Russian companies. "The government is insisting on the immediate implementation of all sanctions defined by the decision of the Security Council," Yatseniuk said.—Reuters

TEPCO rejected requests for antitsunami steps before nuclear crisis

TOKYO — Tokyo Electric Power Co turned down requests in 2009 by the nuclear safety agency to consider concrete steps against tsunami waves at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which suffered a tsunami-triggered disaster two years later, government documents showed Friday.

"Do you think you can stop the reactors?" a TEPCO official was quoted as telling Shigeki Nagura of the now-defunct Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, who was then assigned to review the plant's safety, in response to one of his requests.

The detailed exchanges between the plant operator and regulator came to light through the latest disclosure of government records on its investigation into the nuclear crisis, adding to evidence that TEPCO failed to take proper safety steps ahead of the world's worst nuclear accident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

According to records of Nagura's accounts, Nagura heard TEPCO's explanations of its tsunami estimates at the agency office in Tokyo in August and September 2009 as it was becoming clear that the coastal areas of Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures were hit by massive tsunami in an 869 earthquake. TEPCO said the height of waves was estimated to be around 8 metres above sea level and will not outreach the plant site located at a height of 10 metres, they show.

But Nagura said he remembered thinking pumps with key cooling functions, which are located on the ground at a height of

4 metres, "will not make it" and told TEPCO, "If this is the outcome, you better consider concrete responses." In refusing to immediately act, TEPCO said it would wait for related studies to be carried out by the academic society of civil engineers, which it had requested to be done by March 2012.

Nagura also proposed placing the pumps inside buildings to protect them from being exposed to water, but a TEPCO official told him, "Our company cannot make a decision without seeing the results of the (studies by the) society of civil engineers." Then another TEPCO official told Nagura, "Do you think you can stop the reactors?" according to the government documents. Nagura recalled in the documents, "I wondered why I had to be told such a thing." But he also admitted that, after all, he only encouraged TEPCO to "consider" tsunami countermeasures and did not request that it "take" specific measures. The Fukushima crisis has revealed how Japan, which had boasted of possessing the world's safest nuclear power plants, was ill-prepared against a severe nuclear accident.

Three reactors suffered core meltdowns after they lost their key cooling functions amid a loss of all electrical power following a huge earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. The government-appointed nuclear accident investigation panel has already issued a final report, and the government is now gradually disclosing the records of hearings conducted to people involved.—Kyodo News

South Africa recalls troops from Congo for misconduct

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa is recalling 50 soldiers from United Nations peacekeeping duties in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on charges of misconduct, the Defence Department said on Friday.

The troops had broken curfew and been off-base and were being investigated by military police, defence spokesman Brigadier General Xolani Mabanga said. He did not provide further details.

Almost 1,400 South Africans form the backbone of a Force In-

tervention Brigade acting under the umbrella of UN peacekeeping operations in the region, home to rebel militias linked to the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

The South African contingent's involvement was extended this year to the end of March 2016. Those accused of misconduct will be replaced as soon as they are withdrawn so as to keep the South African deployment at the agreed level, Mabanga said.

"We are awaiting approval from the UN," he said.

Part of the investigation will

be to find out where the troops went and what they did when they were not on the base, he added.

Allegations of misconduct by UN troops are not new. The UN cannot itself punish soldiers and rights groups complain that troop-contributing countries rarely take action, creating an atmosphere of impunity in peacekeeping missions. A UN operation in Central African Republic has been dogged by allegations of misconduct, including rape and excessive use of force by its personnel.—Reuters

Japanese trailblazer, soft bread evangelist in Switzerland

ADLISWIL — Born into a family of bakers running a shop with more than 100 years of history in Japan, Hironori Takahashi prides himself on being an evangelist of traditional Japanese breads filled with such ingredients as red bean paste, curry and custard cream.

Even so, it was a challenge to say the least for Takahashi — said to be the only Japanese owner of a bakery in Switzerland — to promote soft and fluffy Japanese breads in the European country, where people mostly eat breads with thick crusts and often use them to scoop up soups or sauces.

