President U Thein Sein joins Kachin Manaw Festival

Myanmar invites service providers for Yangon Stock Exchange to apply for licenses

Myanmar tourism boom likely to continue at impressive pace

Only 35 villages remain to have access to electricity in Pyawbwe Township

Foreign investments critical to poverty alleviation, says union minister

The World deserves our gratitude

Amarapura, the second last old capital city VII

Development

Amarapura, the second last old capital city VII

Pedestrians walk past an over-100-year old historic building located at the corner of the Merchant Street and Sule pagoda Road in downtown Yangon. The Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar has chosen that historic building to establish the Yangon Stock Exchange there, setting the dead line for submitting applications for getting licenses for service providers for Yangon Stock Exchange and expecting to announce the winners in mid-April.—Photo Aye Min Soe

Yangon, 10 Jan—Hit-ting three million visitors mark last year, Myanmar’s tourism boom is expected to continue in 2015.

The country received 3.081 million tourist arrivals last year, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung said on his recent tour of Chaungtha Beach. With a 51 percent rise in 2014, the country welcomed more than 1.1 million visitors arriving by air and water and more than 1.9 million by land, he added. Myanmar’s tourism industry is growing at an impressive pace, with the country ranked first in the list of “top 10 destinations for 2015” by globe-trotter search engine Skyscanner.

(See page 4)
Donations for offering gold foils at Uriztaw Pagoda in Ponnagyun

PONNAGYUN, 10 Jan — Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Maung Maung Ohn, wife and family donated K3 million for offering gold foils to Uriztaw Pagoda and 10 encircled Zedi in Ponnagyun, Rakhine State, on 9 January.

The chief minister presented K3 million to the pagoda board of trustees and offered provisions to members of the Sangha.

Rakhine State IPRD

Plan to dredge sandbanks in Ayeyawady River for prevention of erosion

SAGAING, 10 Jan—Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems submitted the estimated costs on dredging sandbanks under Ayeyawady Bridge (Yadanabon) and Sagaing Bridge for improvement of watercourses to Mandalay Region Government.

Water erosion causes at the bank on Sagaing and Inwa where Mei Na Brick Monastery and other ancient cultural heritages. So, the watercourse will be improved by dredging sandbanks to have a proper watercourse, Director U Win Hlaing of the department told media.

"Arrangements are being made to dredge the sandbanks for protection of ancient heritages in Inwa. At present, the department submitted an estimated cost to the region government. When the budget has been allotted, we will start dredging works," he added.

The waterway measurements have been made in the second week of December in 2004. The report showed a watercourse flowed along Ayeyawady River near the Sagaing Bank upstream of Ayeyawady Bridge (Yadanabon) and near the Taungtaw Village and the bank near Shwekyetka Pagoda.

At present, Sagaing Bridge has 210 metres wide and 3.15 metres high clearance.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Sittway to hold carriage pulling festival

SITTVAY, 10 Jan—The carriage pulling committee has decided to hold the carriage pulling festival in Sittway from 1 to 3 February.

Peoples of wards and villages pull the carriage as competition by shouting chorus songs.

It is a traditional festival of Rakhine people with the aim of boosting production of crops.

Rakhine State IPRD

Wellwisher donates 10 sets of tables and chairs to BEHS Branch

NYAUNGLEBIN, 10 Jan — A ceremony to donate 10 sets of tables and chairs to Basic Education High School Branch was held at the school in Myoma Ward 1 in Nyaunglebin, Bago Region, on Friday.

Well-wisher Chairman of the Township Development Supportive Committee U Thein Naing explained the purpose of donation.

The well-wisher family donated 10 sets of chairs and tables worth about K700,000 to Headmistress Daw Khin Swe Win.

JAT U Thein Lwin spoke words of thanks on the occasion.—Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)

Tatkon Township IPRD honours top book borrower, top reader awards

TATKON, 10 Jan—Staff Officer Daw Swe Swe Moe of Ottara District Information and Public Relations Department inspected office works of Tatkon Township IPRD on 8 January and gave instructions on development of village libraries.

She presented prizes to top book borrower award in December to seventh standard student Maung Aung Aung Myat from Bo Min Yaung Ward and top reader award to Ko Aung Zaw Min of Bo Min Yaung Ward.

Tatkon Township IPRD is making utmost for raising reading skills of the people.—Tin Soe Lwin (Township IPRD)
President U Thein Sein joins Kachin Manaw Festival...

(from page 1)
The state leader and party then enjoyed Manaw Festival before they were treated to Kachin traditional music and food.

The President said that after Myanmar has regained its independence on 4 January 1948, Kachin State Council Meeting was held on 10 January, and the date was set as Kachin State Day.

Many major towns in Kachin State have received electricity supply from national grid, helping to improve living standards of local people in terms of education, health, economy and social affairs. President also suggested to manufacture value-added goods by using electricity and to develop more small and medium scaled industries, and urged the local people to join hands with all the nationals in peace-making process for stability and prosperity of the whole country.

The festival was also attended by Vice-Senior General Soe Win, union ministers U Aung Min, U Thein Zaw, U Soe Thane, U Hla Tun, Lieutenant General Thet Naing and state government officials. President U Thein Sein and party then visited Dhama Rakkit Wuntho monastery and paid respect to the head monk. In meeting with Rev. Dr Khamal Samsun and members of Kachin Baptist Convention, the President said that in making peace there is no intention to get an upper-hand and urged them to join hands with the government.

Presidential and senior government officials arrived back Nay Pyi Taw by the flight of Myanmar National Airlines in the afternoon. The first Myanmar President Sao Shwe Thaik formed the first Kachin State council and government at the Site-pu ground on 10 January, six days after the independence of Myanmar, and elected Sama Duwa Hnawhaung as the chairman of the council.

President Sao Shwe Thaik gave Sama Duwa Hnawhaung a copy of constitution book and the latter took oath on that day which was marked as the Kachin State Day. President U Thein Sein became the first president who attended the Kachin State Day after the day was set on 10-1-1948 and was attended by the first president of Myanmar, Sao Shwe Thaik. — MNA

Myeik has potential to attract more tourists

Myeik, 10 Jan—Myeik, a coastal area in Taninthari Region, is a topographically distinct region. The friendliness and hospitality of local people make visitors feel home and relaxed alongside their customs and traditional festivals as well as historic places.

Economic development deriving from growing trade with Thailand and successful businesses has given the region a facelift. The number of Thai visitors coming through a border trade camp in Mawtaung reached over 5,600 in 2014, up from 6,300 in 2013, with other tourists totaling 2,421 in 2014. In a bid to meet the rising demand of incoming visitors, more and more hotels of high standard are mushrooming. The White House Hotel was opened on 25 December last year, thereby creating job opportunities for locals and facilitating tours of historic places. Myeik is worth a visit.—Zaw Myo Naing (Myeik District IPRD)

Thingangyun Township plans to install 32 transformers for electrification

YANGON, 9 Jan—Under supervision of district and township officials of Yangon Electricity Supply Board, township electrical engineer and skilled workers are carrying out installation of 32 transformers in 2014-15 fiscal year in 38 wards of Thingangyun Township, here.


So far, the township electrical engineer’s office has installed 15 transformers. Plans are underway to install remaining transformers in the township.

Thailand’s first expo, business matching scheduled for mid-January in Yangon

YANGON, 10 Jan—Thailand Week 2015, the first exhibition and business matching event in Myanmar, will take place from 15 to 18 January at Myanmar Event Park here, aiming to seek new business opportunities.

The four-day event is organized by Thailand’s Department of International Trade Promotion, which has invited interested businesspersons to participate in the business networking session scheduled on 15 and 16 January, with public visits on the remaining two days.

More than 200 booths from 80 leading Thai companies will showcase their products and services, ranging from food and beverages, to health and beauty products, household utensils, garments, textiles and fashion accessories, automotive parts, and home decoration products.

“A business seminar regarding trade and investment policies between the two countries will also be conducted to educate business operators,” said Mr Boon Intiratana, Minister Counsellor of Commercial Affairs of the Royal Thai Embassy.

Thai investors have been keen on doing business in Myanmar over the past two years, he said, adding that the expo is expected to serve a good business platform for Myanmar entrepreneurs desirous of building business links with Thai manufacturers.

According reports, the Department of International Trade Promotion is planning a border trade exhibition in Mae Sot in Thailand from 28 January to 1 February.

The minister counsellor said invitations will be extended to Myanmar businesspersons to display their lines of products at the border trade fair.

Thailand, which is Myanmar’s second biggest trade partner, has reportedly chosen Mandalay, the second largest city in Myanmar, for a similar trade exhibition planned from 23 to 31 August, with the aim of promoting bilateral trade and investment.

(Photograph)

Commercial Counsellor Mr Boon Intiratana briefs the media at a press conference on holding Thailand Week 2015 in Yangon.—PHOTO: KHAI NG THANDA LWIN

By Khang Thanda Lwin
Only 35 villages remain to have access to electricity in Pyawbwe Township

NAY PYI TAW, 10 Jan — Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint attended ceremonies to mark the self-reliant electricity supply and the opening of a library, a multimedia classroom and a science laboratory at a newly-upgraded high school at two villages in Pyawbwe Township, Yangon District on Saturday.

