Time for all national brethren to draw lessons from bitter experiences and strive to terminate all forms of conflict

NAY PSI TAW, 10 Jan—The following is the message sent by President Agga Maha Thayay Sithu, Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Theirin Sein on the occasion of the 67th Anniversary Kachin State Day.

I would like to extend my heartiest greetings to all the national brethren in Kachin State. It is a great pleasure that I am privileged to send a message on the occasion of the 67th anniversary of Kachin State Day, which falls on 10 January.

The Kachin State Council had its first conference on 10 January 1948, six days after independence, and formed its local government. And the day has since been honoured as “Kachin State Day” without missing a single year. Now it turns 67.

We have undergone armed conflicts resulting from political flux following independence. The time has come for all national brethren to draw lessons from these bitter experiences and strive together to bring an end to all forms of conflict and live in harmony.

Only when stability and peace prevail will Kachin State develop on all fronts. The Union Peace-making Central Committee (UPCC) and the Union Peace-making Working Committee (UPWC) have been formed to ensure peace all over the country, including Kachin State. In 2013 and 2014 in Myitkyina, the Union Peace-making Working Committee held talks with a delegation of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and signed agreements. As a direct consequence of the talks, KIO could open its liaison office in Myitkyina. In addition, a negotiation team comprising representatives of both sides was formed with a view to preventing further fighting.

What’s more, the UPWC and ethnic armed groups had a meeting in Myitkyina in a bid to sign a nationwide ceasefire agreement, and they could issue a joint communiqué. Efforts are under way to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA with ethnic armed groups, including the KIO.

It is imperative that all national brethren in Kachin State, hand in hand with the local government, should lend themselves to accomplishing the peace process being undertaken by the Union Government. Furthermore, all Kachin national brethren are encouraged to entertain Union Spirit, a genuine patriotism, with their resolve to turn the Republic of the Union of Myanmar into a prosperous country with flourishing democracy.

Buddhist Art of Myanmar on view in New York

February 10 through May 10, 2015

YANGON, 9 Jan—Asia Society Museum presents a landmark exhibition of spectacular works of art from collections in Myanmar and the United States. Buddhist Art of Myanmar comprises approximately 70 works from the fifth through the early twentieth century and includes stone, bronze, and lacquered wood sculptures as well as textiles, paintings, and ritual implements. The majority of works in the exhibition on loan from Myanmar have never been seen in the West.

On view in New York from February 10 through May 10, 2015, the exhibition showcases Buddhist objects created for temples, monasteries, and personal devotion, presented in their historical and ritual contexts. Exhibition artworks highlight the long and continuous presence of Buddhism in Myanmar since the early first millennium, as well as the unique combination of style, technique, and religious deities that appeared in the arts of Buddhist Myanmar.

Buddhist Art of Myanmar includes loans from the National Museums in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, the Bagan Archaeological Museum, the Kaba Aye Buddhist Art Museum, as well as works from public and private collections in the United States. The exhibition is organized by guest curators Sylvia Fraser-Lu and Donald M. Stadtner in conjunction with Adriana Proser, Asia Society’s John H. Foster Senior Curator for Traditional Asian Art.

Gov’t officials, civil societies take steps to bring National Land Use bill to parliament

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 9 Jan—The Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry and civil societies started to take steps for legislating the National Land Use Policy bill as the bill was put to a referendum in November last year.

The law would guarantee justice and fairness between people and investors, said a ministry official who participated in drafting the bill.

During the referendum, suggestions and objections came from farmers in 17 townships and amendments were made to the bill, he said. The bill sets out a system for confiscating land for government projects that gives compensation to landowners and allows for relocation, according to the ministry.

The bill was drafted by officials of the ministry and the Office of the Attorney-General of the Union and they are working together with civil societies to put it forward to parliament. When drafting the bill, the officials deleted sections not in conformity with current situations and included provisions that would benefit the people, a ministry official said.

Private law experts, giving their own views on the bill, say the legislation focuses on the investment sector and fails to give guarantees of traditional land ownership rights.

The National Land Use Policy bill contains 19 chapters and clauses to systematically manage and use land in the country in the interest of the country and the people, to promote socio-economy of the people and to conserve the national environment, according to the ministry.—GNLM

MPT to introduce better services at lower charges on 12 January

By Khin Yadana

YANGON, 9 Jan—Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications is introducing a new service called “Swethaha” to its subscribers, starting from 12 January, lowering its call and message charges to K 35 per minute and K 15 per message and substituting its minute-based system of for data charges with megabyte-based system of K 15 per Mb, according to Mr. Nagashima, Chief Executive Officer of MPT-KD-Di-Sumitomo.

Under the new service, MPT subscribers are not required to apply for the data connection as before and will be able to enjoy 50 Mb of data free of charge between 12 January and 31 March.

Prepaid MPT customers who would like to use the new service are to subscribe it by sending a message “SWE” to 1332 and postpaid customers are to send message “POSTSWE” to the same number.

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications introduces communication services to the people to be on a par with local and foreign communication companies.—TIN SOE (MYANMA ALINN)
Basic education students join aerobic contest

Muse, 9 Jan — Muse Township Inter-Basic Education School Aerobic Contest was held at No 1 Basic Education High School in Muse, northern Shan State on 6 January. Chairman of Muse District Women’s Affairs Organization Daw Htar Htar Win, Chairman of District Sports and Physical Education Committee Daw Win Thiri Hlaing and officials supervised the contest.

The chairperson of the District WAO presented K100,000 to first prize winning team BEHS No 1, K75,000 to second prize winning team BEHS No 2 (A) and K50,000 to third BEHS No 2(B).

She also donated K50,000 to the fund of BEHS No 1.

Plan to conduct polling household cost for designation of minimum wage

Mandalay, 9 Jan — A training course for polling household costs to designate minimum wage, conducted by Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, was opened at Myoma House in Aungmyethazan Township on 8 January.

Mohnyin Township to get detour for better transport

Mohnyin, 9 Jan — Local authorities are constructing a detour of Mohnyin.

Kachin State government allotted K5.86 billion on construction of an eight-mile and six-furlong long and 12-foot wide asphalt road. An aim has been set to complete construction of the road in 2014-15 fiscal year.

Local people demanded construction of a detour of Mohnyin because heavy machinery, fuel bowser and trucks with logs going to jade mines in Phakant Township caused damage to Shwebo-Myitkyina road and local roads in Mohnyin.

The detour will lie along the foot of a hill, east of Mohnyin. It will have a 300 feet long and 30 feet wide RC bridge identified Nantyin Creek Bridge. Thein Than Htay, Swan Ah Pyae, Mann Pyi Tadun, Kaung Kin Lwin and En Khun Mai construction companies are building the road sections, Engineer of Township Public Works U Aye Lwin told media.—GNLM-001

Dry Zone Greening Department gives A-1 stoves to locals

Myint Sein of the DZGD explained use of A1 stoves for saving firewood, minimizing cost for firewood and preventing deforestation.

He presented stoves to Myingyan District’s deputy commissioner U Myint Thin Aung.

Nay Pyi Taw MCWSC turns out tailors

Patron Daw Kyin Khaing presented the first prize to Ma Khaing Khaing Lwin; Secretary-2 Daw Ahmar, second to Ma Myint Zin Htoo, and Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw MCWSC Daw Aye Aye San, third to Ma Thein Thein Nwe.

Chairperson Daw Thida Kyaiung of District MCWSC presented gifts to a trainer.

The patron of the association and party viewed clothes made by trainees in their practical exercises.
Tipitaka examination continues for 13th day

YANGON, 9 Jan—The 67th Tipitakadharap Tipitakalovida selection examination continued for the 13th day at Maha Pasana Cave on Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Mayangon Township, here, on Friday.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs U Soe Win paid homage to monks who joined the oral test in the examination and donated offerings to nine Ovadaçarjya abbots of the examination.

A total of 186 members of the Sangha entered the oral test and 158 monks the written examination. The 33-day Tipitaka examination is being conducted by the Department of Religious Affairs from 28 December 2014 to 29 January 2015.

On Friday, 57 monks joined the oral test of the examination.—MNA

UN Special Rapporteur visits Rakhine State

SITTAW, 9 Jan—Ms Yanghee Lee, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, arrived here, on Thursday, with her team and held discussions with Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Maung Maung Ohn in Sittway on Thursday.

The discussions focused on latest developments in Rakhine State, implementation and impacts of the action plan, stability of conditions of victims in relief camps after the Rakhine State conflict, improvement of conditions of victims in relief camps, local people resistant to leaving camps, and reconciliation of local communities living side by side peaceably.

During her visit to the camps, local people requested Ms Yanghee Lee not to use expressions that will instigate others or destabilize the situation and she told them she would be careful with her expressions in the future before urging the two communities to live together peacefully.

Sein Lwin Aung

S&T Ministry to improve computer science development law

NAY PYI TAW, 9 Jan—Strenuous efforts are to be made for enhancement of computer and technology development law and improvement of computer science development law, it was held.

The ceremony is to be held in accordance with the law and although some locals refused to accept compensation for their land, the land can be confiscated for the state project under section 16 of the land confiscation law, the secretary said.

The deputy minister said that the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw assigned duty to the Ministry of Information Technology Department to improve computer science development law promulgated in 1996 after revoking the existing laws. The Task Force Team for the law is to discuss revised computer science development law that will protect the national interest.

The director-general of Advanced Science and Technology Department reported remarks from ministries and sectors to be included in the new law. Rectors and officials of the department participated in the discussions.

Other recommendations are also under implementation, the secretary, adding that the Letpadaungtaungpa goda and religious edifices have been moved in accordance with religious traditions to another place where larger edifices with same designs were built and people are now visiting them with great admiration.

The committee had paid over K 11 billion for land compensation and even fulfilled the needs of local people although they were not included in the recommendations by paying discount salaries biannually to local people who are still waiting for their jobs, according to the secretary.

The land at the project site was confiscated for a state project in accordance with the law and although some locals refused to accept compensation for their land, the land can be confiscated for the state project under section 16 of the land confiscation law, the secretary said.

Former Sede, Zeedaw, Wethmay and Kantaw villages are included in the curfew area and the villagers had moved to new and better houses built at new villages after receiving expenses for demolition of their former houses and moving to new houses on their own accord but some villagers are still living at their former villages due to the instigation of outside organizations and networks that aim to destroy the project, the secretary added.