But with the help of the popular cartoon “Yakitate!! (freshly baked) Ja-pan,” a story of a fiery Japanese baker seeking to make the ultimate bread, Takahashi’s shop in the suburbs of Zurich now has as many local Swiss visiting as Japanese expatriates.

“At this year’s ‘JapAniManga Night,’ a fair of Japanese cartoon and animation in Davos held in May, we sold as many as 3,000 breads in one day thanks to

the popularity of Yakitate!! Ja-pan,” said the 41-year-old baker from Niigata Prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast, who opened his shop in 2010.

The cartoon series, which chronicles a boy named Kazuma Azuma and his quest to create a national bread for Japan — “pan” is the word for “bread” in Japanese — was adapted into an anime television series and aired between 2004 and 2006 in Japan.

Takahashi said that because of the anime series his Swiss fans have especially taken to “melon breads,” a type of sweet bun covered with crispy cookie crust that resembles cantaloupe.

“When I opened my own bakery, 80 percent of customers were Japanese living in Switzerland because Swiss people seemed to shun the concept of breads being soft,” he said. “To many Swiss people, it may also have been unthinkable to eat sweet beans.”

But led by cartoon fans and those who have been to Japan and eaten Japanese breads, sales at his

shop, located in an office district, have doubled since the opening, overcoming a temporary decline following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis.

The bakery “Hiro Takahashi” sells about 30 varieties of Japanese breads made with such ingredients

“When I opened my own bakery, 80 percent of customers were Japanese living in Switzerland because Swiss people seemed to shun the concept of breads being soft.”

— Hironori Takahashi, Japanese baker

as beans, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, crab and tuna flakes, chocolate cream, and “matcha” green tea powder.

They are mostly sold at 3 (\$3.06) to 3.5 Swiss francs, roughly triple the prices in Japan, but local customers seem to be more concerned about taste than price.

A policewoman who came to the bakery for the second time to buy melon breads for her and her

coworker said, “The taste is special and the texture is so light. Compared with Swiss breads, they are a bit expensive, but it is reasonable because special ingredients are used.” Takahashi also delivers breads baked at his bakery from early in the morning to 20 shops in the major

Swiss cities of Zurich, Bern, Geneva and Lausanne. To cater to the palate of locals, he has reduced the amount of sugar used for the breads and made the taste of bitter matcha milder.

“Japanese breads are made from flour containing more gluten than flour used to make breads here in Switzerland. I procure custom-ordered flour from a local supplier,” he said. His shop also uses a ma-

chine imported from Japan to knead dough. For Takahashi, who came to Switzerland in 1999 to study confectionery after completing a culinary school in Tokyo, life has been full of twists and turns.

Originally wishing to study either in France or Austria, he sent about 200 letters to apply for a confectioner job in Europe, but only Switzerland issued him a work visa — not as a pastry cook but as a chef for Japanese restaurants.

After working at sushi and teppanyaki (grilling on an iron plate) restaurants for three years, Takahashi finally obtained a visa to work as a confectioner and landed a job at Savoy Baur en Ville, a five-star hotel in Zurich.

While working at the hotel as a patissier, he launched a catering business with his wife as a side job, delivering Japanese breads and sweets to families for birthday parties and other celebratory occasions.

“When I was working as a chef of Japanese food, there were only five sushi restaurants in Zurich, com-

pared with 20 at present, and Japanese dietary culture was not widely introduced,” Takahashi said. “I wanted to bring in delicious Japanese food other than sushi.”

As the catering business began to thrive, Takahashi decided to open his own bakery, which now offers Japanese food items including “edamame” soybeans and fried shrimp in addition to breads and sweets.

His business was affected by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, as Swiss people avoided Japanese food items for a while and imports of flour from Japan for his bread-making stopped. In 2012, tragedy struck when Takahashi’s wife was killed in a traffic accident. “But I didn’t think of closing the bakery because I wanted to keep running it as she had desired,” he said. Leaving behind his two children in Japan, Takahashi continued his business and remarried last year, followed by the birth of a baby. He is scheduled to be reunited with his two other children in Switzerland next year. —Kyodo News



A home burns as the Butte Fire rages near Mountain Ranch, California in this 11 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

California draws \$10 million from reserves for wildfire debris removal

SAN FRANCISCO — California Governor Jerry Brown on Friday directed \$10 million from the state’s budget reserve to help pay for the removal of huge amounts of burned debris left in the wake of two massive wildfires, the administration said.

