Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival starts at National Theatre in Yangon

YANGON, 17 Jan—The Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival was started at the National Theatre here on Saturday morning, aiming to arouse public interest in reading and encouraging local writers to reinforce the Myanmar literature through innovative ideas as well as translated versions of fine international literature and literary works by Nobel prize-winning writers.

As a saying that goes “Books for All”, books are attributed to broad-mindedness and broad horizons that can create peace and harmony in society. U Aung Min, Union Minister at President’s Office, read out the message sent by President U Thein Sein. The message stated that the successful celebration of the literary festival (See page 3).

Ancient kiln sites in Twantay attract ceramic researchers

By Aye Min Soe

TWANTAY, 17 Jan—Ancient kiln-sites in Twantay, about 20 miles south-west of Yangon, have become site museums, attracting local and foreign ceramic researchers.

Several kiln sites and glazed ceramics, including celadon green glazed wares exhibited at the site museums, have become well known just for researchers at home and abroad as the ceramic wares are very helpful for them to explore an extinct ceramic tradition of Myanmar. Modern kilns in the town have attracted mostly tourists. (See page 3)

Nine rice companies chosen for rice exports to China

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 17 Jan—Nine rice exporting public companies have been selected to represent Myanmar’s rice exports to China, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF), Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation Limited (MAPCO), First Rice and Paddy Trading Company Limited (FRP), Myanmar Rice Mill Company Limited, Golden Land East Asia Development (See page 3)

The World Bank says there are good market prospects to accommodate higher rice exports from Myanmar over the next 10-15 years, indicating China is becoming a large net importer of Myanmar rice. PHOTO CREDIT TO WORLD BANK MYANMAR
Shinhan Bank celebrates handover ceremony of school facility construction, renovation in Hlegu Township

According to the agency, the increased number of abandoned aged is based on a decline in moral standards of the people and daily survival for livelihoods of most of the families.

The world faces demographic changes. It is expected that the number of the aged would surpass the working age group in the future. This is due to a decline in marriage and a decrease in the birthrate.

Local aged care agency to increase number of service receivers up to 500

Local aged care providers pay their respects to older persons at a home for the aged in Yangon.—Photo: Khaing Thanda Lwin

Kanaung Town opens administrator office

YANGON, 17 Jan — A ceremony to unveil a signboard of Kanaung Town Administrator Office was held at Kanaung Hall of its fire station in Myanmar Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 15 January.

Township Administrator U Myint Soe and town elders formally unveiled the signboard.

The government designated Kanaung Town in Myanmar Township with five wards on 3 September 1973 under the 1907 Urban Act under the notification of the General Administration Department.

As of 15 October 2014, the town administrator office was temporarily opened at the fire station in ward 3 in undertaking development tasks of the town.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Development affairs committee auctions licences to entrepreneurs

YINNABIN, 17 Jan — Yinnabin Township Development Affairs Committee in Sagaing Region auctioned licences to local entrepreneurs at the people’s hall in Yinnabin on 15 January.

Chairman of auction supervisory committee Acting Township Management Committee U Chit Win made a speech.

Chairman of the Township DAC U Maung Maung explained disciplines on auction of licences. Head of Township Internal Revenue Department Daw Kyu Kyu Pyone briefed all attendees on taxation for licensees.

The committee fetched K35.53 million from auctioning 26 licences of 46 to entrepreneurs for the first time this year. The committee will hold the auction of remaining licences for the second time on 23 January.

It was also attended by Pyuthu Hlutaw representative U Thaung Han and Region Hlutaw representative U Kyaw Myint Thein.—Tun Ko Ko

Local aged care providers pay their respects to older persons at a home for the aged in Yangon.—Photo: Khaing Thanda Lwin

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

YANGON, 17 Jan — Shinhan Bank of the Republic of Korea held a handover ceremony of school facilities which were newly built and renovated in two villages in Hlegu Township, about 45 km northeast of Yangon, on Friday.

During the ceremony, the bank also presented sets of computers, school uniforms and school bags to students through officials.

