**President U Thein Sein sends messages of felicitations to King of Thailand, PM**

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 4 Dec—Given tourist arrivals of 2.7 million to Myanmar up to November, Myanmar’s tourism boom is on track to meet its expected three million visitors this year according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

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According to the country’s Tourism Master Plan, Myanmar expects to welcome more bordes of travelers from around the world. The Asian Development Bank forecasts arrivals of three million visitors by 2015 and 7.5 million by 2020.

Recently, global travel search engine Skyscanner said Myanmar will be the hottest travel destination next year.

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**MYANMAR close to hitting expected 3 million visitors mark**

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**Human trafficking cases exceed last year’s 102**

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 4 Dec—The number of human trafficking cases from January to November has reached 108, and Shan State tops the chart with 49 cases, followed by Yangon with 105, Mandalay with 10 cases, according to the statistics of anti-human trafficking squads.

The squads could save 162 trafficking victims out of 222 this year, most of them women. In the previous year, 220 out of 256 people in 102 cases were saved by the police.

Police Captain Min Naing said Myanmar’s anti-human trafficking police squads put more efforts to expose human trafficking cases, with the result that this year’s human-trafficking figures have exceeded those of the previous year.

Most victims were sold as fraudulent marriage partners and forced labourers in neighbouring countries, especially in China, but there was only one forced adoption case this year. The police could expose 19 human trafficking cases reported in the country until the end of November in which the majority of women were put into prostitution.

The squads in cooperation with Thailand also made an effort to get damages for Myanmar victims who were killed in a cold storage vehicle in Thailand in 2008. Myanmar police are carrying out the work to provide the price of compensation to the families of those victims.

Traffic in persons is a serious crime in both developed and developing countries. Under Section 24 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, offenders of trafficking in persons especially women, children and youth shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend from a minimum of 10 years to a maximum of imprisonment for life.

**Myanmar posts trade deficit in 1st eight months of FY 2014-15**

YANGON, 4 Dec—Myanmar had a trade deficit of more than $3 billion in the first eight months of April-November of fiscal year 2014-15, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce on Thursday.

During the eight months, foreign trade totaled $18,134.681 million, with exports amounting to $7,340,755 million and imports $10,793.826 million, the statistics show.

The total foreign trade in the first eight months of the current FY is up more than $3 billion from the more than $15 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Of total exports, normal trade accounted for $4,791,998 million and border trade made up $2,548,765 million.

Of total imports, normal trade accounted for $9,367,886 million and border trade $1,426,040 million.

Major exports include agricultural produce, livestock, marine products, products from mining, forest and industrial sectors. Major imports include materials for the investment sector, raw materials and household goods. —GNLM
Medical team gives free health care to locals in Ottarathiri Tsp

Nay Pyi Taw, 4 Dec — Ottarathiri Township Health Department carries out free health care services at the pre-primary school in the compound of No 24 Basic Education Primary School in Lewun Village, Ottarathiri Township, on 3 December.

A medical team comprising two doctors, nurses, midwives, health assistant and members of Red Cross Brigade and Maternal and Child Welfare Association led by Township Medical Officer Dr Shan Lian Thang of Ottarathiri Township Hospital (50-bed) gave health care services to about 200 people free of charge.

Three patients of them were referred to the township hospital.

Personnel of the Township Health Department provide free health care services to the local people in the villages monthly.—Shwe Ye Yint

Rural youths study basic computer technology

Thaton, 4 Dec — Future of the rural youth depends much on development of villages and uplift of living standard.

The government is implementing the rural development and poverty alleviation projects for improvement of the rural areas.

With the aim of broadening the horizon of the local youths in information technological sector, a basic computer course is being conducted in Kataikgyi Village in Thaton Township, Mon State.

“Local authorities manage the training course for the youths. The course is being conducted free of charge at the Dhammayon of Kataikgyi Monastery,” said village administrator U Myint Aye.

He continued, “Our village will consume electricity soon. Thanks to electrification, the local youth will have many opportunities to seek the ways for uplift of their living standard. A social organization provided four computer sets and technical assistance to the village authorities to be able to conduct the computer course for the youth. We have a plan to invite the youth from surrounding villages to join the work plan of the training course.”

The training course started on 25 November to date without holiday.

Ma Hnin Nanda Soe of Kataikgyi Village, a trainer of the course, said, “I am a graduate. Before joining the job, I will share my computerization knowledge and technology to my friends.”

Thet Oo (Thaton)

People enjoy new harvest feast

Dawphoneyang, 4 Dec — Shan Literature and Culture Committee in Mo- ele area of Dawphoneyang Sub-Township in Kachin State opened the new harvest feast at the Dhammayon in Phakay Village, Dawphoneyang, Kayah State, on 2 December.

Col Nyi Nyi Swe of the local station, Sub-Township Administrator U Aung Aung and local authorities formally opened the ceremony. Local people then enjoyed the new harvest feast. They also visited the booths displayed by departmental personnel and local people.—Township IPRD

Chin State marks International Day of Persons with Disabilities

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Chin State marks International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Haka, 4 Dec — A ceremony to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was observed at the city hall in Haka, city of Chin State, on 3 December.

Chief Minister of the State U Hong Ngai stressed the need to uplift living standard of the persons with disabilities to be able to join the nation-building tasks as much as possible.

Director of Chin State Relief and Resettlement U Lin Hsaw read the message for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Deputy Director U Chan Pe of State Department of Social Welfare, emergence of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and officials, aims of observing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Chin CBR tasks.—Chin State IPRD
Norwegian king and queen visit pottery in Yandabo Village

MANDALAY, 4 Dec—His Majesty King Harald V and Her Majesty Queen Sonja of Norway visited the pottery of over two hundred years old in Yandabo Village in Myingyan District of Mandalay Region and viewed the stone pillar marking the truce of the first Anglo-Myanmar War on Thursday.

The king and the queen arrived in Yandabo from Bagan by special vessel in the afternoon and viewed the production of pottery at the workshop of octogenarian U Ba Chit, where officials explained the production process and presented gifts to the king and the queen.

Traditional pottery production in Yandabo, which was handed down from generations to generations, dates back over 200 years when Myanmar was ruled by kings. Pottery from Yandabo has been distributed to the entire country since 2010 and the village has been a tourist attraction since 2011.

U Ba Chit said that he had never seen a foreign dignitary visit their village in his life of over 80 years and that he was glad to see the king and the queen who visited the village unexpectedly. He added that the king and the queen had a chance to enjoy the first-hand experience of pottery production and he hoped the royal visit would inspire youths in the village.

School teacher U Thein Oo was of the opinion that the king and the queen visited the village because they were attracted by photographs taken by Norwegian tourists.

Then, the king and the queen viewed the stone pillar marking the truce of the first Anglo-Myanmar War near the village and left for Mandalay on 24 February 1826, the British and Myanmar signed the truce near the villages after the first Anglo-Myanmar war which broke out from 1824 to 1826.—Thura Zaw

Myanmar, Australia ink MoU on migration management project

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Nov—Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi and Australian Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Scott Morrison MP signed an MoU on a border region migration management project on the last day of the Myanmar-Australia ministerial meeting on immigration and border protection in Sydney.

Under the five-year project, the Australian authorities will provide technical assistance and security training to enhance network communication at the international airports and jetties as well as border gates to implement the migration process between Myanmar and Australia.

During the visit, the Myanmar delegation observed Australia’s scheme for checking passports and related documents at international airports and its network structure, arrangement on issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards, implementation of a media department for immigration program and immigration laws.

At the meeting from 24 to 28 November, both sides discussed Australia’s aid to provide capacity building training for staff from the ministry, arrangements on taking census data, registering statistics and experience of population-related policies in Australia.—MNA

Complaints filed for youths detained by KIA

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Dec—The KIA, despite its participation in the peace negotiations with the government, is expanding its troops by recruiting forcibly. Young ethnic people who are leading their lives honestly are detained forcibly and are sent to Sai Aung Camp, Mon Sanyan Camp and Wai Kyaybhum Camp of battalion 3 of Brigade 5, where they are forced to do military training courses including new private training courses, corporate courses and officer courses.

Many of the trainees fled from the courses due to insufficient food, torture and racial discrimination and the KIA is trying to capture them again, according to Rakshine, Shan, Bamar and Palaung youths who recently fled from the training courses.