In a letter to leaders of the legislature’s budget and appropriations committees, the Brown administration said the debris poses a threat to lives, public health and safety. “Fast debris removal is also necessary to enable community rebuilding and economic recovery of im-

pacted communities,” administration officials said in the letter.

The Valley and Butte fires together have burned more than 145,000 acres, killed three people, seriously injured four firefighters and destroyed 1,713 homes.

The administration told lawmakers that while additional funds will be needed down the road for the effort, it noted that the Obama administration’s major disaster declaration will mean that a significant amount of the costs may be eligible for federal reimbursement. —Reuters

Up to 10 million people in Iraq to require humanitarian aid, UN says

UNITED NATIONS — Up to 10 million people in Iraq, including vulnerable people in areas currently controlled by the Islamic State (IS), will require some form of humanitarian assistance by the end of 2015, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters here Friday.

Some 3.2 million people in Iraq have fled their homes in multiple waves of internal displacement since January 2014 and up to now, an estimated 8.6 million people need humanitarian support, Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here.

“The crisis has accelerated since last year, cholera has broken out, basic services are not functioning, and food rations and water supplies have been decreased in part due to lack of donor support,” he said.

The UN Humanitarian Response Plan requesting some 500 million US dollars is only 40 percent funded, according to the spokesman. The IS fighters swept through north Iraq last June, but their advance was contained by Shi’ite militias and Kurdish peshmerga fighters, backed by US-led air strikes, reports said. —Xinhua

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WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the North Bay, monsoon is strong in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weak elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 27th September, 2015: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing Region, Kachin and Mon States, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyarwday Regions, Shan, Rakhine, Kayah and Kayin States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavy falls in Lower Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of thundery activities in the Deltaic areas.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th September, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th September, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th September, 2015: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Emporio Armani presents breezy line for next spring

MILAN — Italian designer Giorgio Armani presented fluid silhouettes and overlapping layers in shades of pink inspired by a “summer breeze” on Friday as he showed next spring’s Emporio Armani collection for women at Milan Fashion Week.

Armani, who celebrates four decades in fashion this year, sent out his first models in grey coats and patterned trousers but dabs of pink such as a T-shirt with a smiling emoticon offered a hint of the colours to come.

The 81-year old designer, nicknamed “King Giorgio” in Italy, paired collared and round-neck jackets with shorts and blazers with cigarette trousers in his spring/summer 2016 show.

Capri pants were light and airy and finished with thick buckles mid-calf. Tops, dresses and jackets had asymmetrical

cuts that emphasized their fluidity.

Armani is known for his clean cut and elegant collections.

Tops and jackets were ribbed and he added flower and petal appliques onto dresses. Some designs were slashed on the hips. Most of the line came in rosy colors with dabs of cinnamon, blue-grey and dark orange also seen.

The designer presented long chiffon tops over trousers, continuing a trend of see-through clothing seen at several Milan fashion shows this week.

Models wore small neck scarves and transparent as well peep-toe booties. They carried bowling bags and summer hats. Jewelry was chunky.

Armani will show his main Giorgio Armani line on Monday.—Reuters



Models present a creation from the Emporio Armani Spring/Summer 2016 collection during Milan Fashion Week in Italy, 25 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sam Smith’s new Bond theme released to mixed reviews

LONDON — The new James Bond theme song, “Writing’s On The Wall”, was released Friday, with fans of singer Sam Smith hailing it as a classic, though others were less complimentary.

The release comes a month before “Spectre”, starring Daniel Craig as Bond, is released in Britain and Ireland on 26 October before a worldwide release on 6 November.

Bond legend Roger Moore, who starred in seven of the films, praised Smith on Twitter for his “very haunting and wonderfully orchestrated” song.

But a number of critics likened the song to Michael Jackson’s “Earth Song” and commented disparagingly on Smith’s claim that it only took 20 minutes to write.

