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DEATH RAILWAY MUSEUM TO OPEN BY APRIL

THE Death Railway Museum at the site of the World War II-era Death Railway in Thanbyuzayat Township, is expected to be inaugurated by coming April.

The museum would showcase historic photos connected with the Death Railway, paintings and sculptures and 3D images of the daily life of prisoners of war who died during construction of the railway.

Artists are putting finishing touches on silicon statues of Japanese soldiers and prisoners of war, which will be displayed within the two-storey museum.

Talamon Company Ltd won the right to develop the museum together with a hotel, a restaurant and other tourist facilities on four acres of land at the site in Thanbyuzayat Township. The construction of the museum began in April last year.

The museum will offer visitors the opportunity to see a coal-fired C-0522 engine, which was used on the Death Railway, and the memorial place where the death railway line originated.



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Tourists visit the coal-powered locomotive, which is displayed near the Death Railway in Thanbyuzayat. PHOTO: TIN HLA MAUNG

Farmers blame jade mining for dangerous dump soil



Jade mining in Indaw Township. PHOTO: MAUNG CHIT LIN

DUMP soil from jade mining in Indaw Township, Sagaing Region, has deteriorated nearby farmland, said local farmers in the township.

Local farmers blamed jade mining companies for the dump soil that flowed into their farmland and for stones that fall on their land when the mining area is quarried for jade stones.

“The small stones fall on our land when they carry out mining and threaten our life,” said Daw Tin Mya, 50, a farmer living near the mines.

My one-acre plot has been destroyed by the dump

soil, she said.

Also, the mud from the dump soil flowed into the farmland during the rainy season, destroying our farmland, said U Kyan Yit, a 65-year-old farmer.

Local people rely on growing crops and on digging for jade for their livelihoods. They have experienced job losses as jade mining companies have entered over the last year, said Ko Chit Win, 49, from the village of Buyaung.

However, U Aung San Oo, an official from Northern Star, a jade mining company that has

explored jade deposits on two acres of land in the township using 80 labourers between 2015 and 2018, said they dumped waste soil from the mining on fallow land.

As part of its corporate social responsibility efforts, the company constructed an earthen road linking Thuy-aung and Khokaung villages through Nantyon village, he added.

Local farmers complained that the dump soil also threatens the environment because they are dumped in the local forest.— *Maung Chit Lin*



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Yangon circular trains popular with tourists

Ko Moe

THE Circular train service in Yangon has become an increasingly popular tourist attraction for those who want to see the daily life-style of people at pedestrian level.

The number of tourists who take circular trains has increased sharply reaching more than 100 a day on average this year.

The number stood at around 60 last year.

Myanmar Railways has sold tickets to foreigners for Myanmar currency since more than a year, decreasing the cost of a ticket from one dollar (around K 1,300) to K 300.

Myanmar Railways has operated its circular train service in Yangon with air conditioned cars since October, 2013.

Currently, MR is operating 215 circular train services every day from downtown to the outskirts of Yangon.



An RBE train stops over at the railway station. PHOTO: TUN AUNG KYAW

Public Health Department to give children polio vaccinations

POLIO immunisations were explained at the Pyinmana General Hospital in Nay Pyi Taw on 27 November.

The head of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area Public Health Department, Dr Hla Hla Kyi, explained the hospital's strategy for the eradication of polio by administering oral polio vaccines and unactivated polio vaccines.

Medical Superintendent

Dr Aye Aye Mar of Pyinmana General Hospital spoke about the extended immunisation project, the prevention of common diseases, surveillance of the unactivated polio disease and the strategy for eradication of polio disease, which runs from 2013 to 2018.

The ceremony at which the explanations were given was attended by officials from the Myanmar Maternal and Child

Welfare Association, the Nay Pyi Taw Women's Affairs Organisation, Myanmar Medical Association and Myanmar Health Assistants' Association, physicians and specialists and health staff from the eight townships of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. A plan is underway to provide oral polio vaccines and unactivated polio vaccines to children under five as of December 2015.—Ko Ko Yu Pa

Cash assistance provided to senior war veterans



Officials of Township WVO presents cash assistance to senior member. PHOTO: PO SHWE THUN

CAPTAIN Htay Naing (Retd), the chairman of the Dawei Township War Veterans' Organisation and Sergeant Khin Maung Kyaw (Retd) provided cash assistance to veterans over the age of 75 at their homes on 27 November.

They presented K20,000 each

to Captain Thein Aung (Retd) of Kanyon ward, sergeant clerk Daw Ngwe Ya (Retd) of Hsinpuhnit ward, Sgt Tin Maung (Retd) of Hsanchi ward and Private Tin Maung (Retd) of Nyaungyan ward at their homes.—Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

Library, dormitories under construction at Taunggyi Buddhist University

SHAN State Chief Minister U Sao Aung Myat inspected the site chosen for the construction of a library for the Buddhist University at Phayaphyu ward, Taunggyi, on 27 November. An official from the Zing Gateway Company explained the plans for the construction of the building.

Company representatives explained the construction of a student dormitory by the Aung Chan Thar Company and a lecturer-monks' dormitory, lunch hall and refectory by the Phyu Sin Company. The chief minister gave the opening remarks at the coordination meet-

ing at the hall of the Shan State Buddhist University, while Shan State Development Affairs Minister U Sai Hla Win, who chairs the Buddhist University Construction Committee, discussed the plans for the construction. Company representatives offered updates on the construction. The chairman of the financial subcommittee spoke about the projects' financial statements.

The chief minister and his party also inspected the progress on the fifth floor of the Taunggyi Shopping Center.—Maung Maung Than



A 135-foot-long petrified sal tree (*Shorea robusta*) is on display at the Tree Jade restaurant in Htanzin village, Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region. PHOTO: HTAY MYINT MAUNG (NATOGYI)

Union minister attends 15th ASEAN Communications and Information Ministerial Meeting

PEOPLE in Myanmar are enjoying educational, health, economic and social benefits thanks to developments in the communication sector, said Union Minister for Energy and for Communications and Information Technology U Zeyar Aung at the 15th Communications and Information Ministerial Meeting held on 26 and 27 November in the Philippines.

According to the minister, the communications sector in Myanmar is rapidly developing, and the number of phone subscribers has increased from less than 5 percent

in the 2010-11 fiscal year to over 60 percent this year.

Present at the meeting were ASEAN communications and information ministers and officials from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the ITU.

The participants discussed the ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2015 and AIM 2020.

The union minister attended exclusive meetings with a deputy prime minister from Vietnam, the communications minister from Vietnam, a deputy minister from Japan and officials from the ITU.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Minister U Zeyar Aung attends 15th Communications and Information Ministerial Meeting. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar to set up airport authority

THE Myanmar government is laying plans to draft a law for the Myanmar Airport Authority, said Union Minister for Trans-

port U Nyan Tun Aung at the meeting of the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) in Yangon on 28 November.



Union Minister U Nyan Tun Aung visits aviation control room at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: TRANSPORT

“Myanmar needs to build the Hanthawady International Airport to be an international gateway for the country,” he said, adding that officials of the (DCA) should observe the operations of aviation and airport authorities of other countries.

The director-general of the department reported on the installation of aviation communication machinery and navigation system devices, the issuance of air operation certificates and pilot licences, the upgrading of Putao, Myitkyina, Kalay, Heho, Sittway, Thandwe, Kyaukpyu, Manaung, Loikaw, Cocogyun and Myeik airports.

The union minister inspected use of navigation machinery for aviation at the central aviation control station of the Yangon International Airport after meeting with air traffic controllers.

He also met with the chief executive officer and other officials of Myanmar National Airlines.—*Ministry of Transport*

Union minister attends opening ceremony of Hitachi Soe Company

THE opening ceremony of the Hitachi Soe Electric & Machinery Company was held at the Sule Shangri-La Hotel in Yangon on Sunday.

Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr Ko Ko Oo and Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe attended the event.

Vice President of the com-

pany U Kyaw Min Tun, chairman of Asia Pacific Hitachi Ltd and Hitachi Asia Ltd Mr Iino Ichiro, managing director of the Electrical Supply Enterprise U Myint Aung and vice chairman U Maung Maung Latt of the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation spoke on the occasion.—*Myanmar News Agency*

DEATH RAILWAY MUSEUM TO OPEN BY APRIL

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The Thanbyuzayat Township graveyard, where several thousand victims of the Death Railway are buried, has also attracted tourists.

“The Japanese army forced more than 120,000 prisoners of war from alien countries and other Southeast Asian nations to construct the 175-mile death railway linking Thanbyuzayat and Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

The number of deaths was equal to the sleepers along the

railway, said an expert who is collecting artifacts related to the death railway to be displayed at the museum.

More than 16,000 prisoners of war died during the construction of the railway, amounting to about 38 prisoners for every kilometer of the 415-kilometer railway. With little or no medical care, they succumbed to sickness, malnutrition and exhaustion. Many suffered horribly before their deaths.—*Soe Win (SP)*

42nd SSEAYP leaves Yangon

THE cultural exchange and dinner of the 42nd voyage of the Ship for the Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program was held at the Sule Shangri-La Hotel in Yangon on Friday.

Union Minister for Education Dr Daw Khin San Yi and Japan’s ambassador to Myanmar Mr Tateshi Higuchi spoke on the occasion.

The union minister presented gifts to the captain and

youths from Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar.

Youths from the ten countries performed their national dances at the dinner.

The youths visited eight universities in Yangon and met with students during their three-day visit to Myanmar before leaving Yangon on Sunday.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Dance troupes bid fare to students of ASEAN and Japan at the port. PHOTO: MNA

MOH to launch mass polio vaccination campaign in Dec

THE Ministry of Health will conduct a polio vaccination campaign in 102 townships across Myanmar, targeting 1.4 million children under 5 years of age.

The campaign, which is supported by the World Health Organization-WHO and UNICEF is scheduled to launch in early December with rounds of vaccination planned across 15 high risks townships in Rakhine and

Chin State, Magway, Bago and Ayeyawady Regions.

The first three rounds of this campaign — scheduled on 5-7 December, 26-28 December and 16-18 January — will target all children under five in these 15 high risk townships across the country.

Two additional rounds of polio immunisation will be conducted in another 87 townships

in January-February 2016. Earlier this year, two cases of vaccine-derived polio virus infection were reported amongst children in Maungtau Township, Rakhine State, according to a press release from UNICEF.

The emergence of such cases of vaccine-derived polio virus is due to low immunisation coverage. In fact, the routine immunisation coverage in Rakhine state

has been below 80% for the last several years.

In 2014, some of the State's townships only 27% of children received the three recommended doses of oral polio vaccine.

The most effective way to stop the circulation of this virus is to increase the immunity of children through increased routine immunisation coverage. The Ministry of Health will also intro-

duce the use of Inactivated Polio Vaccine across the country, which will further reduce the risks of vaccine-derived outbreaks.

In total, more than 3.8 million doses of oral polio vaccine will be provided to reach 1.4 million children under five years old.

The South East Asian Region, including Myanmar, was declared polio-free in 2014.—GNLM

Old Students pay respect to retired teachers at Myanaung BEHS

FORMER students of the Basic Education High School in Myanaung will pay respects to the school's retired teachers on 26 December.