The secretary also said that on 22 December 2014, villagers with swords and rods tried to disturb the police providing security for fencing the project site and although the police handled the situation in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations, a local was killed and nine others were injured while a policeman lost one of his eyes and another policeman was injured. An investigation is also underway for the incident, the secretary added.

Legal action has been taken against the organizations that instigated the villagers, the secretary said.—MNA

Education Ministry honours literary award winning education personnel

YANGON, 9 Jan—A ceremony to honour winners of Life-long Achievement National Literary Award, National Literary Award and Sarpy Beikman Manuscript Award who had served at the Ministry of Education was held at Diamond Jubilee Hall on Pyay Road, here, on Friday.

Director-General in-charge Dr Zaw Mynt of Department of Myanmar Language Commission made a speech.

Union Minister for Education Dr Daw Khin San Yi presents gift to U Tin Hlaing (writer Ledwinthar Saw Chit).—MNA

Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn receives Yanghee Lee, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.—SEIN LWIN AUNG

Implementation Committee for Letpadaungtaung Copper Mine Project report holds press conference

NAY PYI TAW, 9 Jan—Implementation Committee for the report on Letpadaungtaung Copper Mine Project held a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday, with its secretary saying that 29 out of 42 recommendations of the reports have been implemented.

The implemented recommendations included seven recommendations for land compensation, 12 recommendations for environmental issues, eight recommendations for social economic lives of local people and two recommendations for religious edifices, according to Secretary U Tin Myint of the implementation committee.

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S&T Ministry to improve computer science development law
Plan to vaccinate over 1 million of children against measles, German measles in Mandalay

**Mandalay, 9 Jan** — A press conference on mass immunization campaign of measles and German measles for under 15 children was held at Swan Hotel, here, on 8 January.

The vaccination will be jointly conducted by Ministry of Health, World Health Organization, UNICEF and GAVI.

At the press conference, Head of Mandalay Region Health Department Dr Than Win said that vaccination will be given to students under 15 at the school for the first programme and to children under 15 in the community for the second programme. Assistant Director Dr Htar Htar Lin of Health Department said that measles is a quick infectious disease. People need to receive vaccination for measles two times at 9 months old and 18 years.

German measles vaccination will be given to the youths in 2015 programme.

Assistant Director Dr Thiha explained the purpose of providing vaccination to the people and infection of these two diseases.

Information officer U Ye Lwin of UNICEF (Myanmar) said, “UNICEF and WHO will provide vaccination equipment and technology to the Ministry of Health. GAVI will donate vaccination for the programme. The group estimated to donate over 17 million ampoules for Myanmar.”

The mass immunization of measles and German measles will be carried out twice in Myanmar from 19 to 27 January and from 19 to 28 February.

Officials estimated vaccination will be given to over 1 million children in Mandalay Region.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Firefighters participate in fire drill at Kyaunggon Myoma market

**Kyaunggon, 9 Jan** — Township authorities organized the fire drill at Myoma market in Kyaunggon, Ayeyawady Region, on 3 January.

Personnel of Township Fire Services Department, members of auxiliary fire brigade and police participated in the fire drill.

The fire drill was supervised by Township Administrator U Kyaw Aung Hsan, Head of Township Fire Services Department U Tin Win and officials.

David (Kyaunggon)

Township officials checks fuel stations in Myingyan

**Myingyan, 9 Jan** — Myingyan District’s deputy commissioner U Myint Thin Aung and officials of District Police Force, Development Affairs Committee, Fire Services Department, Internal Revenue Department and Trade Promotion Department inspected fuel stations, fuel tanks and warehouses in Myingyan, Mandalay Region, on 7 January.

They checked permits for fuel distribution, installation of fire extinguishers, service of security personnel, quality of fuel, and systematic keeping of accounts.

Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

Carrot marketable in Nay Pyi Taw

**Nay Pyi Taw, 9 Jan** — Local farmers cultivate carrot plants in Thahtaygon, Nweyit and Kyathay-aing villages in Taikon Township.

The farmers now earn income from carrot grown in early November. Likewise, farming workers also earn daily wage for their families from weeding and nurturing the plants.

In the cold season, vegetables are marketable in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. The 45-day carrot plants can be sold at the market.

Shwe Ye Yint

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Plan to vaccinate over 1 million of children against measles, German measles in Mandalay
Indonesia official says ‘pings’ detected in search for AirAsia flight recorders

Jakarta, 9 Jan — Indonesia search and rescue teams hunting for the wreck of an AirAsia passenger jet detected pings in their efforts to find the black box flight recorders on Friday, an official said, 12 days after the plane went missing with 162 people on board.

Indonesia AirAsia Flight QZ8501 vanished from radar screens on 28 December, on its way into a two-hour flight from Indonesia’s second-biggest city of Surabaya to Singapore. There were no survivors.

Forty-eight bodies, including at least two still strapped to their seats, have been found in waters off Borneo, but strong winds and high waves have hampered efforts to reach larger pieces of suspected wreckage detected by sonar on the sea floor.

The Airbus (AIR.PA) A320-200 carries the cockpit voice and flight data recorders near the tail section. Officials had warned, however, that they could have become separated from the tail.

Santoso Sayogo, an investigator at the National Transportation Safety Com- mission, said it appeared that the flight recorders were no longer in the tail.

“We received an update from the field that the pinger locator already detected pings,” he told Reuters.

“We have our fingers crossed it is the black box. Divers need to confirm. Unfortunately it seems it’s off from the tail. But the divers need to confirm its position.”

The tail was found on Wednesday, upturned on the sea bed about 30 km (20 miles) from the plane’s last known location at a depth of around 30 metres.

Indonesian search teams loaded lifting balloons on to helicopters on Friday ahead of an operation to raise the tail.

“The head of the search and rescue agency, Fransiskus Bambang Soelistyo, said he assumed the flight recorders were still in the tail and that reports they had separated had yet to be confirmed.

“The divers are tying the tail with straps and then we will try to (lift it) two ways — floating balloons combined with cranes, so that the tail sector wouldn’t be damaged,” he told report- ers. “Because we assume the black box is in the tail section.”

He said two bodies had been found still attached to their seats, with local television reporting that one of the recovered seats was from the cockpit.

“Looking for victims is still our main priority beside the black box,” he said.

Relatives of the victims have urged authorities to make finding the remains of their loved ones the priority.

Indonesia AirAsia, 49 percent owned by the Malaysia-based AirAsia (AIR.AX), budget group, has come under pressure from the authorities in Jakarta since the crash.

The transport ministry has suspended the carrier’s Surabaya-Singapore licence, saying it only had permission to fly the route on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays.

Flight QZ8501 took off on a Sunday, though the ministry said this had no bearing on the accident.

While the cause of the crash is not known, the national weather bureau has said seasonal tropical storms common in the area were likely to be a factor.

Japan, China to discuss maritime crisis management Monday

Tokyo, 9 Jan — Japan and China have agreed to hold a working-level meeting in Tokyo next Monday to launch a maritime crisis management mechanism in 2015, defence sources said on Friday.

The two countries will resume talks on an oft-canceled clashes around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea — unin- habited islands controlled by Japan but claimed by China.

During their first summit talks in November, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Xi Jin- ping agreed to ease tensions over the sovereignty of the islands and establish the crisis management mechanism.

Chinese patrol ships and airplanes have been repeatedly spotted around the islets, which Beijing calls Diaoyu, keeping Jap- anese authorities on alert.

Attending the upcom- ing meeting are officials from Japan’s Defence Ministry and Maritime Self-Defence Force, and China’s Defence Ministry.

In 2012, Japanese and Chinese defense authori- ties reached a basic agree- ment to set up a hotline, and use a common radio frequency for their ships and planes around the Sen- kakus.—Kyodo News

Japan adopts new space policy focusing on security

Tokyo, 9 Jan — The Japanese government approved on Friday a new space development policy focusing on security, with an aim to boost the total value of the country’s space industry to 5 trillion yen over the next decade.

Under the 10-year Ba- sic Plan on Space Policy, the government said it will enhance cooperation with the United States in the area of security.

To reduce danger of space debris, Japan will work to establish systems and develop technology to monitor them by sharing information with the United States. Japan also plans to have a network of seven “quasi-zenith satellites” over the next 10 years to complement the global-positioning system operated by the United States.

The country aims to launch the first version of the next-generation flagship rocket in fiscal 2020 that will replace the H-2A rocket, while plan- ning to finish enhancing the launch capability of its solid-fuel rocket Epsilon as early as the end of fiscal 2015.

For space exploration, it plans to launch three midsize satellites and five small satellites. Regarding the US-proposed plan to extend the operation of the International Space Station through 2024, an international project in- volving Japan, Tokyo will make a decision by the end of fiscal 2016.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2nd from R), next to Shunichi Yamaguchi (3rd from R), minister of state for space policy, addresses a meeting at Strategic Headquarters for Space Policy at his office in Tokyo on 9 Jan 2015.—Kyodo News

Thai assembly begins impeachment hearing against former PM Yingluck

Bangkok, 9 Jan — Thailand’s parliament began an impeachment hearing against former Prime Minis- ter Yingluck Shinawatra on Friday that could lead to her being banned from politics for five years and stoke ten- sion in the divided country.

Yingluck, Thailand’s first woman prime minister, was removed from office for abuse of power in May and days later her government was ousted in a military coup that ended months of street protests against her by her rivals.

Yingluck remains pop- ular among the rural poor who elected her in a 2011 landslide, as does her broth- er, ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra, and the impeach- ment hearing could test a fragile calm under mil- itary rule.

In her opening state- ment to the military-ap- pointed National Legislative Assembly, Yingluck said the proceedings were futile as she no longer held any political post.

“I was removed from my position as prime minis- ter. I have no position left to be removed from,” Yingluck told the assembly.

About 20 of Yingluck’s supporters gathered outside parliament despite government warnings to stay away. Some held red roses and tried to raise pictures of Yin- gluck until police told them to put them away.

Thailand is under mar- tial law and public gather- ings are banned.

The case concerns Yin- gluck’s role in a rice subsidy programme which critics de- nounced as a wasteful hand- out to the Shinawatras’ sup- porters and which incurred billions of dollars in losses.

A day after she was or- dered to step down in May, the National Anti-Corrup- tion Commission indicted her for dereliction of duty in relation to the rice scheme.

The impeachment is the latest chapter in a divisive relation to the rice scheme, Yingluck’s govern- ment bought rice from farmers at prices much high- er than on the open market leading to huge stockpiles.

Yingluck defended the scheme in her opening state- ment.