Grammy award winner Smith is the first British male solo singer to sing the 007 theme since Tom Jones sang “Thunderball” in 1965.

“The pressure to deliver a Bond song that stands against all the rest feels quite intense,” the British singer told The Sun newspaper in an interview Friday.

The 23-year-old added that



British singer Sam Smith. PHOTO: REUTERS

the movie’s director Sam Mendes had a say over the song’s lyrics and made sure that Bond “didn’t sound weak, that he still sounded powerful”.

Ajay Chowdhury of the James Bond International Fan Club said the song had “automatically achieved classic Bond song status”.

“There are three types of Bond song: the big, bombastic showstopper exemplified by Shirley Bassey’s ‘Goldfinger’, the dark, melancholic, regretful

ballad of which Nancy Sinatra’s ‘You Only Live Twice’ is an example and finally, the heroic rock anthem like Paul McCartney’s ‘Live And Let Die,’” he said.

“Sam Smith’s song belongs to the second of these categories.”

Meanwhile, Stephen Jones, a music commentator, tweeted: “Am I alone in thinking the new Sam Smith Bond theme is reminiscent of Michael Jackson’s Earth Song?”

Numerous other tweets suggested that he was not.—AFP

Caitlyn Jenner has name, gender change officially approved in California

LOS ANGELES — Olympic gold medalist Caitlyn Jenner, who is one of the biggest stars in reality television, had her name and gender change officially approved on Friday by a Los Angeles County judge.

A court spokeswoman said Superior Court Judge Gerald Rosenberg gave the approval.

Jenner is a 1976 Olympic decathlon gold medalist who had been known as Bruce before she became the highest-profile American to transition publicly from male to female this year.

The 65-year-old Jenner starred in the television documentary series “I Am Cait,” and before that was known to reality TV audiences for years as part of the celebrity Kardashian family.

She filed paperwork this month seeking to make her name and gender change official.

Celebrity website TMZ

reported Jenner was not present in court Friday for the hearing on the name and gender change.—Reuters



Caitlyn Jenner is seen on a TV set in the press room during the 2015 ESPY's award show at Nokia Theater. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hollywood star Laura Dern tackles sub-prime crisis in new film

LOS ANGELES — The US sub-prime mortgage crisis that spelled ruin for thousands and left many homeless is not exactly a catchy subject for a Hollywood movie.

But in a new drama — “99 Homes” — Oscar-nominated actress Laura Dern tackles the financial meltdown that touched millions and sent ripples across the globe.

Dern, 48, whose film resume includes “Rambling Rose,” “Sail-

or and Lula” and “Blue Velvet,” sat down with AFP to discuss the movie — which has gotten rave reviews — and life in general.

In “99 Homes,” she plays a woman whose family is forced out of home by an unscrupulous real estate broker after they are unable to make mortgage payments.

Dern said the movie aims to highlight “the level of rage in American families when they are now living in their car because they can no longer afford a motel.”

“We’re very busy as a culture, thinking about the Kardashians or whatever the new topic is,” she said.

“It takes us away from the BP oil spill still leaking, bank crisis and people still losing their homes.

“It is amazing to consider who we throw away, and often we throw away the people we’ve promised the most to.”

“I feel like I’m lucky because my focus isn’t that, because it’s not my language... it

isn’t what defines me,” Dern said of social media.

“I’m not of a generation that thinks that if I haven’t a certain number of followers, I am or I am not liked or popular, because I didn’t grow up that way.

“So I’m basing my values... on the work or my family, my children, my loved ones, but certainly not on social media.”

“Love where you are as a woman at all times in your life. If you buy into the belief that things

are gonna change based on age, it’s a tragedy,” Dern said.

“I hope I’m my sexiest at 60 and I will say I’m playing more interesting characters than I have in a long time. “In 10 years, I hope to be braver, bolder, wilder, boundaryless, without any predisposition to what it’s supposed to look like,” she added.