The committee for holding the ceremony to pay respect to the retired teachers has invited old students across the country to participate in the 14th event.

More than 130 retired teachers who worked at the school during the period from 1953 to 2015 will attend the ceremony.

Former students can contact the following people in regards

to donations to U Soe Win Ph: 044-50029, U Tun Lin Ph: 044-50291, U Khin Maung Win Ph: 044-50285, U Win Maw Ph: 044-50131, Daw Khin Kyu Kyu Ph: 044-50192, U Ye Thu Aung, Ph: 09-73073963, Dr Phone Pyae Naing, Ph: 09-784772623 and KBZ respect-paying ceremony committee, account No. 1031220001732.

A dinner for faculty Basic Education High School students will be held on 25 December 2015.—Win Bo-IPRD Myanaung

67th Mingalar and Buddhist cultural exam arranged by YMBA

PYAWBWE Township branch of Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) organised the 67th Mingalar and Buddhist cultural examination at No.1 Basic Education High School in Pyawbwe, Mandalay Region, yesterday.

Primary and middle school students from basic education schools and monastic education schools took Mingalar and Buddhist cultural exam. Chairman and Vice-chairman of the branch

said, "YMBA sent questions to us. Primary students have to take first level exam and middle school students, second level one. After that, the YMBA Central will announce results."

A total of 895 students from Primary schools sat for first level exam while 388 middle school students took second level exam. Similar exams were held at Yamethin and Thazi townships at the same time.—Min Min Htway (Pyawbwe)

Model plot of Palethwe paddy yields about 200 baskets per acre



Staff of Agriculture Department measure number of paddy plants in model plot. PHOTO: KYAW ZEYAR WIN

HEAD of District Agriculture Department U Aung Naing Win and party, Head of Township Farmland Management and Statistics Department U Aung Win and local farmers attended harvesting of Palethwe hybrid paddy on the five-acre model plot near Tawmagon village in Kanma Township, Magway Region, on 28 Novem-

ber. At the ceremony, Palethwe paddy plantation yielded 195 baskets per acre (one basket=33.33 kg).

The official said, "In the township, local farmers grow Manaw Thuka, Sin Thuka, Yandar Toe, Taungyar and Hmawby-2 monsoon paddy strains on 30,651 acres of land. Of these,

they plant Palethwe paddy on more than 300 acres."

Staff Officer U Soe Myint of Madai Dam said that farmers were expected to grow 400 acres of Palethwe paddy against the target of 2,025 acres of summer paddy. The dam will occasionally irrigate the plantations.—Kyaw Zeyar Win (Kanma)

Irrigation Department at work on breaches of Ngawun Dam

YEKYI Township Irrigation Department of delta Ayeyawady Region has so far closed over 80 breaches of Ngawun Dam, as of 28 November.

A total of 122 breaches

had been found along Ngawun Dam from Bokchaung village to Myeyekwin village in the township, due to floods from Ngawun River during August.

All breaches are to be

closed by the end of November, said an official of Irrigation Department. He added that the dam will be maintained to be more stronger.—Soe Min Oo-IPRD

North Okkalapa fire kills girl of nine

A FIRE broke out in Tathalingyeik ward of North Okkalapa Township at 12.40 am on Sunday morning, killing a girl of nine.

The fire started by overheating and electric fault of a service wire at a squatter plot of Daw Than Than Win and spread to houses nearby.

More than 150 firemen and members of Red Cross society with 12 fire engines were able

to extinguish the fire at about 1.15 am. The fire destroyed eight houses and killed a girl of nine. Although fire engines were sent to the house quickly, narrow streets in the ward and strong wind hampered the efforts to put out the fire, according to a fire department official.

The fire has left 51 people from eight families homeless.—Zaw Gyi (Panita)



Local people view losses in outbreak of fire in North Okkalapa Township. PHOTO: ZAW GYI (PANITA)

Abe leaves for France to attend UN climate summit



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe left yesterday for France to attend a UN climate summit in Paris as part of a four-day trip also including a visit to Luxembourg.

Abe plans to join the UN

climate talks on Monday, the first day of the 12-day session, and hold a meeting with French President Francois Hollande also on Monday to declare his stance against terrorism following the recent attacks on Paris, Japanese officials said.

He is expected to announce a plan to increase Japan's support for anti-global warming measures by developing countries to 1.3 trillion yen (\$11 million) a year by 2020 from the current 1 trillion yen level in his speech at the talks, officially called COP 21, or the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Abe plans to move on to Luxembourg, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, on Tuesday to exchange opinions with Prime Minister Xavier Bettel on expediting talks on a Japan-EU economic partnership agreement.—*Kyodo News*

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Long-tailed macaques eat fruits from a plate held by festival organiser Yongyuth Kitwattananusorn during the annual Monkey Buffet Festival at the Pra Prang Sam Yot temple in Lopburi, north of Bangkok, Thailand on 29 November 2015. The festival provides food and drinks to the local monkey population, which numbers more than 2,000, to thank them for drawing tourists to the town. PHOTO: REUTERS

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Indian participants at BRICS media summit expect fruitful exchanges, success

NEW DELHI — Indian participants who will attend the upcoming BRICS Media Summit in Beijing said on Saturday that it is high time for BRICS countries to carry out media cooperation to meet the demand of their respective audiences.

Before leaving for Beijing to attend the media summit, India's NDTV Producer Pryanka Kaul and Chief Operating Officer Aditi Singh said they are honored to be invited by Xinhua News Agency as guests from India.

They are expecting fruitful exchanges with their BRICS counterparts during the summit, while wishing for a full success of the event.

"There have been an increase of coverage of Chinese news by Indian TV channels in recent years, but it is far short of expectations of local audience," said Kaul.

"The exchanges between

Indian and Chinese media are also seeing a momentum now," she added.

Singh said it is necessary for Indian TV channels to post correspondents in China, a very important country in the world.

"While the news broadcast in Indian TV channels about other BRICS countries are mostly relayed by Western TV institutions, it is inevitable that BRICS countries will provide each other with their direct news coverage in the future," she said.

A media summit will start

in Beijing on 1 December, focusing on cooperation among BRICS media organisations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).

First proposed and hosted by Xinhua, the summit is also jointly organised by Brazil Communication Company, Russia Today International News Agency, The Hindu Group and South Africa's Independent Media.

Leaders of 25 media groups from BRICS will attend the meeting.—*Xinhua*

"While the news broadcast in Indian TV channels about other BRICS countries are mostly relayed by Western TV institutions, it is inevitable that BRICS countries will provide each other with their direct news coverage in the future."

Aditi Singh
Chief Operating Officer

Bangladeshi ex-PM Khaleda to appear before court Monday

DHAKA — Bangladeshi ex-Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will appear before a court in capital Dhaka on Monday in a case filed by the country's anti-graft body.

Khaleda Zia will appear before the Special Judge's Court-9 at about 11:30 am (local time) on Monday and seek bail in the graft case filled for allegedly awarding a contract to a foreign firm causing huge loss to the exchequer, Sanaulah Miah, a counsel for the opposition leader, told journalists yesterday.

Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission filed the Niko graft case in 2007 after the BNP chief was arrested by the then military-backed caretaker government.

A total of 11 people, including Khaleda Zia, former Bangladeshi Law Minister Moudud Ahmed and former State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, were charged on 5 May, 2008 for allegedly causing a loss of 137 billion taka (some 1.76 billion US dollars) to the state exchequer by awarding gas exploration job to a Canadian company, Niko Resources.

Zia had earlier said political vendettas were to blame for the cases against her and her sons.—*Xinhua*

Beijing issues first heavy smog alert of this year

BEIJING — Beijing yesterday issued its highest smog alert of the year, upgrading it yesterday from the yellow of the past two days to orange, second only to red.

The municipal weather center said humidity and a lack of wind would mean the smog will linger for another two days,

before a cold front arrives on Wednesday.

On Sunday, the reading for PM2.5, airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, hit 274 micrograms per cubic meter in most parts of the capital. Under the orange weather alert mechanism, industrial plants are required to reduce or

shut down production; construction sites should stop the transportation of materials and waste while heavy-duty trucks are banned from the roads.

The municipal environment watchdogs have reinforced checks of discharge from coal-fired plants, outdoor barbecues and burning.—*Xinhua*

Paris climate activists plan human chain on global day of action

PARIS — Activists plan to join arms and form a “human chain” in Paris yesterday to urge action on global warming, in a muted rally after attacks on the city by Islamic State, at the heart of worldwide protests on the eve of a UN climate summit in France.

More than 2,000 climate events are planned in cities including Sydney, Jakarta, Berlin, London, Sao Paulo and New York, making it one of the biggest days of action on climate change in history, organisers say.

Activists in France scaled back their plans when the government imposed a state of emergency after the attacks two weeks ago killed 130 people, banning the planned demonstration in Paris, meant as the biggest of all.

In France, activists plan to form a static human chain, formed by about 3,400 people joining arms along what had been the original 3 km (1.9 miles) route through central Paris from the Place de la Republique to Place de la Nation.

“This is a moment for the whole world to join hands,” said Iain Keith, campaign director for

Avaaz, one of the organisers.

Separately, more than 10,000 demonstrators who had planned to come to Paris have instead sent shoes to form a big pile in a sign of solidarity. Organisers said the Vatican even sent a pair to represent Pope Francis.

Alix Mazounie of French Climate Action Network said the activists reckoned a human chain would not violate the state of emergency.

“This is not civil disobedience,” she said. The chain would break, for instance, wherever it crossed a road to avoid disrupting traffic.

But, underscoring security worries, France put 24 green activists under house arrest before the summit, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said on Saturday, saying they were suspected of planning violent protests at the talks.

Still, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius welcomed the worldwide demonstrations, which organisers say will include concerts, rallies, bicycle rides and a march by 1,000 Maasai in Tanzania urging more renewable energy.

“It is very positive,” Fabius said, for governments to feel public pressure to act. Many environmental activists want a phase-out of fossil fuels and a shift to 100 percent renewable energies by 2050.

Some marches were held on Friday and Saturday, from Melbourne to Edinburgh. “Don’t be a fossil fool,” one Australian banner said.

In the biggest single march on climate change ever staged, last year organisers estimated 310,000 people took part in New York.

On Saturday, faith groups delivered a series of petitions signed by 1.8 million people urging stronger action, collected on pilgrimages to Paris. “The time for talking is long over,” said Yeb Sano of the Philippines, who walked 1,500 km from Rome.

Fina Dinkelt, 28, a Swiss health care worker at a march in Zurich on Saturday, said there was a risk marches did not appeal to enough people. “I think they just draw people who already think this way. That is a bit of a problem,” she said.—Reuters

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79% fear Paris-type terror attacks could happen in Japan: poll

TOKYO — Four-fifths of responding Japanese are fearful that terror incidents such as the recent attacks on Paris could take place in Japan, a Kyodo News survey showed yesterday.

The opinion poll also found that the support rate for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet rose to 48.3 percent from 44.8 percent in October, while 40.4 percent said they do not support the Cabinet, down from the previous 41.2 percent.

In the wake of the 13 November Paris attacks, claimed to have been carried out by the Islamic State militant group, 79.7 percent of respondents said they believe similar deadly incidents could occur in Japan.