“Please look at the ben- efits of the scheme and not just the financial cost,” she said.

The hearing resumes on 16 January. —Reuters

Ousted former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra speaks to the media as she arrives at Parliament before the National Legislative Assembly meeting in Bangkok on 9 Jan 2015.—Reuters

Indonesian navy divers prepare operations to lift the tail of AirAsia flight QZ8501 from the Java sea on 9 Jan, 2015.—Reuters

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Cuba releases three prisoners in sign of meeting US agreement

HAVANA, 9 Jan — Cuba released three detainees on Wednesday in a sign it was fulfilling an agreement to free a list of 53 people the United States regards as political prisoners as part of a thaw in relations between the two nations.

The government freed 19-year-old twin brothers Diango Vargas Martín and Blanco Vargas Martín on Wednesday afternoon, opposition activists said. The pair were arrested in December 2012 and sentenced to 30 months in jail for disorderly conduct and threatening a state official.

Dissidents said a third man, Enrique Figueroa Miranda, was also freed. All three were members of the opposition Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU).

The move followed a report on Wednesday by Reuters citing a congressional aide who said Cuba was resuming the release of “several” of the prisoners on the list.

A White House official had denied the Reuters report, saying “we have not heard of any such thing from the Cubans, we fully expect all 53 to be released.”

The prisoner release was part of an historic rapprochement on diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba and end more than five decades of hostility.

However, three weeks after the bid for US-Cuban détente began, President Barack Obama’s administration has done little to dispel questions about what might be holding up full implementation of the prisoner agreement.

The Cuban government had no immediate comment Wednesday on the status of the prisoner release.

The twins were released in the eastern region, and how we will try to address global challenges. We are also in partnership with five other European countries.

The minister said such proactive diplomacy is important, especially when this year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Kishida plans to hold a strategic dialogue with Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi, and to hold talks with Federica Mogherini, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, in Brussels.

In London, Kishida, together with Defence Minister Gen Nakatani, is scheduled to attend the first security meeting involving the foreign and defence ministers of Japan and Britain.

Speaking at a separate news conference, Nakatan said he will make a three-nation trip to Dubai, South Sudan and Britain from 17 to 22 January.

The danger of hostage taking or a second attack has been a central concern of security services since the gunmen stormed the Paris offices of the satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo on Wednesday, killing ten journalists and two police officers.

Interior Minister spokesman Pierre-Henry Brandet told iTélé television he was fairly sure the two suspects were in the building currently surrounded.

“Of course I’m worried about her. I hope it all comes down soon, and turns out well,” Bardoux said.

“They are everywhere. It’s really jumping. They’ve blocked the whole zones, we’ve got helicopters overhead, the police presence is really massive.”

A senior Yemeni intelligence source told Reuters one of the two suspects, French-born sons of Algerian-born parents, was in Yemen for several months in 2011 for religious studies; but there was no confirmed information whether he was trained by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The gunmen shouted “Allahu Akbar” (God is greatest) as they carried out the attack, which has been described by President Francois Hollande and other world leaders as an attack on the foundations of democracy.

Reuters

Sunday, 10 January, 2015

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French police seal off town as they close in on newspaper killing suspects

COLOMBO, 9 Jan — Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa lost his bid for a third term on Friday, ending a decade of rule that critics say had become increasingly authoritarian and marred by nepotism and corruption.

As results rolled in overnight from Thursday’s election, it became clear that Rajapaksa had been beaten by opposition candidate Maithripala Sirisena, a one-time ally who defected overnight in November and decried what the president thought would be an easy win.

Celebratory firecrackers could be heard exploding in the capital, Colombo, after Rajapaksa’s office said he had accepted the victory of Sirisena, who has vowed to root out corruption and bring constitutional reforms to weaken the power of the presidency.

Sirisena, a soft-spoken 63-year-old from the rice-growing hinterlands of this Indian Ocean island state, is expected to be sworn in at Colombo’s Independence Square at 6:00 pm local time.

His allies say he will rebalance the country’s foreign policy, which tilted heavily towards China in recent years as Rajapaksa fell out with the West over human rights and allegations of war crimes committed at the end of a drawn-out conflict with Tamil separatists in 2009.

US Secretary of State John Kerry was quick to welcome the successful election and commended Rajapaksa for accepting the verdict of the nation’s 15 million voters.

“I look forward to working with President Sirisena as his new government works to implement its campaign platform of a Sri Lanka that is peaceful, inclusive, democratic, and prosperous,” he said in a statement.

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More than one million flee, Ukraine close to ‘humanitarian catastrophe’

LONDON, 9 Jan — More than one million people have been driven from their homes by the conflict in Ukraine, aid efforts and leaving the country on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe, aid agencies said on Thursday.

The number of people uprooted within Ukraine, 610,000, and of refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries, 594,000, has more than tripled since August, figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) show.

The UN said an estimated 5.2 million people in Ukraine were living in conflict zones, of whom 1.4 million were highly vulnerable and in need of assistance as they face financial problems, a lack of services and aid, and harsh winter conditions.

The conflict between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists, killed more than 4,700 people last year and provoked the worst crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War.

Denis Krivosheev, deputy director of Europe and Central Asia at Amnesty International, said residents in separatist-controlled Luhansk and Donetsk could barely afford food and medicines, especially vulnerable people such as pensioners.

“While it may be too early to call this a humanitarian catastrophe, it’s clearly progressing in that direction,” Krivosheev told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The provision of humanitarian aid was being hampered by pro-Kiev volunteer units that were increasingly preventing food and medicine from reaching those in need in eastern Ukraine, he said.

“Attempting to create unbearable conditions of life is a whole new ballgame... using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is a war crime.”

The battalions often act like “renegade gangs” and urgently need to be brought under control, Krivosheev added. — Reuters

Poland to seek NATO response to Russia’s Baltic exercises

WARSAW, 9 Jan — Poland expects the NATO alliance to step up its military exercises around the Baltic Sea after a flurry of activity by Russian warships and jet fighters in the area last month, Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak told Reuters in an interview.

“What happened in December was indeed rather unprecedented,” Siemoniak said. “We will definitely want the Baltic Sea to be taken into account to a greater extent, and I think that in terms of military exercises planned by NATO, there will be such a reaction,” he said. The interview was conducted on Monday but authorised for release by the ministry on Thursday.

The Atlantic alliance has already increased the frequency of air patrols in the region, part of a revival of Cold War tensions sparked by Russia’s annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its support for Ukraine’s pro-Russian rebels.

Siemoniak said Moscow did not have an exit strategy, and that NATO and the European Union, which has imposed sanctions against Russia, should brace themselves for years of conflict.

“We shouldn’t talk about lifting the sanctions too soon,” he said, adding that they were the most effective tool at the West’s disposal.

The French government in November put on hold a contract to supply Mistral warships to Russia after coming under pressure from NATO allies.

Asked if French-based companies such as Airbus and the Thales could suffer as they bid for contracts in Poland’s $4.1 billion army modernisation programme, Siemoniak said: “I’m counting on France’s decision (not to deliver) being permanent, so the problem has been solved. It seems that Russia has also accepted that.”

Siemoniak also denied that a US Senate report, which in December made clear by implication that Poland had allowed the CIA to run secret detention facilities on its soil, had damaged the relationship between the two allies.

Polish officials have expressed disappointment that the published version of the report contained enough detail to implicate Poland, putting it at risk of reprisal attacks.

“I think that, at the moment, the cooperation between our intelligence agencies is the best as history,” Siemoniak said, “so the publication of the report has not made it more difficult.” — Reuters

US to cut European military bases to save cost, Pentagon says

WASHINGTON, 9 Jan — The US military will divest an air base in Britain and return it and 14 other facilities in Europe back to their home countries, part of a revival of Cold War tensions, the Pentagon said in a statement.

The restructuring will aid efforts and leaving the country on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe, aid agencies said on Thursday. The number of people uprooted within Ukraine, 610,000, and of refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries, 594,000, has more than tripled since August, figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) show.

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EU’s Tusk to push for airline data sharing after attack

RIGA, 9 Jan — European Council President Donald Tusk will press EU lawmakers next week to drop their objections to states sharing airline passenger data as part of efforts to tighten security after the attack on Paris newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Speaking in Latvia on Friday, the former Polish prime minister who now chairs meetings of EU leaders, said he had discussed the response to the attack with French President Francois Hollande and would put the matter on the agenda of the next scheduled summit in Brussels on 12 February.

“Next week in Strasbourg I will appeal to the European Parliament to speed up work on the EU Passenger Name Record system, which can help in detecting the travel of dangerous people,” Tusk said.

Commissioners have resisted endorsing the system for sharing data known as PNDR on the grounds it will infringe on privacy.

Tusk said of the killing of 12 people in Paris on Wednesday: “Such dramatic events demonstrate the vulnerability of nations in today’s world. The European Union cannot do everything -- but it can contribute to strengthening our security. In reaction to 9/11, the EU developed the European Arrest Warrant. But we need to do more.” — Reuters

E-waste poses risk to Vietnam’s environment: survey

HANOI, 9 Jan — The exponential growth of the information technology (IT) industry in recent years is posing a significant risk to Vietnam’s environment as the disposal of electrical and electronic equipment waste rapidly expands, local media reported on Friday.

Over the past five years, Vietnam’s IT industries have grown an average of 45.5 percent annually. Total revenue exceeded 25.5 billion US dollars in 2012 alone, over 94 percent of which came from electronic equipment and hardware, state-run Radio the Voice of Vietnam quoted figures from the General Statistics Office as saying.

The number of personal computers (PCs) adopted by each household nationwide widened 0.17 between 2004 and 2010 while the usage rate of washing machines, refrigerators, air conditioners and television sets jumped by 183 percent, 32 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

Capital Hanoi is forecast to discard 161,000 TVs, 97,000 PCs, 178,000 refrigerators, 136,000 washing machines and 97,000 air conditioners by 2020. Meanwhile, similar waste from southern metropolis Ho Chi Minh (HCM) City are predicted at higher numbers.

A recent survey conducted in Hanoi and HCM City by an Asia-Pacific consortium of IT corporations and its Vietnamese counterpart showed that between 81 and 100 percent of respondents would rather sell their second-hand electronic items to scrap iron dealers or private electronic repair shops than donate them to e-waste treatment companies.