The ceremonies were held at Anauk Shawphyu and tube village and Plettaw village in the township.

Speaking at the ceremonies, the Amyotha Hlut-taw Speaker highlighted the importance of education in the society, calling for getting all children to school. He also stressed the need of producing one product by one village through effective utilization of electricity.

Only 35 villages remain to have access to electricity in Pyawbwe Township in which there are 317 villages as self-reliant electricity lighted up 282 villages.

MNA

Foreign investments critical to poverty alleviation, says union minister

YANGON, 10 Jan—Foreign investments is one of the national policies designed to alleviate poverty and create more jobs with reasonable salaries, U Maung Myint, Union Minister for Industry, told officials at Suzuki Myanmar (Motor) Co. Ltd. Here on Saturday.

The minister admitted that locally-made automobiles are short of high technology and low in production power.

He expressed his delight at the arrival of the Suzuki company, which he said would be able to manufacture automobiles of international standard, and pledged necessary assistance to the company.

MNA

Myanmar invites service providers...

YANGON, 10 Jan—Inviting foreign investments is one of the national policies designed to alleviate poverty and create more jobs with reasonable salaries, U Maung Myint, Union Minister for Industry, told officials at Suzuki Myanmar (Motor) Co. Ltd. Here on Saturday.

The criteria or requirements for each, U Maung Maung Thein, deputy minister for Finance and Revenue and chairman of the SECM, said on the Yangon Security Exchange in Yangon on Saturday.

A license for underwriting requires K15 billion (around $15 million) for dealing K10 billion; for brokerages K7 billion and for consultancy business K30 million, according to the deputy minister.

A license for underwriting, which tops the capital requirements, is also allowed to operate in the other three businesses areas.

The four kinds of service providers are also allowed to have joint ventures with foreign firms in anticipation of speeding up the development of the stock market, U Maung Maung Thein said.

The SECM has planned to start to sell the applications for the service providers on 19 January and has asked the applicants to submit their applications to SECM by 27 February.

The licenses will not be granted to individuals.

Companies with the term securities in their names are entitled to apply for the licenses, the chairman of the SECM said.

Myanmar’s first stock exchange is named Yangon Stock Exchange (YEX) in honour of Yangon, the country’s commercial city, and is targeted to launch in October this year.

Japan’s Tokyo Stock Exchange and the Daiwa Institute of Research Ltd signed an agreement with the Myanmar Economic Bank to help establish and run Myanmar’s first stock exchange in December, 2014.

The market will be run by Yangon Stock Exchange Joint-Venture Company, with a 51 percent stake owned by the Myanmar Economic Bank under Myanmar’s Finance and Revenue Ministry and the remainder by the Japanese partners.

MNA

Unilever to continue free oral care programme

YANGON, 10 Jan—As part of its corporate responsibility activities, one consumer products manufacturer Unilever, plans to provide oral health care services free of charge to people who live in the populous cities in Myanmar in March, according to its brand manager.

More than 10,000 people from both urban and rural areas received the free service last year. It is estimated the number will be higher this year, Unilever’s Ma Shwe Ye Naing Win said.

To promote public awareness in oral health, an education programme will be conducted at schools in some regions and states this year.

GNLM

Myanmar C.P. Cup tennis championship

YANGON, 10 Jan—Myanmar Tennis Federation will organize the Myanmar C.P. Cup tennis championship with the sponsorship of Myanmar C.P. Livestock Co., Ltd. at Theinbyu Tennis Court in Mingala Taungnyunt Township, here, from 24 to 29 January.

The tournament will comprise men’s and women’s open singles and doubles events, U-12 boys’ and girls’ singles events, U-14 men’s and women’s singles events, U-16 men’s and women’s singles events and inter-club event.

Tennis players may enlist at MTF, not later than 22 January, dialing 02-254051005 and 01-381882 of the administrator.

The federation will serve tennis players from regions and states with travel allowance, accommodation and food and travel allowance for clubs.

GNLM
**Indonesian search team raises tail of crashed AirAsia plane**

**Part of the tail of AirAsia QZ8501 floats on the surface after being lifted as Indonesian navy divers conduct search operations for the black box flight recorders and passengers and crew of the aircraft, in the Java Sea on 10 Jan, 2015. —Reuters**

**Eight killed, 20 injured as suicide blast hits Pakistan’s Rawalpindi**

**Ambulances park near the suicide blast site in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, on 9 Jan, 2015. At least eight people were killed and 20 others injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a religious centre of Shia Muslims in Pakistan’s garrison city of Rawalpindi on Friday, local media and officials said.**

**Cold wave hits northern India, four dead**

**Cold wave conditions continued to grip northern India, including the capital New Delhi, where at least four people have died of cold over the last two days, said officials on Saturday.**

**N Korea’s nuclear envoy to meet ex-US diplomats in January**

**Beijing / Washington, 10 Jan — A senior North Korean official is expected to meet with former US diplomats in mid-January in Singapore to discuss bilateral and nuclear issues, diplomatic sources said on Saturday.**

**The planned trip by Ri Yong Ho, North Korea’s chief nuclear negotiator, comes as Pyongyang is seeking to engage more actively in diplomacy with some other countries despite a standoff with the United States over a cyberattack on Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.**

RI is expected to meet with former US envoys for North Korean negotiations Stephen Bosworth and Joseph DeTrani on 18-19 January, according to the sources.

**The two-day meeting comes after the United States blamed North Korea for hacking the film studio in November and later it imposed additional sanctions on one of the world’s most isolated countries.**

Bosworth, who was US special representative for North Korean policy during the first administration of President Barack Obama, has suggested publicly Washington should return to the negotiation table with Pyongyang.

**The US government has taken the position that the meeting has nothing to do with it. For the meeting in Singapore, North Korea is expected to also send Choe Son Hui, deputy director general of the Foreign Ministry’s North American affairs bureau, and an official from its mission to the United Nations in dealing with bilateral relations, according to the sources.**

**It is known that Ri, the chief North Korean delegate at the long-stalled six-party nuclear talks, previously met with former US government officials who were responsible for talks with Pyongyang in Mongolia last May.**

**The six-party talks aimed at finding ways to achieve North Korea’s denuclearization, which also involves China, Japan, Russia and South Korea, have been deadlocked since December 2008.**

Although North Korea has shown no signs of abandoning its nuclear ambitions, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said earlier this month, the first time since inheriting power following the death of his father in December 2011, that he is open to a summit with South Korean President Park Geun-hye. But Kim urged South Korea to stop carrying out its annual “large-scale war exercises” with the United States as a condition for an inter-Korean summit.
French forces kill newspaper attack suspects, hostages die in second siege

**PARIS/DAMMARTIN-EN-GOELE, (France) 10 Jan** — Two brothers wanted for a bloody attack on the offices of French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo were killed on Friday when anti-terrorist police stormed their hideout, while a second siege ended with the deaths of four hostages.

The violent end to the simultaneous stand-offs northeast of Paris and at a Jewish supermarket in the capital followed a police operation of unprecedented scale as France tackled one of the worst threats to its internal security in decades. With 22 hostages among the entire group scheduled to resume on 18 January, speaking to reporters, the senior US State Department official said US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif planned to meet so as “to provide guidance to their negotiating teams before their next round of discussions.” In 2013, the United States, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China, struck a preliminary agreement with Iran for Tehran to suspend sensitive nuclear work in return for easing some economic sanctions imposed during more than 12 years of nuclear dispute. However, the two sides failed for a second time in November to meet a self-imposed deadline for ending the stand-off and securing a comprehensive agreement before the EU imposed during more than seven months.

Iranian and Western officials have said differences remain over Tehran’s uranium enrichment capacity, how fast economic sanctions should be lifted and other key issues. Romney, the Republican US presidential nominee in 2012, told a meeting of donors on Friday that he is considering another White House run in 2016, a source familiar with the discussions said.

The former Massachusetts governor, who has sent mixed signals about the likelihood of another campaign, told a small group of donors in New York that he was thinking about running and “to tell your friends” he was considering it, the source said.

The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the comments, said Romney did not give a timetable for making a decision about whether to launch what would be his third presidential campaign. Romney failed to win the nomination in 2008 and lost the general election to President Barack Obama in 2012. Romney’s statement comes as some of the party’s top donors begin to line up behind former Florida Gov Jeb Bush, who said in December he would actively explore a run. The Journal said one of the attendees at the meeting asked Romney if he wanted to be president, and he said “yes, of course.” The topic of whether Romney would run for the White House came up at a dinner he had with former advisers on Wednesday night in Menlo Park, California. “The sense I got from him was that he was leaving his options open,” said a former adviser who attended the dinner. The former adviser emphasized that the dinner was a social occasion, not a strategy session, however.