Complaints have been filed to the Human Rights Commission, international social organizations and the UN agencies for the safe return of the offspring of the local people to their parents, according to sources.—Myanmar

Correction

Please read “Girl Guides of Myanmar, Japan will open international camp in Nay Pyi Taw” at the head line of the story appeared in the lower part on page 2 of this daily issued on 1 December.—GNLM

Union FM sends message of felicitations to Thai Dy PM and FM

NAY PYI TAW, 5 Dec.—On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of the Kingdom of Thailand which falls on 5 December 2014, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.—MNA

Myanmar, UNICEF ink agreement to telecast children’s rights education programmes

NAY PYI TAW, 4 Dec—A memorandum of understanding has been signed between three ministries and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) at Thiri Mingala Hotel here on Thursday, officials have said.

The Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education entered an agreement with the UN agency to broadcast children’s rights education programmes designed to promote public awareness of childcare, health and education.

Reports said that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement joined the four entities to create televised programmes, which are expected to be aired next year.

The telecasts will provide the public with information of birth registrations, vaccination of measles and rubella, and children’s rights to education.

After the signing ceremony, Deputy Minister U Pike Hiway and Mr Suleman Malik of the UNICEF presented gifts to officials from radio stations as a token of their cooperation. They also looked round publications of children’s rights. MNA
Emperor, empress visit Hiroshima A-bomb memorial

Japan’s Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko offer flowers in front of a cenotaph for atomic-bomb victims at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, western Japan, on 4 Dec, 2014.—KYODO NEWS

Sino-Japanese ties “very important”, China’s Li tells Japanese experts

BEIJING, 4 Dec — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, in another sign of easing tensions between China and Japan, told a meeting Thursday with a long-established panel of experts that Sino-Japanese relations “are very important” not only for the two countries but also for the region.

Since the two countries normalized diplomatic relations (in 1972), China’s principle and basic policy toward Japan has been consistent. Li said at the meeting with members of the New Japan-China Friendship Committee for the 21st Century.

The meeting in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People took place after members of the committee agreed that deep mutual distrust between the two countries, particularly in the areas of politics and security, should be dispelled by having more exchanges in various fields.

Since taking office in March 2013, it was Li’s first meeting with a group of Japanese people in connection with bilateral issues, according to a Japanese government official.

Li said bilateral relations should be developed with the spirit of “taking history as a mirror and looking forward to the future” but he did not touch on specific issues such as persistent friction over the ownership of a small group of islands in the East China Sea, the official said. Li said China does not want to damage its ties with Japan and proposed that the two countries have more multilayered frameworks to consult a range of issues.

Japanese Post Holdings Co President Taizo Nishimuro, cost, Li said at the meeting told a press conference. The committee, an advisory body to the two governments, held a formal meeting for the first time since October 2011, following Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping last month.

Sino-Japanese ties “very important”, China’s Li tells Japanese experts

Tuynhagupit

Typhoon Hagupit which is currently heading towards the Philippines.—REUTERS

Turkey for lads — making a direct hit on the central Philippines, the forecasting website Tropical Storm Warning Centre of the US navy showed the storm veering north, closer to Manila. The Southeast Asian country was hit by extreme weather in 2013, said a report by a German

Indonesia to sink illegal foreign fishing vessels from Saturday

JAKARTA, 4 Dec — Starting Saturday, the Indonesian government will sink foreign ships conducting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing operations along the country’s sea borders, a Cabinet minister said on Thursday.

“We will take stern legal measures, including sinking the ships,” Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno told reporters after meeting President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo at the presidential office.

“According to her, showed small vessels surrounding a larger ship around the Natuna Islands, bordering the Sea, conducting open-sea transshipment of goods. The ships, she said, appeared to be Indonesian due to their flying the Indonesian flag and bearing Indonesian names. However, it turned out that all of their operators are foreign. The country’s 2009 Law on Fisheries stipulates that fishing operation patrol units are given the authority to implement special actions, such as the burning or sinking of foreign fishing ships caught in Indonesian

Territory, based on sufficient evidence and for the sake of duty,” Kyodo News
Russia depends on itself for economic development: Putin

The US global missile defence system, he said, threatens the security of not only Russia, but the entire world.

“I think it is detrimental to the United States itself, as it creates a dangerous illusion of invincibility and increases the desire for unilateral and, as we often see, injudicious decisions,” Putin said.

Russia, he noted, will not bow because “the more we retreat, the more our opponents will behave cynically and aggressively.”

The president ruled out curtailing cooperation with Europe and the United States, adding that Moscow will restore and broaden traditional ties “with the south of the American continent and will continue cooperation with Africa and Middle Eastern countries.”

Protestors block New York streets after officer cleared in chokehold death

NEW YORK, Dec 4 — Thousands of demonstrators disrupted New York City traffic into early Thursday after a grand jury decided not to bring charges against a white police officer in the chokehold death of an unarmed black man.

Mostly peaceful protests sprang up on Wednesday evening at locations throughout Manhattan, including Grand Central Terminal, Times Square and Rockefeller Centre, after the panel returned no indictment against Officer Daniel Pantaleo in the death of Eric Garner in July.

The US Justice Department said it was investigating to determine whether Garner’s civil rights had been violated.

The 43-year-old father of six was accused of illegally selling cigarettes on a sidewalk when Pantaleo put him in a chokehold from behind and tackled him with the help of other officers. Police said he had resisted arrest. The city’s medical examiner had ruled the death a homicide.

The deadly encounter on Staten Island, New York City’s least populous borough, was captured on a video that quickly spread on the Internet and fueled debate about how US police use force, particularly against minorities.

President Barack Obama said the grand jury decision spoke to “the concern on the part of too many minority communities that law enforcement is not working with them and dealing with them in a fair way.”

The decision poses the biggest challenge yet for New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who came into office in January promising to mend strained relations between black New Yorkers and the police department.

It was the second grand jury in just over a week to decline to prosecute a white policeman in the death of an unarmed black man. The decision by a panel in the shooting death of black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked a summer of violence, with businesses burned and loot ed in the St Louis suburb.

By contrast, the New York protests were civil, with about 30 arrests by midnight. Police were clearly showing restraint and allowing demonstrators to block traffic briefly before coaxing them to move on.

Marchers snaked through the streets for hours, chanting and bumping up against throngs of tourists in New York for the holiday season. Disparate clusters of protestors crossed through Times Square a number of times, and one group brought traffic on the West Side Highway along the Hudson River to a standstill.

Later, after marching from Central Park to lower Manhattan, some protestors crossed a bridge into the borough of Brooklyn.

Katha Souley, 35, was driving his taxi cab on Broadway when protestors blocked traffic. As he chanted along with demonstrators, he said he did not mind the delay. “You’ve got to stand up sometime,” he said.

In one of several “die-ins”, demonstrators laid on the pavement in silent protest about a block from where the Christmas tree lighting ceremony was under way at Rockefeller Centre. Police blocked the street, preventing marchers from interrupting the nationally televised event.

About a thousand people packed into the ornate main hall of Grand Central Terminal for a noisy but peaceful protest.—Reuters

Party's reviewing election tactics after polls show big LDP lead

Abe to Osaka on Thursday where the LDP is expected to face a tough battle in the western Japan prefecture.

“Stable employment conditions and appropriate retirement ages are needed (for Japan) to get out of deflation,” he said.

The Japan Innovation Party, the second-largest opposition force, has sent Kenji Eda, one of its two co-leaders, to eastern Japan and the other co-leader, Toru Hashimoto, who is also mayor of Osaka, to western Japan to give speeches.

As the election approaches, some opposition party leaders may not be able to move around so easily to support their party’s candidates due to concerns that they themselves are in danger of losing their seats.

Natsuo Yamaguchi, head of the LDP’s junior coalition partner Komeito party, plans to continue campaigning around the country in a bid to help the party win more seats in proportional representation section.

The latest opinion poll released by Kyodo News showed that all nine of Komeito’s candidates in single-seat constituencies are expected to retain their seats.

“Our party will continue to work hard without letting our guard down,” Yamaguchi said.

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People sit and block the Lincoln Tunnel as they protest against the grand jury decision to not indict the police officer in the death of Eric Garner in the Manhattan neighborhood of New York on 3 Dec, 2014. —REUTERS

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The US dollar could slide more than 5% against the Japanese yen in the next year as Russia and the European Union ramp up sanctions that are already weighing on the exchange rate, a veteran strategist said.