On possible antiterrorism measures, 46.2 percent said the government should enhance immigration controls at ports and airports.

The survey was conducted over the phone on Saturday and Sunday on 1,440 randomly selected households with eligible voters, collecting valid responses from 1,014 people.

As Abe and his ruling coalition did not accept opposition

calls for convening an extraordinary Diet session this fall by citing his busy schedule for foreign trips, 56.3 percent of respondents were critical of the decision.

Opposition parties had urged deliberations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement involving Japan and 11 other countries, which will increasingly expose farmers to global competition, as well as on the recent reshuffle of Abe’s Cabinet.

By political party, Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party was supported by 36.7 percent, down 0.1 percentage point from the October poll, while 10.2 percent backed the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, down 0.2 point. The results showed 35.9 percent were not in favor of any particular party.

Amid a recent feud within the DPJ over how to promote realignment in the opposition camp and counter the ruling bloc, 45.2 percent said the DPJ should disband, with 42.3 percent saying it should not do so.—Kyodo News



Environmental activists stand among pairs of shoes symbolically placed on the Place de la Republique, after the cancellation of a planned climate march following shootings in the French capital, ahead of the World Climate Change Conference 2015 (COP21), in Paris, France. PHOTO: REUTERS

Three-way tie seen in Spain’s vote as Ciudadanos gains ground

MADRID — Newcomer Ciudadanos has caught up with Spain’s long-established political parties and will tie three ways with them in the 20 December national election, a poll published yesterday showed. Ciudadanos, which bills itself as centrist and anti-corruption, would win around 22 percent of the vote.

That is roughly the same

as the ruling centre-right People’s Party (PP), which has lost ground, and the Socialists (PSOE), who have gained traction in the past month, the Metrosocopia poll of 1,200 people in newspaper *El Pais* said.

Podemos, an anti-austerity party which has also focused on corruption, would come fourth with around 17 percent of the vote, the poll showed,

roughly the same.

Spanish politics has been upended by an economic crisis in which inequality and corruption have become the key focus of the electorate. Unemployment, while now falling, is still 21 percent and many of those working are significantly poorer and with less job security.

Ciudadanos is led by tele-genic 35-year-old Albert Rivera,

which different surveys show as the best-considered candidate and who fared surprisingly well in Catalan regional elections in September.

Up to now, the party has been widely expected to act as kingmaker, although many see it as a natural ally of the PP. It has been critical of corruption within the ruling party, however, and it is not clear it would support

Mariano Rajoy to be prime minister again.

Spain’s largest opinion poll, conducted by the state and considered to be the most reliable, is due for publication this week. The last one showed the PP set to win the election, with other parties catching up and Ciudadanos in position to tie up with either of the two big parties to help form a government.—Reuters

EU hopes for Turkish help to slow migrants at summit



A Turkish Coast Guard fast rigid-hulled inflatable boats tow refugees and migrants in a dinghy on the Turkish territorial waters of the North Egean Sea, following a failed attempt of crossing to the Greek island of Lesbos, off the shores of Canakkale, Turkey. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS — Leaders of the European Union aim to sign an agreement with Turkey in Brussels yesterday that offers Ankara cash and closer ties with the EU in return for Turkish help in stemming the flow of migrants to Europe.

Aware of a sense of desperation in Europe for a solution to a crisis that is tearing the bloc apart following the arrival of close to a million people this year, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has been driving a hard bargain and diplomats said the 28 states had struggled through Saturday to agree a final offer.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu is due to meet the 28 EU national leaders for three hours from 4 pm (1500 GMT).

The Europeans, and none more so than German Chancellor Angela Merkel, are under pressure to manage the biggest influx of people since World War II, the

bulk of them to Germany, where Merkel is pushing hard for a Turkish deal. The crisis has helped populist opponents and set nations against each other, straining the open borders cherished by the Union's members.

Measures the EU has taken in recent months have as yet done little to control movements and while winter weather may lower the numbers for a few months, it is also worsening the plight of tens of thousands stuck by closing borders in the Balkans, piling further pressure on European leaders to find a solution.

Sunday's summit, called just days ago as Brussels tried to clinch a deal offered over a month ago, has been complicated by Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane on the Syrian border.

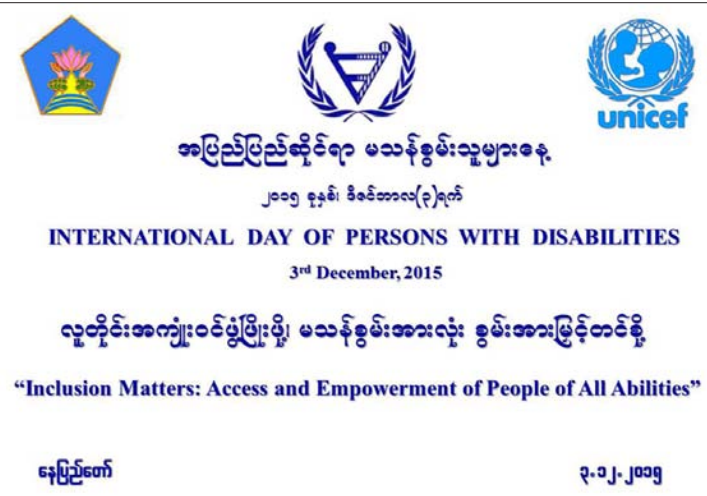
That has in turn complicated European efforts to re-engage with Moscow, despite a continued frost

over Ukraine, in order to try and advance a peace in Syria that could both end the flight of refugees and contain Islamic State. The Islamist group's attack on Paris two weeks ago has also heightened public calls in the EU for more controls on people arriving from Syria.

By late on Saturday, after a further meeting of EU envoys in Brussels, diplomats said a common EU offer that they hope will secure Davutoglu's signature was agreed. It should be approved by governments yesterday before the summit.

There remains a degree of nervousness, however, that Turkey could hold out for more — a nervousness heightened by Erdogan's decision not to attend himself but to send his prime minister.

"The Turks always negotiate to the last second," one senior EU diplomat said. "Why should this time be different?" —Reuters



Pope travels to Central African Republic with message of peace

BANGUI — Pope Francis was due yesterday to begin the final leg of his first African trip in Central African Republic where he will deliver a message of reconciliation and peace to a nation racked by years of violence between Muslims and Christians.

The visit to the former French colony will be the pontiff's first trip to a combat zone and his arrival is being welcomed by both majority Christians and the Muslim minority, who hope his presence can foster renewed dialogue and ease the violence. The capital Bangui has seen a surge in clashes that have left at least 100 people dead since late September, according to Human Rights Watch, and security has been ramped up ahead of the papal visit. France, which has around 900 soldiers deployed in Central African Republic, warned the Vatican earlier this month that the visit could be risky, and the pope's exact itinerary has remained uncertain even in the final days before his arrival.

Gabriel Ouamale, 33, who sells souvenirs, including t-shirts and umbrellas bearing the pope's image, in front of Bangui's cathedral, said sales have only picked

up in the past week. "There were people who doubted, who said he couldn't come due to the situation in the country. But the people now know he's coming," he said.

Hundreds of thousands of the city's residents are expected to turn out to greet Francis. Others will brave rebel and militia checkpoints to travel to Bangui from the rest of the country, and believers from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo will cross the Ubangi River in pirogues to catch a glimpse of the pope. Central African Republic's government is deploying around 500 police and gendarmes to secure the visit. More than 3,000 peacekeepers from the MINUSCA UN mission will also be deployed and French troops will be on alert as well.

General Bala Keita, MINUSCA'S force commander, said the mission aimed to head off any potential spoilers among the city's armed groups and had carried out operations to improve the security situation as much as possible.

"We have brought banditry and attacks on civilians to the lowest level possible, but Bangui is not secure. That's a fact," he said. —Reuters

Putin, citing national security, signs Turkey sanctions decree

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin signed a decree imposing a raft of punitive economic sanctions against Turkey on Saturday, underlining the depth of the Kremlin's anger towards Ankara four days after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane.

The decree, which entered into force immediately, said charter flights from Russia to Turkey would be banned, that tour firms would be told not to sell any holidays there, and that unspecified Turkish imports would be outlawed, and Turkish firms and nationals have their economic activities halted or curbed.

"The circumstances are unprecedented. The gauntlet thrown down to Russia is unprecedented. So naturally the reaction is in line with this threat," Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said hours before the decree was published.

A senior Turkish official told Reuters the sanctions would only

worsen the standoff between Moscow and Ankara.

But aides to Putin say he is incandescent that Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has yet to apologise for the 24 November incident near the Syrian-Turkish border in which one Russian pilot was killed along with a Russian marine who tried to rescue the crew of the downed SU-24 jet.

Senior Russian officials have called the episode, one of the most serious publicly acknowledged clashes between a NATO member country and Russia for half a century, a pre-planned provocation.

Erdogan has been equally robust. He has said Turkey will not apologise for downing the jet, saying Ankara was fully within its rights to defend its air space.

On Saturday, he appeared to soften his rhetoric a little, saying the episode had saddened him.

Putin's spokesman suggested

the Russian leader was ready for a long standoff however, saying he was "fully mobilised" to tackle what he regarded as an unprecedented threat from Turkey.

The decree, posted on the Kremlin's website, spoke of the need to protect Russia's national security and Russian citizens "from criminal and other illegal activities".

In it, Putin ordered the government to prepare a list of goods, firms and jobs that would be affected. Some of the measures announced have already been informally introduced.

The government is expected to publish the list of banned imports on Monday, Interfax news agency reported, citing a government source. The list is likely to include food and some other products, a second government source said.

Turkey mainly sells food, agricultural products and textiles to

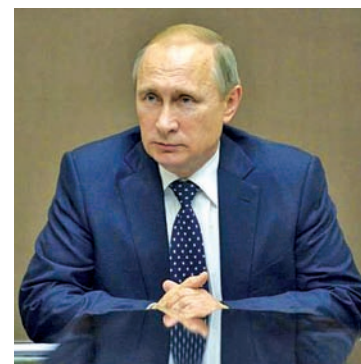
Moscow and is also one of the most popular holiday destinations for Russians. Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said he thought up to 200,000 Turkish citizens could be on Russian soil.

Putin signed the decree days before a climate change summit in Paris. Erdogan said earlier on Saturday it could be a chance to repair relations with Moscow.

"Confrontation will not bring anyone happiness. As much as Russia is important for Turkey, Turkey is important for Russia," Erdogan said in a televised speech in the western city of Balikesir.

Peskov said Putin was aware of a Turkish request for him to meet Erdogan on the sidelines of the Paris conference but gave no indication of whether such a meeting would take place.

He called the behaviour of the Turkish air force "absolute madness" and said Ankara's subsequent handling of the crisis had re-



minded him of the "theatre of the absurd."

"Nobody has the right to traitorously shoot down a Russian plane from behind," Peskov told Russia's "News on Saturday" TV programme, calling Turkish evidence purporting to show the Russian jet had violated Turkish air space "cartoons".

Turkey's foreign ministry advised people on Saturday to postpone all non-urgent travel to Russia. —Reuters

OPINION

The lynchpin of good governance

Kyaw Thura

IT is easy to understand that the development of a country depends on the efficiency of its government and parliamentarians. Simply put, the government is responsible for managing the country's natural resources so as to ensure that its people have their basic needs met.