“(I hope) to be complicated, sexy, kind, broken and all the things a woman should be in her 50s. I look forward to that.”—AFP

For a Major League hair cut, baseball players pick Miami's Juice

MIAMI — Before Miami Marlins ace Jose Fernandez takes the mound Friday night seeking to make pitching history, his pre-game ritual will involve a trip to the barbershop.

Not just any barber, however. Fernandez will visit Hugo "Juice" Tandon, the heavily tattooed son of Cuban exiles who operates Major League Baseball's only private stadium barbershop out of a converted storage room at Marlins Park.

There is no set price to sit for a cut from Tandon, but business — and the tips — are good. A bald man with a long black beard, Tandon has such a steady stream of players, their relatives and team staff as clients that he is open six hours ahead of each home game and makes house calls during the off-season.

"He's family," said second baseman Dee "Flash Jr." Gordon, who recently had Tandon add a lightning bolt to the side of his head.

Tandon was plucked from obscurity by the Marlins thanks to a mixture

of hard work, an affable street cred and talent. His motto is, "no two cuts are the same," and his reputation is for unique and meticulous hair styling.

Some of the game's legends, including Reggie Jackson and Andre Dawson, as well as former Atlanta Braves' pitchers Greg Maddux and John Smoltz, are among those who have sought out Tandon, 45, for a trim.

Last year during the play-offs, Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Carl Crawford flew Tandon first class to California.

"He put me up at the W (hotel), for one cut," said Tandon.

The success may seem unlikely for a man who recounts a youthful predilection for fighting and a series of run-ins with police.

He credits his beautician mother, and his early interest in her clippers, with straightening him out.

At first he cut hair for beer and cigarettes before setting up a makeshift shop in the laundry room of his home, with a 13-inch TV and rap recordings to en-

tertain clients. He said his big break came in 1993 when a rapper friend directed Marlins slugger Gary Sheffield to Tandon's barbershop in Carol City, one of north Miami's roughest neighbourhoods. Soon other players came calling, and he started doing clubhouse visits.

In 2001 he opened his own shop, Headz Up, where he spends mornings before driving over to the stadium on game days.

When the Marlins moved to a new \$500 million stadium in 2012, some of the players pressed the team to reserve a space for Tandon. While other teams may occasionally invite barbers in, Tandon's is the only ballpark shop, players and team officials say.

The windowless space has room for one chair. Scribbled on a "Wall of Fame" are hand-written messages from clients, including actor Antonio Banderas and rapper Lil' Jon.

Clients pay what they see fit. Former Marlins pitcher Dontrelle Willis



Hugo 'Juice' Tandon gives a haircut to Miami Marlins starting pitcher Jose Fernandez in his barber shop in Marlins Park in Miami, Florida, September 23, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

bought Tandon a 1974 Chevy Caprice convertible, for \$21,000.

"He made me cry. That was a dream come true," the barber said.

Tandon says his clients open up to him about their private lives. But don't ask him to divulge any secrets.

"What's said in a barber's shop stays in a barber's shop," he said.

His roster of clients one afternoon this week included Gordon, All-Star outfielder Giancarlo Stanton and closer A.J. Ramos, as well as some visiting Philadelphia Phillies.

Fernandez, 23, was there, too, getting a trim and already thinking ahead to his hopes of breaking a Major League Baseball record for the most home wins without a loss to start

a career. The current mark has stood since 1914.

"Friday, you gotta be here," Fernandez whispered as Tandon leaned over him in the chair putting the finishing touches with a razor to his twice weekly trim.

His barber was quick to reassure him.

"When have I ever failed you?" Tandon said.—Reuters

Teacher who hid students during Newtown shooting writes book

NEWTOWN — The Sandy Hook Elementary School teacher who saved 15 first-grade students during one of America's worst mass shootings has written a book about the experience, hoping it will inspire readers to stay positive through life's worst challenges.

In excerpts from the book "Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Life's Darkest Hours," Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis describes quietly leading her

students into a tiny bathroom at the school as gunfire erupted around them, and waiting until the attack that ultimately killed 26 people ended.

The book will be published 6 October.

The day of the shooting, 14 December, 2012, "started out as a typically happy one," Roig-DeBellis wrote in an excerpt published on Friday in People Magazine. She played "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," and greeted the

children gathered for their morning meeting with the words "Good morning fantastic friends!"