“More sanctions against Russia and EU sanctions against the 15 eurozone countries are going to weigh on the yen and the dollar which are already weak on other strategic factors,” said Keiha Souley, a former strategist at the Bank of Japan who runs his own consultancy in Tokyo, with assets of about 1 billion yen.

Souley said he expected the yen to strengthen against the dollar to 140 yen and the euro to 130 euros per dollar next year from around 115 yen per dollar and 118 euros per dollar now.

The dollar’s rally against the yen and the euro this month has threatened the fresh yen rally of this year, which has declined 12% against the dollar and 13% against the euro in the year to date.

The dollar could drop to 100 yen against the yen as the risk premium to own the yen on a cumulative basis could fall to a range of 0.6% to 1.5% against a 2% to 2.5% premium as in July, he said.

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Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is also leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), gives high-fives to supporters during his official campaign kick-off for the 14 December lower house election, at the Soma Haragama fishing port in Soma, Fukushima prefecture on 2 Dec. 2014.—REUTERS

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Hungary summons US envoy over McCain’s ‘neo-fascist’ comment

BUDAPEST, 4 Dec — Hungary’s Foreign Ministry summoned the US envoy on Wednesday after US Senator John McCain called Prime Minister Viktor Orban a “neo-fascist dictator.” The United States has become increasingly critical of Orban’s government, accusing him of getting too close to Russia since East-West tensions rose over Ukraine.

Hungary’s foreign minister called in Chargé d’Affaires André Goodfriend over McCain’s comments, made in the US Senate during a political spat over the appointment of Hollywood producer Colleen Bell as US Ambassador in Budapest. McCain, a Republican, told the Senate on Tuesday: “I am not against political appointees … I understand how the game is played, but … (Hungary) … is on the verge of ceding its sovereignty to a neo-fascist dictator, getting in bed with Vladimir Putin, and we’re going to send the producer of ‘The Bold and The Beautiful’ as the ambassador.” Bell has since been approved in the Senate and is expected to take up her position in Hungary.

“The Hungarian government ... rejects the words of Senator John Mc- Cain regarding the Hungarian Prime Minister and the relationship of Hungary and Russia.” Foreign Ministry State Secretary Lev- exte Magyar told national news agency MTI.

Noting Orban’s Fidesz party has won parliamen- tary, European, and local elections, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told MTI: “Hungarian citizens … articu- lated a very clear opinion … that everyone ought to respect.” He added that the Hungarian embassy in Washington would contact McCain’s office to inquire about the Senator’s words and their background.

McCain’s office in Washington reaffirmed to Reuters that the senator had been referring to Orban when he used the words “neo-fascist dictator.”

The US State Depart- ment distanced the US administration from the remarks. “I think it’s no surprise that there are a number of views Senator McCain has espoused that we don’t share,” Spokes- woman Marie Harf told a regular news briefing.

The United States, as well as European Union partners, has also criticized Orban for what they see as weakening democratic checks and balances and attacking non-governmen- tal organizations.—Reuters

N Korea likely to meet US security experts in Singapore

SEOUL, 4 Dec — North Korean officials could hold a meeting with US security experts in Singapore next month, Yonhap News Agency reported from Washington on Wednesday, citing diplomatic sources.

Both sides are looking into the possibility of holding such a meeting, though details have yet to be determined, such as the timing and participants, the report said.

North Korea’s chief delegate to the six-party talks on ending Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program, Ri Yong Ho, and his deputy, Cho Son Hui, are likely to attend the talks.

Former US special envoy for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth and former deputy six-party talks negotiator Joseph DeTrani are likely to represent the US side.

The six-party talks on ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons program have been deadlocked since late 2008.

The multilateral forum involves the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.—Kyodo News

Maritime guns for hire adapt to changes in sea piracy

SINGAPORE, 4 Dec — Cash-strapped maritime security firms are being forced to use fewer costly elite guards and to diversify into other businesses such as cyber security, as a steep decline in Somali pirate attacks and hotter competition erode fast-thinning margins.

Hundreds of security firms sprang up over the past seven years to offer protection to shipping companies, with scores of merchant vessels being boarded and sailors taken hostage in pirate raids off the coast of conflict-torn Somalia.

However, attacks in the Gulf of Aden and In- dian Ocean have dropped from a peak of 237 in 2011 to just 10 in the first nine months of this year, the lowest since the piracy scourge began in 2008, according to the International Maritime Bureau.

The fall has been helped by using armed guards, deploying naval forces and defending ships with barbed wire or fire hoses.

The cost of using guards has also halved as the sector has become more competitive, which though good for ship owners is bad for security firms.

“Day rates for em- barked teams are continu- ously being squeezed to rock bottom,” said retired rear admiral Vasilis Politis, managing director of Greek armed guard company Mar- line Security International.

The price for a security team to protect a ship has slumped from an average of $40,000 per voyage to around $18,000-$20,000, said Gerry Northwood, who previously command- ed the British Royal Na- vy’s Counter Piracy Task Group which detained 13 Somalis after an attack on a tanker in 2012.

A typical team comprises three or four guards, working round the clock and armed with semi-au- tomatic weapons to maxi- mize fire power and rifles for accuracy and range.

Faced with a tough- er operating environment, some firms have switched from using former US and British marines and special forces to cheaper alterna- tives including guards from India, the Philippines and Estonia, said Ian May, Asia manager for Protection Vessels International.

Declining revenue has encouraged industry con- solidation. Ambrey Risk, one of the biggest firms, bought the maritime security division of rival Drum Cussac this month, while Gulf of Aden Group Trans- sits shut in July.

Peter Cook, chief exec- utive of the Security As- sociation for the Maritime Industry (SAMI), said its membership had fallen from a high of 180 compa- nies in November 2012 to 140, and he anticipated fur- ther falls.

Companies are trying to expand into new areas including cyber security for ships and the offshore industry, port security and training coast guards.

Some are also offering protection in areas where piracy has increased such as West Africa, with 23 attacks recorded up to Sep- tember this year, and Asia, where almost 100 attacks were reported in the waters off Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.—Reuters

Obama, Hillary Clinton meet at White House but details are few

WASHINGTON, 4 Dec — US President Barack Obama met Hillary Clinton, his former secretary of state, on Wednesday but the White House declined to say whether they discussed her possible presidential candidacy in 2016.

A White House official said they informally discussed many issues during a private hour-long meeting in the Oval Office.

Clinton, who ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination against Obama in 2008, said in September she would probably decide whether to try again after the first of the year.

Obama said in an ABC News interview last month he expects Clinton to stake out some positions that differ from his if she seeks the nomination. Obama cannot run again under US law.

“She’s not going to agree with me on everything,” Obama told ABC’s “This Week With George Stephe- nopoulos.” “One of the benefits of running for president is you can stake out your own positions, and have a clean slate, a fresh start.”—Reuters
Assad says Syria war will be long, difficult

PARIS, 4 Dec — Syria’s conflict will be long and difficult and its army cannot be everywhere at once, President Bashar al-Assad said in an interview published by a French magazine on Thursday, in which he also vowed to remain in power.

Assad told Paris Match no one could predict when the war with insurgents seeking to oust him would end but said enemies had failed to win over the population, allowing the military to advance.

In extracts published on Wednesday, Assad also said US-led air strikes in Syria last September were an “illegal intervention” that had made no difference in the fight against Islamic State militants who are fighting government forces.

“The Syrian army cannot be everywhere at once. Where it is not present, terrorists take the opportunity to cross borders and infiltrate in one area or another,” said in the French language magazine comments translated by Reuters.

“It is not about a war between two armies, where one occupies a territory and the other another one. It is another type of war. We are dealing with terrorist groups that infiltrate a town or village. So this war will be long and difficult.”

The text was also carried by Syrian state media on Thursday.

The uprising against Assad began as peaceful pro-democracy street protests in March 2011 and gradually evolved into civil war after a fierce crackdown.

Assad said the army was progressing in many regions. Asked whether he saw his departure as the solution, he said:

“The state is like a ship the captain does not escape in the storm. He does not quit the deck. If passengers need to leave, then he is the last to go.”

He disputed a United Nations estimate that the conflict had killed nearly 200,000 people since 2011, saying figures in the media were exaggerated.

He dismissed the idea Syria’s military had allowed Islamic State to mature, saying the trainees appeared to be members of Libyan fighters in Iraq and Syria, travelling from scores of countries around the world, in the thousands.

