

Ray of peace dawning upon Kayah State

President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Agga Maha Thare Sithu, Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Sein sent message to the occasion of the 64th Kayah State Day which falls on 15 January.

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President U Thein Sein graces opening of office, mini hydropower plant in Lahe

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Ministry of Culture now protecting ancient Bagaya Buddhist Monastery

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ANALYSIS
Navigating the choppy waters of Myanmar's post-election era

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TREASURES UNEARTHED

Refuge of Queen Pan Htwar discovered in Magway

A WALL and historic materials believed to date back to the ancient Pyu era have been discovered roughly three and a half miles north of Hpo Lay Lone village in Magway township of the same region, although there is still yet to be any effort to preserve the find, according to local residents.

Bricks found at the location are the same size and appearance of bricks from the ancient Beikthano town. A variety of materials believed to be of the Pyu era include a smoker's pipe, counting beads, copper plates, cups and figures which were found in the vicinity, said U Su, a local resident of Hpo Lay Lone village.

"A local farmer from Leik Kone village stumbled across a couple of gold trays whilst ploughing his fields near the site of the brick wall about two years ago. There were also people who found silver coins and ancient pots. They sold them off as they didn't understand the value of such antiquities. Only recently I too went and dug around the site and came across a copper bird, elephant figures and old clay pipes," U Su explained.

Local residents reportedly believed the existence of the brick wall to be merely rumour, letting it go unrec-



Artifacts believed to date back to Pyu era were discovered in Hpo Lay Lone village in Magway township. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

ognised as a valuable site of Myanmar heritage.

"The brick wall mound has been spoken of through the generations as the final resting place of the Queen of the Pyu people, Pan Htwar, who, along with her

Pyu people, sought refuge after they were defeated in battle," commented another local of the Hpo Lay Lone village, U Myint Oo.

There is a local desire for the location of the brick wall mound to be excavated as it is believed

there is a connection between it and the World Heritage site of the ancient Beikthano town located on the outskirts of the town of Pyay in Bago Region.

All that is left of the brick wall mound is the brick founda-

tions in an area roughly half an acre in diameter. It is believed that the eastern and western sides of the wall show evidence of doorways when stairwells would have once stood.— Myitmakha News Agency

The upgraded Okkala Golf Course in Yangon is now open. Golfers that sink a Hole In One in January will be awarded a brand new Belta car to mark the opening of Okkala Golf Course. Enthusiastic golfers are invited to participate!

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Round-up



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

THE 13th regular session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its 30th meeting yesterday, seeking parliamentary approval for two bills and debating one draft law.

First, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker Thura U Shwe Mann announced the recording of the second revision of the bill to amend the Myanmar Gems Law.

The joint bill committee read out a draft of the Pesticide Bill, after which the speaker invited parliamentarians to sign up to discuss the bill.

Next, the parliament ap-

proved the draft of the Commercial Tax on Special Goods Bill and the Legal Supports Bill, each with remarks from the president. The two bills will now be sent back to the president.

During a discussion on the draft of the Union Tax Law (2016), deputy ministers Dr Lin Aung, Dr Maung Maung Thein, Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, U Khin Zaw, U Thauung Tin, U Aung Than Oo, U Than Tun Aung and Daw Lei Lei Thein responded to parliamentarians' questions about the law.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Union Peace Conference continues in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Union Peace Conference entered its third day, with representatives taking part in separate topical discussions at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the paper-reading session, stakeholder groups, including the government, parliament, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organisations, political parties, ethnic minorities and other invitees read out their papers on

the conference's five agenda items: political issues, economic and social issues, security, land issues and the environment.

Next, representatives from the seven stakeholder groups held discussions on the day's presentations.

The third day of the Union Peace Conference concluded following a recording of the day's events.— *Myanmar News Agency*



Representatives discuss economic issue. PHOTO: MNA

Japanese company awards scholarships to Myanmar Maritime University students

JAPAN-based MJ Technology Co., Ltd awarded scholarships to outstanding students from the Myanmar Maritime University yesterday.

It was the second scholarship award presentation by the Japanese company to outstanding maritime students who have performed highest in their respective subjects.

Last year, the MJ Technology Co., Ltd provided ten outstanding students with a scholarship of US\$600 each per year.

The company helped 40 graduate students pursue degrees in naval architecture, marine engineering, port and harbour engineering and river and coastal engineering in 2014 and 2015 to take up employment with Japanese companies. The Myanmar Maritime University of the Ministry of Transport has created job opportunities for its students, establishing a connection with 25 shipping companies and three foreign companies and departments.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw Round-up



U Kyun Khan, MP from Chin State. PHOTO: MNA



U Thaw Zin Oo. PHOTO: MNA



Lt-Col Soe Lin. PHOTO: MNA

THE 13th regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 24th meeting yesterday, with parliamentarians approving the Presidential Security Bill.

Following the presentation of the findings of the Amyotha Hluttaw bill committee on the Presidential Security Bill, the bill was read out and submitted for MPs' approval. Next, a progress

report on the activities of the first Amyotha Hluttaw was submitted to the Upper House speaker and submitted for approval.

Members of various committees read out reports, and the speaker invited MPs to sign up to discuss them.

During Q-and-A session, Deputy Minister for Rail Transportation U Myint Thein said no plan has been laid to build a rail-

cum-road tunnel from Htauk-kyant village in Kalay Township to the Var Bridge in Falam Township, as the construction of a 20-mile tunnel would be too costly. At the meeting, the speaker asked MPs to enlist their names if they want to discuss reports on works done by the committees in the term of the first parliament. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Second Employment Expo to be opened in Yangon on Saturday

THE career finder resource website, work.com.mm, is holding its second Employment Expo, which will feature booths with staff from over thirty local and foreign companies.

The opening of the expo will take place at Yangon's MICT Park this Saturday morning at 8:30am.

It is known that the Deputy Union Minister of Workers, Employment and Social Services, along with respective officials, will open the expo with a

ribbon cutting ceremony.

Social relations manager of the work.com.mm website, Zinmar Thet Mun, explained what will be on offer at the event.

"There's going to be thirty local and foreign companies present at the expo. [Those attending the expo looking for employment] will have the opportunity to apply for work, while companies will be able to review [the job seeker's] application and hold interviews. People will be able to walk away

from the expo with a job," she said.

The first Employment Expo that was held landed approximately 1,500 people with employment, it has been reported. Companies that will have booths at the expo include foreign investment companies such as, Yangon Aerodrome construction and the Chinese mobile phone company Huawei, as well as local companies such as Ayeyarwaddy Bank and Yan Yan. — *Myitmakha News Agency*

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Islamic State launches militant assault on Indonesia's capital

JAKARTA — Islamic State militants launched a gun and bomb assault on Indonesia's capital yesterday, police and media said, marking the first assault on the Muslim-majority country by the radical group, but five of the seven people killed were the attackers themselves.

It took security forces about three hours to end the siege near a Starbucks cafe and Sarinah's, Jakarta's oldest department store, after a team of around seven militants traded gunfire with police and blew themselves up.

A police officer and a Canadian man were killed in the attack, which — with the attackers — took the death toll to seven. Seventeen people, including a Dutch man, were wounded.

Two of the militants were taken alive, police said.

"Islamic State fighters carried out an armed attack this morning targeting foreign nationals and the security forces charged with protecting them in the Indonesian capital," Aamaq news agency, which is allied to the group, said on its Telegram channel. Jakarta's police chief told reporters: "ISIS is behind



Police officers react near the site of a blast in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 14 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

this attack definitely," using a common acronym for Islamic State, and he named an Indonesian militant called Bahrul Naim as the man responsible for plotting it.

The drama played out on

the streets and on television screens, with at least six explosions and a gunfight in a movie theatre.

"The Starbucks cafe windows are blown out. I see three dead people on the road. There

has been a lull in the shooting but someone is on the roof of the building and police are aiming their guns at him," Reuters photographer Darren Whiteside said as the attack unfolded.

Police responded in force

within minutes. Black armoured cars screeched to a halt in front of the Starbucks and sniper teams were deployed around the neighbourhood as helicopters buzzed overhead.

After the militants had been overcome, a body still lay on the street, a shoe nearby among the debris. The city centre's notoriously jammed roads were largely deserted.

Indonesia has seen attacks by Islamist militants before, but a coordinated assault by a team of suicide bombers and gunmen is unprecedented and has echoes of the sieges seen in Mumbai seven years ago and in Paris last November.

The last major militant attacks in Jakarta were in July 2009, with bombs at the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels. The country had been on edge for weeks over the threat posed by Islamist militants.

Counter-terrorism police had rounded up about 20 people with suspected links to Islamic State, whose battle lines in Syria and Iraq have included nationals from several Asian countries. —Reuters

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North Korea sanctions resolution could take weeks: UN diplomats

NEW YORK — A new UN Security Council resolution to toughen sanctions on North Korea for carrying out its fourth underground nuclear test is likely weeks away and should focus on the denuclearisation of the peninsula, according to multiple diplomatic sources.

"It may take weeks," Chinese Ambassador Liu Jieyi told Kyodo News on Tuesday, adding that he did not think a timeline "is as important as getting the right resolution."

Beijing's top UN diplomat stressed the importance China places on denuclearization and peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

"We need to make sure that the draft resolution in terms of specific measures will contribute to the objectives and not take us further away from the objectives and as to the specific things in the resolution we will have to see," he added.

Diplomats have so far been tight-lipped about the scope of the new resolution, believed to have been drawn up by the United States, or details about the level of meetings that are taking place in New York in response to what North Korea says was a successful hydrogen bomb test on 6 January. Following North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006, the Security Council adopted a sanc-

tions resolution five days later. But the subsequent two tests were followed up with much slower actions to punish Pyongyang.

The third test on 12 February 2013 drew a resolution on additional sanctions on 7 March after weeks of intense negotiations, largely between Washington and Beijing.

Another Security Council diplomat concurred, saying it was unlikely there would be a resolution in under three weeks as council members were looking for a "shift in the way that we respond to what's happened" in North Korea.

The diplomat noted the significance of Pyongyang's claim of testing a hydrogen bomb, which is far more destructive than atomic weapons. This is "a first" and represents "a step change," the diplomat said. The council's response, in turn, is expected to be a "step change."

The source added that discussions are not assuming that North Korea successfully tested an H bomb and that a resolution is not contingent on further verification of the nature of the blast.