Last year, Shinhan Bank injected USD 80,000 into a plan to build new school facilities and renovate old buildings for two primary schools in Kha Yaung and Su Khan Gyi villages in the township. The plan was a part of the Hlegu Rural Development Project being implemented by Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

“The bank’s cash contribution to the plan came from a fund of retired bank staff who have donated $10 for many years, said an official of Shinhan Bank.

Shinhan Bank of the Republic of Korea held a handover ceremony of school facilities which were newly built and renovated in two villages in Hlegu Township, about 45 km northeast of Yangon, on Friday.

During the ceremony, the bank also presented sets of computers, school uniforms and school bags to students through officials.

Last year, Shinhan Bank injected USD 80,000 into a plan to build new school facilities and renovate old buildings for two primary schools in Kha Yaung and Su Khan Gyi villages in the township. The plan was a part of the Hlegu Rural Development Project being implemented by Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

“The bank’s cash contribution to the plan came from a fund of retired bank staff who have donated $10 for many years, said an official of Shinhan Bank.

Shinhan Bank celebrates handover ceremony of school facility construction, renovation in Hlegu Township

Responsible persons involved in rural school facility construction and renovation project funded by Shinhan Bank with a US$ 80,000, are pictured together with students in Hlegu Township, Yangon.

Khaing Thanda Lwin
Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival...

(from page 1)

proved the common desire shared among writers in the effort to promote the Myanmar literature, calling it a step forward for the national literature to stand tall and proud in the international community.

The presidential message continued that lack of literature would lead to a society with heads but no brains, in which peace is not guaranteed. U Aung Min cited the message as stating that literature is a primary source of peace, humanity and intelligence.

Myanmar has a goal which is a modern, developed and open society, whose essence lies at the heart of such democratic norms as freedom of expression.

The message called for concerted cooperation in creating literary works that can enrich the society.

KIA opens fire on military camps

NAI PYI TAW, 17 Jan—Armed men of Kachin Independence Army (Kachin) opened fire on military camps in Thowai, Mwayaddy and Seninka villages of Wai Maw Township in northern and Seninku villages of Wai Maw Township in northern Myanmar.

According to the message, KIA also launched two counter-attacks which happened at 11:15 a.m.

Ancient kiln sites in Twantay...

(from page 1)

Myanmar archaeologists and ceramic experts have estimated that there may be more than a thousand kiln sites under the earth in Twantay.

Myanmar has a celadon tradition and evidence found during excavation in the United Arab Emirates has shown that Myanmar had exported its celadon wares to the Arab world since the 15th century, said U Myo Thant Tin, a glazed ceramic expert and the chairman of the Myanmar Ceramic Society.

According to officials, the delegation had a discussion with China’s general administration of quality supervision, inspection and quarantine (AQSIQ) on matters including standards set for rice exports to China.

The selected rice exporting companies will be responsible for the quality of exported rice as they will take care of rice exports to China by rice suppliers in the country, they added.

Myanmar rice is now being exported to China through the informal border channel. Upon completion of the trade agreement, Myanmar will be able to begin legal rice exports to China. The MRF said a networking seminar for rice traders between Myanmar and China will be held on 6 March in Yangon.

Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival displays some genres of books to arouse public interest in reading.

Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival displays some genres of books to arouse public interest in reading.

(from page 1)

Nine rice companies chosen for...

Limited, Ayeayar Pathein Rice & Paddy Trading Company Limited and Rakhine Rice and Paddy Development Company Limited were among the nine selected companies.

They are expecting to begin rice exports to China after finalizing a trade agreement between Myanmar and China at the end of February, U Ye Min Aung, MRF’s general secretary said at a press briefing in Yangon on Saturday.

Myanmar Rice Federation held its second coordination meeting to export rice legally to China at its office in the Republic of Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (RUMFCCI) Building.

The meeting came days after Myanmar’s rice delegation’s visit to China earlier this month.
Only 41% of Kobe quake survivors feel lives have fully recovered

Kobe, 17 Jan — Only 41 percent of people who survived the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake that devastated Kobe and surrounding areas feel their lives have fully recovered, according to a Kyodo News survey of 207 people living in subsidized housing in Hyogo Prefecture.