However, Germany and France have raised doubts on whether such a four-way summit can take place without further progress on the Minsk peace plan, which was agreed in September. On Thursday, Chancellor Angela Merkel said all 12 points in the protocol had to be fully implemented before the EU could consider easing sanctions against Russia. The talks in Berlin on Monday would prepare for “a possible meeting at the highest level”, Ukraine Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said on the fringes of a meeting of the Christian Social Union (CSU) — sister party to Merkel’s conservatives.

“What counts is a result and what we understand as a result is an effective ceasefire and the complete implementation of the Minsk agreement,” Klimkin said. Romney tells donors he’s considering a 2016 White House run

**WASHINGTON, 10 Jan — Mitt Romney, the Republican US presidential nominee in 2012, told a meeting of donors on Friday that he is considering another White House run in 2016, a source familiar with the discussions said.**

The former Massachusetts governor, who has sent mixed signals about the likelihood of another campaign, told a small group of donors in New York that he was thinking about running and “to tell your friends” he was considering it, the source said. The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the comments, said Romney did not give a timetable for making a decision about whether to launch what would be his third presidential campaign. Romney failed to win the nomination in 2008 and lost the general election to President Barack Obama in 2012. Romney’s statement comes as some of the party’s top donors begin to line up behind former Florida Gov Jeb Bush, who said in December he would actively explore a run. The Journal said one of the attendees at the meeting asked Romney if he wanted to be president, and he said “yes, of course.” The topic of whether Romney would run for the White House came up at a dinner he had with former advisers on Wednesday night in Menlo Park, California. “The sense I got from him was that he was leaving his options open,” said a former adviser who attended the dinner. The former adviser emphasized that the dinner was a social occasion, not a strategy session, however.

As to whether Romney feels the likelihood of Bush running makes it harder for him to enter the fray, the former adviser said Romney believes the Republican field is in the “formational stages” and he would not be deterred from jumping in. Romney’s entrance in the race would dramatically reshape what promises to be a crowded and competitive field. Polls show him at or near the top of the Republican race along with Bush. —Reuters
Cuba dissidents say 38 activists freed as part of deal with US

HAVANA, 10 Jan — Cuba has freed 38 opposition activists from prison over the past two days, including a popular hip-hop artist, as part of a deal to improve relations with the United States, dissident groups said on Friday.

The dissident Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) said 29 of its members were among those released, and that most had been warned by the communist government they would be sent back to prison if they continued their opposition activities.

“Our freed prisoners are committed to continue fighting for the democratic Cuba which we all want,” UNPACU’s leader Jose Daniel Ferrer said in a statement.

“The UNPACU activists have left prison with more energy, force and motivation than they had when they were jailed.”

Cuba’s commitment to free 53 prisoners was a key part of the historic deal announced on 17 December under which the Cuban and US governments agreed to renew diplomatic relations after more than 50 years of hostilities.

Almost all of those freed so far appear on an informal list of more than 100 political prisoners drawn up several months ago by dissidents, but it is not known if they were all on the list of 53 that the United States negotiated with Cuba.

Details about who will be freed have been withheld by both governments, providing ammunition for US opponents of the detente, who have complained that President Barack Obama has not pushed Cuba hard enough on human rights and that the government in Havana was not living up to its side of the bargain.

The White House hailed the “substantial and ongoing” releases, saying “So good to see people reunited with their families,” senior White House official Ben Rhodes said on Twitter.

Elizardo Sanchez, founder of the dissident Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, which monitors detentions, said the releases to date were “very good news,” but that activists remained concerned about those still behind bars.

“We don’t know what the future holds for those former Cuban government officials and senior ex-military people, as well the Cuban-Americans who are still in prison,” Sanchez told Reuters.

Several Cuban exiles from Miami are also in Cuban prisons serving sentences of up to 30 years on terrorism-related charges after they attempted to infiltrate the island with weapons.

It is not clear if Washington argued for their release, or for the freedom of Cubans jailed for passing secrets to the United States.

Sanchez highlighted the cases of former high-ranking Cuban government official Miguel Alverdez and his wife, Mercedes Acea, a noted academic, who were jailed in 2012 for undisclosed crimes against the state. Alvarez was sentenced to 25 years, while Acea was given a 15-year term, sources close to their families said.

Most of those released this week were accused of offences such as resisting arrest and threatening police officers, and had been given shorter sentences of two to five years.

The hip-hop artist Angel Yumeron Remon, known as “The Critic,” was serving the longest prison term, eight years.

Remon was arrested in 2013 after painting “Down With The Dictatorship!” on the street outside his home in the eastern city of Bayamo. He staged several hunger strikes behind bars, and said unsanitary prison conditions gave him cholera.

Venezuela supermarket lines swell as shoppers scramble to buy basics

CARacas, 10 Jan — Lines are swelling at Venezuelan supermarkets, with some shoppers showing up before dawn in search of products ranging from chicken to laundry detergent, as a holiday slowdown in deliveries sharpened the nation’s nagging product shortages.

Queues snaked around the block at grocery stores and pharmacies around the country on Friday, with consumers in some cases gathering before dawn under the gaze of National Guard troops posted to maintain order.

Business leaders have assured Venezuelans the situation will improve in the coming days as distributors return from the often extended Christmas holidays, though many consumers blamed the socialist economic policies of President Nicolas Maduro.

“The truth is I don’t know what the government is doing. It gets worse every day,” said Elizio Velez, 65, a delivery man who arrived at 5 am at a large supermarket on the east end of Caracas in search of chicken and toilet paper.

“People walk past shelves mostly filled with the same product at a state-run supermarket in Caracas on 9 Jan, 2015.—Reuters

“This is insane, it’s like the end of the world,” he said, noting that troops had fired shots in the air as scuffles broke out in the line.

Venezuela’s 12-year-old exchange control system has for several years struggled to provide enough hard currency to ensure adequate levels of imports, leading to intermittent shortages of raw materials, machine parts and consumer goods.

Maduro, who blames the situtation on an opposition-led “economic war,” said in December he was planning to make changes to that system, without offering details.

Grocery store lines in the border city of San Cristobal this week have started as early as 3 am and continued until 10 pm, while consumers in the coastal city of Punto Fijo have started sleeping in hammocks outside the main shopping mall.

“I look for everything, at whatever price I can find it. Since December I’ve been hunting for toilet paper because in my house we don’t have any,” said Ruy Can vanny Chacon, a resident of San Cristobal. “We spent Christmas and the New Year without toilet paper.”

The supermarket industry association did not immediately respond to requests for comment, although the group’s president this week said supplies should normalise by the third week of the month.—Reuters

Greek leftist Syriza party keeps lead over ruling conservatives

ATHENS, 10 Jan — Greek leftist opposition party Syriza remains ahead of the ruling conservatives in the polls, as three surveys showed on Friday, with one indicating a marginal rise in its lead and two others a slight closing of the gap ahead of a snap election.

The supermarket industry association did not immediately respond to requests for comment, although the group’s president this week said supplies should normalise by the third week of the month.—Reuters

A survey by pollsters Marc for television station Alpha showed the lead for Syriza, which opposes Greece’s international bailout programme, had widened to 3.2 points from the 3 point lead it had in a poll by the same firm last month.

The party would garner 29.6 percent of the vote compared with the centre right New Democracy party on 26.4 percent in an election that is being closely watched across Europe.

In a poll by company Rass, however, Syriza saw its lead narrow from 3.1 points to 2.7 points.

Leftist Alexis Tsipras’ Syriza would get 29.8 percent in a snap election due on 25 January, with Prime Minister Antonis Samaras’ party, which has pushed through unpopular austerity measures, on 27.1 percent.

That compares to a lead of 3.1 points in a poll published by the same firm last week, which includes undecided voters and those who said they would spoil their ballot paper.

A third survey, conducted by Metron Analysis and due to be published in the Parapoltiki newspaper on Saturday, showed Syriza would win 34.1 percent of the vote if elections were held now, a lead of 4.1 percent.

Samaras’s New Democracy party would take 30 percent of the vote in the poll, which excludes undecided voters.

The same pollster showed a lead of 4.2 percent for Syriza in a previous survey last month.

Several opinion polls by various firms in recent days have shown Syriza ahead but with a narrowing lead.—Reuters
The World deserves our gratitude

By Aung Khin

Most of us mechanically and subconsciously mutter the words ‘Thank You’ in everyday interactions. Ancient Greek fabulist story teller Aesop wrote ‘Gratitude is the sign of noble souls’. Making special efforts to thank those that deserve our gratitude is a humane manner.

Both living things and many inanimate objects around us deserve our gratitude in various levels. Therefore, we should not forget to give heartfelt thanks to those around us that specially deserve our appreciation.

We can instinctively regard those who gave us moral or material support as our benefactors. However, it is mostly impossible to acknowledge our adversaries or challenging situations.

In an optimistic view, even our enemies deserve our gratitude as their possible threats could make us mindful of our weakness. Natural disasters have pushed us to create a safer environment. Alerted by epidemic diseases, we have tried to find more hygienic lifestyles.

Contrary to humane manners, ingratitude is one of the basest qualities of a human being. We, sometimes, encounter some ungrateful people who add injury to insult by not only not appreciating kindness, but repaying it with malevolence, spite and offence. In such circumstances, we should not lose our temper.