The diplomat also said all 15 council members agreed on the necessity for North Korea to denuclearise. The latest test took place just as Japan assumed its seat as a new nonpermanent member for a record 11th time. It

served on the council both in 2006 and 2009 after Pyongyang staged its first and second underground tests and was active in the negotiations at that time.

The United States, along with Japan and South Korea, called for the emergency meeting last Wednesday hours after Pyongyang's announcement on the detonation of a nuclear bomb.

As North Korea's chief ally, China has been more resistant to imposing harsh sanctions as it fears pushing the isolated country too far could lead to a mass exodus on its borders.

It remains to be seen how far the sanctions will go, although diplomats have confirmed that various options, including restricting North Korean shipping and additional financial measures, are being considered.

Meanwhile, the North Korean mission at the United Nations released a statement, a commentary carried earlier by the official Korean Central News Agency, saying that the "H-bomb test" was "neither to 'threaten' anyone nor to 'provoke' someone for a certain purpose." But it added the country's scientists and technicians are "in high spirit" to detonate H-bombs "capable of wiping out the whole territory of the US all at once" as it "persistently moves to stifle" North Korea. —Kyodo News

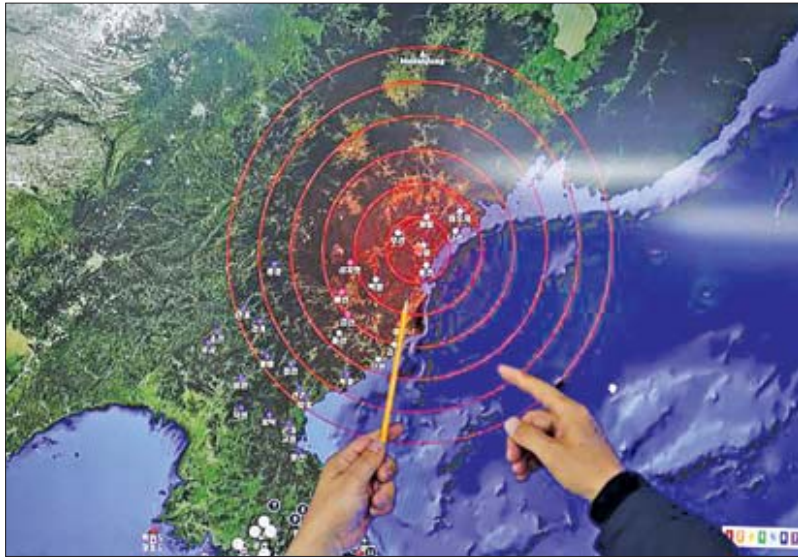
Japanese space agency gets strong response to closed-door test

TSUKUBA — The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency has had a surprising number of applicants for its two-week test on human stress levels in an enclosed environment similar to a space shuttle, according to agency officials. JAXA showed the press the test facility in Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture, on Wednesday and revealed that about 4,400 people — from students to businessmen — had applied for eight "man-only" spots from 24 December through the Tuesday deadline.

"We didn't expect this huge reaction," said an agency official. "People's interest in outer space might be growing. We want to carry out a successful test." JAXA will narrow down the applicants to eight as it goes through their motivation and physical conditions.

The eight participants will receive 380,000 yen, or about \$3,200, each for spending two weeks in the closed-door facility without contact with the outside beginning 5 February. The facility was built based on the design of the International Space Station, with overhead monitoring cameras recording facial expressions and speech. —Kyodo News

South Korea, China defence officials to discuss North Korea test — Yonhap



Ko Yun-hwa (L), Administrator of Korea Meteorological Administration, points at where seismic waves observed in South Korea came from, during a media briefing at Korea Meteorological Administration in Seoul, South Korea, on 6 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

SEOUL — Defence officials from South Korea and China will meet on Friday to discuss North Korea's latest nuclear test, the Yonhap news agency reported, after the South and the United States put pressure on China to rein in its neighbour.

The North's nuclear test on Wednesday last week angered both China and the United States and again raised questions about what can be done to stop its development of nuclear weapons.

Senior defence officials of South Korea and China will meet in Seoul in an annual forum and discuss a joint response to the test, the South Korean news agency reported.

A South Korean Defence

Ministry official could not immediately confirm the report.

North Korea said last week it successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, but the United States and experts questioned the claim saying the recorded blast was too small for it to have been such a device.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye called on China on Wednesday to use its influence over North Korea to press it to end its nuclear programme, adding it could use its permanent seat on the UN Security Council to help draw up effective sanctions.

"I believe the Chinese government will not allow the situation on the Korean peninsula to

deteriorate further," Park told a news conference.

China is the North's main ally and trade partner but it opposes its bombs, while China's ties with US ally South Korea have grown closer in recent years.

The US special envoy for North Korea, Sung Kim, met his South Korean and Japanese counterparts in Seoul on Wednesday and said they had agreed that a "meaningful" new sanctions resolution was needed from the Security Council.

"I hope the Chinese authorities agree with us that we simply cannot take a business as usual approach to this latest provocation," he said.—Reuters

Japan to cooperate with South Korea over currency swap if needed

TOKYO — Japan is prepared to resume a currency swap deal with South Korea if needed, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said yesterday.

"I have not received reports about specific talks (over the matter) as of this moment," Suga told a press conference. "We will cooperate appropriately if necessary."

His remarks came after South Korea's new deputy prime minister in charge of economic affairs Yoo Il Ho, who doubles as the minister of strategy and finance, said Monday before taking office that the country may consider resuming the currency swap arrangement with Japan.

Though Tokyo and Seoul ended the 14-year-old agreement in February last year, a move to

resume the deal has been gaining momentum since a landmark accord was reached last month to resolve a dispute over "comfort women" procured for Japan's wartime military brothels.

The contract formed in 2001, under which each nation can obtain dollars by giving its currency to the other, was expanded in 2011 to \$70 billion from \$13 billion to ensure South Korea had access to sufficient dollar funds to withstand financial market instability amid the eurozone sovereign debt crisis.

The one-year expansion expired in 2012 and the overall size of the swap deal was cut back to \$13 billion.

Tokyo and Seoul then reduced it to \$10 billion in 2013.—Kyodo News

Severe weather in Sydney kills one, disrupts flights

SYDNEY — Severe thunderstorms in Sydney yesterday killed at least one person and injured another, police said, with winds of 122 kmph (76 mph) lashing Australia's busiest airport, besides ripping down power lines and closing roads.

A man was killed and a woman passenger suffered critical injuries when a falling tree crushed their car in the city's west, which emergency services said took the initial brunt of the storm.

Photographs showed damaged shop fronts and roads left impassable by twisted metal and roofing panels. Authorities urged residents to stay indoors and keep away from windows.

"Substantial damage has been caused to a number of homes, cars and power lines," New South Wales state police said in a statement.

The fierce winds, rain and hail struck Sydney after a blistering day that drove temperatures to 39 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit), the Bureau of Meteorology said, forcing disruptions at the city's international airport.

The storm had caused delays and diversions, Sydney Airport said in a Twitter message, urging passengers to check with individual airlines for details.

An airport spokeswoman could not immediately be reached for comment.—Reuters

Pakistani TV station attacked with explosives, one wounded

ISLAMABAD — Attackers on a motorcycle lobbed grenades and opened fire at a Pakistani television station on Wednesday, wounding one person, and left behind pamphlets linked to Islamic State, the station said.

The attack on the ARY News Islamabad office was the second such assault on media premises in as many months by the militant group claiming a connection with Islamic State's self-declared province of Khorasan in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Security guards chased away the drive-by attackers, it said, and an editor hit by shrapnel in the head was hospitalised.

The pamphlets left behind said "Islamic State Khorasan Province" claimed responsibility for attacking media that it accused of "siding with the apostate army and government of Pakistan in their global crusade against Islam".



Paramilitary soldiers stand guard at the ARY News offices after a blast injured several people and caused property damage in Islamabad, Pakistan on 13 January, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pakistan's army is fighting a military campaign against Taliban and other militants in the country's northwest near the Afghan border.

In the past year, several commanders of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban have sworn allegiance to Islamic State, though there is little public evidence so far of direct operational links with the Middle East-based militants' leadership.

The extent of actual militant involvement in attacks can also be difficult to verify. Police say extortionists often use the names of feared groups to intimidate their victims.

In December, an attacker threw a hand grenade at the offices of Din News in the eastern city of Lahore, leaving behind similar leaflets at the site of the attack. Four people were injured in that incident, Pakistani media reported.—Reuters

EU takes on Poland, launches rights probe over court, media



European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans gives a news conference at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, on 13 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BRUSSELS — The European Union began an unprecedented inquiry on Wednesday into whether Poland's new conservative, Eurosceptic government has breached the EU's democratic standards by taking more control of the judiciary and public media.

The first use of the EU executive's new Rule of Law Framework could in principle eventually lead to sanctions such as the suspension of Poland's voting rights. But the main impact now may be to further sour relations among EU member governments already strained by multiple crises and mounting nationalism.

"The European Commission does not wish to put into question any of the democratic choices made by the Polish people," its deputy head, Frans Timmermans, wrote to the Polish justice minister in a letter on Wednesday that was seen by Reuters.

"However, the European Union is founded on a common set of values ... which include in particular the respect for the rule of law," he added. "There can be no democracy and respect for fundamental rights without respect for the rule of law."

The decision, by consensus, followed intense debate at the weekly meeting of the European Commission.

Its 28 members, one from each EU state, weighed whether to continue informal talks with Warsaw or launch a formal confrontation which might harden attitudes within Jaroslaw Kaczynski's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has said it should not be seen to be "bashing Poland" and officials had indicated the executive might hold off on triggering a formal review.

But diplomats said Warsaw did itself no favours in Brussels by its combative reactions ahead of the Commission debate.

One key minister dismissed criticism from EU powerhouse Berlin as "silly" and reminded Germans of their World War II crimes in Poland, while a pro-government magazine depicted Chancellor Angela Merkel as Hitler on its cover, and Juncker as a Nazi general.

Timmermans, who has responsibility for human rights on the executive, pushed his colleagues hard to launch the procedure, sources familiar with the meeting told Reuters. The Dutchman promoted the mechanism when he was foreign minister in The Hague in 2014 as a response to criticism the EU had failed to curb authoritarian measures by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.—Reuters

Mexico to grant transit visas to Cuban migrants

MEXICO CITY — Mexico on Wednesday said it plans to grant 20-day transit visas to a group of 180 Cubans who were chosen from thousands stranded in Costa Rica to continue on their long journey toward the United States.