It is therefore imperative for a country to

regard its cabinet members as its most important assets. It is thus equally important to assign the right people with the right skills to the right positions with the understanding that these people determine the success or failure of a government.

One striking characteristic of good governance is that it always prioritises what best serves the interests of the people by mediating between conflicting interests to reach a common consensus on policies and procedures. Another point is that good governance always takes into consideration the cultural and social diversity of the country so as to ensure the best use of natural resources and the development of human resources.

For a government to be successful in its administrative responsibilities, it is incumbent on the leader to form a government with the right people. Otherwise, ineffective management will result in mismatch recruitment, which, in turn,

will effect inefficient public services.

After all, clean government and good governance require quality people with excellent management skills. A government's success is measured by its willingness to listen, its ability to communicate and its self-awareness of accountability and responsibility.

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

Solving the Garbage Disposal Problems

Khin Maung Myint

I had contributed an article on the garbage disposal problems that was published in the GNLM daily. That article was written at the time when the orange coloured garbage bins started appearing on the main roads of our township, as well as in others around the city. I had pointed out the stench they were emitting and the rodents burrowing beneath them. I emphasized that people, including me, were reluctant to open the lids to dispose our garbage bags because of the stench they produced on opening.

It had been nearly a year since. However, no visible improvement is seen today. Instead, I must say, the conditions are getting worse. As the bins are not thoroughly cleaned, the handles on the lids are so filthy that people don't want to open them. Thus they left their garbage bags lying outside the bins for the dogs and rodents to scavenge them. They are becoming not only eye sores, but nuisances.

Here, I would like to describe how the city of Taipei managed their garbage disposals. I haven't been to Taipei, but what I'm going to describe was based on a documentary video, aired on Channel News Asia (CNA) of Singapore. Where cleanliness and orderliness are concerned, those who had been to Singapore are full of praise for that country. However, in the video documentary, the Singaporean TV presenter was greatly impressed by the garbage management system of Taipei.

The scene started with the TV presenter looking for a garbage bin or a litter box to throw an empty paper cup. He couldn't find one. However, he noticed that, although there was no sign of any garbage bin or litter box in the neighbourhood, the streets were

spotlessly clean and tidy. That aroused his curiosity as to how they did that. He asked a passerby, where he could dispose his empty cup. When he learned that there are litter boxes and dust bins inside the public places only, he was again curious where the household garbage are disposed. He was told that a garbage truck comes to each residential block at 7 pm every night and parks at the designated place.

The presenter went to a residential area and waited at a place, where some men and women were queuing with garbage bags in their hands. At 7 pm sharp, a garbage truck arrived. The workers placed three empty bins on the sidewalk. The bins were of three different colors that matched the colors of the garbage bags brought by the residents. Then one by one, the people in the queue handed the bags to the workers, who put them into the relevant bins. When a bin was full, it was tightly lidded and loaded onto the truck. Then another empty bin was placed on the sidewalk. Within a few minutes, all the bags were collected and the garbage truck left. The TV presenter went along, standing on the rear footboard of the garbage truck, with the workers.

The first stop was at a pig farm of their department. There they unloaded the kitchen wastes and leftover foods. The garbage were dumped into a very large food blender of unimaginable size. They were blended and degermed, before releasing the liquified food into the drains that led to the troughs in the pigsty. The swines immediately fed on them heartily. The second stop was at the recycling plant where the recyclable garbage were unloaded. Then they proceeded to the city outskirts where an incinerator was situated. There the last of the garbage that had to be destroyed were unloaded. The presenter ex-

plained, that place also produce electricity utilizing the garbage as fuel to fire the steam boilers that run the turbine generators.

That is the most unique garbage management system, but that wouldn't be applicable in our country at the present. The garbage are the sources of health hazards and causes of flooding, in Yangon. They are very problematic and need to be addressed urgently. A wild thought came to my mind while writing this article; "While Taipei is making the garbage bins invisible, why are we intentionally making them more visible by placing them on the crowded main roads?"

Another good example of garbage disposal management is that of Thailand. About six years back, I happened to be traveling in *Isann*, the North East region of Thailand, where my son's work-site was located. I noticed young boys and girls in school uniforms, carrying garbage bags on their way to school. It was a peculiar sight. When I asked my son, he explained that they are taking the garbage to barter with chicken eggs. He went on to explain that at the schools, the garbage bags were weighed to determine how many chicken eggs they are worth. The children were then rewarded with the chicken eggs. I was quite impressed by their innovations.

While I was writing this article, I was wondering whether that practice is successful and still going on. So I phoned my son and asked him. He replied that it is still going on and that practice had even spread to some other towns and villages. I asked him whether he knew how they managed those projects. Fortunately, my son happened to be a classmate of a Thai professor at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) who had been researching ways and means to conserve the environments. My

son asked the professor some salient questions that I wanted to know.

The feedback from my son was very interesting. I will try and explain it briefly. The garbage collection campaigns by giving incentives to the public are carried out by the township and village administrations with their own initiatives. Meaning: they are not carried out by orders or directives from higher up. Thus they vary from one place to another. Some places issue bank saving books to the public who brought in the garbage. After weighing the garbage they kept the records of the garbage brought in by each individuals. At the end of each month the amount of money each individual had earned are deposited into their saving books. As for the schools, they are still using chicken eggs to barter with the garbage.

The garbage thus collected are sorted to separate the recyclables, the leftovers and those to be burned. These garbage are the sources of incomes used to hand out or barter with the garbage brought in. The recyclables are sold to the recyclers. Kitchen wastes that contained fruits and vegetables can be processed to produce Effective Microorganisms and compost fertilizers. The Effective Microorganisms, commonly called EM, are used for environmental applications such as: in waste water treatment plants, in septic tanks and to reduce environmental pollutions. They are also useful in the sustainable agricultural practices. The garbage to be destroyed are sent to the incinerators. Nothing is wasted, while helping to generate money to keep the campaigns on track, they kept the environments clean. I think that it is the most viable garbage disposal method.

In my opinion, the Thai example would be more suitable and applicable to our country. As the

general organization or the setup of our respective administrations are not the same as those of their counterparts in Thailand, they may not be able to perform those tasks. Thus, I would like to suggest our youths, who are interested in community services, to rise up to the occasion and take that responsibility. They should form NGOs to carry out those tasks. Also as the situations are not the same as those of Thailand, there may be some difficulties to generate enough money from the garbage, in the beginning. Thus, I would like to request the philanthropists to finance them. As we Myanmar are generous people, I am sure the financing of such projects wouldn't be an issue. However, it would be more appropriate if the administrative bodies could take the responsibilities.

The general public should be educated not to litter and to dispose the garbage properly. Although the authorities had introduced the different colored bags to differentiate the types of garbage, the public do not seem to understand what their purposes are. It is because the garbage collection system does not have proper arrangements to separate the different types of garbage. For instance, as I had suggested in my previous article, they should have different colored bins for different types of garbage. Also, most people don't want to waste money on those specific kind of bags. Only a few percentage of the public are using them. They should be made more aware of the importance of maintaining a clean environment. In doing so, the televisions are the best mediums. The last resort is to apply **the carrot and stick policy** to enforce it. This would benefit our wellbeing by improving the cleanliness of our city and enhance the image of our country too.

Moments of serenity and panic at the Tazaungdaing Light Festival

Alec James Wilmot

Thousands crowd a vast, grassy expanse for a chance to get an up-close view as the explosives are primed. A team of about a dozen men lift a massive basket over their heads and push it into the night sky. Flood lights hone in on the brightly coloured mass twirling its way upward. The crowd cheers and laughs in anticipation as another giant, gaudily painted balloon makes its way higher and higher, the wind carrying it toward the hills.

As the balloon begins to shrink into the distance, the fuses dwindle and meet the ignition caps, and all in an instant, the night sky lights up with terrific force. Streaming jets of gold, green and red pour from the basket in a variety of incredible dances—the torrential streams of gold explode thunderously, to the great amusement of the crowd. Smaller rockets curl and dance their way back down toward the earth. It's Taunggyi in November. The Tazaungdine Light Festival is on again, and it's just as amazing and dangerous as in years past.

The festival is a well-known staple among Myanmar's annual festivals. As far as tradition is concerned, the releasing of the balloons in Taunggyi is the meeting point of three momentous cultural events. The festival takes place over a period that includes the full moon day of Tazaungmon, the beginning of the eighth month of the Buddhist calendar. The day itself is noteworthy, but more importantly, it represents the official end of the Myanmar rainy season. The day also heralds the end of the Kathina season, the time of year during which citizens offer alms and robes to Buddhist monks. The traditional importance of the festival still resonates strongly with visitors, even as commercialisation takes hold.

Ground zero of the event—a large, circular field of grass on which excited spectators sit—is surrounded on all sides by promotional stands, food stalls, carnival games and glowing, semi-mechanical rides. Reaching the quieter epicentre of the event, where the pyrotechnicians prepare their floating fire machines, can take over 20 minutes.

In the eye of the storm, where the bal-



A balloon bobs just above the ground before lifting off.

loons are released, spectators look on reverently as the balloons, replete with explosives, are erected and set ablaze. The best efforts of the security personnel cannot prevent the heavy press of onlookers from coming dangerously close to the chemical explosives.

The balloon launchings are, for the most part, successful, and it is a joy for people to see the multi-coloured sparks whizzing through the sky. However, there were a number that failed upon launch, exploding prematurely mere metres above the ground, showering the crowd with charged projectiles, fire and sparks.

Connor MacDonald, an Australian spectator at the event, was struck directly in the face by a flaming projectile shot from a faulty balloon.

"I heard the collective sigh of the crowd as one of the balloons went up, so I left my seat at the beer stall to see it unleash a wall of fire and rockets onto the crowd directly beneath it. It was quite far

away, maybe 200 metres, and I was taking photos of the display. As I pulled my camera from my eye to have another look, I caught a split second glimpse of a rocket coming my way. Then it hit me."

Mr MacDonald was struck directly in the face by a burning green firework. It missed his eye by two centimetres. He left the festival complaining only of minor burns and did not require medical attention. His close encounter was a lucky one, considering the injuries and even deaths this festival has been known to produce.

Two people were killed, and a dozen were injured when a similar balloon mishap devolved into disaster last year. But the threat of imminent injury does not seem to worry the crowds of balloon-gazers; indeed it has come to be expected. The makeshift fire brigade on hand, equipped with buckets of water, offers a modicum of solace to the pyrophobic spectator.

While this year's celebrations were thankfully completed without disaster, the

failure of some of the balloons, which take a great deal of care and effort to craft and release, causes dismay among the team members who build them. One such team whose balloon faltered, even after they repeatedly placed themselves in danger in their attempts to correct its course, were later witnessed collectively sobbing in shame.

Such is the heady, confused celebration that is the balloon festival in Taunggyi. It is an odd cocktail of tourism, commercial peddling, love, devotion, Buddhist traditionalism, beauty and danger. The displays are stunning. The swell and jubilation of the crowd (aided by the flow of beer and whiskey) colour the event with a cheerful chaos. There are cautionary tales to be told about Tazaungdine Light Festival, as one Australian attendee would certainly attest. But did he regret being there? Not at all.