"The theme that day was Our Holiday Traditions. [The students] talked about making cookies and visiting Santa and listening for reindeer," she wrote.

Minutes later the tranquil morning was shattered by the sound of gunshots. She closed the door of the classroom, turned off the lights and packed

the 15 first graders into a small adjacent bathroom, fearing death.

"I tell them how much they have meant to me. 'I need you to know that I love you all very much,' I say. 'Anyone who believes in the power of prayer needs to pray right now,' I say, 'and anyone who does not, needs to think really happy thoughts,'" she wrote in the excerpt.

She said she used a storage unit to barricade the door.—Reuters

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: right;"> <h3 style="margin: 0;">News Channel in Brief</h3> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">(27-9-2015, Sunday)</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top; border: none;"> 6:00 am • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw 6:50 am • Documentary (Mingun Sayadaw) 7:00 am • News/ Weather Report 7:30 am • Head Line News 8:00 am • News/ International News 8:30 am • Head Line News 9:00 am • News/ International News </td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top; border: none;"> 9:35 am • Weekly Entertainment 10:35 am • Teleplay 11:30 am • Head Line News 11:35 am • Amazing World 12:00 noon • News/ International News/ Weather Report 12:35 pm • Round Up of The Week's International News 12:50 pm • Myanmar Movies (Part-1) </td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top; border: none;"> 2:30 pm • Head Line News 2:35 pm • Myanmar Movies (Part-2) 3:00 pm • News/ International News 3:35 pm • Business News 4:35 pm • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Second Year (English) 4:50 pm • Documentary </td> </tr> </table>	6:00 am • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw 6:50 am • Documentary (Mingun Sayadaw) 7:00 am • News/ Weather Report 7:30 am • Head Line News 8:00 am • News/ International News 8:30 am • Head Line News 9:00 am • News/ International News	9:35 am • Weekly Entertainment 10:35 am • Teleplay 11:30 am • Head Line News 11:35 am • Amazing World 12:00 noon • News/ International News/ Weather Report 12:35 pm • Round Up of The Week's International News 12:50 pm • Myanmar Movies (Part-1)	2:30 pm • Head Line News 2:35 pm • Myanmar Movies (Part-2) 3:00 pm • News/ International News 3:35 pm • Business News 4:35 pm • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Second Year (English) 4:50 pm • Documentary	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">(27-9-2015 07:00 am~28-9-2015 07:00 am) MST</p> <p>Today Fresh</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none; font-size: small;"> <tr><td>07:03 Am</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>07:25 Am</td><td>A visit to Htam Hsan Cave A Miraculous Place</td></tr> <tr><td>07:52 Am</td><td>Next Weekend</td></tr> <tr><td>08:03 Am</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>08:26 Am</td><td>One Heritage.....One Festival</td></tr> <tr><td>08:44 Am</td><td>Kambawzathardi Golden Palace - A Treasured Legacy Of Golden Days</td></tr> <tr><td>09:03 Am</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>09:26 Am</td><td>Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-2)</td></tr> <tr><td>09:48 Am</td><td>Myanmar Alternative Medicine (Noni)</td></tr> <tr><td>10:03 Am</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>10:26 Am</td><td>Entrepreneur - Dr. Thant Thaw Kaung</td></tr> <tr><td>10:36 Am</td><td>Tipitaka Hteinlin Pariyattisarthintike</td></tr> <tr><td>10:53 Am</td><td>Black Gold (Part- II)</td></tr> </table> <p>(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)</p> <p>Prime Time</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none; font-size: small;"> <tr><td>07:03 Pm</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>07:25 Pm</td><td>Let's Cook (EP-3) Scrambled Eggs & Cutie Pancake</td></tr> <tr><td>07:53 Pm</td><td>Today Myanmar: The New Automobile Law</td></tr> <tr><td>08:03 Pm</td><td>News</td></tr> <tr><td>08:26 Pm</td><td>The Writer "Chit Oo Nyo" (Part-2)</td></tr> </table> <p>(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Saturday Repeat(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am)- Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am) (For Detailed Schedule - www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)</p>	07:03 Am	News	07:25 Am	A visit to Htam Hsan Cave A Miraculous Place	07:52 Am	Next Weekend	08:03 Am	News	08:26 Am	One Heritage.....One Festival	08:44 Am	Kambawzathardi Golden Palace - A Treasured Legacy Of Golden Days	09:03 Am	News	09:26 Am	Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-2)	09:48 Am	Myanmar Alternative Medicine (Noni)	10:03 Am	News	10:26 Am	Entrepreneur - Dr. Thant Thaw Kaung	10:36 Am	Tipitaka Hteinlin Pariyattisarthintike	10:53 Am	Black Gold (Part- II)	07:03 Pm	News	07:25 Pm	Let's Cook (EP-3) Scrambled Eggs & Cutie Pancake	07:53 Pm	Today Myanmar: The New Automobile Law	08:03 Pm	News	08:26 Pm	The Writer "Chit Oo Nyo" (Part-2)
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Entertainment Channel