The Cubans will have to leave Mexican territory after the permits expire, the National Migration Institute said, adding the visas were given for humanitarian reasons.

The Cubans' arrival is part of a pilot programme agreed last

month to start allowing the migrants to move toward the United States from Costa Rica, where they have been stuck since mid-November after Nicaragua shut its borders.

The first group, chosen out of an estimated 8,000 stranded there, flew to El Salvador on Tuesday, from where they boarded buses and arrived in Mexico on Wednesday.

The flow of migrants from Cuba has surged as the process of a detente between Washington and Havana stirs fears that

preferential US asylum rights for Cubans may end soon.

Central American governments will meet next Thursday in Guatemala to evaluate the first trip of Cubans and see if the transit programme should continue, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said on Wednesday.

In upcoming meetings, diplomats are also expected to work out logistical details of how the migrants' travel will be paid for, the Mexican government has said.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

2 men injured in explosion at Kobe pizza shop

KOBE — Two men suffered burns to their faces and were rushed to hospital yesterday following an explosion at a pizza shop in Kobe, western Japan.

The two men in their 20s and 30s are employees of the pizza shop, firefighters said. At around 12:40pm, firefighters received an emergency call reporting the sound of an explosion and smoke at an outlet of Chicago Pizza Co near JR Motomachi Station, according to the Kobe municipal fire department investigating the incident.—Kyodo News

British minister says staying in an unreformed EU would be 'disastrous'

LONDON — A cabinet minister in Prime Minister David Cameron's government hinted yesterday he could back leaving the European Union, saying that to remain in the bloc without significant reform would be disastrous for Britain.

"Simply staying in the EU with our current terms of membership unchanged would be disastrous for Britain," Leader of the House of Commons Chris Grayling wrote in the *Evening Standard* newspaper. Cameron is renegotiating Britain's relationship with the 28-member bloc ahead of a referendum which could come as soon as June.—Reuters

Former Israeli president Peres hospitalised over heart attack

JERUSALEM — Israeli elder statesman Shimon Peres suffered a heart attack yesterday and was undergoing surgery at a hospital near Tel Aviv, Israel's Channel 10 television said.

A Peres aide confirmed that the 92-year-old former prime minister and president had been taken by ambulance to Sheba hospital in Tel Hashomer with an irregular heartbeat. "He is conscious and talking but still has chest pains," the aide, Ayelet Frisch, told Israel's Army Radio. The hospital's spokesperson could not immediately be reached for comment.—Reuters

Car bomb attack by Kurdish militants kills five, wounds 39 in southeast Turkey

CINAR, (Turkey) — Kurdish militants launched a car bomb attack on a police station in Turkey's southeastern town of Cinar overnight, killing five people and wounding 39, the provincial governor's office said yesterday.

Militants of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attacked the police station and adjoining accommodation in the town south of Diyarbakir, the region's largest city, around 11:30pm (10:30pm BST), the governor's office said in a statement.—Reuters

Kerry thanks Iran, credits diplomacy in release of US sailors

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State John Kerry thanked Iranian authorities on Wednesday for their cooperation in the release of 10 American sailors who were taken into custody in the Gulf and credited diplomacy with resolving the situation.

"I think we can all imagine how a similar situation might have played out three or four years ago, and fact that today this kind of issue can be resolved peacefully and efficiently is a testament to the critical role diplomacy plays in keeping our country safe, secure, and strong," Kerry said in a speech at the National Defence University.—Reuters

Contract for construction of bridge across Sava River

BELGRADE — Serbia's road maker Putevi Srbije signed a contract with an Austrian consortium for the construction of a second bridge across the Sava River near Ostruznica in the length of 1,964m as part of the Belgrade bypass road.

The total value of the contract is RSD 3.57 billion, excluding VAT, and the project is to be completed within 26 months from the date of signing. The bridge will be built as part of the second phase of construction of the E-70 E-75 section between the Dobanovci and Orlovaca loops.

The consortium, made up of J Strabag AG - Ed. Zublin AG — Dywidag Bau GmbH — PZP Zajecar, made the best offer and won the international tender for the project, Putevi Srbije said in a release.—u

OPINION

In pursuit of intergenerational justice

Khin Maung Aye

THIS TUESDAY was a day of political significance, one for which a monument should be erected to commemorate a key moment in the pursuit of peace in Myanmar. On 12 January 2016, the government, the Tatmadaw, the parliament, political parties and the indigenous armed organisations began discussing matters relating to national reconciliation on the largest scale yet since the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), which eight armed groups have signed.

It was an auspicious day not only for indigenous armed organisations but also for the entire nation. The Union Peace Conference (UPC) is expected to lay firm foundations for the restoration of eternal peace.

In his speech at the opening of the UPC, president U Thein Sein said: "This conference is not just a meeting to be held for just a short period. In fact, this is the commencement of the building of a democratic, federal union. The points under discussion and those representing various organisations are to be carried forward into an extended process of negotiating national reconciliation. Starting with this conference, matters relating to politics, social issues, economic issues, security, land policy and environmental policy will continue to be discussed within the political framework."

It is undeniable that nations develop only in peaceful conditions; without peace and stability, development cannot be carried out. It is of the utmost importance to transfer long-lasting peace to future generations. Bloodshed and instability cannot be left

unchecked. It is, therefore, needed to hand over a peaceful and developed nation to future generations for the sake of intergenerational justice.

The Global New Light of Myanmar would like to urge all stakeholders attending the Union Peace Conference to focus on common interests and negotiate with a win-win strategy in order to bring about peace and stability upon which future generations will build a modern, peaceful, developed nation.

Write for us

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

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

Navigating the choppy waters of Myanmar's post-election era



Soe Thane

MYANMAR'S historic general election on Nov. 8 led to a landslide victory for the opposition National League for Democracy. Having served in the present government since 2011, I stood as an independent candidate and won a seat in the new parliament.

The elections were widely hailed -- both at home and abroad -- as free and fair, and the first such national poll for 25 years. This broad approval was largely due to the results. If the incumbent party had scored well, I doubt that international observers would have reacted so positively. Nevertheless, it was a convincing win which will usher in a new era for our country. As a minister in the current government of President U Thein Sein, I believe this administration has performed its historic role to the very best of its ability, and I wish our successors all the best.

The big issue facing leaders of the new administration however is how they handle the many daunting challenges ahead.

This question brings to mind some oft-quoted words of Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister and so-called father of Singapore: "In many countries, anti-colonial fighters and heroes would win independence and assume power, but then fail at nation-building -- because the challenge of bringing a society together, growing an economy, patiently improving people's lives, are very different from the challenge of fighting for independence, mobilizing crowds, getting people excited, overthrowing a regime."

I choose these words from all Lee's insights in a positive spirit, because I believe the vital task of governing and governing well requires vastly different skills from

those required to be an effective opposition. This is especially the case in a complex situation such as Myanmar's, where the opposition had little room to operate until 2011.

A fragile peace

Of the myriad challenges facing our country, some are more critical than others.

The first is the peace process. Our government has had to negotiate, over thousands of hours, with dozens of different non-state armed groups and ethnic minority organizations, in the hope of bringing a final end to nearly seven decades of internal armed conflict. We have had to be patient in building trust. But there is still a long way to go to secure this peace, as leaders of the incoming administration no doubt understand.

I congratulate the president, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the government's chief negotiator -- Minister U Aung Min, the ethnic minority leaders and other political figures, including many who have helped from behind the scenes, in getting us this far. What comes next is many months if not years of delicate negotiations, where tough compromises on key economic and political issues will have to be made.

Central to the peace process will be the issue of federalism. There are seven ethnic dominated states in Myanmar -- all with different characteristics and all among the country's poorer areas. Hand in hand with a sustainable and just peace, the objective in our negotiating position was to form a federal government structure, with the states gaining rights to manage their own affairs.

My concern is that instead of a federal system, the country could end up becoming a collection of fiefdoms. Another worry is that power rivalries could develop between the national - or union -- government and state governments. Do people living in these states know their newly elected representatives? If not, I urge

them to become familiar with their politicians.

Skills gap

Another vital issue facing Myanmar is the dearth of skills. This is not due to a lack of brainpower but a lack of people with the required experience, training and skills. Years of isolation -- self-imposed and resulting from international sanctions -- have led to a monumental shortage of skilled workers and professionals. There is no quick fix. The education system will take a generation to reform. But the lack of skills in the workforce meanwhile will run the country into many brick walls over the coming years as it tries to move ahead.

There is a darker challenge ahead. As Myanmar becomes increasingly technologically connected, largely due to the priority we have placed on increasing telecommunications and internet access, more people are using the web and social media networks such as Facebook. While some are using these new technologies in positive ways, for example for livelihood development, health and education purposes, many more seem to be using social media to attack those with whom they disagree, spreading rumors and hatred.

Then there is the issue of pent-up public frustration with officialdom and deep-seated impatience for reform. Amid newfound freedoms, many in Myanmar have been quick to criticize those in power. But with our fledgling democracy still in early stages, many critics seem unaware of the differences between the legislative, judicial and executive branches. If some people are unhappy with their township administrators, they criticize the national government. Similarly, if they are dissatisfied with responses of police, municipal officials or judges, the government is automatically blamed.

On a broader level, an emerging culture of what I would call "irresponsibility" could hinder government plans and develop-

ment of a real democracy. Such attitudes are illustrated in the explosion of traffic in the former capital, Yangon. In recent years, cars have become affordable for many more people after the overhaul of import regulations. But many drivers do not adhere to traffic rules, they become impatient in a way that worsens road chaos and reflects a damaging lack of civic responsibility.

Then there is the economy. Myanmar urgently needs to develop its economy, to create badly needed jobs and boost incomes. We must develop manufacturing and increase exports, and not rely solely on resources like natural gas and gems. Raising productivity will be an ongoing headache. The recent introduction of a minimum wage was possibly before its time. It will take much longer to substantially transform our economy. For now, the services, trading and construction sectors are the only ones that can be considered to be thriving. The new government will be able to build on the foundations we have laid, but it will still be very difficult to catch up with our neighbors in any short space of time.