Only three out of 15 e-waste treatment facilities are performing at their designed capacity, handling an average of 9,000-11,000 tons per year, far from the estimated 61,000-113,000 tons in need of treatment. High recycling costs and a lack of support from relevant agencies are attributed to this gap, said the survey.

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PERSPECTIVES
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Are all people ready?
By Myint Win Thein

With more people paying taxes on their incomes or on the goods and services they buy, they are more tax-conscious than ever, often wondering where their taxes go. Some of them sometimes even complain that the taxes they pay at a restaurant or a shop never reach the hands of tax authorities because restaurants they eat out at collect taxes on their bills but fail to give them tax stickers or proper tax stickers. Some of them complain that they have to pay taxes twice, first for their salary and then for goods and services they buy with their after-tax salaries.

It is a good thing for people to be interested in the taxes they pay. In the past, they did not pay taxes and did not wonder what tax collectors are doing and how the government is appropriating revenues. Now, they have become interested in the taxes they have to pay and where the taxes go. They are starting to wonder whether the taxes they pay go where the nation needs or are waste on unprofitable projects or end up in the hands of corrupt people. Some even began to ask questions whether the taxes being levied on them are fair or not or whether there are some successful businessmen who avoid taxes.

While people have become tax-conscious due to the economic reform of the government, it is the greatest responsibility of tax collectors and budget planners to collect taxes properly and to allocate revenues in the interests of the country and the people. The public has changed its mindset. Are tax collectors and budget planners ready to accept this?

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 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.

(1) POWER OF MIND FOR WORLD PEACE
(2) The Religious Roots of Social Harmony
(3) Buddhism and its relevance to the world situation

The following is the full text of speech delivered by Venerable Dr. Ashin Ñyãnisãsa (D.Litt., Ph.D.) at the Multilateral Dialogue between Islam and Buddhism held in Teheran, Iran, on 30 December.

Venerable Dr. Ashin Ñyãnisãsa (D.Litt., Ph.D.)
Shihid Rahimi Conference Hall, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization
Teheran
Islamic Republic of Iran
30 December, 2014

Good morning,

Today, I’m very much pleased and honoured to be invited to this multilateral dialogue between Islam and Buddhism organized by the International Islamic Culture and Relations Organization of Iran. I really appreciate the organizers for organizing this important seminar with the objective of exchanging views and exploring opportunities on joint scientific and religious cooperation between Islam and Buddhism for world peace. It is also a great honour for me to meet with Muslim and Buddhist brothers and friends including the Minister for Culture of Iran and Islamic Leaders, Chancellor, Professors and Lectures of the Interfaith University of Iran and Venerable monks from Thailand and Sri Lanka here at this august seminar and that I wish you all peace and happiness. I’m happy to share a piece of Buddha’s teaching with you which says holding views, thoughts, words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Today in the world, we find that the two sides are becoming more and more, peaceful co-existence between the two major religions would be built.

As you are all aware, the world today is facing various conflicts and tragedies almost everywhere. At this critical juncture, we need to find out the cause of the problem as a matter of priority so that we will reach the right solution to the problem. In other words, it is an urgent need for us to find ways in order that peace and stability would prevail in the whole world.

The current situation of the world is a great challenge for political, spiritual and religious leaders. It is my firm conviction that all religious leaders, on our part, are responsible to help mitigate tensions and conflicts by disseminating the noble teachings of our respective religions to our followers.

Every religion calls upon their followers to live a moral way of life, to attain mastery over the mind and to cultivate purity of heart. Whether it is the Bible or the Koran, or the Veda, or the Ti-Pitaka, all scriptures call for peace, amity and harmony. From Jina to Jesus, all great founders of all religions have emphasized it with virtues of tolerance and non-violence. But the world we live in is often driven by religious conflicts and sectarian strife, or even the war of brutal fighting. Because we usually attach importance only to the outer shell of religions and we overlook the universal truth or the inner core of religious. The result is a lack of love, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and self-understanding in the mind.

When there is no peace in individuals, then there cannot be peace in the world. Violence and peace never can coexist. The only way to achieve inner peace is insight meditation. This is a non-sectarianism but scientific result-oriented practice of meditation. It is a self-observation and self-realization of the truth.

Practice of Insight Meditation brings some unprecedented result—that is experiential understanding of how mind and body are interacting.

Whenever negative emotion arises in human mind, such as craving, jealousy, hatred, anger, ignorance and so on, these negative spirits trigger unpleasant sensations within the body. On the other hand, sometimes, positive states arise in the mind such as tolerance, love, compassion, sympathetic joy and wisdom, etc. At that time, mental actions create happiness and pleasant sensations within the body.

Every moment to moment, the mind generates hate or love, compassion or cruelty, sympathy or jealousy, positivity or negativity, pleasantness or unpleasantness and selflessness or selffulness. So the entire mind is flooded with pleasant sensation or unpleasant sensation all the time. In-sight meditation reveals that mental action precedes every physical and vocal action, determining whether that action would be wholesome or unwholesome. That is why we must find practical methods to create pure and peaceful mind.

The practice of insight meditation can be used for keeping the balanced mind and sound health. By exercising insight meditation, everyone can remove mental disease of negatives and can achieve balance of mind. The balanced mind will make us unbalanced, stable mind will make unstable, world stable and peaceful mind will make the violent world peaceful.

The people of any faith can practice such insight meditation without discrimination of caste, colour or creed. At the same time, they may follow their own religions and traditions in peace and harmony. There is no need for conversion of religion. A common source of tension and conflicts create negativity only. Therefore, conversion is only for changing the negative mind to the positive mind. As an observer, one will find a society living in peace and harmony in its natural setting.

Today in the world, we see clearly various degrees of spiritual pollution like discontentment, dissatisfaction, disagreement, argument, demonstration, strikes, violence, invasion, aggression, and tension, etc. These spiritual pollutions are always creating bad consequences to human societies and human environment.

(See page 9)
Homage Paying Ceremonies

By Myo Myint

The cold season in Myanmar can be recognized by the blue sky, misty fog, and memories as homage paying ceremonies are held by former students for their old teachers all over the country. That means this year, the teachers stay on till it is time to go on retirement, except for the small minority who either exploit their profession for personal gain, or leave it for good to seek a better paying job. Thirdly, 70 percent of the population of Myanmar still live in rural areas, and the majority of such schools are in rural areas, and the majority of teachers may never have the opportunity, or the inclination to travel to a city in a big town or city. Fourthly, teachers have very poor career prospects. There are over 300,000 basic education teachers and of them, some may become a high school headmaster or headmistress, a job that has some social prestige and authority, but entails a lot of responsibility and a salary scale that is only above that of a high school teacher. Fifthly, they have also very poor financial prospects. Unless they are married to a better paying job, or they have other incomes, few can hope to own a house or an apartment upon their retirement, as there is no source of income to save from their salary. However, interest in this profession, especially among women, never wanes, as the age-old belief still persists that it is a respectable profession very suitable for women. While attending school, a person may not have known it, but later been able to remember that their teachers had been provided with snacks out of their own pocket, so that they will not feel hun- gry during the extra coach- ing after school. Some will remember how strict their teachers had been to ensure that they learn. Some will remember the admonitions of their teachers that had changed their lives for the better. Some bright students from poor backgrounds may remem- ber that on passing the ma- triculation examination, their school teachers, al- though not rich themselves, have collectively funded the high school fees for students who might still live in the same place, some will see their former teachers still travel- ing to their schools, or other- wise, have expensive guides. The only providers of knowledge had been their school teach- ers. Some will remember that some former students re- member the gratitude they owe to their teachers for the success they are now enjoying, and will make it a point to repay to their former teachers in cash and kind. Some former students might not realize what im- pact the annual monetary gifts they present to their former teachers, who have fallen on hard times after retirement, have on their lives. Some former students might not realize that some retired teachers who have not have the means, but have forgotten their teach- ing years be happy.

This is the Dhamma. What is called Dhamma in the world has nothing to do with Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Islamism, or any other “ism”. Dhamma is a simple truth.

1) To understand the Truth, our common core.

2) To understand the Truth is our common goal.

3) To understand the Truth is our common solution to all prob- lems.

4) To avoid extremism and aggressiveness and to follow the Middle Path are our Common Platform.

Let us, once again, like to appreciate the or- ganizers of this seminar for their vision and efforts. I would also like to express my profound thanks to all participants and to the Minister for Culture of Iran, and officials, as well as to the Ministry, Chancellor and Professors of Interfaith University of Iran, Islamic Leaders and academicians for their all-round support and helpingMultiplier a success. And I wish to repeat my particular thanks to all religious leaders in Iran for giving us this great opportu- nity of building further mutual friendship and un- derstanding and exchang- ings views for world peace. L, now, conclude with my earnest hope that Buddhist and Islamic leaders work together for peace and sta- bility of the future world. May all beings be free from aversion. May all beings be happy. May peace and Har- mony prevail in every cor- ner of the world. Thank you.

Venerable Dr. Ashin Ñyãnisara (D.Litt., Ph.D.)
Aggamahapadita, Mahadhammakathika Bhahuanihat- adha, Aggamaha Suddhammakkotakdiha, Sasanadittha-dhammacariya Chancellor of Sitagui International Buddhist Missionary Association
Founder of the Board of Directors of Theravada Dhamma Society of America
Honorary Professor of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University Chairman of Interna- tional Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities

OPINION

POWER OF MIND FOR... (from page 8)

This is the manifestation of unbalanced and un- trained mind. They are mo- tivated by negativities latent within human mind. We all understand that we need to protect our environ- ment and society, stop polluting them and remove such mental pollutions. People are searching for a place of peace and tranquility. However, they cannot find such a place of paradise in this materialistic world. So, let us change our minds and turn, now, to positivity. Removing such pollutants of negativi- ties will promote peace and harmony as well as balanced mind. A healthy re- lationship between human societies and its natural en- vironment. This is how Buddhism can foster envi- ronmental protection.

Now, we the religious leaders of Islam and Bud- dhism are gathered here at this Dialogue. The Interna- tional Islamic Culture and Relations Organization of Iran, Buddhists leaders from Thailand and Sri Lanka in cooperation with the Sit- agua International Buddhist Academy aim to find out the religious roots of social harmony and also to ex- plore the development of teaching materials high- lighting social harmony in Buddhist, Muslim and Christian faiths, as well as a grass-roots education program.

So, I’m confident that we should put our joint ef- fort to abstain from con- flicts and violence. We should try to seek long- term, for- eignness, selflessness and con- fession for the establish- ment of peace, harmony, stability, security and co- existence in the world.