Syria is on high alert for attacks by radicalised Muslims or by home-grown militants returning from fighting in the Middle East, having raised its threat level to high and undertaken a series of high-profile raids in major cities. D<br>
Bishop has said that at least 70 Australians were fighting in Syria and Iraq back by about 100 Australia-based “facilitators”.

The government, which recently warned that the balance between freedom and security “may have to shift”, is also introducing controversial data retention laws it says are needed to tackle security and criminal threats.

Critics say the data laws go too far in compromising privacy, will be too costly and could lend journalists and whistleblowers open to hefty prison sentences.

Kurdish Peshmerga fighters hold their weapons while celebrating atop an army vehicle as they move towards the Syrian town of Kobani from the border town of Suruc, Sanliurfa Province on 13 Oct, 2014.—Reuters

US military monitoring Islamic State training in Libya: general

WASHINGTON, 4 Dec — The US military is closely monitoring a nascent effort by Islamic State, the militant group that has overrun parts of Syria and Iraq, to train a couple of hundred fighters in eastern Libya, the commander of US forces in Africa said on Wednesday.

Army General David Rodriguez, head of the US Africa Command, said it was not yet clear how closely aligned the trainers were with Islamic State or whether the effort should be targeted by US forces.

He said he had not recommended US troops or air power to go after the training camps in the chaotic North African country at this point.

“We’re watching it very carefully to see how it develops,” Rodriguez told reporters at the Pentagon. “Right now it’s just small and very nascent and we just have to see how it goes.”

Rodriguez said the trainees appeared to be members of Libyan militiamen who were “trying to make a name or trying to make a connection.”

It was unclear whether they might join or invite other insurgents elsewhere once their training was complete, he said.

“It’s mainly about people coming for training and logistics support right now, for training sites, and that’s what we see right now. As far as a huge command and control network, have not seen that yet,” Rodriguez said.

“The numbers are somewhere around a couple hundred ... but again we don’t have a specific precise assessment of that right now,” he said.

Libya itself is caught in a conflict between two rival governments, one which is self-declared and was set up in Tripoli after forces from group known as Libya Dawn took over the capital in the summer, and another, internationally recognized government which operates from the eastern city of Tobruk.
Unity in diversity is our destiny
By Kyaw Thura

Myanmar had been enjoying stability and prosperity under its own monarchy over the course of history before falling under British occupation. Its days of glory have since then passed, leaving the country amid an independence struggle and then the games of power struggle soon after independence. In other words, the country has survived painful days, with its wounds still bleeding. A glance at what has torn the country apart in the past decades is enough to reveal that the pains have resulted from war, oppression, poverty and ethnic conflict, all of which are nowadays worsened by land-grabbing, corruption and economic injustice.

A multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, Myanmar needs to pay careful consideration to how to handle the rights of all ethnic groups and religious faiths so that it can be peaceful and prosperous as a democracy. Even with peace talks in progress, the problem of ethnic conflict remains unsolved. No matter how much we say we have a great love for peace, it is impossible to restore peace as long as stakeholders harbour a grudge against each other. It will not be far wrong to conclude that the country is now in a position in which we cannot afford even a single mistake. In spite of differences in race, gender and religion, people have one thing in common, which is love for peace.

Martin Luther King once marvelously stated, "We have guided missiles and misguided men", warning that the human race has been left with two choices, "either nonviolence or nonexistence".

Everyone has a dream and that dream is none but peace. Awayward, peace still remains a dream. It is high time that Myanmar evolved into a love-oriented society. Only then will we be able to dry the tears our beloved motherland has shed and clean the blood she has shed.

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.taw@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.

Bribery and Corruption
By Khin Maung Myint

These two words are inseparable like two lovers. Without bribery there won’t be corruption and without corrupted person there won’t be bribery. Please note that I did not say bribery, because even if there are no corrupted person there could be bribers, who will attempt to bribe to get favours and undue privileges. Bribery and corruption is a worldwide phenomenon that plagued every country, though they may vary in dimensions.

What is Bribery and Corruption?
I will try to define it from a layman’s point of view and not from the legal perspective. Bribery is an act of giving someone, with authority, a gift, either in kind or cash, to get that person’s favor, or in most cases, undue privileges. Corruption is an act of taking a bribe and going out of the way, or rather out of the procedure, to grant favors and privileges. Both bribery and corruption are criminal acts punishable by imprisonment.

Difference Between a Gift and a Bribe.
A retired judge once explained to me the difference between a gift and a bribe. He said, quoting the standing laws of those days, only fruits and flowers in small numbers can be accepted as a gift. However, if it is in abundance, that is, if some one gives you a truck-load of fruits or flowers it would amount to bribery. Here, fruits and flowers are just metaphors, what he meant was things that are of little value. According to him, cash cannot be accepted as a gift, whatever the amount and if taken, it is deemed as taking a bribe and is guilty of corruption.

Different Ways of Taking Bribe.
In the past, bribery and corruption is not so rampant as nowadays. In those days bribe money is dubbed “trou money. From that term it can be deduced that the amount is not much, thus it must be going on among the lower echelons of the bureaucracy only. Here, I would like to relate one interesting episode that will support my deduction. While I was posted at a far flung district town, there was an office superintendent (OS) at a certain office. People who came to that office for anything or to the OS would pocket it and left happily. I will leave the details for your imaginations, as to what was in that folded piece of paper.

Later the term changed to one table, indicating that the cost or the price of a bribe was increased and hence the level of the bribe taker or the corrupted person were getting higher. At present, I think the slang for bribing is pouring water, indicating the volume of money involved. I must admit I do not know how that expression came into being. However, I am sure the epidemics of bribery and corruption had spread further up the ladder of hierarchy. The methods of taking bribes, too, had changed over the years and have become more sophisticated than that of the old OS’s days. As there are too many ways of bribing and because they are just hearsays and I haven’t had the first hand knowledge, I would not expand on that matter. Nonetheless, I like to point out that a biscuit tin containing brownies only can be deemed as a gift, but if it is stashed with money, it would amount to be a bribe.

How to Tackle Bribery and Corruption.
There is a saying in Myanmar, "the floors decayed because of a leaky roof". If we repair or replace just the decayed floor without touching the leaky roof, it would not be effective. The floor will rot again. So what I would like to suggest, with goodwill and intentions, is to either replace or if still repairable, to start from the roof first. In other words, we must tackle this epidemic from top to bottom and not the reverse.

Another important factor for the successful eradication of bribery and corruption is to increase the salary of the employees at all levels. Here the Singapore’s example should be taken into consideration. Singapore may not be one hundred percent corruption free, but is among the list of least corrupted nations. The reasons—reasonable and appropriate salary and other financial assistances, enough to cover the expenses of the government employees, played a crucial role in controlling corruption. We don’t need to equal that of Singapore, but at least some improvements from the present status will do. Also it would be necessary to take criminal actions against those corrupted government service personnel. Administrative action alone would not be enough to deter the would-be bribe takers.

Looking forward to a corruption free society

Union FM meets IOM director general, ICRC official

Union FM meets IOM director general, ICRC official

By the nature of his work, an ICRC official plays a crucial role in controlling corruption. Employees, played a crucial role in controlling corruption.

Myanmar needs to pay careful consideration to how to handle the rights of all ethnic groups and religious faiths so that it can be peaceful and prosperous as a democracy. Even with peace talks in progress, the problem of ethnic conflict remains unsolved. No matter how much we say we have a great love for peace, it is impossible to restore peace as long as stakeholders harbour a grudge against each other. It will not be far wrong to conclude that the country is now in a position in which we cannot afford even a single mistake. In spite of differences in race, gender and religion, people have one thing in common, which is love for peace.

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Local farmers expect high yield of groundnut

YINMABIN, 4 Dec — Hsipapadetha-11 groundnut, sesame and sunflower plantations are thriving in rural areas of Yinmabin Township, Sagaing Region.

Hsipapadetha groundnut strain yielded over 60 baskets per acre.

Local farmers said that they spent K110,000 per acre on ploughing, seeding, weeding and pesticides in cultivation of groundnut and cost of quality groundnut seeds but can earn K500,000 per acre.

Tan Ko Ko (Yinmabin)

MWAF donates cash and kind to Philanthropic School for the Blinds in PyinOoLwin

PYINOOLOWIN, 4 Dec— Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation and Mandalay Region organized a function to donate rice, clothes and cash to Philanthropic School for the Blinds in PyinOoLwin, Mandalay Region, on 2 December.