Border issues

Our diplomatic relations - particularly with China - are another critically important issue. We cannot forget that Myanmar and China share a long border and there are related strategic problems. While the government was striving for nationwide peace with ethnic armed groups, conflict erupted in the Kokang region, along Myanmar's eastern border with China. Is it a coincidence that eight out of 16 ethnic groups that refused to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with the government - including the Kachin, Wa, Kokang and Palaung groups -- are all based along the China border? The issues of politics and trade are intertwined here. Last and strategic China-led infrastructure projects have been affected, mainly due to protests about our large neighbor's growing influence inside the country. It

took almost five years to resolve issues over the Letpadaung copper mine, and the Myitsone dam project - suspended for the term of the incumbent government -- is still unresolved. The new government must deal with all these challenges while maintaining good relations with China -- a balancing act that will be risky but essential.

On an even more precarious front is the issue of sectarian tensions in Rakhine state. Much more needs to be done to build mutual trust and foster development in both the Buddhist and Muslim communities there, which they cannot achieve by themselves. As we know from experience, trust-building in the state is a formidable and highly sensitive challenge.

Finally we must consider a key force in shaping the country: Myanmar's elected representatives. I do not wish to judge the qualifications of each member of parliament. After all, they are chosen by the people, for the people. But it is worth noting that in order to competently govern, relevant experience is essential. This means having at least the ability to debate and draft appropriate and equitable laws in parliament.

It is a vital democratic practice to hold elections, and there will be winners and losers every five years. It can only be hoped that competent people will take the helm of government and parliament, for the people of Myanmar have huge expectations of the incoming government to steer the ship safely.

U Soe Thane is a union minister in the office of the president of Myanmar.

This article is from the Nikkei Asian Review and is published in the Global New Light of Myanmar with permission from the writer.

Foreign tourist visits to ancient Min Hla fort exceeded 3,000 in 2015



Tourists visit Min Hla Fort.
PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

OVER 3,200 foreign tourists visited the ancient fort of Min Hla, located along a stretch of the Irrawaddy river in Magway Region, by boat during 2015, according to the Department of Ancient Research at the town of Min Hla.

The majority of foreign visitors came from countries such as the USA, Britain, Australia, Ger-

many, Switzerland, New Zealand and Canada as well as lesser numbers of Asia region tourists.

"Once the boats dock at the riverside jetty in the town of Min Hla, the main place foreigners visit is the Min Hla fort which dates back to the time of the Myanmar monarchy," explained Daw Hla Win, Head of the Min Hla An-

tient Research Department.

The Min Hla fort was built in 1860-1861. Construction was a collaborative effort between the younger brother of King Mindon, Prince Kanaung French and Italian experts and Myanmar engineers.

The Min Hla fort was built on the western bank of the Aye-

yarwaddy river, measuring 184 by 171 feet in length, with a height of 26 feet. The telegraph office that was used during the time of the Myanmar monarchy still stands today, located in the northern wing of the fortification.

Descriptions of a battle fought between royal Myanmar soldiers and the expanding British Empire in 1889 have been etched into stone on the fortification which states that 500 of Min Hla's garrison fought the foreign invaders with canon, guns and other weapons.

Foreign visitor numbers habitually dwindle during the rainy months, when river waters are high, and increase again during the current cold season when the weather becomes more suitable for outside activity.

Privately owned foreign tourist river boats plough the water of the Ayeyarwaddy between Yangon, Mandalay and Mandalay Pyay, with most travel itineraries lasting between 10-15 days. The rest stops that are made along the way are the towns of Thayet, Min Hla, Salay, Tantkyitaung, Yatnapo, Sagaing, Inwa and Amarapura. — yt News e y

Smart card system to expose forged driving licences

THE Road Transport Department has stepped up efforts to expose fake driving licences with the distribution of smart cards around the country beginning on 12 January.

Smart cards fitted with electronic chips will be issued at division-level offices of the department across the country, and a Demerit Points System will assist authorities in easily penalising drivers who break traffic rules and in exposing forged licences, according to the department.

Those who exceed the limit for demerit points will be required to reapply for licences. — t



A smart card with Demerit Points System from Indian transport department.

Suspect for robbery, rape arrested

POLICE arrested a thief who reportedly raped a housemaid in Hlinethayar Township within 27 hours of the crime being committed. After investigating the case, police arrested the suspect - Thet Yu Zaw, 30, from Hlinethayar township yesterday.

The suspect is accused of stealing jewelry, US currency, Singapore dollars and Myanmar

currency altogether worth more than K 23 million at gun point. He threatened a housemaid working at the home in FMI city on Tuesday before raping her, according to a police report. The suspect was arrested in Taikkyi in the northern district of Yangon. Charges have been filed against him by Hlinethaya Myoma Police Station. — Ko oe

NLD hosts environmental discussion forum

THE National League for Democracy (NLD) will apply the suggestions of seasoned experts from various fields relating to the conservation of the natural environment in future government projects, according to the political party's Central Natural Environment Conservation Committee.

A discussion forum with environmental experts was held by the Central Environmental Committee of the NLD in Yangon on January 14.

"People's treatment of the natural environment is a very important matter. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi believes that while leading the government, experts must be involved so that their advice can be implemented in

policy. That is why we invited these experts to this discussion forum," said the chairperson of the Central Natural Environment Conservation Committee, U Soe Nyunt. It is known that the NLD will continually hold discussion fora with environmental experts in order to apply their advice in formulating policy.

"There will be participatory discussion on matters which must be seen to in order to sustainably fish from Myanmar's lakes and ponds," said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation. The discussion forum was attended by environmental experts as well as other experts of relevant fields. — yt

News e y

CSOs ask Ministry of Forestry to tackle illegal logging in border regions

A TOTAL of 141 civil society organisations (CSOs) sent a formal request to the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MECF) on 14 January, asking the ministry to stop the illegal logging trade along the Myanmar-China border.

The letter was sent to the MECF as well as to a Chinese company called the Blue Moon Fund, which provides financial support to investors in logging enterprises and trade between China and Myanmar. The letter highlighted the illegal logging trade in Kachin and Shan states, calling for better management

of vulnerable forests in those areas.

"On top of the inequalities that can arise in the management of natural resources, which can be made much worse by instability in the region, illegal logging can cause the current peace negotiations to collapse. It can also be a hindrance to the development of the country," said Daw Khun Jar, a spokesperson for the Kachin Women's Network.

Myanmar CSOs have criticised the lack of transparency in discussions between Myanmar and China in 2015 about illegal border crossing and timber trad-

ing. "CSOs were not informed about the discussion between the two countries on the issue of illegal logging. The issue is linked to resources that Myanmar people depend on and that can have large-scale repercussions for the public. The discussions that were held between the two governments were held behind closed doors," said Ma Nan, a member of the Shan Farmers Network.

The statement by the 141 CSOs mentions that Chinese investors have begun investing in wood-cutting and wood craftsmanship since exports of timber from Myanmar to China ceased.

The aforementioned CSOs also called for the MECF to recognise the letter, to consider its contents and to open transparent inroads for discussion. Last year, 152 Chinese nationals were caught carrying out illegal logging in Kachin State. Two loggers were sentenced to 10 years in jail, while the rest were sentenced to life imprisonment at the Myitkyina court on 22 July 2015. However, they were later released on 31 July in an amnesty after an official announcement was made by the Chinese embassy in Yangon that the punishments were too severe. — yt News e y



Teak logs are piled near a forest. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

Istanbul bomber entered Turkey as refugee from Syria: PM says

ISTANBUL — An Islamic State suicide bomber who killed 10 German tourists in the heart of Istanbul's historic district entered Turkey as a refugee from Syria and went undetected as he was not on any watch lists, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Wednesday.

The bomber, who blew himself up among groups of tourists on Tuesday near the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia, the top sites in one of the world's most visited cities, had registered with immigration authorities in the city a week ago.

Turkey has kept an open border to refugees from Syria's civil war and is now home to more than 2.2 million, the world's largest refugee population. But its border has also been used by foreign fighters seeking to join Islamic State or return from its ranks to commit atrocities abroad. "This individual was not somebody under surveillance. He entered Turkey normally, as a refugee, as someone looking for shelter," Davutoglu told a news conference, adding he had been identified from fragments of his skull, face and nails. "After the attack his connections were unveiled. Among these links, apart from Daesh, we have the suspicion that there could be certain powers using Daesh," he said, using an



A woman places a candle at the site of Tuesday's suicide bomb attack at Sultanahmet square in Istanbul, Turkey on 13 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Arabic name for Islamic State.

Turkey accuses Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and his allies including Iran and Russia, of cooperating with Islamic State in the Syrian regime's effort to destroy Syrian opposition forces.

Turkey, which like Germany is a member of the US-led coalition

against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, has become a target for the radical Sunni militants.

It was hit by two major bombings last year blamed on the group, in the town of Suruc near the Syrian border and in the capital Ankara, the latter killing more than 100 people in the worst

attack of its kind on Turkish soil. Asked if Turkey planned retaliatory air strikes on Islamic State, Davutoglu said Ankara would act at a time and in a manner that it saw fit. He pointed out the Turkish military had hit Islamic State targets abroad after the Suruc and Ankara attacks.—Reuters

UN envoy says Syria peace talks still on for 25 January



A boy inspects damage inside his school, due to what activists said was an air strike carried out yesterday by the Russian air force in Injara town, Aleppo countryside, Syria, on 12 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

GENEVA — The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria said after meeting representatives of the United States, Russia and other major powers on Wednesday that Syria peace talks were still planned to start in Geneva on 25 January.

Staffan de Mistura told reporters they had discussed access

to the government-besieged town of Madaya, where the first aid deliveries were made on Monday to starving civilians after three months. "This meeting was essential in order to move forward on the Geneva talks, and there are issues still, and very much at stake, that's why I needed to consult them," he said. Assistant US

Secretary of State Anne Patterson said the talks were still "on track" for 25 January and she had had a "good conversation" with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov and senior officials from Britain, China and France.

"Everyone's primary concern is humanitarian access given some of the dire situations that are taking place inside of Syria," Patterson told reporters.

Syrian rebel groups said earlier on Wednesday they would not take part in the peace talks unless humanitarian articles in the latest UN resolution on the conflict were implemented.

The groups, who include the powerful Islam Army, mentioned articles 12 and 13 of a resolution passed late last year, which calls for humanitarian access to all in need and the cessation of attacks on civilians. De Mistura's office issued a statement saying that officials from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council had agreed to push for "sustained and unimpeded access

to a number of besieged areas" in Syria's civil war.