Let us, now, try to for- mulate a definition of reli- gion. We should try to un- derstand the intrinsic meaning of religion. Then, there would be no greater misfortune for humanity than a failure to define reli- gion as synonymous with peace.

Every religion has its own outer shell and inner core. The outer shell con- sists of rituals, rites, cere- monies, beliefs, myths, and ceremonies. It is as if the shells differentiate one reli- gion from another. How- ever, there is an inner core which is common to all re- ligions. This is the univer- sal teaching of all religions, charity, mental discipline, pure mind, pure love, com- passion, goodwill, toler- ance and insight truth. This is a common denominator that all religious leaders ought to emphatically teach their followers to practice. If proper impor- tance is attached to the es- tablishment of all religions, the pure love, tolerance, forgiveness and compassion are shown for their surface level, then conflicts and vi- olence will be controlled.

I would here like to share my understanding that Water has unchange- able characteristics of cool- ness to all, regardless of race, caste and religion. It helps one who drinks it from thirst and makes one who touches it clean and fresh. Likewise, fire has a constant nature of producing light and heat. People produce drinking water in different shapes of bottles with different labels and lighters in different brand names. However, their nature is irreversible. My message here is that if we take a superficial look and attach things from dif- ferently. If we use eyes of wisdom, we will see truth and reality.

All human beings should be free to profess their own faith. However, they must be careful not to neglect to practise the essence of their own respective religions, not to disturb others by their own religions, and not to condemn other faiths. In this diversity of faiths, when people of different views approached him, the Buddha said, “Let us set aside our differences, let us give attention to what we can agree on and let us put the common core which we seek upon it. Why quarrels?” Such wise counsel still re- tains its value until today.

The Buddha said, “Animosity can be erad- icated by its opposite which is pure love, patience, forgiveness and so on. Animosity cannot be eradicated by animosity. Violence is ceased by non-violence. Violence is never ceased by violence. Hatred is never ceased by hatred. Through pure love, only it can be ceased. This is the eternal law.”
US forces ‘building pressure’ on Islamic State — military chief

WASHINGTON, 9 Jan — US efforts against Islamic State militants in Iraq are “a drumbeat, a steady building pressure” on several fronts that will ultimately enable Iraqi forces to launch a counteroffensive at a time of their choosing, the top US military officer said on Thursday.

General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said US forces were not sitting idly in the key Iraqi cities of Baghdad or Arbil waiting until spring to launch an offensive but were actively working to weaken Islamic State in several areas.

“When you ask me what are the prospects for a spring offensive, we’re working with Iraqis, military and civilian leaders, to determine the pace at which we will encourage them and enable them to do a counteroffensive,” Dempsey said. “But I want to make sure I also highlight the fact that this isn’t about waiting till the spring to do anything.”

“This is a drumbeat, a steady building pressure on ISIL along eight or nine lines of effort: counter-financing, counter-foreign fighters, counter-message as well as the military operations,” he added, using an acronym for the Islamic State group.

Dempsey’s spoke to reporters after meeting with his Iraqi counterpart, Lieutenant General Benjamim Gantz, to discuss regional security and military cooperation as Gantz winds up his tenure as the chief of the Israel Defence Forces general staff.

Dempsey said Iraq would initiate a counter-offensive against Islamic State when Baghdad felt it was ready to conduct the necessary military operations to recapture territory and follow it with humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.

“In the meantime we’re keeping steady pressure on and we’re building their capacity,” Dempsey said.

He said several hundred Sunni tribesmen had been incorporated into Iraqi Security Force, a sign the mainly Shi’ite government was trying to become more inclusive. He also said several thousand troops had been newly trained.

The chairman said US forces were looking for ways to help Iraqis cope with improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs and houses rigged with explosives.

“There’s some things that we can do to help the Iraqi Security Forces reduce their casualties as they go forward and we’re discussing that with them,” he said. The Pentagon said this week that US forces have hit or damaged some 3,222 Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria since August. US military officials also said the department is looking into complaints that civilians may have been killed in US air strikes.

Yemeni police arrest six suspects in police college bombing

SANAA, 9 Jan — Police in Yemen have arrested six people suspected of involvement in Wednesday’s bombing of a police college in Sanaa, the capital’s police chief told Yemeni television on Thursday.

The car bomb, which exploded in the street outside the college, killed 40 people and wounded another 71, according to the latest casualty toll provided by state news agency Saba on Thursday. The authorities have blamed al-Qaeda militants.

More fugitive suspects were still being pursued, police chief Abdelrazaq Al-Muayyid told al-Masirah television, which is owned by the Houthi rebel clan. Muayyid gave no further details. Earlier on Thursday, al-Masirah reported that the suspects had been caught by police in collaboration with the Popular Committees, which are Houthi-led groups of fighters. The militias have themselves been the target of suspected al Qaeda attacks in recent weeks.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Wednesday’s bombing but an official source in Yemen’s Supreme Security Committee, cited by Saba, blamed “al-Qaeda terrorist elements” for the attack.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), is one of the Sunni militant group’s most active wings. Wednesday’s attack was the second to cause multiple casualties in a week. A suicide bomb last Thursday killed 26 people at a cultural centre in Ibb city. —Reuters

Car bombs explode at checkpoints in Iraq’s Samarra, three dead

BAGHDAD, 9 Jan — Car bombs exploded at three checkpoints on the western outskirts of Iraq’s holy city of Samarra on Thursday, killing three people and wounding 41 others, a security official and locals said.

Samarra in central Iraq, 125 km (80 miles) north of Baghdad, is home to a significant Shi’ite shrine and has been under attack since Islamic State militants swept through most Sunni areas north of the capital in June.

The three bombs before sunrise on Thursday killed a civilian and two policemen as well as wounding dozens of others, and were followed by a hail of rocket and mortar fire, the official said.

Then, after several hours of fighting with security forces, gunmen reared under fire from Iraqi warplanes, he said.

The blowing up of the ninth century al-Askari shrine in Sunni-majority Samarra in February 2006 by Sunni jihadis triggered revenge attacks by Shi’ite militias, tipping Iraq into years of sectarian violence. Islamic State adopts a partriarchal interpretation of Sunni Islam and considers tombs sacrilegious. It has also destroyed shrines in areas of eastern and northern Syria that it controls.

On Thursday, al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front militants blew up the 13th century tomb of a revered Islamic scholar in southern Syria, Syrian state news agency SANA and monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, reported.—Reuters

Nigerian president Jonathan defends record in campaign launch

LAGOS, 9 Jan — President Goodluck Jonathan opened his campaign to win a second elected term as Nigeria’s leader on Thursday, defending his record on the Boko Haram insurgency and corruption to a rally of thousands in the opposition stronghold of Lagos.

Jonathan faces opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler who was seen as tough on crime, militancy and graft, in a 14 February election that is too close to call.

Buhari’s campaign has drawn support from critics who say Jonathan is weak, that he has failed to deal with the Boko Haram insurgency which has killed thousands, and that corruption in the oil-rich nation has flourished under his watch.

Speaking to thousands of supporters waving Nigerian flags and posters of him, Jonathan blasted his opposition critics.

“They talk about insecurity, that they will fight insecurity, ask him when he was head of government did he buy one rifle for Nigerian soldiers? No. These people did not buy anything for the military,” Jonathan said to loud cheers.

“They say the government is corrupt, that we are not fighting corruption,” he continued. “We have arrested more people, we have done more convictions, but they tell us these lies.”

Flanked by Vice President Namadi Sambo and Senate President David Mark, Jonathan wore a white robe and horse-traditional hat of the Yoruba people who dominate Lagos and the southwest, which comprises the main swing states.

Buhari is likely to win across the north, while Jonathan is expected to do well in his home southern Niger Delta region and in the east.

Jonathan first took power in Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country, after his predecessor Umaru Yar’Adua died in office in 2009. He started his first elected term in 2011, when the southwest overwhelmingly voted for him over Buhari in 2011.

This time its political elites are firmly behind Buhari and some voters are disappointed with Jonathan.

His administration has been dogged by several corruption scandals in the oil sector, some of which it has promised to investigate and others it has denied.

The Boko Haram Islamist insurgency meanwhile has dramatically worsened since he was last elected in 2011. Lack of equipment is one of the major problems faced by Nigerian troops in the northeast, which Jonathan blamed on Buhari.

“No country equips armed forces overnight,” he said.

A man walks past a portrait of Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan, who began his campaign on Wednesday for a second-term in office in Lagos on 8 Jan, 2015. —Reuters

Troops of the Interior Ministry take part in a parade during a ceremony marking the Iraqi Police day’s 93rd anniversary at police academy in Baghdad on 8 Jan, 2015. —Reuters

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, US Army General Martin Dempsey in Iraq and Syria since August. US military officials also said the department is looking into complaints that civilians may have been killed in US air strikes.
Apple wins dismissal of lawsuit over MacBook logic boards

SAN FRANCISCO, 9 Jan — Apple Inc (AAPL.O) won the dismissal on Thursday of a lawsuit accusing it of defrauding consumers by selling MacBook laptop computers that contained “logic boards” it knew were defective, and which routinely failed within two years.

US District Judge William Alsup in San Francisco said the plaintiffs, Uriel Marcus and Benedict Verceles, failed to show that Apple made “affirmative misrepresentations,” despite citing online complaints and Apple marketing statements calling the laptops “state of the art” or the “most advanced” on the market.

“Plaintiffs have failed to allege that Apple’s logic boards were unfit for their ordinary purposes or lacked a minimal level of quality,” Alsup wrote. “Both plaintiffs were able to adequately use their computers for ordinary purposes or lacked a minimal level of quality.”

Apple has moved to dismiss the lawsuit because it believed the cases had failed to adequately state a claim under consumer protection laws in California and Texas, where the lawsuit began last May before being moved.

They also contended that Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook was told about the defective logic boards in 2011, but did nothing.

Logic boards contain computer circuitry and are sometimes known as motherboards. A separate and still pending lawsuit in California accuses Apple of defrauding consumers by selling MacBook Pro laptops in 2011 that contained defective graphic cards, causing screen distortions and system failures.