A civilized person appreciates the good things that occur in their life, recognizes benefactors and is grateful to them. Without the slightest hesitation, we should express our appreciation and gratitude by some return of kindness, not only to the people who have helped us, but to everyone around us. Such a humane attitude is certainly to make the world a better place for all.

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.tun@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.

DEVELOPMENT

U Kyi Mun

Development of man means raising man to the Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Perfection.

- Anonymous

Development means: Growth, Progress, Advance ment, becoming more mature mentally and emotionally.

Development can be in the forms of:

- Individual Development
- Team Development
- Organizational Development
- National Development

And Development can be in the fields of:

- Political Development
- Economic Development
- Technological Development
- Socio-cultural Development
- Moral & Ethical Development
- Morale Development
- Science Development
- Arts Development
- Public Relations Development
- Educational Development
- Environmental & Ecological Development

Now, let us explore a little more about the characteristics of DEVELOPMENT in the following manner:

D for Daring
E for Excelling
V for Values
E for Effectiveness-cum-Efficiency
L for Learning
O for Objective
P for Proactivity
M for Managing for Growth
E for Execution
N for Networking
T for Time Management

DARING

- Dare to make things happen and dare to get things done.
- Dare to out-think and out-perform the competitors.
- Dare to be shakers and movers!

EXCELLENT

We should excel for our further development in whatever we do. We should stand out from the crowd. We should be head and shoulder above the average.

We must dare to rise above mediocrity. We should be the pioneer. We should be the guiding star.

It is said that low aim is crime.

VALUE

We must have, for our radical development, beliefs and values as the core of our being. We have got to stand for something. We should do much more than for our own selves. We have got to aim at the BIG PICTURE and far into the FUTURE. We must have moral values as well as moral courage like upholding the interests of the Triple Bottom Line: People, planet & Profit.

EFFECTIVENESS-CUM-EFFICIENCY

Whatever we do, we have got to be effective and efficient. To be effective, we have got to do the RIGHT things; to be efficient, we have got to do the things RIGHT. In other words, in order to achieve the set objectives and goal, we must be strategically effective; and in order to raise productivity and lower the level of wastages of resources including time and money, we have got to be tactically efficient.

LEARNING


So, we have got to go all-out for learning the most in the knowledge age, individually, in teams and in groups, organizationally as well as nationally.

OBJECTIVE

Many an effective manager practices what is called Management by Objectives. Management by Objectives is viable because every vision, every mission, every purpose is bound to have some strategic objectives. Without an objective, an undertaking will be like a journey without a DESTINATION. So, everything should be done with an objective set clearly. Every work must begin with the END in mind!

PROACTIVITY

Proactivity means being proactive which in turn means not be reactive. It means you don’t react to something; you preempt, you take initiative, you aim and you take charge. Taking responsibility, taking charge and leading the struggle are being proactive. So, to be proactive means to be the master of your fate and to be the captain of your soul!

MANAGING FOR GROWTH

Managing means making things happen and getting things done in order to achieve the set goal and objectives.

Growth means:

G for Goal
R for Resources
O for Organizing
W for Working for Win-Win Outcome
T for Tactically Prevailing
H for Harmony of Minds

EXECUTION

Without an effective execution, no strategy on earth can bear fruits. A Plan of Action must be implemented in the right way and at the right time.

Formerly, it used to be said: “Don’t fix it, if it ain’t broke.” Now, it is usually said: “Fix it even if it ain’t broke”. The motto today, “Fix it, do it, try it.”

NETWORKING

For the purpose of development, man meets man and mind manages mind. It means all kinds of development inevitably involves man and mind, i.e. people. People purport power. So, to gain power – power to achieve the desired goal, networking with important people must be strategically given emphasis and priority. After all, profit is the product of the Loyal People (i.e. Customers & Employees).

TIME MANAGEMENT

All sorts of development can only happen in time, on time and with time. Time is always ticking away. Respect time and make the most of it. Time is a most precious commodity. Be mindful of the importance of TIME and take care in using time.

CONCLUSION

Don’t grow old; grow up!

U Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAING Group Capital Co.,Ltd.
Amarapura, the second last old capital city VII

During the 27-day long riverine march from his capital city Amarapura to Dagon, King Thayawaddy so-journed at the following stations to visit historic pagodas to offer the fourornings and to receive homage and tribute from his subordinate kinglets:

1. On 7th waning moon of Tawthalin, he stopped for the night at the Yang Aung Myin Jetty, Inwa.

2. On 8th and 9th waning moon, Their Majesties were carried on the Kat Kyaw Barge and spent one night each at two of the stations — Laung Tha at Nyaung zin village and Myingyan in Taloke Myo township.

3. On the 10th waning moon, the king continued the journey by “Pyi Kyi Mun” royal barge and spent two nights at Nyaung U village. The king and the chief queen accompanied by the entourage were carried in the spired coach to Bagay Shwe Zigon and Ananda Pagodas which they worshipped and donated offerings.

4. On the nights of 13th, 14th and 15th waning moon, the royalty spent their time at Laung u (Dala) town and Saar Ta W village and Kyi Pin Ten respectively.

5. On the first wanning moon of Thadingyut, royal entourage reached the station at Kyuhat village in Pyay in Pyay. The king conferred the title “Ma Min Hin Kyaw Swa” on Pakhan Min Kyaw Swa Nat spirit. The king ordered him to join the royal entourage. One night was spent at this station.

6. On the 2nd, 3rd and 4th waning moon of Thadingyut the king spent one night at each of the three stations — Tha-wuhti village in Myey-de township, Thayet Myo, and Mya Ywo at the No-win stream in Pyay township respectively.

7. The king stayed two days at the royal residence at Mya Ywo during which he visited Shwe Bon-tha pagoda built by King Thado Dhamma Yaza, younger brother of King Baysint Naung and Pyay Shwe San-daw pagoda.

8. The king made an over-night stop at each of the two stations — the royal residence at Kyi-the Hsin Nyen city and the royal residence at Thanbaya Kan in Mingala Thayawaddy township on the 6th and 7th waning moon respectively.

9. On the 8th waning moon, the king reached Mingsyi Ywo where he stayed four days during which he gave the governor of Mingla Thayawaddy town construction materials and money to build a pagoda on the site of his previous residence. On the 10th waning moon at the auspicious hour of 4 p.m. the ground breaking ceremony was held at the site. Minister Thado Atula Mingyi Maha Bandu, chief of the riverine patrol.)

10. After one night at royal residence at Thanbaya Kan, the king continued his journey via Zeyaw stream and reached Maha Paung Shwe Laung stream.

11. The king spent one night at each of the four stations — Shwe Laung stream, Sun Ywe village, Pho Khauang village, and Ywa Thit Kyi village in Hlaing township.

12. On the 2nd waning moon of Thadingyut, he jour-neyed to the royal residence at the pier, a distance of 400 iar away from the palace at Okalapa (Dagon).

13. On the 3rd waning moon at past 3 hour the king arrived at the royal residence and spent one night there.

14. On the morning of the 4th waning moon, Their Majesties were borne on the Ratana Palanquin to the Okalapa palace, followed by the royal entourage. They ceremonially took occupancy in the palace. Entertainments by performing artists were held in their honour.

15. On that day His Majesty riding the royal tusker “Pepahutanda”, accompanied by his retinue went to pay homage to Shwe Dagon Pagoda.

16. On the 5th waning moon, a variety of entertainments — wrestling, somersault, dramatic performance, puppet show, dancing, singing and music were held at the palace.

17. On the 8th waning moon, the king visited Dagon Shwe Dagon Sin and Thahbyin Kyi Khauk Pagodas. There was a grand parade of troops and display of flotillas to mark the occasion.

King Thayawaddy came to Dagon (Yangon) with 15000 troops and over ten thousand men were stationed at and around the royal residence. But the British Intelligence al- legance importantly reported to the British Government General of India that King Thayawaddy brought with him a hundred thousand strength.

The king stayed in Dagon till March 1842. He car- ried out religious works, built new fortresses and a new town. In the month of Tazazumng (November) he in- spected Shing Saw Pa town, Than Hlyin town, Dala town, Pegu town, Thilawa Kan (Patin town), Thayet Tabin Kyun U and Kyi Myint Taung towns. He visited Shwe Da- gon, Shwe Hmaw Taw, Kyi Khauk, Kausyinaga Pago- das and many other sacred places where he repaired and renovated old religious monuments and built new ones. On the 4th waning moon of Nataw (December) the king sent Buddha images of gold, silver, and alloy to Mingala Thayawaddy town to be enshrined in the pagoda, being built in the compound of Yen Kin Mingyi (the High Offi- cial in charge of the riverine patrol.)

In the month of Pyatho (January) the king again visit- ed Shwe Dagon Pagoda and donated little bells of alchem- ic iron, gold and silver to be hung on the Hit (crown um- brella on the pagoda). The king discovered the Bodhi tree planted by Moe King Dhammacazi who received its sapling as a religious gift from a Singhalee king. It had grown into a big tree on the Bodhi Kone hillock on the north-west of Shwe Dagon Pagoda. He repaired and renovated relig- ious buildings there and built a sima (ordination hall) named “Maha Wirya” near the said Bodhi Tree.