Vice President of MWAF Daw Tin Tin Latt explained the purpose of donations. The federation officials donated K300,000 to the fund for construction of the two-storey building of the school and rice and clothes to the school officials.

Responsible persons of the federation enjoyed the entertainment of the students from the school.

They also donated books to the Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association in ward 4.

Philanthropic School for the Blinds in PyinOoLwin admits 86 men and 51 women, totalling 137 students and Maung Thein Hlaing Sai Myo Ad medals in the 7th ASEA Paralympics Games.—PyinOoLwin District IPRD

Chief Ministers of Sagaing Region and Kachin State visit India

NAGALAND, 4 Dec — According to press release of the Indian Embassy in Yangon, a 10-member delegation from Myanmar led by Chief Minister of Sagaing Region U Tha Aye and Chief Minister of Kachin State U Lajon Ngan Sai visited India from 30th November – 7th December, 2014 at the invitation of the Chief Minister of Nagaland. The visiting Chief Ministers from Myanmar were warmly welcomed by the Nagaland Chief Minister at the inauguration of Hornbill Festival, an annual cultural festival of Nagaland, India on 1st December, 2014. The Festival was inaugurated by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi. Also present on the occasion were Governor of Nagaland and Ambassador of India to Myanmar Gautam Mukhopadhyaya.

On 2nd December, the two Chief Ministers of Sagaing Region and Kachin State were the guest of honour at the festival of Kisama village and were also Chief Guests of Kwigwema village stone pulling ceremony.

The two Chief Ministers will then travel to Shillong, Meghalaya State to attend a two day Conference/Seminar on India’s North Eastern States and Eastern Neighbours: Engaging for connectivity, culture and prosperity by an intelligent third space in Shillong on 3rd and 4th December, 2014. The Seminar is being organized by the Asian Confluence, Divya Jeevan Foundation in collaboration with Indian Council for World Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs. The Seminar will address the complex and sensitive issues relating to the tremendous role that the civil society can play in the development of North Eastern part of India and as India’s land connectivity corridor to the greater economy of the South East and East Asia.

Chief Minister of Chin State U Hong Ngai along with 38 member delegation including cultural troupe visited Imphal to attend Sangai Festival, an annual cultural festival of Manipur State from 20th – 24th November, 2014. In November 2013, Chief Minister of Sagaing Region and Chief Minister of Mandalay Region visited Imphal and attended Sangai Festival.

The visit of Chief Ministers from Myanmar to the North East of India is yet another milestone in furthering relations between the bordering States of India and Myanmar which will go a long way in establishing greater people-to-people contact, opening new avenues of trade and cultural exchanges thereby bringing peace and co-prosperity to the entire region. The visits of Chief Ministers from the bordering States of Myanmar and to the North East India will provide impetus to the further expansion and deepening of India-Myanmar relations.

Indian Embassy

Vocational courses conclude in Dawhoneyang

DANWPHOINANG, 4 Dec — The Basic Domestic Science Course No 21/14 and the Advanced Tailoring Course No 12/14 concluded at the Vocational Training Course for the Women under the Education and Training Department recently. Momauk Township Administrator U Peter Daw La made a speech at the training school.

Col Nyi Nyi Swe of the local station, the township administrator, Kachin State Hluttaw representative U Sai Myo Aung and the sub-township administrator presented prizes to outstanding trainees from the courses.

Principal Daw Khin San Win of the school gave certificates to a trainee leader.

Officials viewed the works of trainees displayed at the school.

Township IPRD
Asia cheered by US economic resilience, euro struggles

Tokyo, 4 Dec — Asian stocks rose on Thursday amid fresh signs of resilience in the US economy, while the euro wobbled near two-year lows before a much-anticipated European Central Bank meeting that could open the door to more stimulus.

Tokyo: Nikkei climbed 0.8 percent to near 7-1/2-year highs, with sentiment buoyed by media projections suggesting a business activity is strong win for Japanese premier Shinzo Abe’s coalition at the 14 December election. A victory for Abe could lead to a new mandate for his “Abenomics” policies to revive the economy.

“Theres a activity in anticipation of extremely promising conditions being born,” said Hiyori Nakai, chief strategist at Tokai Tokyo Research Center Co in Tokyo. MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIALP0000CUS rose 0.4 percent, while Australian shares .AXJO were up 0.9 percent.

The Shanghai Composite Index .SSEC surged 2.3 percent as the rally on expectations that China would implement further stimulus measures showed no signs of abating.

Private payrolls and services sector data released on Wednesday underscored the US economy’s resilience.

That contrasted with the gloom in the euro zone, with a survey showing business activity grew less than expected in November and raised the spectre of another economic contraction. The euro struggled as a result. It fetched $1.2307 EUR=E after falling to a two-year low of $1.2301 overnight on the view that the ECB will be forced to inject even more stimulus to prop up the tottering euro zone economy.

While a full-blown quantitative easing programme after Thursday’s policy review is seen as unlikely, some believe the ECB may lay the groundwork for such a move early next year.

“The prospect of a sovereign bond buying programme is looking even more likely. It probably won’t begin tonight (however, we see further corporate bond buying tonight),” Evy Lewis, market strategist at IG in Melbourne, wrote in a note to clients.

“The prospect will only increase sentiment towards European equities.”

Spreadbetters forecasted a higher start for European stocks, with Britain’s FTSE .FTSE and Germany’s DAX .GDAXI seen opening 0.2 percent higher and France’s CAC .FCHI rising 0.1 percent.

Speculation the ECB will pave the way on Thursday for sovereign debt purchases has pushed down euro zone debt yields across the board. The Italian 10-year yield IT10YT=TWEB fell to a record low below 2 percent overnight, while the German rose to a new seven-year high of 119.955 yen JPY= after the upbeat US data further highlighted the diverging monetary policy paths of the United States and Japan.

Crude oil markets remained choppy after last Thursday’s decision by OPEC not to cut supply sparked volatility and a sharp price fall.

US crude futures CLc1 rose 67 cents to $68.05 a barrel after gaining the previous day on data showing a surprise tumble in US inventories. US crude has lost more than 30 percent so far this year, touching a seven-year low of $63.72 on Monday. [OR]

Gold’s advance was halted as the dollar’s strength pared the metal’s allure as an alternative investment. Spot gold XAU= dipped 0.3 percent to $1,205.40 an ounce after overnight. Spot gold XAU= gained 0.9 percent the previous day on firmer oil prices.

Reuters

SoftBank invests $250 mln in Southeast Asian taxi-hailing app GrabTaxi

SINGAPORE, 4 Dec — Japanese telecoms firm SoftBank Corp has pumped in $250 million to become the top investor in Southeast Asian mobile taxi-booking application GrabTaxi Holdings Pte Ltd, its biggest investment in a Southeast Asian Internet firm.

GrabTaxi, which allows customers to order cabs closest to their location by mobile phone, operates in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. In a statement, the two companies said the funding will be used to accelerate the app’s expansion in the region.

The investment in GrabTaxi comes about a month after SoftBank and its billionaire CEO and founder Masayoshi Son announced a $627 million funding into online marketplace Snapdeal as part of a plan to put $10 billion into India’s booming online retail market. SoftBank also said in October it will lead a $210 million investment round with existing investors in India’s ANI Technologies, which owns a mobile application for taxi bookings.

The Japanese firm is the largest investor in recently listed Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. Including the SoftBank investment, GrabTaxi has raised $340 million in funding. The statement did not disclose how much of GrabTaxi SoftBank will own.

Other investors in GrabTaxi, which was developed by two Harvard Business School graduates and launched in Malaysia in 2012 as MyTaxis, include a unit of Singapore state investor Temasek Holdings [TEMUL.L] and US investor Tiger Global Management. The app competes with Rocket Internet’s Easy Taxi as well as better known app.

Taxi-hailing apps have become popular in Southeast Asia, especially Singapore, one of the most expensive places in the world to own a private car.

Finding a cab during peak hours and during frequent tropical downpours can be difficult in the city-state, which last month said it planned to start regulating third-party taxi booking services for the first time.

Reuters

Scientists make breakthrough discovery to fight malaria

SYDNEY, 4 Dec — Australian scientists have made a breakthrough discovery in a new way to destroy the malaria parasite, which kills more than 500,000 people every year.

Scientists from the Australian National University (ANU), working with other research groups, have found that certain molecules are capable of disabling a molecular salt pump on the surface of the malaria parasite, and this in turn causes the parasite to fill up with salt and burst.