MacBooks are part of Apple’s Mac line of desktop and laptop computers. The company reported unit sales in that business of 18.91 million in its latest fiscal year. —Reuters

Researchers develop “pop-up” 3D fabrication technique

WASHINGTON, 9 Jan — An international team of researchers said on Thursday they have developed a simple new fabrication technique mimicking the action of a child’s pop-up book to transform two-dimensional micro- and nanostructures into complex 3D shapes. Using a variety of advanced materials, including silicon, the researchers produced more than 40 different geometric designs, including shapes resembling a peacock, flower, starburst, table, basket, tent and starfish. “In just one shot you get your structure,” co-corresponding author Huang Yonggang, professor of the Northwestern University, said in a statement. “We first fabricate a two-dimensional structure on a stretched elastic material. Then we release the tension, and the 3D structure must have some place to go, so it pops up.”

The pop-up assembly technique trumps 3D printing on many levels, Huang said. The method is fast, inexpensive and can utilize many different materials, including silicon, to produce a wide range of structures down to a thickness of 100 nanometers, he said. Moreover, it can be used to build many different structures at one time and incorporate different materials into a single structure. 3D printing, on the other hand, manufactured objects layer by layer slowly. It is difficult for 3D printing to integrate more than one material in a structure, and it is almost impossible to print semiconductors or single crystalline metals. The researchers said their pop-up technique has great potential for use in a wide variety of man-made systems, including biomedical devices, sensors and electronics. “A key, unique feature of these approaches to 3-D microarchitectures is that they work equally well with a very wide variety of materials, including the highest performance electric conductors, such as device-grade silicon,” said co-corresponding author John Rogers, professor of the University of Illinois. —Xinhua

Google to start selling auto insurance in the US, analyst says

SAN FRANCISCO, 9 Jan — Google Inc may be moving into the US auto insurance market with a shopping site for people to compare and buy policies, an analyst said on Thursday, as it continues to shift its attention to the automotive industry.

The search giant is planning soon to pilot its new venture, Google Compare auto insurance comparison shopping site, wrote Forrester analyst Ellen Carney in a note. According to Carney, the company has been pitching the service to insurance providers for more than two years.

Google, which currently offers a service in the UK for users to compare over 125 auto insurance options, makes a cut when a user buys insurance online or by phone.

Industry experts say the Mountain View-based company has increasingly been exploring online searches tailored toward specific industries or markets. Google already offers its users a site to compare travel destinations and find the cheapest flight fares, for instance.

Google in past years has begun to expand beyond its core business of internet search and advertising, seeking to extend its technological dominance to fields as diverse as self-driving cars and robotics.

Carney expects the California pilot for the new service to begin in the first quarter of 2015. Google is already licensed to sell auto insurance in 26 states and is working with a handful of insurers including Dairyland, MetLife and others, she said. In addition, a Google employee is licensed to sell insurance on behalf of CoverHound, a San Francisco-based company that pulls insurance options from the largest carriers.

Google said it does not comment on speculation. —Reuters

Bosnia leads global search for missing with expertise on bones

TZULA, (Bosnia) 9 Jan — Bosnia was still digging up the bones of its own when those of others began arriving in boxes from the tsunami-struck shores of Southeast Asia a decade ago. It coincided with Kathyne Bomberger’s rise to head of the Bosnian-based International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), created in 1996 on the initiative of Bill Clinton to unearth the secrets of gruesome death pits strewn across the Bosnian countryside following its 1992-95 war.

The ICMP sent a handful of staff to Thailand to set up a laboratory to collect blood samples from relatives of some of the 230,000 people who perished when a giant wave struck in December 2004, matching them with DNA from bone samples of the victims sent to Bosnia. It helped identify some 800.

“That was really a huge learning experience for us,” Bomberger told Reuters in an interview. A decade later, what started as an ad hoc body devoted to the former Yugoslavia has become the world’s leading authority on missing people, a status enshrined last month in a treaty signed by five European governments – Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden – that will see the organization move its headquarters this year from Sarajevo to The Hague and become a permanent global body. The move is recognition of the ICMP’s success not just in the ex-Yugoslavia, but in Thailand, the Philippines, Chile, South Africa, the United States, Iraq, Libya, Colombia and others, where its unique DNA-identification techniques have helped identify victims of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, of political repression, drug crime, apartheid and war.

Mexico is next, Bomberger says, while Syria — with tens of thousands missing — represents a looming challenge. The ICMP says it has proposed working with Syrian refugees to collect data on missing relatives, and has met with opposition figures. —Reuters

Forensic experts of the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP) work on trying to identify the remains of a victim of the Srebrenica massacre, in the ICMP centre near Tuzla in this 1 June, 2011 file photo. —Reuters
Three dead after tourist boat sinks off Costa Rica

A tourist who survived a shipwreck off the Central Pacific coast of Costa Rica boards a bus at the Coast Guard station in Caldera, Puntarenas on 8 Jan, 2015. Reuters

SAN JOSE, 9 Jan — Three people died after a tourist catamaran carrying around 100 passengers sank off Costa Rica’s Pacific Coast on Thursday morning, the government said.

The catamaran sank off the Punta Leona beach resort after emitting a distress signal, public security ministry spokesman Jesus Ureña said. The cause of the accident was not yet known.

Costa Rica has been experiencing exceptionally strong winds this week, according to the National Meteorological Institute.

Costa Rican Vice President Ana Helena Chacon identified the dead as a 68-year-old woman from the United States, a Canadian woman aged 70 and an 80-year-old British man.

Four passengers who had been missing were found and the other 106 people on the boat, including the crew of 10, all survived and were in good health, Chacon added.

False alarm causes chaos in Madrid after suspect package found at station

MADRID, 9 Jan — A false alarm over a possible terrorist bomb brought the center of Madrid to a halt on Thursday evening.

The alarm was given after the discovery of a suspect package at the Nuevos Ministerios station shortly after 17:30 local time. Police immediately closed the station and evacuated everyone inside after the package, a shoebox, approximately 20 cm by 10 cm and with the logo “Storm” written on it, was found placed on top of a rubbish bin in the entry hall to the station.

The main railway station, which is in the heart of the capital serves three lines of the Madrid metro, as well as regional and local trains and both metro and train services through the station were suspended while explosives experts worked to determine whether the threat was genuine. Police dogs are reported to have initially acted as if the box did indeed contain explosives but it was confirmed as a false alarm at 18:45 local time and it is confirmed as a false alarm.

A panel of judges in Lima ruled that Fujimori, 76, diverted funds from the military to pay for favourable coverage in tabloid newspapers to promote his bid for a second presidential term. Fujimori has been imprisoned since 2007 for crimes committed during his 1990-2000 term.

In 2009, he was sentenced to 25 years for ordering death squads to carry out massacres that killed 25 people during a crackdown on leftist insurgents.

The new sentence, however, will not prolong the time Fujimori spends behind bars because jail terms in the Andean country are served concurrently and not consecutively. Fujimori had denied the accusation that he embezzled funds.

But it will be a blow to his political party and the political ambitions of his eldest daughter, Keiko, who is widely viewed as a likely candidate in next year’s presidential election.

“Today is not a good day for us,” said Keiko Fujimori who attended the trial.

Prosecutors had alleged the former president gave permission for 122 million Peruvian soles ($41 million) from the military’s budget to be diverted to the secret intelligence service.

Fujimori, the intelligence agency’s then chief and Fujimori’s former right-hand man, had denied the accusation, saying merely that some references in three social study textbooks — two on modern social studies and one on politics and economics.

Suken Shuppan, which was established in Kyoto in 1923 and moved to Tokyo in 1954, plans to delete these references from its textbooks to be used from April this year.

Its previous politics and economics textbook said discussions have been held on the issue of compensation for foreign workers brought to Japan against their will and the sending of foreign women to war-front brothels.

But the new version says merely that some South Korean individuals have filed lawsuits in Japanese courts seeking apologies and compensation from Japan, Suken Shuppan refused to comment on why it has chosen to cut these references, with an official saying the publisher cannot answer at this point.

In January 2014, the education ministry revised its textbook-screening standards for social studies, asking publishers to state the government’s official views or the Japanese Supreme Court’s decisions in contentious cases.

Kyodo News

Peru’s Fujimori, already jailed, slapped with another prison term

LIMA, 9 Jan — Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, in jail for human rights abuses, was handed a new eight-year prison sentence on Thursday for siphoning public funds to help finance his re-election in 2000.

A tourist who survived a shipwreck off the Central Pacific coast of Costa Rica boards a bus at the Coast Guard station in Caldera, Puntarenas on 8 Jan, 2015. Reuters

Fujimori, in jail for human rights abuses, was handed a new eight-year prison sentence on Thursday for siphoning public funds to help finance his re-election in 2000.

But the new version

No deaths reported in Syria as storm quells fighting

BEIRUT, 9 Jan — Nobody was reported killed by fighting in Syria on Wednesday, the first day without casualties in three years, after a fierce winter storm quelled violence, a group that monitors the war said on Thursday.

Freezing temperatures brought new hardship for refugees and civilians but “the cold protected the Syrians from bombardment and fighting,” said the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdulrahman.

An average of 150 people died every day through December in a conflict that has killed around 207,000 people since it erupted in 2011, according to Observatory figures.

But the UK-based organisation, which uses sources across Syria to track the conflict, did not register any deaths on any side as a result of fighting on Wednesday, Abdulrahman said.

One Islamist fighter died in Darraya near Damascus as a result of wounds sustained earlier, he added.

Blizzards, rain and strong winds have buffeted the Middle East this week, raising concerns for refugees who are facing the winter in flimsy shelters.
INVITATION TO OPEN PREQUALIFICATION OF BIDDING

The Irrigation Department (ID), Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, announces the PREQUALIFICATION of International Competitive Bidding for “Procurement of Construction Machineries for ID” under the Irrigation Development Project in Western Bago Region based on the Loan Agreement (Loan No.: MY-P7) signed on 5th September, 2014 between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry.

The procurement works shall consist of equipment supply, site assembling, test-run, training and commissioning for the construction machineries. Please note that Joint Ventures are acceptable.

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<th>Sr. No.</th>
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A complete set of prequalification documents is available in Myanmar kyat (50,000/-) from 10:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 16:00 in the working days from 13th to 19th, January, 2015 at Procurement Director Office of Irrigation Department, Building No. (43), Nay Pyi Taw and closing date will be 27th January, 2015 during office hours.

Submission of the Documents later than closing date will not be considered.