Desiring of the riverine journey to Dagon. This bell is the largest bell on the platform with 100 lines of inscription which produces a pleasant sound. On the body of the bell were inscribed in 100 lines of his achievements and the full account of his riverine journey to Dagon. The king found the vulnerability of these natural barriers and their topography, King Thayawaddy planned to construct on some of them forti- fications to protect his new town. With Shwe Dagon hill as the main eastern front fortress, the site for a new town was chosen at where present Dagon Township is. His palace building stood on the maird grounds (\(\frac{4}{5}\)ha), facing Moe My Ma High School. Keeping the palace in the centre and facing east, a new town was built.

On the auspicious hour 1 p.m. on the 9th waning moon of Tazazumng, the construction of the town was begun. Myanmar chronicle KONBUUNG SET MAHA YAZAUVON TSW TGY Vol.3 says that “the wall, the moat, the canal, the battlements, turrets, the town gates, and the bridges were completed with the combined la- bour of the military and the public. The king named his new town "Aung Mye Yan Hnin" (The Land of Victory driving out all enemies) and his palace “Myan Nan Aung Chau” (auspicious, victorious and central palace).

The new town was square in shape and the town wall was 16 feet high and 8 feet thick. On the north and the east were fortifications built on the hillocks. About a quarter of a mile lay between the eastern gate and Shwe Dagon pagoda hill. The town has 13 gates, namely (1) Mye Ni Gate on the north accessible to Mye Ni Gone area (2) Lake-Khin Gate accessible to Shwe Dagon pa- goda (3) Heish Na Su Gate (4) on the east (5) Baue-dan Gate or Kya-ku Gate (6) South Gate (7) Nayung Bin Gate (8) Thit Nyo Gate on the south (9) Wet Su Gate (10) Shin Say Pu Gate (11) Ma Tha Gate and two other gates on the west.

On the 7th waning moon of Thadingyut was the residence of his son Prince Bagun. On its site Prince Bagun later built a pa- goda titled “Maha Dhamma Yanthi” (Great Light of Bud- dha Dhamma). But it is commonly called “Ein-day Yar Pagoda” (the pagoda built on the site of Prince’s house). He also built another pagoda on the site of his house in Mingala named Maha Lokha Yami Pagoda (The Great Ligh of the World). It is also commonly called Ein-daw Yar pagoda.

On the north were stationed 500 swordmen and 500 gunners, and on the east were stationed garrisons. Many monasteries, rest houses, ordination halls, wa- ter tanks, and wells were built and dug around the new town. Around the palace were dug 30 wells to supply fresh water for the palace.

After the construction of the new town was com- pleted, all governmental offices, Mayor’s office, cus- toms houses, immigration, registration offices, land sur- vey, etc., and officers’ quarters were moved to the new town. Prominent Myanmar families also moved to Aung Mye Yan Hnin. But foreign merchants, their resid- ences, shops, stores and go-downs were allowed to remain at the old town. They came to the new town only on business.

There emerged two towns of Yangon — one built by King Alaungpaya came to be known as old Yangon which continued to remain as commercial town, and the other built by King Thayawaddy came to be known as new Yangon which became the seat of Myanmar gov- ernment in lower Myanmar. King Thayawaddy’s visit to Dagon and his sojourn there for over five months had graced Yangon. Foreign trade increased and the old town grew into a seaport. Yangon became more known to the world.

Until today, the main road leading to Shwe Dagon pagoda on the south is called Lan Mu Daw (southwest) (Great royal road) which King Thayawaddy used when he visited Shwe Dagon pagoda. The arch which he built at the entrance stairway still stands behind the modern archway. His bell at the north-east corner is the largest bell on the platform with 100 lines of inscription telling the history of his time. His fortresses and fortifi- cations, moats and canals are still found around Yangon. Mr. B.R. Pear, Professor of History at Yangon University in pre-war time wrote a big volume History of Rangoon in which he detailed data on Yangon – the three of Yangons — Alaungpaya Yangon, Thayawaddy Yangon and British Yangon.
US man accused of trying to join Islamic State overseas — Justice Department

WASHINGTON, 10 Jan — A federal grand jury indicted a 19-year-old American for trying to travel overseas to join Islamic State militants operating in Syria and Iraq.

Bahraini protesters clash with police over opposition leader’s detention

MANAMA, 10 Jan — Dozens of Bahraini protesters on Friday clashed with security forces who fired bird shot and tear gas to disperse them during an anti-government rally over the detention of an opposition leader, a Reuters witness said.

Western-allied Bahrain has seen outbreaks of sectarian tension since security forces quelled ‘Arab Spring’ protests in 2011. Bahraini’s majority Shi’ite Muslims have demanded reforms and a bigger share in government in the Sunni-ruled kingdom, where the US Fifth Fleet is based.

The discontent has worsened since the arrest on 28 December of Sheikh Ali Salman, a Shi’ite Muslim cleric who heads the al-Wefaq Islamic Society, after he led a protest against last November’s election, boycotted by the opposition.

The witness said protesters marched by about two hundred men and women in the mainly Shi’ite village of Sitra, south of the capital Manama, turned violent, with dozens of young men throwing petrol bombs at security forces who fired bird shot and tear gas back.

Al-Wefaq said at least five protesters were injured. It sent to journalists photos of one person with bird shot injuries to his back and another with blood-stains on his head.

The Interior Ministry said it was checking the reports. The public prosecutor accuses Sheikh Salman of several offences, including inciting people to overthrow the government. Sheikh Salman was remanded in custody on Sunday for 15 days pending further investigation.

The US State Department has criticised Salman’s detention, saying it could further stoke tension in Bahrain.

Rights monitor says 2,100 people died in Syrian prisons last year

Inmates are seen behind bars in Aleppo’s main prison on 22 May, 2014.—Reuters

The United States, European Union and Turkey list the group as a terrorist organisation.

The DHKP-C traces its roots to Communist movements active in Turkey in the 1970s. It has carried out terrorist attacks in Turkey and Europe over the last decade. It was significantly weakened the DHKP-C, but experts say it still poses a serious threat.

Turkey, Europe and the United States, has called for the group to be labelled a terrorist organisation

Gunfire, heavy artillery heard near Nigeria’s Damaturu — Reuters witness

DAMATURU, 10 Jan — Shooting and heavy artillery fire were heard on the outskirts of Damaturu in northeastern Nigeria on Friday, a Reuters witness said.

No further details were immediately available.

A series of arrests across Turkey and Europe over the last decade have significantly weakened the DHKP-C, but experts say it still poses a serious threat.

PKK/PYD (People’s Protection Units) have left in a state of flux since a ceasefire in 2013.
**Dollar, stocks fall on revived growth worries**

New York, 10 Jan — The dollar rallied on Friday after a US labour market report suggested a go-slow approach to raising interest rates, while global equity markets fell on more weak data from Europe, adding to worries about tepid growth around the world.

Crude oil slipped under $50 a barrel as Brent, the global benchmark, posted a seventh straight weekly loss. Gold rose and notched its first weekly gain in four weeks as political uncertainty in Greece boosted demand for safe-haven assets.

Also weighing on investors was a Reuters report that raised concerns that prospective European Central Bank bond-buying may fall short of the unlimited money-printing programme investors have expected.

“The news out of the ECB this morning, this leaking out about what the programme may look like, people are disappointed because they don’t think it is big enough, so that is causing some pullback,” said Ken Polcari, director of the NYSE floor division at O’Neil Securities in New York.

Investors are still concerned about the impact of lower oil prices and how that might expose certain trades in the financial markets, said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at BMO Private Bank in Chicago.

“Somebody’s going to cry ‘uncle,’ we just don’t know who it is yet,” he said.

Data from Germany highlighted weakness in the euro zone, which is still struggling to emerge from the region’s long-simmering economic crisis.

German exports fell sharply in November and industrial output also declined.

US job growth increased briskly in December and the jobless rate dropped to a 6-1/2-year low. But wages slipped from November, barring the case for the Federal Reserve not to rush to raise interest rates.

The 5-cent drop in the US consumer price index in December from a year earlier, according to the Federal Reserve, is growing as rapidly as the one that is growing as rapidly as growth in that region’s long-simmering economic crisis.

German exports fell sharply in November and industrial output also declined.

Markets are caught between stock and bond investors over-reacting to economic data and global events, pushing US equities to new highs and bond yields to record lows, said David Kelly, chief global strategist for JPMorgan Funds in New York.

“The only thing that is more bizarre than a lack of wage growth right now is that, in an economy that is growing as rapidly as this one, is that you can have a 2 percent Treasury. That makes no sense at all,” Kelly said.

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In winter freeze, Turkey clears capital of Syrian shanty towns

ANKARA, 10 Jan — Turkey rounded up more than 300 Syrian refugees in Ankara on Friday, tearing down makeshift shelters, eyewitnesses said, in what authorities described as an operation to send vulnerable families to camps as winter temperatures plunge.