Of the polled survivors with an average age of 73.7, 54 percent said they were not receiving or were dissatisfied with support from local governments, while only 21 percent said they were satisfied.

Ninety-two percent of the respondents called for the expansion or continuation of local government support. Among specific support measures, housing assistance was cited by 67 percent and economic aid by 25 percent.

Local governments have provided subsidized housing to people who lost their homes in the disaster. At the end of last year, 4,197 households were living in such housing, with the 20-year subsidization periods set to expire around September 2015.

Japan’s Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko walk to the altar to offer flowers during a memorial ceremony in Kobe, western Japan, on 17 Jan, 2015, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, which devastated the port city and its surrounding areas and claimed the lives of 6,434 people. —Kyodo News

India may seek other suppliers if US will not sell drones — senator

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — India may buy unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, from other countries if the United States does not ease current export restrictions on such aircraft, a key Democratic senator said on Friday.

Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, who will join President Barack Obama during a trip to India on 26 January, said he was concerned that other countries could rush in to sell India the equipment the United States sells to its allies.

“We are looking for a new global order where the United States does not set the agenda,” Warner said. “We are concerned that other countries might step in.”

The move comes following reports of financial mismanagement affecting state-funded projects across Laos and reports, tender documents and contract agreements. The decree also encourages greater involvement of Japan’s bullet-train technology to India, according to Kishida.

Kyodo News

Japan, India converge on strengthening economic ties

NEW DELHI, 17 Jan — Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on Friday on further strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with Modi in New Delhi, Kishida said Japan wants to boost economic cooperation with India by increasing its economic policy, called “Modinomics,” and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s “Abenomics” economic policy “can operate together and create a relationship of reciprocity.”

Kishida quoted Modi as saying during the meeting that India appreciates Abe’s efforts to promote Japanese investment into India.

Abenomics features aggressive monetary easing, fiscal stimulus, plus long-term structural reforms to revitalize the Japanese economy, while Modinomics aims to promote infrastructure projects in India through foreign investment.

Kishida and Modi also agreed to accelerate negotiations for a civil nuclear pact that would allow Japan to export nuclear power plant technology to India. They also exchanged views on a possible introduction of Japan’s bullet-train technology to India, according to Kishida.

Kyodo News

Laos vows to improve oversight in state-funded projects

VIENTiane, 17 Jan — The government of Laos has announced efforts to improve the inspections of state-funded projects following the exposure of numerous cases of financial mismanagement, state-run media Vientiane Times reported on Friday.

Inspection officials will be required to carefully scrutinize state investment projects from the preliminary stages onward following a government decree signed by Lao Prime Minister Thongšing Thammavong that came into force on 6 January.

All projects financed by the state budget including state co-financing, grants and loans are all subject to thorough inspections under the decree.

The move comes following reports of financial mismanagement affecting state-funded projects across Laos as highlighted at the recent ordinary session of the country’s National Assembly.

Among the most obvious cases of mismanagement were so-called “ghost” projects to which funds were repeatedly allocated and spent with little or nothing to show for the investment. Some 25 of such projects were reported in a single province alone, costing the nation’s coffers in excess of 324 billion kip (40 million US dollars) in assets including 200 billion kip (24.6 million US dollars) in cash. Many state-funded infrastructure development projects nationwide were found to be undertaken without a tendering process, with collusion during the bidding process.

Upon request, those responsible will be required to produce any relevant documents including proposals, surveys, designs, feasibility studies, economic and technical studies, social and environmental assessment reports, tender documents and contract agreements.

The decree also encourages greater involvement by media, civil society organizations, and members of the general public in identifying cases of mismanagement.
Obama, Cameron vow to take on ‘poisonous ideology’ of radical Islam

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — US President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron vowed on Friday to take on the ‘poisonous ideology’ of Islamic extremists and said intelligence agencies must be allowed to track militants online despite privacy concerns.