Contact: Director, Procurement branch.
Telephone: +95-67-410019

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (039N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PANJA BHUM VOY NO (039N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 11.1.2015 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
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS WAN HAI LINES PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

THAILAND PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS KULNATEE CO LTD
Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KULNATEE VOY NO (14/14)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KULNATEE VOY NO (14/14) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of S.P.W(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 Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS KULNATEE CO LTD
Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SCI KAMAL VOY NO (006W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SCI KAMAL VOY NO (006W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 11.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS THE SHIPPING CORP. OF INDIA LTD
Phone No: 2301185

Top science prize honours computing research, findings

Beijing, 9 Jan — Research on the paradigm shift of computing won one of China’s top science prizes at the annual National Science Awards on Friday.

The team, led by Zhang Yaoye — president of Central South University and a professor with Tsinghua University — invented the concept of transparent computing.

The term refers to pervasive programming in which users are not “aware” of the software, like operating systems and applications, and can access and accomplish tasks from any type of device, such as personal computers or intelligent appliances.

Xinhua

Positive recovery signs detected in S Korea

Seoul, 9 Jan — Positive signs emerged in the South Korean economy as recent economic data showed upbeat picture, a government report showed on Friday. “Positive signs spread over domestic demand recovery though not solid,” the Finance Ministry said in its monthly economic report called Green Book.

The report said economic indicators, including industrial output, retail sales, facility investment and employment, are gradually improving though low headline inflation continued. In December, retail sales were upbeat as auto sales by local carmakers jumped 27.2 percent from a year earlier. Credit card usage grew 8.7 percent last month, and gasoline sales rose 1.6 percent.

Sales at discount outlets and department stores slid 3.6 percent and 0.3 percent each in December. It was down from falls of 4.7 percent and 6.5 percent each in November. Construction investment declined 1.7 percent in November, but facility investment expanded 13.1 percent during the same month. Production in the mining and manufacturing industries grew 1.3 percent in November on solid domestic demand for cars and chips, job creation was 438,000 in November from a year earlier, but consumer prices rose 0.8 percent in December on lower food prices. Worrying worries about deflation.

Exports in December increased 5.7 percent on demand for locally-made mobile phones, steels and chips. Trade surplus posted 5.78 billion US dollars last month — Xinhua
**Country stars sing adieu to Grand Ole Opry’s Little Jimmy Dickens**

**Nashville, 9 Jan — Country music stars sang a farewell on Thursday to Grand Ole Opry icon Little Jimmy Dickens, who died last week at 94 after decades performing at the landmark Nashville venue.**

Brad Paisley, Carrie Underwood, Vince Gill, Steve Wariner, Chris Young and Old Crow Medicine Show took the stage near Dickens’ casket in songful tribute during a two-hour memorial service. When it was over, the curtain was lowered and Dickens left the stage for the last time at the theatre where he brought laughter and toe-tapping to country fans for generations.

Dickens — who sang novelty numbers such as “Out Behind the Barn,” and “May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose” as well as traditional country hits “Fly Up Your Nose” as well as “Out Behind the Barn,” and novelty numbers such as “I haven’t even seen The Tourist.” Who has? It must be good because it’s nominated,” he deadpanned at the 2011 awards, his last as host.

Those kinds of missteps may be a thing of the past for the Globes’ organizer, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which has become a more respected arbiter in the Hollywood awards season, which kicks off with Sunday’s Globes and ends with the Academy Awards on 2 February.

“This was a period a few years ago where it seemed like the best thing for a movie in the Oscar race was to lose at the Golden Globes,” said Pântanguu’s chief correspondent and awards expert, Dave Karger.

Take the Coen Brothers thriller “No Country for Old Men” and Kathryn Biglow’s war drama “The Hurt Locker,” both of which lost out on the Golden Globes best drama accolade but won on to win the Best Picture Oscar in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

This year, surreal showbiz satire “Birdman” leads the film nominees with seven nods in the comedy/musical film categories while coming-of-age tale “Boyhood” has five nominations in the drama film categories.

Both have been warmly received by critics, who have bestowed numerous awards on them already, and both are hotly tipped as Oscar front-runners when nominations are announced next week.

For the most part, this year’s Golden Globe nominees have echoed critical favours, with “Birdman” star Michael Keaton expected to win for best actor in a comedy/musical. JK Simmons tipped for best supporting actor for “Whiplash,” and Patricia Arquette to take best supporting actress for “Boyhood.”

The Golden Globes are voted on by about 90 foreign journalists who are members of the HFPA, with no overlap in the voting bodies of the rest of the major Hollywood awards including the Oscars, which are voted on by members of the film industry.

“Not only is the Hollywood Foreign Press a very aware of the fact that they’ve been made a punching bag to some highbrow critics for their “taste,” but they also have said helped lock in their subsequent Oscar wins.”

In the television categories, the Golden Globes have earned a reputation as an early taste-maker, this year favouring shows on cable television and online streaming platforms over broadcast stalwarts.

If Netflix’s “House of Cards” wins best TV drama and “Orange is the New Black” or Amazon Studios’ “Transparent” wins best TV comedy, it would be a “watershed moment,” Karger said, defining a new era in television.—Reuters

**Blunders begone! Golden Globes burnish Hollywood credibility**

**Beverly Hills, (Calif), 9 Jan — Four years ago Golden Globes host Ricky Gervais turned his sharp tongue on voters of the awards show, ridiculing them for nominating the poorly reviewed Johnny Depp-Angelina Jolie action thriller “The Tourist.”**

“I haven’t even seen The Tourist. Who has? It must be good because it’s nominated,” he deadpanned at the 2011 awards, his last as host.

Those kinds of missteps may be a thing of the past for the Globes’ organizer, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which has become a more respected arbiter in the Hollywood awards season, which kicks off with Sunday’s Globes and ends with the Academy Awards on 22 February.

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**Actress Paula Patton announces the nominations for the 72nd annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly, California on 11 Dec, 2014. The awards will be presented on 11 Jan, 2015.—Reuters**

**Angelina Jolie meets pope after Vatican screening of her film**

**Vatican City, 9 Jan — Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie met Pope Francis on Thursday before screening at the Vatican of her film “Unbroken”, the Vatican said.**

The pope was not present at the screening but Jolie, who is a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and two of her children met him briefly afterwards, a spokesman said. Her husband Brad Pitt was not present.

Jolie, 39, directed the film about American Olympian and World War Two hero Louis Zamperini, whose plane was shot down over the Pacific during World War Two. It tells the story of his survival in a raft for nearly two months and his later ordeal as an inmate in prisoner of war camps.—Reuters

**Patrick Wilson, Ted Danson join second season of FX’s ‘Fargo’**

**Los Angeles, 9 Jan — Actors Patrick Wilson, Ted Danson and Jean Smart will be taking leading roles in the second season of FX’s hit mini-series “Fargo,” the network said on Thursday, joining previously announced cast members Kirsten Dunst and Jesse Plemons.**

Wilson, star of “The Conjuring,” will play Lou Solverson, described as a “clean-cut Minnesota state trooper” and war veteran who tackles a crime case, while “Cheers” alum Smart will be taking on the role of her father-in-law, Sheriff Hank Larsson, FX said.

Veteran TV actress Smart will be joined by Jesse Plemons, who will play Lou’s father-in-law, Sheriff Hank Larsson, FX said.

Writer and executive producer Noah Hawley will return for the second installment, scheduled to air in the fall of this year.

The second season of FX’s “Fargo,” adapted from Joel and Ethan Coen’s 1996 Oscar-winning film of the same name, will follow the 1979 crime story across 10 episodes, set in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Luverne, Minnesota.

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Writer and executive producer Noah Hawley will return for the second installment, scheduled to air in the fall of this year.

The first season, starring Martin Freeman as a cowed small-town insurance salesman and Billy Bob Thornton as a hitman who both become entangled in a murder, earned critical praise and won three Emmy Awards last year.

“Fargo” has five television nominations at Sunday’s Golden Globe Awards.—Reuters
Boston named US bid city for 2024 Olympics

BOSTON, 9 Jan — Boston was selected on Thursday as the American city that will bid to host the 2024 Olympics, taking the first strides in a gruelling marathon to bring the Summer Games back to the United States.

Boston, which has never hosted an Olympics, was unveiled as the surprise pick over two-time host Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington following the United States Olympic Committee's USOC board meeting at the Denver International Airport.

“We’re excited about our plans to submit a bid for the 2024 Games and feel we have an incredibly strong partner in Boston that will work with us to present a compelling bid,” USOC Chairman Larry Probst said in a statement.

The decision followed more than one round of voting before the Boston bid eventually received the unanimous endorsement of the USOC’s board of directors.

The United States has not hosted a Summer Games since the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

As home to the world’s most famous marathon, Bostonians are well-acquainted with tests of endurance and are about to enter a punishing race with all manner of hurdles and twists and turns in a bid to land the sporting world’s biggest prize.

Boston will be up against Rome and Germany, which has announced that it will bid through Berlin or Hamburg. A string of potential hosts, including Istanbul, Paris, Doha and a city from Africa, are also considering bids.

Cities have until September to officially put in a bid with a decision on the 2024 host to be made in mid-2017.

“It is an exceptional honour for Boston to be chosen as the US representative in the running for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games,” said Boston Mayor Martin Walsh. “Our goal is to host Olympic and Paralympic Games that are innovative, walkable and hospitable to all.”

With the IOC having recently overhauled the bidding process to make it more cost-effective, a compact Boston bid that would take advantage of many existing facilities proved attractive.

The Russian city of Sochi spent a staggering $51 billion in staging last year’s Winter Olympics, with the future of many of the purpose-built venues in doubt.

Boston is no stranger to expensive projects given the city’s Big Dig project, a state initiative from the 1980s to bury a raised highway that for years had split the city in two that was famous for its huge cost overruns.

But for the most part the USOC’s decision was seen with enthusiasm from athletes, sports officials and politicians, including failed 2012 presidential candidate and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who played a key role in organizing the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. “We know Boston is the place to inspire a new generation of athletes to discover the greatness within,” said Romney.

The announcement ends an exhaustive, 22-month evaluation process that began with the USOC reaching out to about 35 US cities to gauge interest in a bid.

After stunning rebukes to New York to host the 2012 Olympics and Chicago’s failed bid for the 2016 Games the USOC had taken a cautious and methodical approach and assessing their chances before throwing their hat into the Olympic rings.

The USOC has spent years patching up strained relationships with the IOC over revenue sharing that hampered the last two U.S. bids for the Summer Games and will count on those improved ties when it comes time to vote.

“The deliberative and collaborative process that we put in place for selecting a city has resulted in a strong US bid that can truly serve the athletes and the Olympic and Paralympic movements,” said Probst.—Reuters

New Palace boss Pardew defends his record at Newcastle

LONDON, 9 Jan — Alan Pardew has defended his record at Newcastle United saying that his side are second to none with “pulled up above its weight” during his four, often turbulent, years in charge.