"It was a pretty crazy thing that happened to me, but in the end, I had an amazing time."



A balloon explodes above some unsuspecting teddy bears.



The festival attracts people from all over the world.

Iran unveils new model of oil contracts to attract investments

TEHRAN — Iran's Oil Ministry unveiled a new model of oil contracts here on Saturday to attract foreign investments in oil sector in the post-sanction era.

The newly developed model of oil contracts, dubbed as Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC), are designed to help the country attract finance from Asian and European investors, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said in a conference.

The IPC is replacing traditional Iranian "buy-back" contracts which are no longer attractive to foreign companies.

He hopes the new model will bring in some 25 billion US dollars in investment in Iran's energy sector over the next years, Zanganeh said.

In the new contracts, different stages of petroleum industry, exploration, development and production, are commissioned in an integrated manner.

Under the IPC, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) will set up joint ventures for crude oil production with international companies which will be paid with a share of the output.

The move is to encourage



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh speaks during the Tehran conference in Tehran, capital of Iran, on 28 November 2015.

PHOTO: XINHUA

the foreign investment in Iran's energy sector if sanctions could be lifted in early 2016 as the result of the landmarks deal reached between Iran and the world powers on 14 July.

Also, Iranian experts will work with foreign investment companies in order to become familiar with the latest technologies in the world.

Earlier, Mehdi Hosseini, the head of Oil Contracts Revision Committee in the ministry, said that based on the new model of

the contracts "ownership of reservoirs is not transferable."

International companies withdrew from Iran as the United States and European Union imposed sanctions on Iran's oil and gas industries during the past few years, which caused a significant decrease in Iran's oil and gas exports and production.

Since the new government took office in 2013, Iran's Oil Ministry has focused efforts on regaining Iran's status in global markets.—Xinhua

Israeli officers shoot dead Palestinian attacker

JERUSALEM — Israeli border police shot dead a Palestinian who stabbed an officer in Jerusalem on Sunday, a police spokesman said, the latest attack in a two-month wave of violence.

Near a main gate of Jerusalem's walled Old City, the Palestinian pulled out a knife and stabbed a border policeman in the neck, moderately wounding him, before being shot by officers, the spokesman said.

Almost daily Palestinian stabbings, car rammings and shootings have killed 19 Israelis and one US citizen since 1 October. Israeli forces have killed 94 Palestinians, many of whom were carrying out assaults and

others in clashes with police and troops. Many of those killed have been teenagers.

Palestinian allegations that Israel is trying to alter the religious status quo at a Jerusalem holy site, known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, where al-Aqsa mosque stands, and to Jews as the Temple Mount, have partly fueled the violence.

Non-Muslim prayer is banned around al-Aqsa and Israel has said it will not change that. But more visits in recent years by Jewish religious activists and ultra-nationalist Israeli politicians to the complex, where two biblical temples once stood, have done little to

convince Palestinians. Overnight in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron, Israeli forces shut down and confiscated equipment from a Palestinian radio station, the third in recent weeks, that the military said has repeatedly broadcast material which "promotes and encourages terror and acts of violence against Israeli civilians and security forces."

The station owner, Talab al-Jabar, told Reuters that the broadcaster, called Dream, was not inciting, rather reporting on events. "I can tell you that Dream radio will be back on air very soon and it will be stronger," he said.—Reuters



An Israeli border policemen checks on a Palestinian man at the area in Jerusalem's old city where an Israeli border police shot dead a Palestinian who stabbed an officer on Sunday, a police spokesman said, the latest attack in a two-month wave of violence, on 29 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Body of Russian pilot in Turkey, preparing handover to Russia: Turkish PM

ANKARA — The body of the pilot killed when Turkey shot down a Russian jet last week was taken to Turkey late on Saturday to be handed over to Russia on Moscow's request, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said yesterday.

The body is being treated in accordance with the Orthodox tradition, Davutoglu said

in a news conference in Ankara before going to Brussels for a meeting with EU leaders on migration. Davutoglu said with different coalitions operating in Syria with differing objectives, similar incidents to that of the downing of the Russian jet could happen unless there was information sharing and coordination.—Reuters

Burkina Faso votes to choose first new leader in decades

OUAGADOUGOU — Polls opened in Burkina Faso yesterday in the first free election in three decades as the country chooses a replacement for President Blaise Compaore, who was overthrown a year ago in an uprising backed by the army.

Compaore ruled for 27

years until protests at his attempt to change the constitution to maintain his tenure drove him from power. The polls were pushed back from 11 October after an abortive coup in September by members of the now-disbanded elite presidential guard.—Reuters

Syria monitor: Russian air strikes kill at least 18 in northwest

BEIRUT — Air strikes believed to have been carried out by Russian jets killed at least 18 people and wounded dozens more in the town of Ariha in northwest Syria yesterday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Observatory, said a total of at least 60 people had been killed and wounded in the attack. The pro-opposition Orient TV reported an initial death toll of 40. Reuters could not independently verify the reports.

Officials at the Russian defence ministry could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Russian air force has been conducting air strikes in support of President Bashar al-Assad since 30 September.

Ariha is located in Idlib province, which is controlled by insurgent groups including the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front. The province is not a stronghold of the Islamic State group that controls wide areas of eastern Syria. The Syrian military withdrew from Ariha in May as alliance of rebel groups including the Nusra Front advanced in Idlib in an offensive that resulted in the entire province falling to insurgents.—Reuters

Islamic State claims bombing in northern Iraq that killed seven

BAGHDAD — Islamic State said it was responsible for a suicide car bomb attack on a police checkpoint in the northern Iraqi town of Tuz Khurmatu on Saturday which left seven people dead and 17 others wounded.

The hardline Sunni militant group said in an online statement distributed by supporters that the target was "rejectionists", its term for Shi'ite Muslims.

The attack in Tuz Khurmatu, about 175 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, threatened to exacerbate tensions between Kurdish and Shi'ite Turkmen communities in the town, which has seen deadly clashes between paramilitary forces from each group in recent weeks.

Efforts to push back Islamic State militants in northern and western Iraq have been complicated by such sectarian and ethnic rivalries.—Reuters

UK's Fallon says would like to have vote for Syria action this week

LONDON — British defence minister Michael Fallon said yesterday the government wanted to have a vote in parliament to launch air strikes against Islamic militants in Syria this week but it had to keep building the case of extending military action.

Asked whether there would be a vote in parliament this week, Fallon said: "We'd like

to have a vote for military action but we've got to keep building the case."

Asked whether the government had got the votes needed to get parliamentary approval for the air strikes, Fallon told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show: "Not yet, we are working at it and we need to keep working at it."—Reuters

US store sales down slightly for Thanksgiving and Black Friday

CHICAGO — Sales at US brick-and-mortar stores on Thanksgiving Day and Black Friday were down slightly from last year, but the performance was still seen as strong in a holiday shopping season where discounts spread well beyond the weekend and many shoppers moved to the web.

Online sales were up by double digits, according to data released on Saturday.

Data from analytics firm RetailNext showed overall sales for both days fell 1.5 percent on flat customer traffic, while average spending per shopper dropped 1.4 percent.

Preliminary data from ShopperTrak showed sales at stores totaled about \$12.1 billion on Thursday and Friday. The company said it is an “estimated decrease from last year” but did not give the percentage decline due to an internal change in the way

it calculates data. Last year, it reported sales of \$12.29 billion for the same period.

ShopperTrak will release its final sales numbers on Tuesday. It stuck by its forecast of a 2.4 percent increase for November and December sales.

The data highlights the waning importance of Black Friday, which until a few years ago kicked off the holiday shopping season, as more retailers start discounting earlier in the month and open their doors on Thanksgiving Day.

Both firms said that despite the fall in sales over the two days, the performance must be interpreted as a good one for retail stores because sales held up amid rising competition from online shopping and were better than expected due to pent-up consumer demand and lower gas prices.

Last year Black Friday and



Nancy Villagomez pays for her purchases during Black Friday Shopping at a Target store in Chicago, Illinois, United States, on 27 November.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Thanksgiving sales were disappointing, forcing retailers to double down on discounts which led to a last-minute shopping frenzy.

“It’s still a good perfor-

mance for the weekend, given the growth that is being witnessed online as well,” ShopperTrak founder Bill Martin said.

ShopperTrak said Thanksgiving and Black Friday generat-

ed \$1.8 billion and \$10.4 billion in sales respectively. Martin said early promotions in November were a bigger factor hurting Black Friday than store openings on Thanksgiving evening.

Customer traffic remained flat on Thanksgiving Day from a year earlier while traffic fell 1.8 percent on Black Friday, RetailNext said. Their estimate last year showed overall traffic for both days fell 14 percent.

“The numbers are down but it’s still a better sales trend during the two days than we have seen for physical retail through the year and especially after a very difficult summer and October,” Shelley Kohan, vice president of retail consulting at RetailNext, said.

Electronics and toys, which were better promotions did well, both firms said. Apparel sales struggled despite better promotions, Kohan said.—Reuters

China’s shadow banking risk shifts to booming bond market

SHANGHAI — A year after China’s financial regulators squared up to the systemic perils of “shadow banking”, the threat is shifting to a booming corporate bond market, and risky borrowers’ debt is finding its way into products aimed at retail investors.

An opaque network of trust companies and non-bank lenders had grown their annual market to a hefty 2.9 trillion yuan (£299 billion) in loans before regulators stepped in, spooked by rising defaults on wealth-management products (WMPs) backed by such high-interest shadow lending.

Now the high-risk borrowers who took those loans, such as unlisted real-estate firms struggling with a stagnant property market

and financing companies backing shoddy local government investment, are finding a new avenue of funding after regulators began allowing unlisted companies to issue bonds on public exchanges.

New corporate bond issuance leaped to 914 billion yuan in the third quarter, accounting for 29 percent of all new credit, up from 381 billion yuan and just 8 percent in the first.

And the profile of new borrowers looks strikingly like the patrons of the shadow banking set. Of the 57 firms posting bond listing announcements in Shanghai in October, 23 were local-government-owned project or infrastructure investment firms. Beijing engineered the freeing up

of the bond markets as a transparent alternative funding route, and the credit crunch that followed its clampdown on shadow banking guaranteed a high take-up.

But wealth managers are now turning these bonds into leveraged high-yielding products and selling them to investors desperate for returns after a real-estate slump and summer stock-market crash.

Data from CN Benefit, a research firm tracking wealth management sales, shows that 60 percent of new bank wealth-management products (WMPs) were linked to debt and money market instruments in September, up from less than half in the first quarter.—Reuters



A woman walks past a board showing the length and annual yield rates of finance products, outside a shop in Shanghai, China. PHOTO: REUTERS

Facebook makes paid time off for baby leave a global benefit

SAN FRANCISCO — Less than a week after Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said he would take two months of paternity leave, the social media company announced it is extending its parental leave policy to full-time employees outside the United States.