Turkey has removed 3,000 refugees nationwide and sent them to a specially built camp in Gaziantep in the south east, Dogan Eskinat, spokesman for Turkey’s disaster management agency AFAD told Reuters, without giving a time frame. He said the aim was to ensure that only those able to sustain themselves remain outside of camps.

AFAD says Turkey hosts 1.7 million Syrian refugees, of whom 230,000 are in camps, with access to facilities such as schools, supermarkets and even cinemas.

At dawn, a day after the affected families were informed, riot police cleared tents and shack in Haci Bayram, one of the poorest parts of the capital, and sent 308 of their inhabitants, more than half of whom were children, to a camp, locals said.

One Syrian man laden with battered suitcases said police had let him stay to load his car but he now had no idea where his wife and children were. “I don’t know the name of the camp we’re being sent to,” said the man, who gave his name as Abdullah.

A young child and people searching for firewood picked through wood and tarpaulin littered with abandoned personal belongings, the remains of the refugees’ shanty housing.

Many locals said they were happy to see the Syrians leave although there was discomfort about how it had been handled. “I want the Syrians to go home, but this sort of evacuation isn’t good. It was like a terrorist operation,” 60-year-old Suleyman said.

Storms and blizzards in the Middle East this week have raised concerns for Syrian refugees, although Eskinat said extra precautions have been taken to protect those in Turkish camps.

“The idea is that people living outside of camps are able to sustain themselves,” Eskinat said, adding that evacuations to camps were “a necessity if people are freezing in the street” and the policy will continue for “as long as there is a need”.

Since December, Syrians must be registered in order to get access to free healthcare and schooling outside of camps. AFAD said the rationale of the registration process, which includes recording biometric data, is to help it coordinate humanitarian relief and direct people to facilities.

People take pictures of each other in the snow following a snowstorm at a park in Jerusalem on 9 Jan, 2015. A storm buffeted the Middle East with blizzards, rain and strong winds, keeping people at home across much of the region and raising concerns for Syrian refugees facing freezing temperatures in flimsy shelters. The storm is forecast to last several days, threatening further disruption in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which have all been affected. — Reuters

Widespread flu kills at least 26 kids in US

WASHINGTON, 10 Jan — A “nasty” flu virus is now widespread in the United States, killing at least 26 children, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Friday.

The CDC said a weekly update that high levels of flu activity were reported in 46 US states for the week ending 3 January, up from 43 states during the previous week.

“It appears that we’re right in the middle of the flu season this year,” CDC Director Tom Frieden said in a teleconference. “But it’s too soon to say whether we’ve peaked.”

According to the CDC, a US flu season lasts about 13 weeks on average and the country is now about seven weeks in.

The predominant circulating strain this season is H3N2, which Frieden called “a nastier flu virus” than other flu viruses.

Hospitalization rates among people 65 years and older “are rising sharply,” going from 52 per 100,000 the previous week to 92 per 100,000, he said.

The last H3N2 season was in 2012-13 and the cumulative hospitalization rate for older people by the end of that season reached 183 per 100,000.

“We wouldn’t be surprised to see something similar happening this year,” the CDC chief said.

Five children died from the flu during the last full week, bringing the total flu deaths to 26 this season, he said, noting the actual number of deaths may be “even higher” based on past investigations.

Even worse, about two-thirds of H3N2 viruses analyzed this season are different from the H3N2 virus that’s included in this year’s flu vaccine, he said.

That means protection with vaccination against this season’s H3N2 virus will probably be reduced.

Despite that possibility, Frieden continued to urge people to get vaccinated, especially children younger than two years and adults aged 65 years and older.

“Vaccinations may still offer some protection and there are other strains of flu out there as well,” he explained.

Syrian opposition figure declines Moscow parley later this month

AMMAN, 10 Jan — Prominent Syrian opposition figure Mouaz Al Khatib said on Friday he had turned down an invitation to a Moscow meeting with Syrian government officials, in a further blow to Russian efforts to find a solution to the Syrian conflict.

“We decided to decline this is because the conditions we think are necessary to ensure the success of the meeting are not available,” the moderate Islamist said in an online post.

When he headed the Western-backed Syrian political opposition in 2012, Khatib called for negotiations with President Bashar al-Assad to pave the way for a handover of power.

Russia, one of Assad’s top allies, had extended invitations to senior opposition figures within Syria and outside to meet Syrian government representatives in late January.

The main Turkish-based National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces has already shunned the meeting and said any of its members who attended would be expelled.

The role of Assad in Syria’s future is a major stumbling block to any settlement in a war that has killed around 200,000 people and displaced millions since 2011.

The rise of hardline jihadist groups like Islamic State, at the expense of Western-backed rebel fighters, has complicated matters further.

Most of Syria’s opposition considers Russia and Iran enemies without whose help Assad would not have survived the insurgency. — Reuters

A Palestinian rescue worker (L) paddles a raft on a flooded street to evacuate residents in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, on 9 Jan, 2015. Rescuers have been sent to evacuate dozens of people from their flooded homes as a heavy rainfall and storm hit the region. —Xinhua

A child views Chinese contestants making a snow sculpture during the 20th Harbin International Snow Sculpture Competition in Harbin, capital of northeast China’s Heilongjiang Province, on 10 Jan, 2015. A total of 28 teams from twelve countries took part in the competition, which kicked off here on Saturday. —Xinhua
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.

Sr. No. Bidding No. Description Qty. Remarks
1. ITP-ID-01 Procurement of Construction Machineries for ID

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

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 11th January, 2015: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be scattered in Tanintharyi Region, Kachin and Mon State. Fair weather is likely in Upper Sagraing Region. Shan, Kayah and Kayin States weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagraing and Mandaly Regions, Chin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough sea are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Tanintharyi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong wind may reach (35) m.p.h. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.

London auction houses target buyers worldwide with Monet, surrealists

London, 10 Jan — The London auction scene is gearing up for another big season, with the two biggest auction houses targeting buyers around the world for evening sales in February expected to generate several hundred million pounds.

Sotheby’s is offering a view of Venice by French impressionist Monet for an estimated 20-30 million pounds as part of February evening sales it says could bring in as much as 200 million pounds overall. Rival Christie’s expects its main surrealist, modernist and impressionist lots to fetch up to 134 million pounds in the same month.

Sotheby’s is banking on broad global interest for its offering of Monet’s “Le Grand Canal” of 1908, which was on loan to The National Gallery in London from 2006-14.

“The market for works by Claude Monet has now reached an all-time point of strength, with bidders coming from four times as many countries as a decade ago,” Helena Newman, Sotheby’s co-head of impressionist and modern art worldwide, said in a statement.

London’s high-end art scene has attracted a growing number of buyers from Asia, Russia and Latin America in recent years, reflecting the growing number of multi-millionaire art enthusiasts in emerging markets.

Sotheby’s is displaying a number of paintings in Hong Kong to generate interest ahead of the sale, including Monet’s “L’Embarcadere” (1871), estimated at 7.5-10 million pounds, and works by Matisse, Toulouse-Lautrec and Magritte.

Christie’s, which had previously announced it would be selling Cezanne’s Mediterranean landscape “Vue sur L’Estaque et Le Chateau d’If” in February, with a pre-sale estimate of 8-12 million pounds, said on Thursday it will also be auctioning a large range of surrealist art.

The 36 surrealist lots include Joan Miro’s “L’oiseau au plumage deploye vole vers l’arbre argente” from 1953, estimated at 7-9 million pounds, alongside works by Magritte, Chagall, Picabia, Arp, Ernst, Tanguy and Dominguez, Christie’s said.

Olivier Camu, deputy chairman of impressionist and modern art for Christie’s, said the surrealist sale was the “strongest and most valuable” grouping of such works the house had ever offered and was attracting strong interest among buyers.

“They realise, together with the modern classical collectors, that surrealism is still not that expensive,” he said in a telephone interview.

End of the road for racy models at Chinese autoshow?

Shanghai, 10 Jan — Female models in tight dresses and miniskirts may be banned from one of Asia’s premier car exhibitions in Shanghai this year.

The Chinese government is concerned about what it sees as increasing vulgarity in society. A crackdown on pornography and freedom of expression more generally has intensified since President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2013. Victor Yang, spokesman of Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd, told Reuters on Friday that the company has received verbal notice from the Shanghai organizer that no models can be used at the week-long event, from 20 April. An official at the Council for the Promotion of International Trade Shanghai, one of the main organisers of the show, said such a restriction was “under discussion” and a decision would be published soon. He did not elaborate.

Auto promoters in China, as in many other places, often employ models to jazz up their stands. The models often seem to get more attention than the cars, especially from shutterbugs in the crowd.