"The Special Envoy and his team will continue working hard to issue the invitations in order to ensure maximum inclusivity, with a view to starting the intra-Syrian Geneva Talks on 25 January," it said. The opposition council told de Mistura that the Damascus government would have to take goodwill steps, including a prisoner release, before they would go to negotiations.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Twitter that Gatilov would meet representatives of various opposition groups on Thursday. It also said the international powers needed to do more work to agree lists of groups to be regarded as terrorists. Patterson said the United States and Russia were working "very assiduously" on the question of defining terrorist groups.

They had been discussing "the terrorism issue in the whole Syria-Iraq corridor" for months, and military and intelligence contacts were continuing.—Reuters

Obama discusses Syria, Ukraine with Russia's Putin

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama, in a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, emphasized the need to work toward a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine and address the conflict in Syria, the White House said.

Obama told Putin that a key next step in resolving the Ukrainian crisis was for all sides to agree on the modalities of local elections in the Donbas region of Ukraine, the White House said in a statement.

The two leaders also "noted the necessity of taking steps to foster productive discussions between representatives of the Syrian opposition and regime under United Nations auspices, principally by reducing violence and addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian people," the statement said.

They also discussed the "importance of a strong and united international response" to North Korea's recent nuclear test.

Separately, the Kremlin said in a statement that Obama and Putin expressed support during their phone call for an easing of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.—Reuters

IS group gains ground in Iraq's Salahudin Province

TIKRIT — Islamic State (IS) militants yesterday took control of large areas of the eastern part of Salahudin Province, threatening the provincial capital city of Tikrit and several key towns, a provincial security source told Xinhua.

The extremist group carried out a major attack at dawn from their positions in Makhoul mountain range and advanced in several routes to capture a large area from the province to the areas of Tal Gseiba and al-Madad, some 30 km east of Tikrit, the source said on condition of anonymity. Tikrit is located some 170 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. IS militants also seized a rugged area in Makhoul mountain range and cut the strategic road between Tikrit and the city of Kirkuk, the source said.

The IS advance came amid heavy clashes with security forces and allied militias, which, so far, resulted in the death of 12 militants and seven security members, including two officers, the source said, citing initial reports about the ongoing battles.— u

Home Retail in talks to sell Homebase to Australia's Wesfarmers



A sales assistant carries tiles at a Homebase store in Aylesford, England in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — British takeover target Home Retail (HOME.L) said on Wednesday it was in advanced talks to sell its Homebase home improvement stores to Australia's Wesfarmers (WES.AX) for 340 million pounds in cash, allowing it to focus on its Argos chain.

If successful, the move by conglomerate Wesfarmers, Australia's dominant hardware retailer and second biggest supermarket owner, would mark its first acquisition offshore.

"The UK home improvement and garden market is an attractive and growing market," Wesfarmers said in a statement confirming that it had made a conditional offer for the UK's second largest home improvement and garden retailer.

Supermarkets operator Sainsbury's (SBRY.L) made an approach to buy the whole of Home Retail in November — a couple of months after Wesfarmers started talks — but its interest lies in Home Retail's bigger Argos general merchandise business, according to the rationale it published earlier on Wednesday.

Home Retail, responding to a Sky News report, said it was finalising the Homebase sale. Home Retail and Wesfarmers said there was no guarantee it would conclude.

Wesfarmers said its aim was to "reinvigorate" Homebase's assets and build a Bunnings-branded business over three to five years. Bunnings is Australia's leading home improvement chain.

Home Retail considered selling Homebase in 2014, but decided instead to shrink the number of stores by a quarter while it focused on Argos, which contributed about six times as much operating profit as Homebase in its 2015 financial year.

Home Retail Chief Executive John Walden said a sale represented good value for shareholders as it would come about a year into a three-year improvement plan for the chain, which trails Kingfisher's (KGF.L) B and Travis Perkins' (TP-K.L) Wickes in the British DIY market.

"The sale would allow the group to focus on Argos and its transformation plan, with an improved balance sheet and financial position, which I believe represents an even greater opportunity for building long-term shareholder value," he said.

Sainsbury's jointly founded Homebase and owned the chain until 2000, but it barely mentioned the stores when it laid out the "compelling" logic behind its ambitions for Home Retail, lead-

ing to speculation that it would immediately offload the business to private equity or another retailer.

A sale to Wesfarmers relieves Sainsbury's of that task. It has until 2 February to make a firm offer or walk away.

Analysts at Investec had put a value of 1.45 billion pounds on Home Retail, based on their assumptions of an equity value of 230 million pounds for Homebase, 360 million for Argos and the remainder from cash, its loan book and freehold property.

Home Retail said about 200 million pounds of the proceeds from Homebase would be returned to shareholders, while 75 million would go on restructuring and deal costs and 50 million would be paid into its pension scheme.

It said selling the business, which contributed 19.8 million pounds in operating profit in its 2015 financial year, would significantly improve its balance sheet, mainly by reducing its store leasing liabilities.

Wesfarmers, which is being advised by Lazard, declined to comment on how it would fund the cash deal. Home Retail said it would update the market on its Christmas trading on Thursday. —Reuters

UK motor insurance premiums see biggest rise since 2011

LONDON — Comprehensive car insurance premiums in Britain rose 13.2 per cent in 2015, the biggest annual rise since 2011, according to Confused.com's car price insurance index.

The increase, following a jump of 6.9 per cent in the fourth quarter, pushed the average premium for an annual comprehensive car insurance policy to 672 pounds, data from the price comparison website Confused.com and consultants Willis Towers Watson Plc (WLTW.O) showed.

"The recent increase to Insurance Premium Tax along with inflationary pressures on claims costs, especially to vehicle damage repair costs, have been the major factors driving up prices," UK Head of P & C Pricing at Wil-

lis Towers Watson, Stephen Jones said.

The cost of third-party fire and theft policy (TPFT) policies rose at a similar rate, up 6.9 per cent in the quarter and 16.8 per cent annually, the company said.

"We've now seen 11 consecutive months with no premium decreases, which would suggest that the trend is likely to continue", Head of Data Services at Confused.com, Steve Fletcher said.

In November, the government raised Insurance Premium Tax rise to 9.5 per cent from 6 per cent.

In 2011, the average comprehensive cover premium reached a high of 858 pounds per year. —Reuters

1st Philippine-developed satellite to be launched in March

TSUKUBA — The Philippines' first satellite developed with the country's involvement was unveiled Wednesday at the Tsukuba Space Centre of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency ahead of its launch scheduled for March.

The micromini satellite for disaster and crop surveillance was jointly developed by researchers at two Japanese universities and the Philippine Department of Science and Technology.

The 50-kilogram satellite is equipped with four cameras and measures 55 centimetres long, 35 cm wide and 55 cm high.

Under the plan, a US rocket will carry the satellite to Japan's Kibo laboratory on the International Space Station in March before it is released into space, which can take place as early as April. In March 2015, Hokkaido and Tohoku universities said they would help the Philippines develop its first satellites over a period through 2017. Manila has so far purchased satellites from foreign countries. —Kyodo News



The Philippines' first satellite developed with the country's involvement is unveiled at the Tsukuba Space Centre of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency in Tsukuba, northeast of Tokyo, on 13 January 2016. The micromini satellite, scheduled to be launched in March, was jointly developed by researchers at two Japanese universities and the Philippine Department of Science and Technology.

PHOTO KYODO NEWS

Google creates virtual reality arm, names key executive to run it

SAN FRANCISCO — Alphabet Inc's Google has created a virtual reality (VR) computing division and said Clay Bavor, the executive running its product management team, will run the new arm.

A spokesman for Google, Joshua Cruz, confirmed Bavor's new role on the team, but declined to provide any further details.

According to Bavor's Twitter profile, he is the vice president of virtual reality at Google. As vice president of product

management, Bavor oversaw some of Google's key apps, including Gmail, Google Drive and Google Docs, his LinkedIn profile showed.

Technology news website Re code first reported Bavor's appointment on Tuesday and said his earlier role will now be taken over by Senior Vice President Diane Greene.

Google has been flirting with virtual reality but never quite fully dived into it until now. In May last year, the company announced a partnership

with action-camera maker GoPro to enable 360 degree view in virtual reality, using a new technology that Google had developed. The company said in November its video-sharing site YouTube supported virtual reality video. Viewers could view VR video using a cellphone and Google Cardboard viewer.

Oculus, the virtual reality company Facebook bought in 2014, has started accepting pre-orders for its much-awaited virtual reality headset, Rift, which will ship in 2016. —Reuters

Samsung Electronics to produce Qualcomm's Snapdragon 820 chips

SEOUL — Tech giant Samsung Electronics Co Ltd said yesterday it will mass produce Qualcomm Inc's new Snapdragon 820 mobile processors using its 14-nanometre chip production technology.

Samsung said in a statement

the manufacturing technology used for the chips was the same as one being used for its new Exynos processors.

The South Korean firm did not elaborate further or reveal the value of the deal with Qualcomm. —Reuters

India in talks to boost Rafale deal ahead of Hollande visit

PARIS — France and India are negotiating whether to widen a proposed \$9 billion deal for the sale of 36 French-built Rafale warplanes to include an option for further purchases, but have yet to decide the scope of the deal, a person close to the talks said.

The nations have been negotiating for months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced plans to buy 36 warplanes directly from the French government following the collapse of a larger commercial deal with Dassault Aviation.

Talks have sped up in recent weeks ahead of a visit to India by French President Francois Hollande on 25-27 January, and aides were said to be locked in discussions with Indian officials at France's presidential offices on Wednesday.

"The deal should be signed at the end of January and there is an option" for more jets, the person close to the talks said.

Dassault Aviation declined to comment.

Indian government sources say the Rafale deal is politically done, paving the way for Hollande's visit, though the country's longstanding efforts to modernise its air force have been peppered

with delays and premature hopes of a deal.

One source at the defence ministry said the all-in price for the 36 fighter jets, in fly-away condition, was 610 billion rupees (\$9.1 billion).

An option for add-on purchases could give France an extra edge over US and European rivals circling India's lucrative arms market and allay concerns among India's military about the strength of its ageing air force, which is at its weakest operational strength since the 1962 war against China.