The policy, which provides four months of paid time off, will be provided to all new parents regardless of gender or location, starting 1 January. Employees may take leave at any point up to a year after the birth of their child, Lori Matloff Goler, the company’s head of human resources, said in a Facebook post late Wednesday. Facebook currently offers four months of paid parental leave to US-based full-time workers. Outside the United States, Facebook now offers a minimum of four months of paid leave to full-time employees who are new mothers and primary caregivers. Fathers and non-primary caregivers outside the United States get four weeks of paid leave.

“We want to be there for our people at all stages of life, and in particular we strive to be a lead-

ing place to work for families,” she added. “An important part of this is offering paid parental or ‘baby’ leave.”

Goler said the new policy will primarily help new fathers and employees in same-sex relationships outside the United States, noting that it will not change maternity leave already available to employees worldwide.

Zuckerberg last week said he would take two months off after his daughter’s birth. Zuckerberg announced in July that he and his wife, Priscilla Chan, were expecting a baby girl; they have not said when the baby is due.

His announcement was seen in Silicon Valley as a strong endorsement from a high-technology industry top executive on the importance of family time.

Technology companies in Silicon Valley have been rushing to extend parental leave allowances and other benefits to help recruit and retain employees. Many high-tech workers, however, do not take advantage of such benefits for fear of falling behind at work or missing out on promotions.—Reuters

Samsung Biologics investing \$736 million in manufacturing plant

SEOUL — Samsung Biologics, an unlisted arm of South Korea’s Samsung Group, said on Friday it would invest 850 billion won (\$736 million) to build a manufacturing facility, as the conglomerate steps up its expansion in the biopharmaceutical sector.

Construction of the plant, which will have a capacity of 180,000 litres, is to be completed by September 2018, according

to a regulatory filing.

Most shares in Samsung Biologics are owned by Samsung C&T Corp (028260.KS) and Samsung Electronics Co Ltd (005930.KS).

Samsung Bioepis Co Ltd, a developer of generic versions of biotech drugs that is 90 percent-owned by Samsung Biologics, said in June it was considering a Nasdaq IPO.—Reuters

Biros, not butchery, for ex-Central African child soldiers

BAMBARI — When two of Josephine's uncles were murdered by armed cattle rustlers on Central African Republic's southern border just before her twelfth birthday, all she could think of was taking revenge.

The schoolgirl was an easy target for recruitment by mostly Christian militia groups battling fighters of the Muslim Peul tribe in the flatlands of the eastern Ouaka region.

"The Peuls had killed my uncles and I was ready to commit reprisals," said Josephine, now 14, sitting in a bright yellow dress under the shade of a mango tree in her school playground.

"Our job as children was to decapitate the bodies of dead enemy soldiers," she said, her face blank and betraying no emotion.

Children have been enslaved and used as fighters and human shields by rival militias who have recruited up to 10,000 under 18s since largely Muslim Seleka rebels briefly seized power in 2013, triggering waves of violence and reprisal killings, according to the UN children's agency UNICEF.

It was during a gun-battle across the lawless, mineral-rich floodplain in 2013 that Josephine was recruited by the so-called anti-balaka, a largely Christian militia that tried to inflate its ranks with children who could be easily mobilised against the Peuls.

Her brigade of 111 soldiers included 42 children at the height of the conflict in 2013, during which the opposing militias used blood-thirsty tactics,



Former anti-Balaka child soldiers wait to be released in Bambari, Central African Republic. PHOTO: REUTERS

ransacking villages and stealing livestock, said Josephine, twiddling a biro in her fingers.

"The Peuls had no hesitation in killing my uncle and his brother so for me it was the same. I got it out of my system," Josephine said. Her name has been changed for her safety.

The red-soil scrubland of Ouaka is some 200 km from the capital Bangui, where Pope Francis was due to arrive on Sunday seeking to heal Christian-Muslim divisions.

His visit comes with the city still tense from a fresh bout of fighting in September. In Ouaka, the anti-balaka are often involved in deadly skirmishes with ethnic Peul fighters of the Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC), a

Muslim splinter group of the Seleka coalition, which controls CAR's northeast.

Nearly three years of inter-religious conflict in Central African Republic have been characterised by shocking brutality and abuses on both sides.

A number of ex-child combatants have told UNICEF they were forced to disembowel deceased pregnant women and to kill their own parents as a form of initiation into the armed group.

But the proportion of under 18 year-olds in rebel ranks has fallen sharply, UNICEF said, spurred by the signing of an internationally-sponsored pact in Bangui, in May, under which the armed factions agreed to demobilise all child soldiers as part of

CAR's transition towards elections now set for 27 December.

More than 5,000 children have been released from armed groups since the beginning of 2014, the UN agency said.

Josephine, who stayed with the anti-balaka for two years, was one of 1,300 children, 213 of them girls, to be released as part of a UNICEF scheme this year which presented her with a choice — go back to school or to start a business.

"I turned my back on the armed groups and decided school was the way forward," said Josephine, suddenly distracted by the uproar of songful children bursting out of classrooms in the heat of the early afternoon.

In Ouaka's main town,

Bambari, where a river divides Muslim and Christian communities, former child combatants have set up businesses with sponsorship through a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Nda.

"I used to carry weapons," said shaven-headed Mahmoud, 16, an ex-UPC member whose real name has been changed.

He spent two years with the UPC, whose leaders also forced him to carry out menial tasks such as cooking and cleaning equipment.

"I used to think being a soldier was the way forward but now I want to make clothes for money," said Mahmoud, his eyes lighting up as he drew green cotton from an a rainbow of spools in a tiny

mud-walled tailor's shop in the town's main market.

A \$300 grant from UNICEF, paid in installments, gave him the capital to buy textiles and a sewing machine, which he uses to stitch clothes, making him one of the more successful ex-fighters to enter the rehabilitation programme.

Others can be reluctant to leave the armed groups fearing they may be stigmatised in their home community after playing a role in the conflict, said Benoit Daoundo, UNICEF's head of child protection programme in Bambari.

Daoundo said he was concerned that fresh tensions in CAR, which saw an upsurge in fighting two months ago, had created fertile conditions for children to re-join the rebels.

The violence caused the postponement of internationally-backed elections to the end of the year, but both the UPC and the anti-balaka have said they are adhering to the UN-backed process to release children from their ranks.

"We have already freed all the children associated with our group. They are no longer part of the UPC," Ali Daras, the UPC's leader, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview in Bambari, close to the border with Democratic Republic of Congo.

Daras, dressed in a white shirt, and his young uniformed fighters, many of them ethnic Peuls, control Bambari, a vital gateway to barely exploited diamond and gold mines that analysts say could one day transform CAR into an export powerhouse.—Reuters

Chicago police union stands by cop charged with murdering teen

CHICAGO — The main Chicago police union is standing behind the white officer who was charged this week with first-degree murder for gunning down a black teenager. It is facing a backlash from leaders of the city's black community as a result.

On its website, the Chicago lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), has posted a bail fund appeal for the officer, Jason Van Dyke, who is accused of shooting 17-year-old Laquan McDonald 16 times just six seconds after emerging from his patrol car on a street in Chicago on 20 October, 2014. An earlier link on the FOP's

front page to a GoFundMe campaign was removed after the fundraising site said it violated a policy against its use by criminal defendants.

The FOP also is paying the lawyer representing Van Dyke, Daniel Herbert, himself a former FOP member the union pays to represent Chicago cops in misconduct cases. Funding such a defense is a common practice among US police unions.

The FOP's support for Van Dyke appears to have support within the union, according to email and phone interviews Reuters conducted with a number of white and black active-duty and retired cops, as well as union

and black police association officials.

They stopped short of defending Van Dyke's actions — which were caught in a graphic video made public this week — but did say it was important to place them in the context of a racially divided city beset by violence.

Some of the officers say they are concerned the city's police force has become a political football and is not getting enough support from Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and police chief Garry McCarthy. These officers also say the decision by Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez to charge

Van Dyke with first-degree murder, rather than the lesser charge of second-degree murder, was a politically motivated effort to head off outrage about the video.

"First degree is a high bar to set, and of course it's political," said one active duty police officer who asked not to be named, and who responded to written questions from Reuters by email. A second police officer said most people would not understand the pressures on Van Dyke and other cops when they are dealing with someone holding a weapon, in this case a knife, and have to make split-second decisions.—Reuters



Police officers watch protesters during a demonstration in reaction to the fatal shooting of Laquan McDonald in Chicago, Illinois, on 27 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

EU starts to slam doors on asylum seekers

OXFORD — Two weeks have elapsed since the terrorist attacks in Paris. With the news that at least two of the attackers posed as refugees to enter Europe via Greece, a number of EU countries have taken steps to shore up their borders and restrict entry by asylum seekers, citing both security concerns and capacity problems.

Here's a round-up of which countries have done what:

France

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, President François Hollande declared a state of emergency and said the country's borders would be closed. In reality, reinstating systematic border checks on every road and railwayline that connects France with five large, neighbouring countries is not feasible. Instead, it has established checkpoints along major routes to Belgium and on some cross-border trains. France has also pushed for other member states to ramp up border controls and called for more security screening at the EU's frontiers.

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls told journalists on Tuesday that, due to the security risks, "we cannot receive more refugees in

Europe," although he added that France would fulfil a pledge – made in the wake of the Paris attacks – to accept 30,000 Syrian refugees for resettlement over the next two years. It's a figure that dwarfs France's previous commitments.

Germany

Chancellor Angela Merkel has so far resisted intense internal pressure to set a limit on how many asylum seekers Germany takes in, insisting that what is needed is a permanent, mandatory system for sharing refugees more equitably across the EU's 28 member states. Germany had already absorbed 758,500 between January and the end of October, and the state of Saxony-Anhalt is now threatening to impose its own intake limit and calling on other state governments to do the same. The country has had temporary border controls in place since mid-September in an effort to manage the seemingly endless flow of asylum seekers crossing from neighbouring Austria, having travelled through the Balkans from Greece. However, the controls mainly consist of passport and vehicle checks, and asylum seekers continue to be admitted in record numbers.



A man with a crying child shows his Greek registration paper to heavily armed Macedonian border police. Only Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis were allowed to cross the border. PHOTO: IRIN

Federal Police reported that 180,000 arrived in the first three weeks of November alone.

Sweden

Until recently, Sweden was considered one of the most welcoming EU states for asylum seekers. Since 2013, it has offered permanent residency to all Syrian refugees who can reach the country. But, by autumn of this year, asylum seekers were arriving at a rate of 10,000 a week and officials had run out of places to house them. Earlier this month, the country introduced border checks that involved turning away asylum seekers who arrived without identification documents.

The measures only slowed the rate of arrivals slightly and, on Tuesday, the government announced that it would offer only temporary asylum and residency for the next three years, with the exception of those who arrive through the EU's relocation programme. Refugees will also face more restrictions in their right to bring family members to join them in Sweden.

Sweden's announcement was quickly followed by neighbouring Norway saying it would also tighten border controls.

The Balkans and Greece

Last week, several Balkan countries abruptly imposed new border con-

trols that amount to only admitting refugees fleeing conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Migrants and asylum seekers from other countries, who make up about a quarter of those travelling the Balkan route from Greece to northern Europe, have been left stranded, mainly at Greece's border with Macedonia.

In recent days, a group of predominantly Iranian asylum seekers has gone on hunger strike to protest being denied entry into Macedonia. Several of them have also sewn their lips closed.

The UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, has warned of a "fresh humanitarian situation" developing at the

Balkan border crossings and called for all nationalities to be allowed to exercise their legal right to seek asylum.

Meanwhile, the number of migrants and refugees arriving on the Greek islands from Turkey dropped steeply over the weekend, prompting speculation that new border controls in the wake of the Paris attacks might be discouraging many refugees from attempting the journey.

But, by Monday, the boats had started coming again, with an estimated 2,000 people landing in Lesvos alone, and 60 more boats arriving on Tuesday, according to news reports.—IRIN

Austria's Faymann sees compromise in EU-Turkey talks: Kurier

VIENNA — Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann expects the European Union and Turkey to strike a deal on how to stem a tide of refugees into the continent in return for financial aid and closer ties, he told the Kurier paper.

European and Turkish officials have been working to smooth out their remaining differences on an agreement, which they hope will be signed yesterday by EU

leaders and Turkey's prime minister. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has broadly accepted a draft plan under which the EU would provide 3 billion euros (\$3.18 billion) in aid over two years for the 2.3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. It would also "re-energize" talks on Ankara's joining the bloc and ease visas for Turks.

"Turkey now wants 3 billion a year to invest the money in schools and ac-

commodation. We will meet somewhere in the middle," Faymann, a Social Democrat who governs with conservative coalition partners, was quoted as saying.

He said the money should be spent primarily for housing and schools and that the EU would sign off on payments only after reviewing each project.

Noting Erdogan's push for EU membership, Faymann noted Vienna's stance

that this would have to be put to a referendum in Austria that would likely fail. He said talks should focus instead on a "privileged partnership" with Turkey. Asked about joint preparation for the talks by Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, Faymann said these countries were net contributors to EU finances and prime destinations for refugees making their way to Europe. "We

pay so that in other countries the standard of living rises. Now we demand that we are not left alone with the refugee issue," he said, reiterating his threat that countries that shun solidarity over refugees may suffer when it comes to EU funding. He appealed to keep the Schengen open-border system in Europe, which he said helped Austria's export-led economy. Asked about prospects for easing sanctions against

Russia over Moscow's annexation of Crimea given Russia's potential role as an ally in fighting Islamic State militants, Faymann said: "Cooperation with Russia in the framework of the fight against terrorism is very important. The annexation of the Crimea justified sanctions against Russia. I am in favour of now thinking in the EU about normalising relations with Russia."—Reuters

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Selena Gomez never intended her life to be tabloid story

LOS ANGELES — Selena Gomez dislikes being in news for love affairs as she never wanted her life to make headlines of the gossip columns.

The 23-year-old former Disney star says, she hates being asked about her relationship with ex boyfriend Justin Bieber, with whom she was spotted spending time in Beverly Hills, reported E! online.

"I'm just tired of talking about it. I never intended for my life to become a tabloid story," Gomez said.

Bieber, 21 and the "Good For You" singer dated on and off for three years before calling it quits in 2014. —PTI

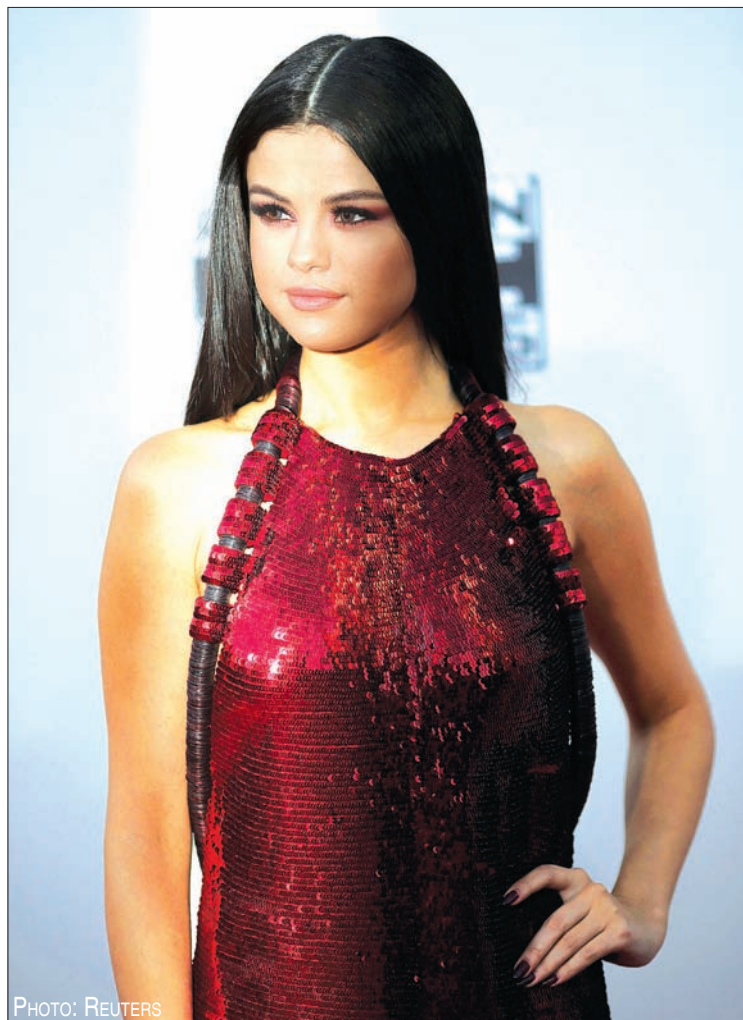


PHOTO: REUTERS

Adele's '25' becomes UK's biggest-selling No. 1 album

LONDON — British singer Adele's "25" notched up the most sales in its opening week of any UK album, beating a record set in 1997 by Oasis, the Official Charts Company said on Friday.

The 27-year-old's third studio album sold 800,307 copies — compared with Oasis' previous record of 696,000 with "Be Here Now" — and amassed more sales than the last 19 No. 1 albums in Britain combined.

It also became the most downloaded No. 1 album ever, the charts company said.

"The statistics surrounding the album are staggering, topped by the simple fact that no album has ever sold 800,000 copies to reach Number 1 in the history of British music," said Chief Executive Martin Talbot.

Adele, who also broke the

single-week US album sales record in just four days with 25, announced on Thursday she would begin a 15-week concert tour of Britain, Ireland and continental Europe in February, her first tour in four years.

Elsewhere in the album charts, Elvis Presley was back up a place at two with the "If I Can Dream" compilation while Justin Bieber's "Purpose" was third.

Bieber was also riding high in the UK singles chart, taking three of the top four places. Madonna was the last act to occupy the top two positions simultaneously back in 1985 with "Into The Groove" and "Holiday".

Bieber's "Sorry" was top, with "Love Yourself" second and "What do you Mean" fourth. Adele was third with "Hello". —Reuters

Petition launched to remove Adam Lambert from concert

LOS ANGELES — More than 16,000 petitioners have rallied to prevent singer Adam Lambert from headlining a New Year's Eve concert in Marina Bay, Singapore.

The petition posted on ipetitions has the headline, "Petition against Adam Lambert performing in Countdown 2016," reported Aceshowbiz.

The petition read, "Countdown 2016 is our annual iconic, public event for Singaporeans to come together to celebrate New Year's Eve, as one.

"Allowing Adam Lambert to perform as the star of Countdown 2016 shows disregard for the values of a majority of fam-

ily-centric Singaporeans who have consistently resisted the promotion of western liberal ideas about family values and societal models." It called the 33-year-old singer an "inappropriate" choice.

"Adam Lambert is an inappropriate choice and reflects a lack of judgment that could turn an otherwise dignified family-friendly event into a situation that is offensive and potentially divisive."

The petition pointed out some "inappropriate acts" done by Lambert during previous shows.

"During the live American Music Awards 2009, Lambert

engaged in sexualized acts, including kissing a male band member, on stage. Given Lambert's unpredictability, and out of concern that he would repeat his offensive acts, 'Good Morning America' of the ABC News Network cancelled his scheduled performance."

MediaCorp has not dropped Lambert, but it promises that the show "will be suitable for family audiences and conform with broadcast regulations." Lambert said in a statement that his performance would "celebrate the entire human family in all its diversity" and that he was "a uniter, not a divider." —PTI



"The Assassin" has come in at the top on the list of film magazine Sight and Sound's best films of 2015. PHOTO: XINHUA

'The Assassin' Named Best Film of 2015 by BFI

BEIJING — The British Film Institute (BFI) have just announced international film magazine Sight and Sound's best films of 2015, and Hou Hsiao Hsien's "The Assassin" has come in at the top of the list.

The unconventional martial-arts film topped the poll that was voted for by 168 UK and international film critics.

Hou Hsiao-hsien picked up the best director award at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year for the film, and critical praise for it has as lavish as the film's gorgeous cinematography.

Set during the Tang Dynasty (AD618–907), it is perhaps the closest anyone has yet come to capturing something of the historical atmosphere of that ancient time on film.

Todd Haynes' film "Carol" came in at number two with two female leads played by Rooney Mara and Cate Blanchett; George Miller's "Mad Max: Fury Road" in at the third spot, where Charlize Theron's character took the spotlight away from the titular Max. —Xinhua

Lawrence's 'Joy' tribute to 'unsung heroes of households'

LOS ANGELES — Actress Jennifer Lawrence says her film "Joy" is dedicated to the "women who are unsung heroes of their households".

After working on the third film with writer-director David O Russell, the 25-year-old "Hunger Games" star said she would be ready to do anything with the filmmaker till the time she is alive, reported Variety.

"Joy" is a tribute to women who are the unsung heroes of their households. I would do anything with David until the day I die," Lawrence said.

The 57-year-old director said the character Lawrence plays in the film "is the first character we've done together who's not crazy."

The actress, who was present at the screening of film said the character, inspired by the real-life inventor Joy Mangano, "had a fire and gift that she had buried for 17 years."

Also starring Robert De Niro and Bradley Cooper, the film marks Russell's first project with a woman protagonist. —PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Asleep in Jesus

Mr. Tancy William McDonald

Age 93 years

Residing at 511/A, Away Yar 1st Lane, Nanthar-gone, Insein, Yangon beloved father of Sarah Jane, beloved husband of (Naw Phaw Lar), son of Mr.P.E Mc Donald and Mrs.S.J Mc Donald fell asleep in Jesus on 29 November. Funeral will be at Christ The King Church, No.3, Mingyi Road, East Ywama, Insein at 9 am on 1 December, Tuesday.

The memorial service will be at home at 4 pm on 1 December Tuesday.

Bereaved Family

Dubai steps up marketing efforts to invite European visitors

DUBAI — Dubai is ready to welcome 300 travel agents from Europe in a bid to promote emirate as an all-year travellers' destination, said a tourism official on Saturday.

According to Issam Kazim, chief executive of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism), these travel agents are from Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and France.

By 2020, Dubai aims to welcome up to 25 million visitors to the World Expo 2020.

Last year, the emirate

hosted 13.1 million tourists.

"As we continue to welcome more and more travel industry leaders from around the world, we aim to encourage the world to visit us and explore the many exciting wonders that Dubai has to offer," said Kazim.