The ANU’s Professor Kiara Kirk said the malaria parasite had become sistent to nearly all of the drugs currently available and discovering new ways to kill the parasite was vital.

“It is critical that new ways are found to kill the parasite and thereby treat people with the disease,” he told Fairfax Media on Thursday. “We’ve discovered what seems to be a fatal weakness in the parasite.”

“The salt pump clearly plays a crucial role in the parasite’s survival, and what we have shown is that there are many different types of molecules that can stop this salt pump from working, and which thereby kill the parasite. This pump would seem to be a real Achilles heel.”

Kirk said the new treatment has already passed clinical trials and would be available in a few years. —Xinhua
New US spaceship set for Thursday test flight

CAPE CANAVERAL, 4 Dec — A new US spaceship designed to fly astronauts to Mars and other deep space destinations is poised to blast off on an unmanned test flight on Thursday.

A triple-booster Delta 4 Heavy rocket, built and flown by the Lockheed Martin Corp and Boeing Co joint venture known as United Launch Alliance, was cleared for its planned launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at 7:05 am EST (1205 GMT) Thursday, NASA said on Wednesday.

Perched atop the rocket, the biggest in the US fleet, is NASA's first Orion space capsule. It is due to make a 4-1/2-hour flight to test its heat shield, parachutes and other systems needed to ferry astronauts into deep space and return them safely to Earth. Meteorologists predicted a 70 percent chance the weather will be acceptable for lift-off on a launch that is part of the US space agency’s plan to land humans on an asteroid sometime around 2025 and on Mars about a decade later. “Tomorrow is a giant day,” NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden told reporters at the launch pad on Wednesday. “For the first time in more than 40 years this nation is going to launch a spacecraft intended to carry humans beyond low-Earth orbit. That’s a big deal.” NASA’s last human expedition beyond Earth was the final Apollo mission to the moon in 1972.

Flying the capsule without a crew allows NASA to aggressively test how well it fares beyond the protective environment of Earth’s magnetic field and a 20,000 mph (32,200 km/h) dive back into the atmosphere.

The rocket will take Orion about 3,600 miles (5,800 km) into space, some 15 times farther than where the International Space Station flies, before it plunges back to Earth. Key events, such as the jettisoning of aerodynamic panels and launch escape system and the deployment of parachutes, will be immediately apparent. How Orion weathered other aspects of the flight will not be known until engineers retrieve recorded data from more than 1,200 sensors aboard the ship. — Reuters

Spanish meteorological agency predicts “warmer than average” winter

MADRID, 4 Dec — The coming winter will see warmer than average temperatures throughout Spain, with the east of the country and the Balearic Islands enjoying especially warm weather.

That is the prediction for the months of January, February and March 2015 for the months of January, February and March 2015, with the east of the country warmer than average temperatures and, as AEMET also predicted, the winter will be colder than usual.

The warmer than average winter should also be translated into a wetter winter, according to AEMET, which gives a 45 percent chance of the country receiving more rainfall than usual, something that will be welcome in the southeast of Spain which suffered a serious drought during the first half of 2014. — Xinhua

Soap, sunscreen chemicals found in Antarctic waters: New Zealand research

WELLINGTON, 4 Dec — Polluting chemicals found in everyday soaps, cosmetics and sunscreens can be found in waters off Antarctica at the same levels as many urban areas of the world, according to research from New Zealand and Canada.

The active ingredients in personal care products — classed as emerging organic contaminants (EOC) that can harm the ecosystem or human health — were present in sewage effluents discharged from Antarctic research bases, said the University of Canterbury researchers.

The EOCs were found in coastal waters of the sparsely populated frozen continent at concentrations comparable to more urban areas in the world, including New Zealand, researcher Dr Phil Emnet said in a statement.

“We found contaminants along larger coastal areas than we expected. It is likely that the environmental conditions, including extreme cold, could have contributed to the persistence of some of these compounds in seawater. Sewage discharges may therefore be having greater impacts on a much wider area in marine environments than previously thought,” Emnet said.

The presence of EOCs was of international concern as many of the everyday chemicals were designed to be biologically active and could have adverse effects on marine organisms, but this had not been studied, researcher supervisor Dr Sally Gaw said in the statement.

“This study will lead to better waste management and monitoring systems being put in place for Antarctic research programmes,” Gaw said.

Dr Neil Gilbert, of the university’s Antarctic New Zealand research institute, said in the statement that the research had identified an opportunity to improve environmental management on the ice. — Xinhua

Google to introduce child-friendly versions of products — USA Today

NEW YORK, 4 Dec — Google Inc plans to roll out child-friendly versions of its most popular products in a bid to be “fun and safe for children”, USA Today reported, quoting Pavni Diwani, the company’s vice president of engineering.

The company will likely create specific versions of its search, YouTube and Chrome products for children aged 12 and under, USA Today reported, adding that Google did not provide a timeline for the rollout. (usat.ly/1wtsWTp)

“We want to be thoughtful about what we do, giving parents the right tools to oversee their kids’ use of our products,” USA Today quoted Diwani as saying.

A Google spokesperson declined to comment, but confirmed that the effort described in the report was accurate. — Reuters

Samsung mobile executives to leave after profit slide

SEOUL, 4 Dec — Three deputies to the head of Samsung Electronics Co Ltd’s mobile division are leaving, a person with knowledge of the matter said on Thursday, as the world’s largest smartphone maker faces a rapid decline in profit.

The person, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter, said the executives directly report to division chief JK Shin, who this week retained his post despite sagging smartphone sales and expectations the company will see its worst annual profit in three years in 2014.

The departures included global marketing chief DJ Lee, the source said, confirming earlier media reports.

Samsung Electronics declined to say if any executives were leaving the company as it announced its annual reshuffle for executive-level staff.

But the announcement showed Samsung had made 165 executive-level promotions, the lowest number in at least four years, underscoring the strains the South Korean company is under.

“Shin was given another chance, given his past contributions, but he will definitely continue to feel the pressure going forward,” said IBK Securities analyst Lee Seung-woo.

Samsung’s share of the smartphone market has fallen year-on-year for the last three quarters, squeezed by Chinese rivals like Xiaomi Technology Co Ltd [XTC.UL] at the low-end and Apple Inc’s iPhones in the premium segment.

Samsung Electronics is expected to announce its annual business reorganisation plan by next week. — Reuters
**Venezuela indicts opposition leader**

**Machado, alleging plot to kill Maduro**

CARACAS, 4 Dec — Venezuela has indicted hardline opposition leader Maria Corina Machado on charges that she took part in an alleged plot to kill President Nicolas Maduro, the state prosecutor’s office said on Wednesday.

Machado, who was at the forefront of major street protests against Maduro’s socialist government earlier this year, has dismissed the accusations as a charade meant to silence her and distract Venezuelans from a growing economic crisis. If found guilty, the former legislator could be sentenced to between 8 and 16 years in jail.

“Only our option is to fight for democracy and freedom,” Machado said after she was indicted at the state prosecutor’s office in Caracas on Wednesday.

“We’re at the doors of a transition period,” she said, draped in a yellow, blue, and red Venezuelan flag as dozens of supporters chanted her support.

One of Machado’s advisors said authorities had not ordered her immediate detention. There were no immediate indications the case could spark the same mass demonstrations that rocked Venezuela for three months earlier this year.

Machado, 47, was arrested on Friday in a crackdown on political dissent that rocked Venezuela on 4 Dec — Singapore will set up a multi-million-dollar fund for research on innovative teaching and learning in tertiary education, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat announced on Thursday.

The fund of 100 million Singapore dollars (about 76 million US dollars) will be available on a competitive basis for all researchers in institutes of higher learning, he said at a conference on higher learning at Nanyang Technological University.

With the new fund, the Ministry of Education will be promoting innovation and research on teaching and learning across all levels of education, from pre-primary to tertiary, he said.

Heng said that innovation in education is critical to helping people in the country to realize their potential.

“By learning about learning, by trying new ways, by rigorous evaluation and integrating promising approaches into a coherent whole, we can make meaningful education innovation,” he said.—Xinhua

**North Korea offers to send leader’s sister to event in the South**

SOUTH KOREA has offered to send the leader’s sister to a South Korean event planned for early next year, an organizer said on Thursday, which would be the first time an immediate family member of the ruling family would visit the South.

Kim Yo Jong is included in the North’s list of ruling party officials to participate in a joint food festival planned by a private South Korean group of businesses with ties in the North, an official with the group said.