Government censors faced a backlash from Chinese Internet users this month when a television drama about a Chinese empress was scrubbed of all footage showing actresses’ cleavage. Major web portals have also been under pressure to rein in what the government considers “harmful” content. While the news, circulated on microblogs, triggered some criticism, Yang said it would be a positive move for car makers. “An autoshow is an industry event to showcase cars, not beautiful models,” he said. — Reuters
‘The Grand Budapest Hotel’ leads BAFTA awards’ shortlist with 11 nominations

LONDON, 10 Jan — “The Grand Budapest Hotel”, an offbeat comedy starring Ralph Fiennes as the concierge of a luxury hotel in a bygone Europe, topped the shortlist for Britain’s BAFTA awards, with 11 nominations, including for best film.

Following is how the main films stack up for the awards. Nominations were announced on Friday and the winners will be unveiled by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts on 8 February.

— “The Grand Budapest Hotel” was nominated for best film, best director for American Wes Anderson and original screenplay; original music, cinematography, editing, production design, costume design, make-up and hair. Fiennes was nominated for leading actor.

— “Birdman”, a satire of show business by Mexican director Alejandro Inarritu, was nominated for best film, best director, original screenplay, original music, cinematography, editing and sound. Star Michael Keaton is nominated for leading actor while co-star Edward Norton is up for best supporting actor and Emma Stone is nominated for supporting actress. “The Theory of Everything”, a biopic of scientist Stephen Hawking by British director James Marsh, received nominations for best film, outstanding British film, director, adapted screenplay, original music, editing, costume design and production design. Benedict Cumberbatch was nominated for leading actor and Keira Knightley was nominated for supporting actress.

— American director Richard Linklater’s coming-of-age film “Boyhood”, filmed over a 12-year period using the same cast, received five nominations, as did American director Damien Chazelle’s “Whiplash”, which portrays a music instructor who pushes students beyond their limits.

— There were four nominations each for “Mr Turner”, British director Mike Leigh’s portrayal of landscape painter JMW Turner, British director Christopher Nolan’s space epic “Interstellar” and US film “Nightcrawler”, about a video cameraman who films gruesome accidents.

New photo from ‘Terminator Genysys’ revealed

LOS ANGELES, 10 Jan — A new photo of T-800 from “Terminator Genysys” has landed online.

The photo from Arnold Schwarzenegger-starring action adventure movie shows the robot still sporting glowing red eyes. Its sleek skeleton and teeth make it look scary, reported Ace Showbiz.

Directed by Alan Taylor, the movie will see the former governor of California reprising the titular role. Emilia Clarke stars as Sarah Connor, Jason Clarke as John Connor, and Jai Courtney as Kyle Reese.

The movie will see Kyle being sent to 1984 to save Sarah from a robot programmed to kill her. However, he does not expect what he sees when he arrives in the past. The film is due to arrive in theatres starting 1 July in the United States.—PTI

Binoche Greenland drama to open Berlin Film Festival

BERLIN, 10 Jan — Juliette Binoche called “Nobody Wants the Night” is a historical drama set in icy Greenland in 1908 about courageous women facing extreme circumstances.

Directed by Spain’s Isabel Coixet, “No Fumamos el Night” is an historical drama set in icy Greenland in 1908 about courageous women facing extreme circumstances.

It will be the seventh film by Coixet, who was on the Berlinale jury in 2009, to be included in the festival, and the third film in competition for the Golden and Silver Bear awards after “El Ego” (2008) and “My Life Without Me” (2003).

Binoche has also been a regular at the Berlinale with “Chocolat” (2001) and “Los Amantes del Pont-Neuf” (1992) among others. She won the 1997 best actress Silver Bear for the “English Patient”, going on to win an Oscar for her performance.

Berlin is one of the world’s oldest film showcases, with a proud tradition of screening movies with political agendas. However, it has faced growing criticism for shifting towards Hollywood and red carpet glamor.

The Berlinale, which runs 5-15 February and kicks off the 2015 festival season, has been keeping the festival season, has been kept safe by the Presley family. The Berlinale, which runs 5-15 February and kicks off the 2015 festival season, has been kept safe by the Presley family. The Berlinale, which runs 5-15 February and kicks off the 2015 festival season, has been kept safe by the Presley family. The Berlinale, which runs 5-15 February and kicks off the 2015 festival season, has been kept safe by the Presley family.

The 78 RPM acetate was sold at the auction include items which is up for auction on 80th birthday.

The song was recorded at Sun Records in Memphis in 1953 when Elvis Presley was 18.—PTI

Ken Jeong, Jennifer Coolidge to star in ‘Glee’

LOS ANGELES, 10 Jan — Actors Ken Jeong and Jennifer Coolidge have signed up for roles in musical series “Glee”.

“American Pie” star Coolidge and “The Hangover” actor Jeong will play Brittany’s (Heather Morris) parents in the final season of the Fox comedy, reported Variety.

Jeong posted a photo of himself with Coolidge, Morris and producer Michael Hitchcock earlier this week.

The pair join fellow new cast member Gina Gershon, who will play the mother of Blaine (Darren Criss), named Pam Anderson. “Glee” will bring back multiple fan-favourite characters for its final season, in addition to introducing five new students.

New episodes will see Rachel Berry (Lea Michele) and Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) facing opposition from Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch) when they return to McKinley High to re-launch the New Directions.—PTI

Cast member Ralph Fiennes and director Wes Anderson (L) arrive for the premiere of “The Grand Budapest Hotel” in New York on 26 Feb, 2014.—REUTERS

Damien Chazelle’s “Whiplash”, which portrays a music instructor who pushes students beyond their limits. — There were four nominations each for “Mr Turner”, British director Mike Leigh’s portrayal of landscape painter JMW Turner, British director Christopher Nolan’s space epic “Interstellar” and US film “Nightcrawler”, about a video cameraman who films gruesome accidents.

Reuters

Elvis Presley’s first record up for auction on 80th birthday

LOS ANGELES, 10 Jan — King of Rock and Roll Elvis Presley’s first record “My Happiness” is one of the items which is up for auction at Graceland on his 80th birthday. The song was recorded at Sun Records in Memphis in 1953 when he was 18. The 78 RPM acetate was made as gift for his mother Gladys, reported Ace Showbiz.

Elvis left it at a friend’s house when he stopped by to listen to the track because the Presley family did not have a record player. It has since been kept safe by the friend’s family.

“I’m hoping that somebody who loves Elvis Presley and is a huge Elvis Presley fan and who can appreciate the record ... ends up with it,” said Lorisa Hilburn said. She inherited it from her late uncle Ed Leek, the singer’s friend.

Ed Leek tried to sell the record in the 1980s, but it never changed hands. It is in original condition and is still playable. It also has been authenticated. Elvis paid the studio USD 4 to cut the track years ago, and now it’s being auctioned with the starting bid set at USD 50,000.

Other items being sold at the auction include a gold and diamond necklace the late King of Rock ‘N’ Roll gifted to his staff at Graceland, a copy of “That’s All Right” he autographed for his friend Ed, and customised watch that has a Star of David and Christian cross which symbolised brotherhood in his entourage.

Also being sold this month are Elvis Presley’s two private planes. One is a refurbished Convair 880 jet named after his only daughter Lisa Marie Presley, and the other is a Lockheed JetStar named The Hound Dog II, a less opulent plane purchased by the singer to take him on his trips while the Lisa Marie was being re-vamped.

PTI

The song was recorded at Sun Records in Memphis in 1953 when Elvis Presley was 18.—PTI

The photo from Arnold Schwarzenegger-starring action adventure movie shows the robot still sporting glowing red eyes.—PTI

Elvis Presley’s first record up for auction on 80th birthday

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**Boston Mayor promises no overspending on 2024 Olympics**

**SHARAPOVA AND IVANOVIC REACH BRISBANE FINAL**

**Messi, Serena Williams promote new campaign to educate children**

**Rio stadium to reopen after two years of repairs**

New York, 10 Jan — Lionel Messi and tennis star Serena Williams are promoting a new campaign to help some of the 58 million children who are out of school get an education.

The “In 11 campaigns” is organized by the UN children’s agency UNICEF, the FC Barcelona Foundation and the Qatar Foundation’s Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) organization.

The campaign, named for the one in 11 primary school-age children who are not in school, initially aims to help over 500,000 marginalized youngsters in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nepal, with a goal of expanding to more countries.

A campaign film featuring Messi and Williams will be shown during Sunday’s Barcelona vs Atlético Madrid match.

The organizers said the campaign hopes to raise between $12 million and $15 million to kick start the project at an art auction at Sotheby’s in London next month.

Messi said in a statement that he is supporting the campaign “because I believe every child has the right to fulfill their potential and realize their dreams.”

Williams’ statement expressed her wish of getting the number of youngsters not going to school “down to zero.”

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Washington, 10 Jan — One day after United States Olympic Committee selected Boston to bid for the 2024 summer Olympic Games, mayor of the city Martin Walsh promised on Friday that Boston will try to avoid overspending.

“I promise this will be the most open, transparent and inclusive process in Olympic history. I also promise that I will never leave Boston with a large price tag of an unpaid debt,” Walsh said in a Press conference in Boston.

“We are not going to be using tax payers’ money to be building venues,” he added.

The United States’ last two attempts to bid for the Games both failed, with New York for 2012 and Chicago for 2016 Games. The last time for US to stage the summer Olympics was in 1996 in Atlanta and Salt Lake City hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics.