Pardew was named as manager of his former playing club Crystal Palace on Saturday after Palace met the terms of a release clause in his Newcastle contract.

While he is busy plotting this weekend’s home clash with in-form Tottenham Hotspur, Pardew’s Thursday news conference inevitably focussed on his reasons for leaving mid-table Newcastle for a relegation battle.

“It was difficult because it’s a big club run on fairly tight financial margins,” Pardew, who spent £229 million in charge of Newcastle and took them into the Europa League in 2012, said.

“Our net spend was one of the lowest, we had to really work hard at transfers because the funds for a club of that size makes it difficult and for the fans to understand that you need slow progress, to build slowly, which we did for four years.”

Despite a steady tenure at club desperate for success, Pardew never completely won over the Geordie faithful and a dismal start to this season saw a concerted campaign by fans to get him sacked, with scores of banners held up at home and away matches.

Pardew resisted any temptation to hit back though.

“I’ve left a good club, I like to think with a good base of young players and some fantastic professionals,” the former Crystal Palace midfielder said.

“We’ve pulled above our weight at times. Of course when you lose games there will be criticism from the stands but never once did I sense that outside of the ground.”

“I had tremendous support while I was there and want to thank all Geordies.”

Pardew, who has also managed Reading, West Ham United and Southampton, said the decision to leave was his alone.

“ Personally and professionally it was the right time for me and the right time for Newcastle too if I’m honest,” he said.

“It was my decision, (Palace chairman) Steve (Parish) met the clause in my contract and I had to make a decision which I hope was the right one for me and the right one for Palace.”

Palace are third from bottom in the table and this weekend host a Tottenham side buoyant after beating Chelsea.—Reuters

‘Game of Thrones: The Exhibition’ to visit London

LONDON, 9 Jan — ‘Game of Thrones: The Exhibition’ has been announced for The O2 in London next month.

‘Game of Thrones: The Exhibition’ has been announced for The O2 in London next month. —Reuters

Sky TV customers will have exclusive access to the event, which runs from 9 to 12 and 15 to 17 February.

The latest version of HBO’s exhibition in London will be the first of its international tour, and its debut in the city, reported Telegraph online.

Available exclusively to Sky TV users and their guests, the exhibition focuses on the fourth season of ‘Game of Thrones’, including new installations, nearly 70 original artefacts from the series, and select pieces from the upcoming fifth season.

Photo stations will also allow fans to interact with the event, placing them in ‘Game of Thrones’ scenes and locations.

Fans can also pledge their allegiance to their favourite ‘Game of Thrones’ family by joining a House before entering the event.

Meanwhile, the O2's Rift-powered Ascend the Wall experience can take fans to the top of the 700-foot wall of ice. They will also be able to sit on the Iron Throne elsewhere in the exhibition.

Sky TV customers can book up to two tickets for £60 while tickets are handed out on a first-come, first-served basis from January 26.

Game of Thrones returns for its fifth season in the spring on Sky Atlantic in the UK and HBO in the US.

A jogger runs along the Charles River past the Boston skyline on cold winter day in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 8 Jan, 2015.—Reuters

Crystal Palace's new manager Alan Pardew gives a thumbs up after his team beat Dover in their FA Cup third round soccer match at the Crabble Athletic Ground in Dover, southern England, on 4 Jan, 2015. —Reuter

6:30 am
Teleplay
Myanmar Series

6:45 am
Musical Programme

7:00 am
Teleplay

8:00 am
Travelogue Programme

8:10 am
Teleplay

8:40 am
Dramatic Arts

10:00 am
Myanmar Video

MITV MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

(10-1-2015, Saturday)

* Local News
* The Prayer Halls And Buddha Images
* World News
* Inspiration
* Local News
* Shwe Myanmar (I)
* World News
* Shwe Myanmar (II)
* Local News
* ID Show “Traffic”
* World News
* Tea

Life

Family

Education

Sports

National

Myanmar

Media

Entertainment

Teleplay

6:00 am

6:30 am

6:30 am

10:00 am

MITV

Teleplay

Television Programme

The Kayin Threading Event

Myanmar Video

Saturday, 10 January, 2015

Myanmar Video

Saturday, 10 January, 2015

Myanmar Video

Saturday, 10 January, 2015

Myanmar Video

Saturday, 10 January, 2015

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Myanmar Video

Saturday, 10 January, 2015
FA charges Mourinho for verbal attack on referee Taylor

MELBOURNE, 9 Jan — Australia shook off a nervous start and an injury before trampling over Kuwait 4-1 to kick off their home Asian Cup in emphatic style in Melbourne on Friday.

Young midfielder Massimo Luongo lived up to the high hopes setting up a goal for Socceroos talisman Tim Cahill in the 33rd minute before heading in one of his own two minutes before the break in front of 30,000 spectators at the Rectangular Stadium.

The double strike put Australia 2-1 up at halftime after Kuwait defender Husein Fadhel had stunned the hosts with a goal in the eighth minute of the Group A encounter.

The second half was far more routine for the hosts as captain Mile Jedinak netted a 62nd penalty before James Troisi iced the match with an injury-time strike that sent the home fans into raptures.

The relief was palpable as thrilled Socceroos players embraced at the final whistle, having come into the match with a solitary win from their 11 previous matches under coach Ange Postecoglou.

Though they dominated possession and tormented Kuwait goalkeeper Hameed Youssef for much of the second half, Australia’s shaky defence will leave Pos- tecoglou with much to ponder. After an opening ceremony featuring hip hop music and indigenous dance, a nervous Australia conceded the first goal with some sloppy set-piece defending.

The 30-year-old Fadhel latched onto a neat deflection from teammate Fahed Al Ebrahim after a low corner had whizzed into the heart of the penalty area.

Australia spent much of the half regaining their composure before Cahill, so long Australia’s saviour, cancelled out the early goal in the 33rd minute after a brilliant jinking run by Luongo, who eluded three opponents near the right corner before crossing low into the path of his team mate. Luongo then leaped in front of Cahill to head in a cross from Ivan Franjic to give Australia a deserved halftime lead.

Australia pushed relentlessly after the break, with Matthew Leckie cannoning a left-foot shot off the crossbar after Cahill had a low shot parried away by the keeper.

The pressure told and forward Robbie Kruse was brought down when charging into the area, allowing captain Jednak to coolly slot home the spot kick.

Australia keeper Mathew Ryan was forced to stretch to put a hand on a swirling shot from Fahed Al Ebrahim that also hit the crossbar.

Substitute Nathan Burns was next to hammer the woodwork before Leckie set up the stunning finish, cutting the Kuwait defence to ribbons in the area before Troisi hammered the final goal home.

South Korea and Oman are the other teams in Group A, with the pair meeting in Canberra on Saturday.—Reuters

Australia’s Massimo Luongo (2nd L), scores a goal next to teammate Tim Cahill (2nd R), Kuwait’s Mesaud Alenzi (L) and Ali Hussain Fadhel during their Asian Cup Group A soccer match at the Rectangular stadium in Melbourne on 9 Jan, 2015.—Reuters

Neymar hits double as Barca put five past Elche

BARCELONA, 9 Jan — Neymar’s double helped Barcelona cruise to a 5-0 victory in the first leg of their King’s Cup last 16 tie against Elche on Thursday to ease the pressure on coach Luis Enrique.

The Brazilian put the Catalans in front after 34 minutes when he fired home following a well worked move and after that, the flood gates opened against the bottom side in La Liga.

Six minutes later Luis Suarez slotted past Przemyslaw Tyton after creating the chance with a delightful dummy as he allowed the ball to run through his legs before bearing down on goal.

Lionel Messi, who was the focus of attention following a reported bust-up with Enrique, looked very motivated from the start with some lively runs and converted a penalty just before halftime after Neymar was felled by defender Enzo Roco.

Jordi Alba made it 4-0 with a clinical finish from a Messi pass after 55 minutes and Neymar got his second goal with a deflected drive from distance five minutes later.

Shortly afterwards Neymar was substituted and made it clear he was unhappy as he shook his head when walking off.

It was an important win for Enrique who was criticised for leaving Messi and Neymar on the bench for the defeat by Real Sociedad last Sunday with his team stuttering under him.

The coach put out a first-choice strike force against Elche as he could not afford another slip-up and he received a mixed reception from the Camp Nou crowd.

At several times during the game, fans chanted his name but they were then drowned out by whistles.

“The only reflection that I have, is a penalty like Big Ben. In this cause it is a scandal,” said Mourinho.

Jose Mourinho

LONDON, 9 Jan — Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho was charged with misconduct by the FA on Thursday following comments he made about referee Anthony Taylor after last month’s 1-1 draw at Southampton in the Premier League. The Portuguese was furious with Taylor after he booked Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas for diving in the 29 December match. Mourinho said the referee’s failure to award a penalty was a scandal and that he should be ashamed.

He added that his team were being unfairly targetted in a campaign waged against them after Fabregas became the fifth Chelsea player to become involved in a row over diving in a matter of weeks. The Spaniard, though, appeared to be tripped by Southampton defender Matt Targett in the penalty area.

“In other countries where I have worked, tomorrow in the sports papers it would be a front-page scandal because it is a scandal,” said Mourinho.

“It is not a small penalty, it is a penalty like Big Ben. In this country, and I am happy with that, more than happy with that, we will just say that it was a big mistake with a big influence on the result.

“I will go to the referee and wish him a good year and tell him he will be ashamed,” added Mourinho.

In a statement, the FA said his remarks constituted improper conduct. The notice does not explicitly imply bias on the part of a referee or referees and/or bring the game into disrepute. Mourinho has until 1800 GMT on 13 January to respond to the charge.

The FA will not take any action against him following the comments he made before the game against Stoke City on 19 December but gave him a formal warning as managers and players are banned from making pre-match media comments about officials. Before the game Mourinho said he hoped referee Neil Swarbrick “does his job”.

“I like these matches,” added the Chelsea manager. “It’s no problem with a good referee that can understand what is aggressive or when aggression finishes and when the rules of the game start. “I know it is difficult for every team to play this kind of match but again I’m not worried. The result is there exactly to judge what is aggression. And aggressivity always welcome, it makes the game much more beautiful and difficult.”—Reuters

Australia hammer Kuwait 4-1 in stunning Asian Cup start

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