Kim, who is believed to be 27, was identified by the North’s state media last week as a senior official of the Workers’ Party, the only other member of the ruling Kim family known to have an official role in the government. “A list of participants was sent to us, and (Kim Yo Jong) is in there,” Dongho Yong-man told Reuters.

The group is in discussions with the South Korean government over the event planned for Seoul, he said.

The South’s Unification Ministry, which handles relations with the North, did not immediately have comment when asked about the event. Most private exchanges between the rivals were halted after a torpedo attack against a South Korean navy ship in 2010, which Seoul has blamed on Pyongyang.

If it happens, Kim Yo Jong’s visit would mark the first visit by an immediate member of the Kim family in more than six decades of division.

South Korean presidents have travelled to the North for summit meetings with the current leader’s father, Kim Jong Il, in 2000 and 2007. But the North has not reciprocated the visits.—Reuters
Weathers Report

Forecast valid until evening of the 5th December, 2014: Isolated light rain are likely in Tanintharyi Region and Mon State, weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing and Yangon Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Kayin States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

State of the Sea: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Likelihood of isolated light rain in the Southern Myanmar Areas.

Claims Day Notice

MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (112)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (112) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.L.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority
Agent for: MS ORINET OVERSEAS CONTAINER LINES

Claims Day Notice

MV KOTA RESTU VOY NO (RSU-417)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA RESTU VOY NO (RSU-417) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority
Agent for: MS ADVANCE CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

Claims Day Notice

MV E.R. TURKU VOY NO (060W)
Consignees of cargo carried on MV E.R. TURKU VOY NO (060W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority
Agent for: MS HANJIN SHIPPIING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

Three Abu Sayyaf militants killed in S Philippine clash

ZAMBOANGA CITY, (Philippines), 4 Dec — Three Abu Sayyaf militants were killed after a fight with government troops in the southern Philippines on Thursday morning, the military said.

The fight started about 7 am in the Basilan Province, a southern island province, with Joint Task Group Basilan defeating militants led by Abu Sayyaf leaders Fuji Indama and Nurhassan Jannan three hours later.

Two soldiers were wounded and three militants killed in the fight, according to Reynaldo Yoma, commander of the Joint Task Force Zambalulta.

According to military source, pursuit continued as the militants retreated to the forest area of Tipo-Tipo town, where 14 Philippine Marines were beheaded in 2007.

The 400-strong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), founded in the early 1990s by Islamic extremists, is a violent Muslim terrorist group operating in the southern Philippines. The ASG is notorious for a series of kidnappings, bombings and even beheadings in southern Philippines over the past decades.

Xinhua

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Los Angeles, Dec — Taylor Swift climbed back to the top spot on the newly revamped US Billboard 200 chart on Wednesday, in a list that the trade magazine believes now more accurately reflects present-day music consumption.

Swift’s “1989” jumped from No. 2 to No. 1 this week with total album sales of 339,000 units, according to physical album sales, digital song sales and online streaming figures compiled by Nielsen SoundScan.

The new weekly Billboard 200 chart, previously measured only by physical and digital US album sales, will now include digital songs, of which 10 songs equal one album unit, and online streaming figures, where 1,500 streams equal one album unit.

In the case of “1989” this week, there were 281,000 copies sold of the full album, 580,000 songs purchased individually and 36,000 streams of music from “1989.” The lower streaming figure relates to Swift removing her entire catalogue of music from online streaming giant Spotify.

A cappella group Pentatonix climbed one spot to No. 2 as “That’s Christmas to Me” sold a total of 227,000 units, while rapper Eminem debuted at No. 3 with “ShadyXV” selling 148,000 units.

Last week’s chart-toppers, British boy band One Direction, dropped to No. 4 this week with “Four” selling 125,000 units.

Other new entries in the top 10 of the Billboard 200 this week include rapper Rick Ross at No. 6 with “Hood Billionaire” and R&B singer Beyonce at No. 8 with the “Beyoncé: The Life of an Icon.”

The much-awaited super-villain movie will also star Jared Leto, Margot Robbie, Jai Courtney and Cara Delevingne, following much speculation, reported Variety.

Based on the DC Comic, ‘Suicide Squad’ was confirmed when Warner Bros announced its DC film slate over the years.

The trio previously worked together with much ing role of Oola opposite Eddie Redmayne and Alicia Vikander in Tom Hooper’s ‘The Danish Girl’ for the strong support of Warner Bros and Warner Music.

Amber Heard to star in Tom Hooper’s ‘The Danish Girl’

Los Angeles, 4 Dec — Model-actress Amber Heard is in talks to join ‘The King’s Speech’ director Tom Hooper’s ‘The Danish Girl’ for the strong supporting role of Oola opposite Eddie Redmayne and Alicia Vikander.

The film sees Oscar-winning director Hooper re-teaming with ‘Working Title’ s Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner. The trio previously worked together with much success on ‘Les Misérables’, reported Deadline.

Inspired by the novel written by David Ebershoff, ‘Danish Girl’ is a love story about Danish painters Einar Wegener and his wife Gerda. In 1930, Wegener was one of the first men ever to undergo operations to become a woman. Lucrecia Cuxon adapted the screenplay.

Los Angeles, Dec — Hollywood stars Will Smith and Tom Hardy have joined the cast of ‘Suicide Squad.’ The much-awaited super-villain movie will also star Jared Leto, Margot Robbie, Jai Courtney and Cara Delevingne, following much speculation, reported Variety.

Jesse Eisenberg may also show up in the film as Lex Luthor, after he takes on the role in ‘Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice.’ The Warner Bros roots are deep on this one,” Warner Bros president Greg Silverman said in a statement. “We look forward to seeing this terrific ensemble, under David Ayer’s amazing guidance, give new meaning to what it means to be a villain and what it means to be a hero.”

Comedians have an inherent ability to observe human nature, Sundance Film Festival director John Cooper said. “With The Bronze, it makes the jokes into jokes most of the time, but now they’re actually stepping into it as a performance from understanding it.”

Amber Heard performs during the 2014 Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show in London on 2 Dec. — Reuters

Singer Taylor Swift performs during the 2014 Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show in London on 2 Dec. — Reuters

Will Smith, Tom Hardy join ‘Suicide Squad’

Los Angeles, 4 Dec — Comedy stars are the highlight of films exploring human nature and existence that will compete in the US drama category at the Sundance Film Festival next year, announced by organizers on Wednesday.

From “The Bronze,” co-written by and starring “The Big Bang Theory” actress Melissa Rauch as an ageing former gymnast, to “Flight of the Conchords” co-creators on Wednesday.

Sundance Film Festival director John Cooper (L), Executive Director Keri Putnam (2nd L), Founder and President of Sundance Institute Robert Redford and moderator Sean Means (R) address the media at an opening day news conference for the Sundance Film Festival at the Egyptian Theatre in Park City, Utah, on 16 Jan, 2014. — Reuters

Ed Sheeran tops Spotify most-streamed in 2014 chart

London, 4 Dec — British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran got 860 million plays on Spotify in 2014, the most for any artist this year, the online music streaming service said on Wednesday.

Sheeran’s 2014 album “X” also came first for the most streamed album, Spotify said.

Pop singer Katy Perry was the most streamed female artist on Spotify’s Year in Music list (here#section-story-1), while Coldplay was the most streamed band of the year. Pharrell Williams’s hit single “Happy” got the most plays by Spotify’s 50 million paying customers this year.

However, Avicii’s “Wake Me Up” still holds the position for the single most frequently played track in Spotify history, with more than 300 million streams, the Stockholm-based service said.

Spotify, which provides free on-demand music, or ad-free tunes for paying customers, has been in the spotlight in recent months after million-selling American singer Taylor Swift pulled her entire catalogue from the service. — Reuters

Comedy actors take spotlight in Sundance drama competition
Berdych inspires Singapore to first IPTL win

Singapore Slammers' Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic hits a return to Manila Mavericks' Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France during their men's singles match at the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) in Singapore on 2 Dec, 2014. — Reuters

ed the four-city mixed team tournament with four straight defeats but drew on the big-hitting Czech to overcome the Aces after looking a beaten side midway through the five single-set encounter.

With matches decided on games won rather than sets, world number one Serena Williams gave the hosts a perfect start with a rousing 6-4 victory over Ana Ivanovic, fighting back from 3-1 down to give a rocking Indoor Stadium plenty to cheer.