Dubai has been trying to highlight incredible luxury experiences and fun family attractions as key features of its tourist industry, he said, adding that Dubai Tourism is also working to promote the diversity of Dubai's touristic offerings.—Xinhua

mitv Myanmar International

(30-11-2015 07:00 am~ 1-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Masterclass: Artist Zay Yar Aye
07:39	Am	Black Gold (Part - II)
07:44	Am	Historic Temples Of Massiveness And Unique Structure
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Shrinking Footprints
08:51	Am	Cultural Show: Theatrical Make Up
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Daingnak Style
09:40	Am	Family of Toys
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	A Worth Studying Site For Ancient Myanmar Heritages
10:43	Am	South Okkalapa Pagoda

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Food Trip (Ep-3) (Part-2)
07:50	Pm	Kindhearted Pet Lovers
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Glass Noodle Soup)
08:44	Pm	Hip-Hop and Design
08:49	Pm	Director: Kyi Phyu Shin

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

Experts optimistic Tut's tomb may conceal Egypt's lost queen

LUXOR — Chances are high that the tomb of Ancient Egypt's boy-king Tutankhamun has passages to a hidden chamber, which may be the last resting place of the lost Queen Nefertiti, experts said on Saturday.

There is huge international interest in Nefertiti, who died in the 14th century BC and is thought to be Tutankhamun's stepmother, and confirmation of her final resting place would be the most remarkable Egyptian archaeological find this century.

New evidence from the radar imaging taken so far is to be sent to a team in Japan for analysis. The results are expected to be announced in a month.

"We said earlier there was a 60 percent chance there is something behind the walls. But now after the initial reading of the scans, we are saying now its 90 percent likely there is something behind the walls," Egyptian Antiquities Minister Mamdouh al-Damaty told a news conference.

He said he expected to reach the other side of the tomb's wall within three months.

Discovery of Nefertiti, whose chiseled cheekbones and regal beauty were immortalized in a 3,300-year old bust now in a Berlin museum, would shed fresh light on what remains a mysterious period of Egyptian history.

It could also be a boon for Egypt's ailing tourism industry, which has suffered near endless setbacks since the uprising that toppled autocrat Hosni Mubarak in



The golden sarcophagus of King Tutankhamun in his burial chamber is seen in the Valley of the Kings, in Luxor, Egypt, on 28 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

2011 and which is a vital source of foreign currency.

"There is, in fact, an empty space behind the wall based on radar, which is very accurate, there is no doubt," Japanese radar specialist Hirokatsu Watanabe said, his hand hovering over a fuzzy blue radar scan he said indicated the presence of a false wall. The size of the cavity is not known.

British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves, leading the investigation, said last month he believed Tutankhamun's mausoleum was originally occupied by Nefertiti and that she had lain undisturbed behind what he believes is a partition wall.

But at the news conference with Damaty on Saturday, Reeves warned that even the most minor of incisions in the wall could wreak damage to an inner chamber that may have

been hermetically sealed for so many years.

"The key is to excavate slowly and carefully and record well. The fact is this isn't a race. All archaeology is disruption. We can't go back and re-do it, so we have to do it well in the first place," Reeves said.

"I'm feeling more certain today than I expected to be," he said outside the Howard Carter House, a site named after the British archaeologist propelled to international celebrity for his discovery of the Tutankhamun tomb in 1922.

King Tut, as he is affectionately known, died around 1323 BC. His intact tomb, complete with his famous golden burial mask, was discovered in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor.

Experts have long sought to understand why Tut's tomb was smaller than that of other pharaohs

and why its shape was more in keeping with that of the Egyptian queens of the time.

Egyptologists remain uncertain over where Nefertiti died and was buried. She was long believed to have passed away during her husband's reign, suggesting she could be buried in Amarna, where her bust was found in 1912, some 400 km north of Luxor.

More recently, most experts, including Reeves, have come to believe she outlived Akhenaten, who may have been Tut's father, but changed her name and may have briefly ruled Egypt.

"Research doesn't always translate into reality. But it looks like we're headed in the right direction, and our investigations are going well," said Reeves.—Reuters

Moscow to suspend Russia-Turkey visa-free travel from 2016: FM

MOSCOW — Russia has decided to suspend visa-free travel regime with Turkey from next year for fear of terrorism spreading, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday.

Commenting on Russian nationals in Turkey who are considered as suspected terrorists by the Turkish authorities, Lavrov lashed out at Ankara for refusing many times to provide relevant information, saying there was a real threat of terrorists penetrating into Russia.

"These threats are very much real and we declare this with responsibility," he said at a press conference after talks with his Syrian counterpart, Walid al-Moallem, in Moscow.

This is the latest in a series of moves following the downing of a Russian Su-24 on Tuesday by Turkey.

By shooting down the fighter jet, Lavrov said, Turkey has crossed the red line and put itself in a difficult place both for long-term national interests and

regional situation. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday called the downing a "stab in the back from accomplices of terrorists," and demanded a high level apology and a compensation for the damage.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has described the downing as an "act of aggression," and ordered the government to draft possible economic sanctions against Turkey.

Following the incident on Tuesday, Lavrov canceled a session of the Joint

Russia-Turkey Strategic Planning Group Meeting in Turkey's Istanbul, and the Foreign Ministry suggested Russians scrap their trips to Turkey for tourism or any other aims, citing security concerns.

Russian tourist agencies have stopped booking trips to Turkey following the ministry's suggestions.

Russia and Turkey signed an agreement to cancel the visa regime between the two countries in October 2010 in order to promote tourism.—Xinhua



Players trying to score goal in student basketball tournament. PHOTO: TIN MAUNG (MANDALAY)

Student basketball tournament held in Mandalay

WITH the assistance of the Myanmar Basketball Federation, Horizon International School organised the 11th Horizon Basketball Tournament at its hall on 58th Street in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, on 28 November.

The SKY team won the men's open event, followed by the Kaung Su Aung team in second place. The USA team placed third.

A total of 188 students from 47 teams representing basic education schools in Mandalay and Pyin Oo Lwin participated in the U-15 event, U-18 event and open men's event.

Head of the Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Edu-

cation Department U Wai Zin presented prizes to the Mandalay Sports and Physical Education Institute and the Original and AIS teams in the U-15 men's event, which respectively placed first, second and third.

He also gave prizes to the winning teams in the U-18 men's and U-15 women's events.

Principal of Mandalay SPEI U Myo Myint Aung awarded the first, second and third prizes to SKY, Kaung Su Aung and USA teams in the men's open event.

The principal of the international school also presented best player awards to Kyi Htwe of SKY team and Ma Yadana Oo of Mandalay SPEI.—*Tin Maung*

Neymar double as Barca's rampant strikers sink Sociedad

BARCELONA — A Neymar double, a spectacular volley from Luis Suarez and a goal for Lionel Messi saw top of the table Barcelona's unstoppable strike force sweep aside Real Sociedad 4-0 in La Liga on Saturday.

An early goal from the inform Antoine Griezmann gave Atletico Madrid a 1-0 victory over Espanyol that keeps them four points behind Barca while Celta Vigo are behind Real Madrid on goal difference in fourth after a late Nolito goal gave them a 2-1 win at home to Sporting Gijon.

Substitute Carlos Castro drew Sporting level after Fabian Orellana's opener, but in a stroke of fortune five minutes from time, a clearance from keeper Ivan Cuellar rebounded off Nolito and into the goal.

Barca have 33 points from 13 games with Atletico Madrid on 29. Real, who were ham-

pered 4-0 by Barca last weekend and are now nine points off the pace, play Eibar on Sunday.

Elsewhere, Deportivo La Coruna moved fifth with a 2-0 win over Las Palmas and Malaga drew 2-2 with Granada.

Neymar slotted home a Dani Alves cross after 22 minutes and Alves was again the provider for Suarez who acrobatically beat Real keeper Geronimo Rulli before halftime to take his tally to 11 goals in seven games.

La Liga's top scorer Neymar took his total to 14 this season as he knocked in a Jeremy Mathieu cross after 53 minutes and in injury time he set up Messi to score from close range.

Astonishingly, the trio's latest performances meant that Messi, Neymar and Suarez have so far scored 125 goals between them in all competitions for Barca over the calendar year.—*Reuters*

Record for goal-king Vardy as Leicester hold United

LONDON — Jamie Vardy wrote his name into the record books on Saturday, becoming the first player to score in 11 successive Premier League matches as his Leicester City team drew 1-1 with Manchester United at the King Power Stadium.

The England striker, who began his run against Bournemouth on 29 August and has now netted 13 times in 11 games, struck an angled shot in the 24th minute to eclipse the

mark established by United's Ruud van Nistelrooy in 2003.

Vardy is now one match away from equalling the all-time English top-flight consecutive scoring run of 12 matches set by Sheffield United's Irish forward Jimmy Dunne in Division One in 1931-32. Although Vardy took his goal tally for the season to 14, Leicester were knocked off top spot as Bastian Schweinsteiger's header at the end of the first half secured a point for United.—*Reuters*

Briton Fury crowned world champion after beating Klitschko



Tyson Fury celebrates winning the fight for IBF & WBO Heavyweight Title's at Esprit Arena, Dusseldorf, Germany. PHOTO: REUTERS

DUESSELDORF — Underdog Tyson Fury caused a huge boxing upset on Saturday, stunning Wladimir Klitschko with a points victory to snatch the champion's four titles and become the first Briton to hold a world heavyweight crown since 2011.

Undefeated Fury, who improved his record to 25-0 and now has the WBA, WBO, IBF and IBO belts, was never troubled by the 39-year-old Ukrainian who suffered his first loss in 11 years and has already demanded a rematch.

"He's been a great cham-

pion, but every good dog has its day," challenger Fury told a 50,000 crowd at Dusseldorf's Esprit Arena.

"Tonight is that start of a new era. I will be the most charismatic champion since Muhammad Ali," he said before serenading his wife in the crowd with a song by American band Aerosmith.

"I worked for six months for this in the gym, it's a dream come true," Fury said while draped in his new world title belts and unable to hold back the tears.

The fight, postponed once due to a Klitschko injury, almost

did not take place with Fury's team complaining earlier on Saturday over the thick ring canvas that they claimed limited his movement.

Modifications were made and Fury, quick, despite his 2.06 metres, was better from the start, showing no problems with the new canvas.

He kept landing left-right combinations with Klitschko, not used to fighting taller men than him, struggling with Fury's reach.

Klitschko managed to get close with a few good left jabs in the second round but Fury landed a powerful right, pushing the Ukrainian back.

Fury, constantly changing between southpaw and orthodox stance, kept chipping away at Klitschko's defences with his combinations and by the eighth round the champion was bleeding from a cheek wound.

Fury, who shed 32 kilos in five months to get in shape for the fight, landed a bruising left uppercut in the ninth that wounded Klitschko's right eye.

Sensing the titles slipping away, Klitschko threw everything he had in the final round in search for a knockout but ended up losing on all three of the judges' scorecards, putting an end to his winning run that stretched back to 2004.

"Tyson really stepped on the gas," said a disappointed Klitschko, fighting in front of a home crowd with his base in Germany.

"I was missing my speed today and I struggled with his reach.

"I knew I was behind and had to land the punches. I tried but it did not work."—*Reuters*