(27-9-2015, Sunday)

6:00 am • Myo Ma Nyein Music Troupe 6:25 am • Teleplay 7:45 am • Fashion Show (Music)	8:05 am • Teleplay 9:10 am • Musical Programme 9:25 am • Sing & Enjoy 10:30 am • Myanmar Video
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Myanmar football chief elected for first time in 68 years

Ko Moe

THE first Myanmar Football Federation Congress 2015 took place in Yangon on Saturday.

The congress elected the president and vice president. U Zaw Zaw was reelected as the president for four years tenure. On the occasion, U Zaw Zaw requested the government

to improve the infrastructures including the football grounds for the development of Myanmar football. He also called for holding soccer matches at region and state level and township and ward level.

Dr Sai Hsam Tun and U Pyi Phyo Teza became the vice president of the federation. They were elected unanimously

by majority of representatives who attended the congress — 39 in favour and two against.

The election of the president by the congress is the first time in 68 years. During the reign of the previous government, the president was appointed directly by the Myanmar Olympic Committee.—GNLM



Representatives from region/state football federations vote for new president of Myanmar Football Federation Congress for 2015. PHOTO: MFF

Women footballers to take part in League match

Ko Moe

FOR the National Women Football Team to gain victories at international matches, the Myanmar Women Football League is to be held during the football season of 2016, said president of Myanmar Football Federation U Zaw Zaw.

“The season is to start with semi-pro matches”, he added at the federation’s press conference of MFF Congress 2015, at Novotel Hotel on September 26. The participating eight teams will be from government ministries, sport institute, and local clubs.

Myanmar’s National Women Football Team ranks fourth among ten ASEAN countries and ranks much lower among Asian teams.

The Myanmar team fetched only third prizes during 2007, 2009 and 2013 SEA Games.—GNLM

Tottenham put four past Man City in comeback win

LONDON — Leaders Manchester City suffered their second successive Premier League defeat when Tottenham Hotspur produced a stunning fightback to win 4-1 at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

Goals from Eric Dier, Toby Alderweireld, Harry Kane and Erik Lamela left City reeling after the visitors had dominated early on and taken a 25th-minute lead through record signing

Kevin de Bruyne.

Coming a week after a 2-1 home defeat by West Ham United that halted City’s 100 percent start to the season, their second-half collapse in sunny north London means they could lose top spot after Saturday’s later matches.

Manchester United will go top if they beat Sunderland.

There seemed no hint of what was to come when City broke quickly in the 25th min-

ute through the marauding Yaya Toure who fed De Bruyne to slot past Hugo Lloris.

If there was a hint of offside about that goal, Tottenham’s equaliser on the stroke of halftime was even more controversial.

Clearly offside, Kyle Walker crossed low into to the area and although City keeper Willy Caballero saved well from Son Heung-min the ball was drilled back into the net by Dier.

Tottenham went ahead five minutes after the break when Lamela’s free kick was headed in by Alderweireld. Eleven minutes later Kane broke his season-long goal famine for his club when he coolly clipped in a rebound after Christian Eriksen’s free kick struck the crossbar.