The source close to the talks played down a report that the options would cover 18 planes, expanding the potential deal by 50 per cent. "No. The negotiations are ongoing," he said. Indian military officials have warned their air force risks a major capability gap with China and Pakistan without new western warplanes, or if local defence contractors cannot produce what the military needs in a timely manner.

In October, Indian officials said the government had turned down the military's request to expand the acquisition of 36 Dassault-built fighter planes to plug vital gaps, nudging it to accept an indigenous combat plane.—Reuters

Smitten with actress, Mexico's 'Chapo' tripped up by flirting



Pinatas depicting Mexican actress Kate del Castillo (L) and the drug lord Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman are displayed outside a workshop in Reynosa, in Tamaulipas state, Mexico, on 13 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

MEXICO CITY — Details of flirtatious phone messaging chats between Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and actress Kate del Castillo have gripped Mexico, and an official said his "obsession" with her led him to lower his guard and be caught.

Guzman, 57, was arrested in the northern city of Los Mochis on Friday, six months after a dramatic second jailbreak through a tunnel in his cell. He is now back in the same prison.

Mexican authorities said they intercepted a se-

ries of instant message conversations in which del Castillo, 43, brokered a secret meeting between Guzman, herself and Hollywood star Sean Penn in October, helping them trace the kingpin.

A senior government official, who declined to be identified, said one reason Guzman left his redoubt in the Sierra Madre mountains of Sinaloa for Los Mochis was because he was desperate to set up another meeting with the Los Angeles-based actress.

"I'll look after you

more than my own eyes," Guzman said, according to transcripts of the exchanges published by newspaper Milenio on Wednesday. "I'm very moved," she replied. "Nobody has ever looked after me."

The government official said the messages were genuine and that Guzman "had a kind of obsession" with the actress that was his undoing.

Del Castillo took to Twitter to thank her supporters and wrote: "Not surprisingly many have chosen to make up items

they think will make good stories and that aren't truthful."

She pledged to give her story in due course.

The warmth between the drug lord and the actress has surprised even Mexicans inured to the often stranger-than-fiction events of the drug war. Stores in Mexico City on Wednesday sold piñatas resembling the pair, with "del Castillo" brandishing a pistol with "I love Chapo" written across it.

The newspaper said some of the messages were copied from an intercepted phone used by one of Guzman's lawyers. Another of his lawyers said reports the two were close were "speculation."

Later messages between the two appear to have been retrieved from a Blackberry device that a lawyer bought for del Castillo on Guzman's orders. The kingpin wanted her to have a pink handset but in the end agreed to gray.

Guzman's ties with del Castillo began publicly in 2012 when the actress, who has fronted campaigns for L'Oreal and Ford, wrote an open letter calling on the capo to "traffic in goodness" and saying she believed more in him than the government.—Reuters

US to expand refugee programme for Central Americans fleeing violence

WASHINGTON — The United States will expand its programme helping the thousands of people fleeing violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Wednesday.

The announcement follows backlash from Democrats in the US Congress who called on the Obama administration to halt its deportations of families who fled the three crime-infested Central American countries and entered the United States without documentation.

The expanded Refugee Admissions Programme would offer "a safe and legal alternative to the dangerous journey many are currently tempted to begin, making them easy prey for human smugglers who have no interest but their own profits," Kerry said in a speech at the National Defence University. President Barack Obama

previously said the United States would take in 3,000 refugees from Latin America by October this year.

A State Department spokesperson said the administration does not have plans to take in more than 3,000 refugees from the region, but it may adjust the number "should conditions require." He said the US government would work with the United Nations and non-governmental organisations to identify people in need of refugee protection. He specifically mentioned those targeted by criminal gangs, including human rights activists.

"We also continue to explore additional options, including for those who may be at imminent risk of harm," Kerry said.

Once the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights refers a potential refugee to the Uni-

ted States for resettlement, the case is reviewed at a Resettlement Support Center, according to the State Department. The United States operates nine centres globally, but only one is in the Western hemisphere — in Quito, Ecuador. The State Department spokesperson said the Quito centre operates a branch office in San Salvador, El Salvador. Kerry did not say whether the United States would deploy any federal workers to the region or had plans to open additional centres. The Department of Homeland Security has received more than 6,000 applications from minors in Central America, some of whom have begun to arrive in the United States as refugees, Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson said on 4 January. He said he expected the pace of child refugee arrivals to increase.—Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (1 / 2016)

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

Sr.No Tender No	Description	Remark
(1) IFB-062(15-16)	Data Processing Center and Data Acquisition Serceel (5) Items	US\$
(2) IFB-063(15-16)	Data Processing Software & Hardware Accessories (1) Lot	US\$
(3) IFB-064(15-16)	2900 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (3) Sets	US\$
(4) IFB-065(15-16)	Explosimeter (2) Nos	US\$
(5) IFB-066(15-16)	Telecommunication Equipments (2) Items	US\$
(6) IFB-067(15-16)	Portable Welding Machine with Complete Accessories (2) Sets	US\$
(7) IFB-068(15-16)	High Pressure Pump with Complete Accessories (2) Sets	US\$
(8) IFB-069(15-16)	Pipe Line Pigs (2) Items	US\$
(9) IFB-070(15-16)	Drill Track Guidance Tool (1) Set	US\$
(10) IFB-071(15-16)	4" ERW Steel Line Pipe, API 5L Grade A (10,000)Meter	US\$
(11) IFB-072(15-16)	NDT Services for 20" Domestic Gas Pipe Lines (1) Lot	US\$
(12) IFB-073(15-16)	Steel Ball Valves (2) Items	US\$
(13) DMP/L-012(15-16)	Landing Leg (Landing Gear) for CNG Tube Trailer (10) Sets	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 10-2-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 13th January, 2016 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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

Venezuela opposition seeks to unblock congressional deadlock

CARACAS — Three Venezuelan opposition lawmakers gave up their seats on Wednesday to try to defuse an acrimonious power dispute between President Nicolas Maduro's government and the newly opposition-led National Assembly.

Venezuela's Supreme Court had barred the three -- plus a government legislator -- from office pending a probe into alleged vote cheating in their jungle state Amazonas.

But the opposition, which won control of the legislature in December's elections for the first time in 17 years of socialist rule, defiantly swore the three in anyway.

However, in a reluctant U-turn cheered by government lawmakers as a "victory for the people," the opposition majority approved on Wednesday a letter from the three asking to leave the legislature pending resolution of the election dispute.

The Supreme Court, which almost always rules in favour of the government, had said congressional decisions would be null until the swearing-in of the three was overturned.

"We completely reject that ruling," the three's letter said. However, by leaving, "we help free parliament from the institutional ambush they (the government) want to lead it into."

The opposition's victory in the December vote gave them a long-sought power-base to take aim at Maduro, who succeeded late president Hugo Chavez, and try to undermine his grip on the OPEC nation of 29 million people.

Days before the opposition took over the legislature last week, the outgoing

government-controlled congress named 13 new magistrates to the 32-judge Supreme Court.

Critics saw that as a cynical ploy to ensure the government would win any constitutional clashes.

Earlier on Wednesday, the three opposition legislators and dozens of supporters protested outside the Supreme Court.

Illustrating the tensions, tomatoes and a firework were hurled at people walking into congress by a group of red-shirted bystanders who appeared to be government supporters, witnesses and some local media said.

The opposition argues that even without its barred legislators, it still has a two-thirds super majority that will enable it to, for example, fire ministers.

Without the four barred legislators, the opposition has 109 seats to the government's 54. So the opposition would have two thirds of an effective sitting total of 163 seats.

The government, though, is likely to argue that based on the chamber's total capacity of 167 seats, the opposition will have less than a two-thirds majority.

In addition to the move to defuse the dispute over the legislators, there was a rare sign of rapprochement in news that National Assembly president Henry Ramos twice talked by phone with Maduro's new vice president, Aristobulo Isturiz, this week.

Many Venezuelans want dialogue so leaders on both sides can focus on the country's economic crisis: a deep recession, runaway inflation and shortages of basics.—Reuters

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Earthquake victims return back after receiving blankets distributed by Nepal Army at Kerauja, one of the worst quake-hit villages in Gorkha, Nepal, on 13 January 2016. Nepal Army distributed blankets to earthquake victims residing in those shelters. Earthquake victims in Gorkha District are in difficulties due to heavy snowfalls in recent days amid harsh winter. PHOTO: XINHUA

M6.7 quake shakes northern Japan, no tsunami warning

TOKYO — An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.7 shook northern Japan shortly after noon Thursday, the weather agency said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The 12:25pm quake registered lower 5 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of 7 in southern parts of the northern main island of Hokkaido and northern Aomori Prefecture, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The quake originated at a depth of around 50 kilometres off the coast of Urakawa in Hokkaido.

Two women aged 86 and 95 from Sapporo were taken to hospital after they were knocked over but did not suffer serious injuries, according to the local fire department and police.

The temblor caused New Chitose Airport to close its runways temporarily, while some trains in Hokkaido and bullet trains on the Tohoku Shinkansen Line stopped briefly in Aomori and neighbouring Iwate prefectures, according to their operators.

No abnormalities were detected at nuclear power plants in Hokkaido and Aomori, the regional power companies said.

The Japanese government has set up a liaison office at the crisis management center inside the prime minister's office.

The meteorological agency has warned aftershocks with a maximum intensity of 4 on the Japanese scale could occur over the next week.—Kyodo News

Palestinian shot dead in attempted stabbing in West Bank

JERUSALEM — Israel's army said yesterday morning that troops shot dead a Palestinian after he tried to stab a soldier in the southern West Bank, the latest in a four-month surge of violence.

The incident occurred at the Beit Anun Junction, north of Hebron, an area in which many of the recent Palestinian attacks took

place. No Israelis were injured in the incident, a military spokesperson said in a statement.

According to the spokesperson, a Palestinian "armed with a knife, attempted to stab a soldier." The suspect, whose name was not immediately identified, was shot and killed.

The incident came a

day after Israeli forces killed two Palestinian men, one 23 and the other 17, outside Beit Anun, claiming that one of them intended to perpetrate a stabbing attack while the other had driven him.

At least 150 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces or armed civilians since the violent uprising began in mid-Sep-

tember. In the same period, 23 Israelis and a US citizen were killed in knife, car-ramming, and shooting attacks by Palestinians.