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Sao Paulo, 10 Jan — The Rio de Janeiro stadium that is to host athletics at the 2016 Olympics will reopen next month after almost two years of repair work, according to the president of the Botafogo soccer club that play there.

The 45,000-capacity Joao Havelange Olympic Stadium (Engenhao), completed in 2007 for the Pan American Games, was closed in March 2013 after officials discovered the roof was in danger of collapse.

On Friday, Botafogo president Carlos Eduardo Pereira said his club would play Boavista there in the Rio de Janeiro state championship next month.

“We have just left a meeting with Mayor Eduardo Paes and can confirm Botafogo will open their campaign on 1 February at the Engenhao,” Pereira told the Arena Sportv television show.

The lower tier, which seats 20,000, will be opened next month and the rest will follow at a later date.

Pereira also said the club had officially asked to change the name of the venue to the Nilton Santos Olympic Stadium, in tribute to the Botafogo full back who won a World Cup winner’s medal in 1958 and 1962. The ground, owned by the city and leased to Botafogo, is called the Joao Havelange Olympic Stadium after the former president of world soccer’s ruling body FIFA.

Havelange was also a member of the International Olympic Committee until he resigned from the IOC in 2011 after being accused of taking bribes. Some fans now want his name stripped from the stadium title.

However, Brazilian Olympic officials have said they are proud of Havelange and will not remove his name. The stadium’s closure cast a grey cloud over the Arcs with 34 metal towers and toilets had to be built and shore it up.

The closure represent a calamity for Botafogo who lost an estimated 12 million Brazilian reals ($4.56 million) a year in stadium income, the previous club president Mauricio Assumpcao told Reuters last year.

With one of its biggest sources of finance no longer available, the club owe players millions in unpaid wages and the government has sequintered its main revenue streams in lieu of back taxes. “All our problems started when the stadium was shut down,” said Assumpcao before the club were relegated in December.

“It was a major rupture for us. We lost sponsorship and we lost income.”

League officials have played down the debacle and will be delighted to see the stadium open with the Olympics just 19 months away.

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Brisbane, 10 Jan — Russia’s Maria Sharapova and Ana Ivanovic of Serbia won their semi-finals at the Brisbane International on Friday to set up a highly-anticipated showdown in the lead-up to this month’s Australian Open.

Sharapova beat the talented Ukrainian Elina Svitolina 6-1, 6-3 to reach the final without dropping a set while Ivanovic battled her way to a 7-6(2), 6-4 victory over American Varvara Lepchenko.

Sharapova beat Ivanovic in the 2008 Australian Open final and both women are in devastating form heading towards the first grand slam of the season, starting in Melbourne on 19 January.

Sharapova has dropped just nine games in her three matches to get to the final and showed no mercy against Svitolina, a rising star who won the 2010 junior French Open, as she reached her 56th WTA final.

“I expected her to play well. I think I did a lot of things good to try to take away her game,” Sharapova said.

“In the end, it became a little bit more difficult. She became more free, went for her shots a little bit, a few unforced errors from my end, but overall I’m happy I stuck with it and finished the last point.”

Ivanovic, who came from a set down to win her previous match, once again had to dig deep before seeing off Lepchenko after nearly two hours on the Pat Rafter Arena.

Lepchenko twice served for the opening set. Ivanovic broke back both times then won the tiebreaker.

In the second set, Ivanovic charged to a 5-1 lead before she got the wobbles, allowing Lepchenko to reel off the next three games before she finally sealed the win on her seventh match point. “Definitely, (my) heart was racing a little bit, especially that it really was becoming a battle,” Ivanovic said.

“Even though I was 5-1 up, still felt like a battle all the way through.”

Ivanovic will be chasing her 16th WTA career title and her fifth in 12 months after she began her latest resurgence up the world rankings.

Currently ranked seventh, the 27-year-old is looking as one of the favourites for the Australian Open. A former world number one who won her only grand slam title at the 2008 French Open, Ivanovic credits her return to form to finally learning how to cope with fame.

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St Petersburg, 10 Jan — The World No. 1 Sharapova and No. 3 Ivanovic reached the Brisbane International women’s singles semi-final match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, on 9 Jan, 2015.

The organizers said the campaign hopes to raise between $12 million and $15 million to kick start the project at an art auction at Sotheby’s in London next month.

Messi said in a statement that he is supporting the campaign “because I believe every child has the right to fulfill their potential and realize their dreams.”

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A view of the Joao Havelange Olympic Stadium, undergoing renovation to stage athletic competitions during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, during the 2nd world press briefing for the games in Rio de Janeiro on 6 Aug, 2014.— Reuters
CANBERRA, 10 Jan — South Korea opened their bid for an elusive third Asian Cup title with a 1-0 win over Oman in their opening match in Canberra on Saturday.

Cho Young Cheol fired South Korea in front in first-half stoppage time and that proved to be enough to give the 2011 semifinalists victory and move them alongside hosts Australia on three points in Group A.

South Korea, seeking their first continental title in 55 years, created a raft of chances in the first half, and Oman goalkeeper Ali Al Habsi had to get down low to turn away a shot from Koo Ja Cheol.

Oman failed to register a shot on target in the first half, but had a strong shout for a penalty waved away when Qasim Saeed appeared to be brought down in the box.

Al Habsi prevented a potential own goal with another stop from Abdul Salam Amer’s misguided header before the South Koreans broke the deadlock in the first minute of time added on.

Al Habsi could only parry a stinging shot from Koo and Cho reacted quickest to slide home from close range.

South Korea continued to dictate the pace and Al Habsi produced another acrobatic stop to keep Koo’s header out.

But the Koreans had to endure a tense finish as Raed Ibrahim had a shot deflected just wide and substitute Amad Al Hosni saw his header tipped onto the cross bar by Kim Jin-hyeon in the dying seconds.

**Cho goal gives South Korea winning start**

**United injury crisis is finally over, says Van Gaal**

LONDON, 10 Jan — With just one player left on Manchester United’s injury list and a new goalkeeper signed, manager Louis van Gaal is starting to enjoy life at Old Trafford as he tries to assemble the “best team in the world”.

Third-placed United, unbeaten in their last 11 matches in all competitions, host fourth-placed Southampton at Old Trafford on Sunday with just a point separating the sides after 20 matches.

United were plagued by injuries at the start of the season but the treatment room has an emptier feel now as a number of first-team players close in on returns.

Lukáš Shaw, who signed from the Saints during the close season, is fit to face his former club after recovering from an ankle injury and midfielder Daley Blind has shaken off a knee problem he sustained in November.

Argentine defender Marcos Rojo will return to training on Saturday, leaving Ashley Young, who has a hamstring problem, as United’s only injury concern.

“We have only one player injured. Can you believe it? Only one,” Van Gaal told a news conference on Friday. “Another point is, of course, match rhythm, but everybody is healthy and can play except Ashley Young who is out for four to six weeks.

“I have to select for the first team in my career at Manchester United the 11 and the 18 players. But I have to watch the qualities of Southampton, how I can reduce that quality by my line-up but also by our game-plan.”

United signed former Barcelona goalkeeper Victor Valdes on a free transfer on Thursday to free up the number one spot at Old Trafford.

“We were the first to buy a player. We were very quick to buy Victor Valdes. You everybody? Manchester — we deal quickly. When we can, we deal quickly,” Van Gaal said.

“My ambition is that I have the best players who can cooperate with each other to form the best team in the world.

“I had the chance to see him and his behaviour in rehabilitation but also if his quality was still the same. He has confirmed both and that is very important for me.”

United beat Southampton 2-1 at St Mary’s last month, Robin van Persie scoring both goals to secure a somewhat fortuitous victory against the run of play.

**Chelsea assistant rules out Messi swoop**

LONDON, 10 Jan — A Chelsea deal for Barcelona forward Lionel Messi would be impossible under financial fair play rules, assistant coach Steve Holland said on Friday.

The Argentine’s future at Barca has come under increasing scrutiny in recent weeks amid media reports of a bust up with coach Luis Enrique and talk of a potential move away from the Nou Camp.

The four times world player of the year would almost certainly command a world record transfer fee while his wages would ensure any deal would be viable only for the most financially powerful clubs. Holland, standing in at the club’s weekly news conference for Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho, said it was unlikely the London club could bring the 27-year-old to Stamford Bridge without breaches of Uefa’s stringent spending controls.

He added that it was unlikely that any player would join Chelsea in the January transfer window.

“Jose has made it quite clear that in this window his expectation is that nobody comes and nobody goes,” Holland said.

“Recall him this time last year saying a similar thing, but a couple of things happened that made us reactive. Manchester United made a huge bid for Juan Mata. Sometimes you have to react.

“But the hope and expectation is that nobody leaves and nobody comes. We’re happy with what we have.”

“This club conforms with financial fair play. We’ve brought one or two players in over the last 12 months but it’s quite clear that players have been sold to balance the books.

“When you look at the numbers being mentioned around the Messi deal, I think it’s almost an impossible deal for any club working within the restraints of financial fair play.”