The impressive Lamela completed the scoring when he showed great composure to fire past Caballero.—Reuters



Toby Alderweireld scores the second goal for Tottenham against Manchester City during their Barclays Premier League at White Hart Lane, London, England on 26 September, 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rosberg on pole in Japan after Kvyat crashes

NICO Rosberg put Formula One world champions Mercedes on pole position for the Japanese Grand Prix on Saturday after Red Bull’s Daniil Kvyat crashed heavily and brought qualifying to an early close.

The German secured his first pole since Spain in May when the red flags came

out with 36 seconds remaining, leaving team mate and championship leader Lewis Hamilton no chance of claiming a 12th pole in 14 races.

Hamilton, who has a 41-point lead over Rosberg with six races left, missed out by 0.076 seconds but made sure of an all-Mercedes front row

to the relief of a team that was eclipsed in Singapore last weekend.

“A good comeback for the team after such a difficult weekend in Singapore. We really turned things around... I pretty much nailed my laps today. I’m really pleased with the way it went,” said Rosberg.

“At times today I had the perfect car.”

The front row was a repeat of last year’s at Suzuka, a wet race overshadowed by French driver Jules Bianchi’s tragic accident in the closing stages and that Hamilton won on his way to a second world championship. Finland’s Valtteri Bottas quali-

fied third for Williams on a dry track after Friday’s rain with Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel, victorious in Singapore and a four times winner in Japan, lining up in fourth place.

“The first lap I lost a bit of time into Turn 11 and I think in the last corner,” said Hamilton.

“Nico is driving well this weekend but I definitely felt pretty good on that last lap, but the main thing is that Kvyat is OK.”

The Russian was unhurt in his dramatic crash, losing control of the rear of his car after going wide onto the grass as he approached the hairpin.

Snapping sideways, the car was pitched into a tyre wall and flipped over before coming to rest with the wheels torn off the left side. Kvyat assured the team he was OK and then slowly ex-

tricated himself unaided. “It was a big impact, but the main thing is he is fine. A little bit winded,” said Red Bull team principal Christian Horner.

Brazilian Felipe Massa qualified fifth for Williams, with Ferrari’s Kimi Raikkonen sixth and Australian Daniel Ricciardo seventh for Red Bull.

McLaren’s Jenson Button failed to make it through the first phase of qualifying, on a dismal afternoon at engine partner Honda’s home circuit, and starts 16th with Spanish team mate Fernando Alonso 14th.

Button might have squeezed through but the yellow warning flags denied him a final quick lap after Dutch teenager Max Verstappen’s Toro Rosso was left stranded on track at the hairpin exit.—Reuters

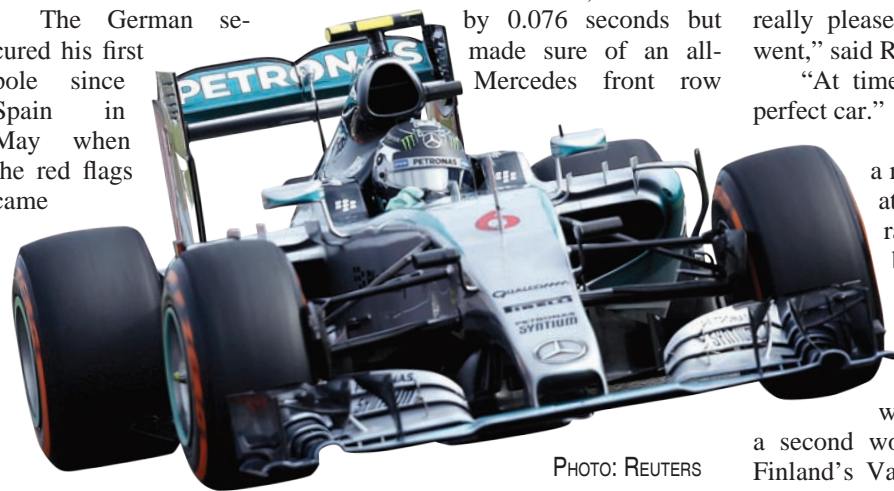


PHOTO: REUTERS