Israel has been accusing the Palestinian National Authority of "inciting" the violence while the Palestinians say it is the result of 49 years of Israeli control of their lands. — u

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV DYNAMIC OCEAN 02 VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M DYNAMIC OCEAN 02 OY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-2 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE

LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (141W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M ESM CREMONA OY NO (141W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S ORINET OVERSEAS

CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

DAWEI SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND
ITALIAN-THAI DEVELOPMENT
(MYANMAR) CO., LTD.
INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER

Open Tender is invited for a Myanmar local company to enter into a partnership with Italian-Thai Development (Myanmar) Co., Ltd. for developing and operating the rock production of the Barash Quarry for the Initial Phase Development of the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project. The tender documents can be obtained upon request by emailing to this address: tender@daweispecialzone.com. The proposal, complete in all respects, shall be submitted not later than 15:00 Hr. on Friday 22nd January 2016.

DAWEI SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND
MYANMA INDUSTRIAL ESTATE CO., LTD.
INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER

Open Tender is invited for Resettlement and Compensation Independent Expert Service for the Initial Phase Development of the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project. The detail information concerning the tender documents can be obtained upon request by emailing to this address: tender@myanmaindustrialestate.com. The proposal, complete in all respects, shall be submitted not later than 17:00 Hr. on Friday 22nd January 2016.

Music meets fashion in LA as Stella McCartney shows pre-fall line

LOS ANGELES — Music, celebrities and fashion came together in Los Angeles on Tuesday as British designer Stella McCartney presented her autumn 2016 collection amid the Hollywood awards season buzz.

Models danced between rows of records and CDs at Hollywood's landmark Amoeba Music store, dressed in "fur-free fur" or embroidered coats and jackets adorned in cat motifs and leopard and tiger prints.

Light dresses bore graphic circles while loose blouses were paired with loose trousers. Known for her neutral colour palettes, McCartney's pre-fall line came in cream and earthy tones with dabs of indigo, orange and pink.

The designer, who presents her main collections in Paris, follows on the heels of Tom Ford, who showcased his fall 2015 line in Hollywood in February. Last year, Louis Vuitton held its "L

Series 2" exhibit in Hollywood while Burberry took over Los Angeles' Griffith Observatory to show its 2015 collection.

"We'd always wanted to have a party in LA and it just really felt like the right time," McCartney said.

"I have so many close friends here and I spend a lot of time here and it just feels like a moment when music, film, fashion, the arts, it's all just come together for LA."

McCartney often dresses select celebrities for the red carpet. At Sunday's Golden Globes, Taraji P. Henson, who won best drama actress for "Empire", wore a custom McCartney strapless white dress.

"We don't go out and, kind of, attack people and we don't pay people, we just go with the flow of whatever happens that season," she said.

The show drew big names like Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Hud-



Cara Delevingne and Joan Smalls present creations by British designer Stella McCartney as part of her Autumn/Winter 2014-2015 women's ready-to-wear collection show during Paris Fashion Week. PHOTO: REUTERS

son, Katy Perry and Anjelica Huston to the store. McCartney, daughter of former Beatle Paul McCartney, said music is a key influence.

"I've been brought up with music, so it's something that I feel very comfortable around, probably more comfortable

around than fashion, quite frankly," she said.

The fashion spotlight on Los Angeles centres on the red carpets rolled out during the two-month awards season.

Saint Laurent will present its fall winter 2016 menswear and part of its womenswear collec-

tions in Los Angeles on 10 February ahead of the Grammy Awards five days later.

The curtains come down on the awards season on 28 February when the Oscars are handed out at the Academy Awards ceremony in Hollywood's Dolby Theater.—Reuters

Stallone says 'didn't expect to win' Golden Globe

LONDON — Sylvester Stallone and cast members of "Creed", which continues on from the Hollywood star's "Rocky" films, hit the red carpet in London for the movie's European premiere on Tuesday.

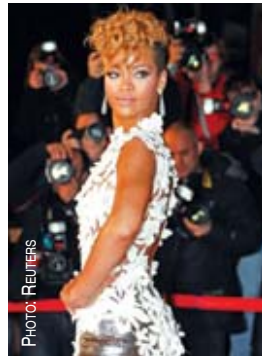
The 69-year old actor won a Golden Globe award for reprising his iconic role as boxer Rocky Balboa in "Creed" and received a standing ovation at the ceremony in Los Angeles on Sunday.

His performance in 1977's "Rocky" — the first film in

the franchise — earned Stallone nominations at the Golden Globes, Oscars and BAFTAs — but he failed to win any of those awards.

"I didn't expect to win," Stallone said on the London red carpet.

"I didn't expect to be there the last time I was there was maybe 1977, there was maybe 10 tables and it was indoors, it wasn't televised — it was surreal for me — here is my wife my three kids — and Rocky, he just comes through."—Reuters



Rihanna named most marketable star

LONDON — R & B star Rihanna has beaten out the likes of Angelina Jolie and basketball phenomenon Stephen Curry to be named the world's most marketable celebrity.

According to new data from The NPD Group, the "Umbrella" singer, 27, leads the way when it comes to endorsement opportuni-

ties, reported Contactmusic.

The star, who has worked on branding with companies including Jeep, Puma and Samsung, landed an index score of 367, which is "almost 3.7 times as many strong brand endorsement opportunities as the average big-name celebrity".—

'Fifty Shades' and 'Pixels' among Razzies 'worst film' nominees

LOS ANGELES — As awards season heats up in Hollywood, the annual Razzies Awards on Wednesday named the year's worst achievements in film with steamy romance "Fifty Shades of Grey" and Adam Sandler's video game adventure "Pixels" among the top nominees, while Sylvester Stallone was honoured with a redemption.

"Fifty Shades of Grey," "Pixels," sci-fi saga "Jupiter Ascending," comedy "Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2," all of which landed six nominations, and superhero "Fantastic 4," which landed five nods, will compete for the Razzies worst picture award.

The tongue-in-cheek Razzies, created in 1980, serve as an antidote to Hollywood's prestigious Oscars ceremony, as organisers choose to bestow winners of the

year's worst films with a gold spray-painted trophy worth \$4.97.

Stallone, who won his first Golden Globe last week for reprising his iconic role as Rocky Balboa in "Creed," is nominated for the Razzie Redeemer Award, going from an "all-time Razzie champ to 2015 award contender."

He will compete for the title with Will Smith, nominated for his redeeming role in "Concussion," actor-director Elizabeth Banks for directing the hit "Pitch Perfect 2" and horror filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan for directing hit horror "The Visit" after a slew of flops.

Winners of the Razzies are voted for online by around 900 members of the Razzies committee, and anyone can sign up to vote, with memberships starting at \$40.

The "tacky" Razzies ceremony are traditionally held in Hollywood on the night before the 28 February Oscars ceremony, and those honoured seldom show up.

Perennial Razzie favourite Sandler, nominated for five consecutive years, this year scored nods for worst actor in "Pixels" and worst screen combo for "Adam Sandler Any Pair of Shoes" for his role in "The Cobbler" — about a cobbler who can magically step into the shoes of his customers.

Eddie Redmayne, a potential best actor Oscar contender for his role in "The Danish Girl," landed a worst actor Razzie nomination for "Jupiter Ascending," while Rooney Mara, potential Oscar best actress nominee, landed a worst supporting Razzie nod for her role as Tiger Lily in "Pan."—Reuters



Sylvester Stallone. PHOTO: REUTERS

C
S S N M ()
P D R S (0)

Formerly Purohit layawkhin v.t., Zeyawadi distinguished Ramayaneer
Expired on (8.1.2016) at (7:20)am. Localtime, in the Brahm idyalaya Ashram, Patana, India and cremated according to Hindu rites on the same day there.

All friends and admirers of Pandit Ji, please accept this as the only information.

S A F

'El Chapo's' style makes statement for California fashion firm

LOS ANGELES — The saga of drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who was captured on Friday in Mexico, is a good fit for one Los Angeles clothing company.

Guzman was photographed in a shirt from apparel firm Barabas shaking hands with Sean Penn in an image accompanying the actor's recent Rolling Stone article about the fugitive.

Barabas quickly capitalised on the drug kingpin's taste for the abstract-design shirt that features bright blue stripes, posting on its Facebook page, "EL CHAPO GUZ-

MAN WEARING BARABAS SHIRT"

Later, the firm said in another post that high traffic had temporarily crashed its website, Barabasmn.com. On Wednesday, the website was back up, with side-by-side photos of the Guzman-Penn meeting, and a handsomely coiffed male model in the same Barabas shirt. "Most wanted shirt," read a caption under the pictures.

Mexico's government says it plans to extradite Guzman to the United States, where he is wanted on charges including drug trafficking, kidnapping and murder.—Reuters



Actor Sean Penn (L) shakes hands with Mexican drug lord Joaquin "Chapo" Guzman in Mexico on 10 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

German bakery luring visitors to town near Iwami Ginzan silver mine



The inside of German bakery Hidaka in Oda, Shimane Prefecture, crowded with shoppers from within and outside of the prefecture in December 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

MATSUE — An authentic German-style bakery near the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Iwami Ginzan silver mine in Oda, Shimane Prefecture, is drawing customers from far afield and helping keep alive a small town.

The bakery, called Hidaka, is among traditional Japanese houses in the Omori area about five minutes by car from the Iwami Ginzan World Heritage

Centre. The town has a population of about 400.

Some 30 kinds of German bread are displayed on a table at the center of the bakery operated by Kosaku Hidaka, 34. Pretzels are the most popular.

Hidaka bakes bread in time for opening of his shop at 10am and 2pm. On a day in mid-December last year, more than 10 peo-

ple were waiting in line in front of the shop before 2pm. Among them was a female bakery worker in her 30s from Yamaguchi Prefecture, who said, "The smell of cooking here makes me happy and all of the different kinds of bread looks tasty."

Born in the city of Okayama, Hidaka studied bread-making skills in Germany for five years from 2006 and became certified as a master baker.

He opened his shop in Omori in October 2015 as proposed by Toshiro Nakamura, 67, owner of a local artificial limb maker who has campaigned to preserve the townscape.

Hidaka does everything from selection of ingredients to baking. He developed a pretzel full of cheese at the request of local people as well as bread using locally produced salt and wheat grown near Mt. Daisen in neighboring Tottori Prefecture.

"More young people have come to visit the town since the bakery opened," Nakamura said.

Added Hidaka, "I will further improve my shop so that people want to live in Omori." He plans to bring his wife and two children from Tokyo.