The tie then appeared to be slipping away from Singapore after Williams and Bruno Soares lost the mixed doubles 6-3 and an error-strewn Andre Agassi was thrashed 6-2 by Aces skipper Fabrice Santoro in the 'icons' singles match.

Trailing 16-11, Berdych entered to dominate Gael Monfils 6-2 in the men's singles, setting the stage for Australians Lleyton Hewitt and Nick Kyrgios going into the final set of the night, a men's doubles encounter against Monfils and India's Rohan Bopanna.

The Australians edged the contest 6-5 following a five-minute shootout when the scores were tied at 5-5 with Hewitt dedicating the victory to deceased cricketer and "dear friend Philip Hughes", whose funeral was held the night before.

Wednesday. The victory ensured the contest ended 23-23 meaning a seven-minute super shoot-out was needed to decide the winner and home captain Josh Eagle called on Berdych to take on a weary Monfils and his charge duly obliged 10-6 to secure the win.

"There's no better feeling than that," an elated Berdych said in a courtside interview. "It's great to share in such an important win with the guys and you can see that everything is possible in this game. We have our first win."

Earlier, the UAE Royals beat the Manila Mavericks 26-21 to close on the Aces at the top of the standings. After five rounds, the Aces have 18 points, with the Royals on 15, the Mavericks on 13 and the Slammers on 10. The tournament has one more night in Singapore before shifting to Delhi, where Roger Federer will play for the Aces, and concludes in Dubai on 31 December. — Reuters

Beckham group say Miami MLS deal will succeed

Miami, 4 Dec — David Beckham’s business group say his plan to bring a Major League Soccer team to Miami will happen and that they hope to “provide and exciting news” soon.

The comments come after Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber told Reuters on Tuesday that a search for a home for Beckham’s proposed team “can’t go on forever” and noted a number of other cities were lining up for expansion spots in the growing North American league.

Beckham announced in February his intention to exercise his option to own a MLS team but two proposed waterfront venues for the team in downtown Miami were subsequently rejected by local politicians.

Garber has repeatedly stated that a Miami team will be allowed in the league if a well-located stadium venue is found.

"The reality is that everything is progressing very well," said a spokesperson for Miami Beckham United, the group set up to launch the American league.

Former British soccer player David Beckham smiles at the Evening Standard Theatre awards in London on 30 Nov, 2014. — Reuters

This year may be hottest on record; adds urgency to climate talks: UN

Lima, 4 Dec — This year is on track to be the hottest on record, or at least among the very warmest, the United Nations said on Wednesday in new evidence of long-term warming that adds urgency to 190-nation talks under way in Lima on slowing climate change. Including this year, 14 of the 15 most sweltering years on record will have been in the 21st century, the UN’s World Meteorological Organization said.

"There is no standstill in global warming," WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said in a statement. “What is particularly unusual and alarming this year are the high temperatures of vast areas of the ocean surface."

The WMO said average sea surface temperatures hit record highs in 2014. On land, it listed extremes including floods in Bangladesh and Britain and droughts in China and California. Reliable global temperature records date from about 1850.

If temperatures stay similarly above normal for the rest of the year, “2014 will likely be the hottest on record, ahead of 2010, 2005 and 1998,” the WMO said, based on temperatures for January to October. A cool finish would push 2014 down the list.

Christiana Figueres, head of the UN’s Climate Change Secretariat, called the heat “bad news” that showed a need for action to limit rising greenhouse gas emissions.

"The urgency is actually to get... hopefully within this decade, to the turning point" to start cutting emissions, she said. The Lima talks are working on a deal to limit climate change, due to be agreed in Paris in a year’s time. — Reuters
Chelsea march on, Aguero keeps Man City in the mix

LONDON, 4 Dec — Chelsea's inexorable Premier League title march continued with a consummate 3-0 triumph over Tottenham Hotspur and champions Manchester City stayed second with a 4-1 canter at Sunderland on Wednesday.

Southampton's challenge suffered further deflation with a 1-0 defeat at Arsenal, but the pacesetters took full advantage with Chelsea making it 21 games unbeaten this season thanks to goals from Eden Hazard, Didier Drogba and Loic Remy. The 36-year-old Drogba proved a splendid replacement for suspended top-scorer Diego Costa, grabbing his first chance within two minutes of Hazard's 19th-minute opener before his replacement Remy also netted to seal the points.

The performance of the seemingly ageless Drogba earned high praise from his team mate Hazard. "He does everything, he's very important for the team and every game he comes in, he plays very well. It is a pleasure to play with him," the Belgian told Sky Sports.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, promising there would be no let-up in his side's title push, was also delighted. "Tottenham started better than us and should have scored before us, but after our first goal our team became more stable and confident and we controlled the game," he said.

"I'm really happy with the points, performance and spirit of the players." The only cloud on the horizon for Mourinho was that his towering midfield anchor, Nemanja Matic, will be unavailable for Saturday's match at Newcastle after picking up a suspension for his fifth booking. Chelsea's victory, which continued their amazing record of being unbeaten by Spurs at Stamford Bridge for 24 years, maintained their six-point lead over City, who came from behind to crush Sunderland at the Stadium of Light.

The champions were once again grateful to the league's leading marksman Sergio Aguero who produced a sublime display, scoring twice with his 13th and 14th league goals of the season.

The Argentine struck two minutes after Connor Wickham had put Sunderland ahead on 19 minutes, equalising with the sweetest of strikes. He then set up Stevan Jovetic six minutes before the break, Pablo Zabaleta added a third and Aguero, in the 71st minute, completed the rout.

Extraordinarily, it meant that Aguero, the man with the best goals per game strike rate in Premier League annals, has now scored 30 in his last 33 league matches for City.

City manager Manuel Pellegrini had bad news for Premier League defenders too by suggesting that we have not seen the best from the Argentine yet.

"Sergio is only 26 and he can improve every day," he told the BBC.

"At the moment we are seeing very high performances from him. Not only is he scoring but he's playing well as well."

Southampton, whose high-flying start to the season was arrested in a 3-0 defeat by City on Sunday, slumped to a second successive defeat with an 89th-minute Alexis Sanchez goal finally breaking their resistance at the Emirates.

ZAURICH, 4 Dec — The FIFA Ballon D'Or award has become a painful reminder of the sorry state Italian football, Juventus and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon said on Wednesday. Italy has not had a player on the final shortlist of three since Fabio Cannavaro was voted World Player of the Year in 2006.

"The fact that no Italian has been nominated forces us to understand the situation our football is currently in, and confirms that the technical and individual quality of our players has declined," Buffon said in an interview with FIFA.com. "I don't know if we have a young, talented player coming through who can aspire to win this sort of award in the future.

On the comeback, Woods has same expectations — win

WINDERMERE, 4 Dec — Tiger Woods has not played competitively in nearly four months, but the injury plagued former world number one has not altered his mindset for this week's Hero World Challenge event — win.

Winning is something Woods has not yet done this year, in a truncated season marked by back surgery in March and struggles after his attemptful return that forced him to set aside his clubs after missing the cut at PGA Championship in August.

The 38-year-old proclaimed himself healthy and on the way back after working with a new swing consultant, if perhaps a bit rusty.

"It felt good to be out there," Woods told reporters after Wednesday's pro-am on the eve of the opening round of the elite 18-player event that benefits his foundation. "Obviously, being playing at home with my boys for a little bit of cash, but still (that is) a little bit different. Every shot counts a little bit more. (But) Felt good."

It also felt comfortable for Woods, who is staging the event this year at Isleworth the enclave he had been home for over a decade before moving to Jupiter Island.

"Watched the first two, three, four balls and then it hit me — Oh, wait a minute, he hasn't played in a while. It looked like he was just kind of riding a bike..."

Steve Stricker said after sharing the driving range.

"Didn't look like he was getting in his way. Looked like the club was going through a lot free. Looked like it was on a better path."

Zach Johnson, the 2007 Masters champion, also had a favorable impression. "It looked great. I mean, the compression looked there, the turn looked there."

"I watched the first two, three, four balls and then it hit me — Oh, wait a minute, he hasn't played in a while. It looked like he was just kind of riding a bike..."

The bulky back limited Woods to eight tournaments in a season in which he missed two cuts and withdrew from two events.

Stricker warned not to count Woods out.

"I think if he starts swinging it better and starts feeling good about what he's doing again, it won't take long for him to be at the top of the game again," he said.—Reuters