Iwami Ginzan, the largest silver mine in Japanese history, had been active since its discovery in 1526 until it was closed in 1923. The mine and surrounding landscape became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.—Kyodo News

2 Chinese universities in top 10 of world's most int'l universities

LONDON — Two Chinese universities, University of Hong Kong and University of Macao, squeezed into the top 10 of the world's most international universities in 2016, according to a new list published by Times Higher Education yesterday.

The latest list showed that University of Hong Kong ranked third and University of Macao seized the sixth place. World's Most International Univer-

sities Ranking 2016 by The Times Higher Education included 200 universities from 28 countries.

It employed indicators such as the proportion of international staff, the number of international students and research papers published with at least one co-author from another country of each institution. University claimed the most international institution, marking the first time a Middle East-

ern university has topped the list.

The remaining of the top 10 were the University of Luxembourg (second), Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (fourth), University of Geneva (fifth), ETH Zurich — Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (seventh), University of St. Gallen (eighth), National University of Singapore (ninth) and Imperial College London (10th).

The survey also re-

vealed that London enjoyed the largest number of the world's international universities, with 15 among on the top 200 list, including six in top 30, which were the Imperial College London (10th), University College London (18th), King's College London (20th), London School of Economics and Political Science (22nd), Queen Mary University of London (23rd) and Royal Holloway, University of London (30th).—u

mitv Myanmar International

(15-1-2016 07:00 am~ 16-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

T	F
07:03	Am News
07:26	Am Discovering Tribes "Lisu: Their Life and Customs" (Part- I)
07:48	Am Myanmar Railways City Circular Train
08:03	Am News
08:26	Am Travelogue: "Anyar Myay" or Upcountry (Part-I)
08:49	Am Fantastic Orchid Garden From The Flower City
09:03	Am News

09:26	Am	Well-Trained Elephants			
09:36	Am	A Chance to Change Their Future			
09:54	Am	Art Students: Their Dream			
10:03	Am	News			
10:26	Am	The Richly Blessed Gem Land			
10:52	Am	Kay Tu Mar Lar “The Family”			
(11:00A	0 :00P)-T	R	(0 :00A	11:00 A)
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07:00	Pm	1 st Korea-Myanmar Exchange K-Classical Concerts			
(0 :00P	11:00P)-T	R	(0 :00A	11:00 A)
(11:00P	0 :00A)-T	R	(0 :00A	11:00 A)
(0 :00A	0 :00A)-T	R	(0 :00A	11:00 A)
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MRTV Entertainment Channel

(15-1-2016, Friday)

:00	:
• Alinka Wut Yee Music Troupe	• T Drama Series
:20	:40
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• Stories
:40	:20
• Musical Programme	• Teleplay
:00	10:20
• T Drama Series	• Myanmar ideo
	M
	• Close Down

From 15.1.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm
To 16.1.2016 (Saturday) 06:00 Pm

T 24

Leicester stay calm to beat Spurs, put heat on Arsenal

LONDON — 'Keep Calm And Carry On' could be Claudio Ranieri's motto for the second half of the season after Leicester City earned a 1-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur on Wednesday to put the heat back on Premier League leaders Arsenal.

Their chances of taking the title may still be minimal — just two percent according to a statistical report in the Leicester Mercury — but Robert Huth's late header made a top-four finish look a lot more likely.

Leicester had gone three league games without a goal, dropping behind Arsenal and prompting fears that a slide had started, but their fighting spirit shone through at White Hart Lane.

Striker Jamie Ardy and winger Mahrez have netted 28 goals between them this season but both were off the park when Huth headed an 83rd minute winner, which ended a run of 374 minutes without a goal.

The win left Leicester behind Arsenal — who played out a 3-3 thriller at Liverpool — only on goal difference and three clear of third-placed Manchester City.

The gap to Spurs in fourth is now seven points.

Ranieri said it was important that his side showed they can score even when their top two danger men fail to hit the net.

"We created a lot of chances not only with Mahrez and Ardy, but a lot of players can make a goal and that is important for the team, for the confidence to continue in this great moment for

us," said Ranieri.

Ranieri, who says he still laughs when people ask him if Leicester can win the league, suggested that 79 points might be enough to claim the title.

They now sit equal with Arsenal on 43 points.

"Always I want something more ... If we make 79 I am very happy," he added.

It was the second of three matches against Spurs in 10 days, after a 2-2 draw on Sunday in the FA Cup forced a replay, which

Leicester host next Wednesday.

Ardy, who missed Sunday's match because of a minor groin operation, had few chances against Spurs and extends his run without a goal to five matches.

Ranieri had no concerns, however, and said the forward's recent performances had been hindered by injuries.

"In the last month and a half, I have not seen Jamie at training because always there was a little problem. Now ... slowly he can start to retrain with us and im-

prove his condition."

The Italian also heaped praise on his defence and in particular goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, who made a series of remarkable saves to keep his side in the match.

"The first 15 minutes were unbelievable, they press a lot and we want to press them but it wasn't possible ... Kasper made some fantastic saves and it is the third clean sheet in a row

(in the Premier League)," said Ranieri.

Leicester drew 0-0 with Bournemouth and Manchester City in their previous two league games.

A frustrated Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino said Spurs had been the better side but hailed Leicester's spirit.

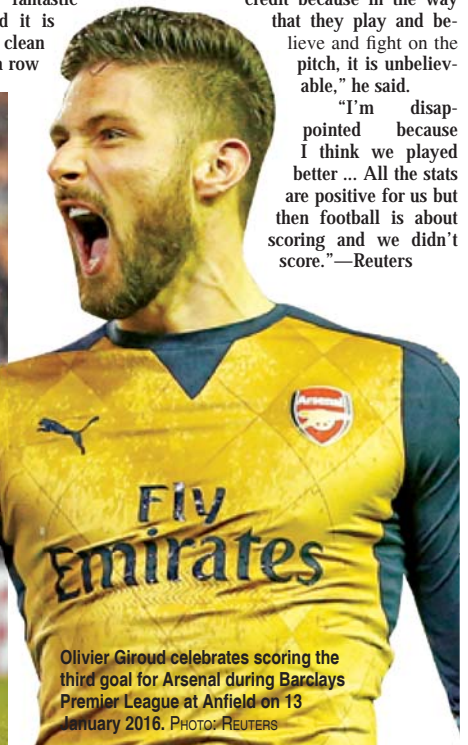
"We need to give them full credit because in the way that they play and believe and fight on the pitch, it is unbelievable," he said.

"I'm disappointed because I think we played better ... All the stats are positive for us but then football is about scoring and we didn't score." —Reuters



Tottenham's Kyle Walker in action with Leicester City's Jamie Vardy during Barclays Premier League at White Hart Lane on 13 January 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Olivier Giroud celebrates scoring the third goal for Arsenal during Barclays Premier League at Anfield on 13 January 2016.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Barca ease past Espanyol into Spanish Cup quarters

MADRID — Holders Barcelona cruised into the King's Cup quarter-finals when a side missing several regulars beat city rivals Espanyol 2-0, with Munir El Haddadi netting both goals in a thumping 6-1 aggregate success on Wednesday.

Lionel Messi, fresh from collecting a fifth FIFA Ballon d'Or award on Monday, sent El Haddadi clear to round goalkeeper Francesco Bardi with a deft finish in the 32nd minute at Espanyol's Cornella-El Prat stadium.

The academy graduate, who has had limited playing time since his promotion from the B team, made it 2-0 two minutes from time with a tap-in from Aleix Vidal's centre.

El Haddadi was deployed up front in place of Luis Suarez, suspended for his part in a fracas after last week's bad-tempered first leg, with the likes of Neymar, Andres Iniesta, Sergio Busquets

and Gerard Pique rested.

Felipe Caicedo caused some problems for the Spanish and European champions' defence but keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen was equal to anything the Ecuador striker could throw at him.

"We already had a big advantage and we just tried to protect it," Barca centre back Javier Mascherano told Spanish T.

"We played a good game and I think the victory was deserved. Let's see who we get now in the draw," added the Argentine international.

Athletic Bilbao, whose 23 Spanish Cup triumphs are only bettered by Barca's 27, also progressed when forward Inaki Williams struck to secure a 1-0 win at Villarreal and a 4-2 victory over the two legs.

Bilbao, who lost to Barca in the final last season and in 2012, have reached the last eight for three consecutive seasons.

Third-tier Cadiz, who went through to the last 16 after Real Madrid were expelled for fielding an ineligible player, fell 2-0 at Celta Vigo and were eliminated 5-0 on aggregate.

Las Palmas beat Eibar 3-2 at home in the Canary Islands last week and won by the same scoreline in the Basque country to advance 6-4.

In the remaining two ties, Atletico Madrid, the 2013 winners, and Rayo Vallecano are level at 1-1 and Gary Neville's Valencia lead Granada 4-0 before Thursday's second legs.

Sevilla knocked out city rivals Real Betis and second-division Mirandes, the only non-La Liga side left in the competition, eliminated Deportivo La Coruna on Tuesday.

The quarter-finals will be played over two legs later this month, with the semi-finals at the start of February and the final on 21 May. —Reuters

David Beckham honoured at UNICEF Ball

LONDON — Former soccer star David Beckham has received UNICEF USA's Humanitarian Leadership Award.

The 40-year-old star has been given the accolade at the annual UNICEF Gala Ball in Beverly Hills in recognition of his charity work and has vowed to continue his efforts to help disadvantaged children through the organisation and his own offshoot, the Seven Foundation, reported Female First.

Ahead of the black tie event, alongside a picture of himself with a group of kids who benefit from the fund, Beckham, who is a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, wrote, "Extremely honoured to receive the @UNICEFUSA's Humanitarian Leadership Award this evening at the UNICEFBall. I can't wait to continue doing all

I can for Unicef and my 7 Fund, 7.Org, to help children across the world (sic)."

Beckham arrived alone, sans family, to the event at the Beverly Wilshire Four Seasons Hotel, but once inside was joined by a string of other famous faces, including Miranda Kerr, Selena Gomez, Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Connelly and Paul Bettany, Michelle Rodriguez and Heidi Klum.

The celebrated sportsman was handed the honour by his friend veteran musician Elton John.

The event also marked the launch of French fashion house Louis Vuitton for UNICEF.

The global partnership will help support children affected by conflict, disease, natural disasters, and other situations that threaten their safety and well-being. —