Obama and Cameron held two days of White House talks amid increasing concern in Europe about the threat posed by extremists after 17 people were killed in Paris attacks and Belgian authorities engaged in a firefight with terrorist suspects.

“We face a poisonous and fanatical ideology that wants to pervert one of the world’s major religions, Islam, and create conflict, terror and death,” said Cameron, adding that intelligence and military force alone would not solve the problem, and they would work together on “strategies to counter violent extremism that radicalizes recruits and mobilizes people, especially young people, to engage in terrorism.”

The extremists’ ability to communicate online and spread recruitment propaganda on the Internet have presented a challenge to authorities. Obama and Cameron expressed concerns about new encryption products that could prevent governments from tracking extremists poised to attack.

Technology companies became alarmed with surveillance techniques after former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden leaked classified details about how government harvests data from companies like Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, AT&T and Verizon.

“We’re not asking for back doors,” said Obama, adding that intelligence and military force alone would not solve the problem, and they would work together on “strategies to counter violent extremism that radicalizes recruits and mobilizes people, especially young people, to engage in terrorism.”

The extremists’ ability to communicate online and spread recruitment propaganda on the Internet have presented a challenge to authorities. Obama and Cameron expressed concerns about new encryption products that could prevent governments from tracking extremists poised to attack.

US President Barack Obama (L) and British Prime Minister David Cameron (R) depart a joint news conference following their meeting at the White House in Washington on 16 Jan, 2015. — Reuters

A suspect in a hostage taking situation raises his arms in the air as he is detained by members of special French RAID forces outside the post offices in Colombes outside Paris, on 16 Jan, 2015. — Reuters

French post office hostage-taking ends, no victims

PARIS, 17 Jan — An armed man who earlier took several hostages at a post office northwest of Paris on Friday has surrendered with no one hurt, a French police official told Reuters. The man equipped with a military weapon took an unconfirmed number of hostages at the post office in the town of Colombes, just outside the capital.

“I cannot confirm or deny whether it is linked to terrorism,” an official at the city protector’s office told Reuters earlier, declining to give further details.

BFM TV, citing an unidentifiable source, said the hostage drama was not related to last week’s attacks in Paris. French police arrested 12 people earlier on Friday suspected of helping militant Islamist gunmen in last week’s killings in Paris. There have been numerous false alerts across the city since the attacks.

AFP photographer wounded in Charlie Hebdo clashes in Karachi — police

KARACHI, (Pakistan), 17 Jan — A photographer with French news agency AFP was wounded in Pakistan on Friday after being shot during clashes against the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo outside the French consulate in the port city of Karachi, police said.

“The Europeans have still not made the necessary gestures to reach a good deal,” the diplomat said. “I have the feeling that things have not radically evolved and that we’re still relatively far from getting there.”

There has been growing pressure on negotiators from hawks in Teheran and Washington. US lawmakers are seeking to impose further sanctions on Iran, although Obama said on Friday he would veto any such measures.

“We should not put ourselves under artificial pressure,” said the Western diplomat. “Striking a weak deal with Iran would be a disastrous signal for the world and would encourage other countries in the region to follow this bad example.”

Iran’s Zarif meets US, French counterparts to narrow nuclear gaps

PARIS, 17 Jan — Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met his US and French counterparts separately on Friday to try to narrow gaps over Iran’s nuclear programme, with just over two months left before a deadline to reach a deal.

Iran and six world powers — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — have renewed their quest for an elusive nuclear accord after negotiators failed in November to meet another self-imposed deadline. Zarif and US Secretary of State John Kerry met for about an hour in Paris to follow up on a lengthy meeting on Wednesday in Geneva in search of an agreement that is seen as crucial to reducing the risk of a wider Middle East war. “We discussed ways to overcome problems and get closer,” the official told Iran’s state TV. A senior US State Department official said the two men would see each other again in the coming weeks, but gave no details on the talks.

Speaking in Washington, US President Barack Obama told reporters the chances of striking a deal with Iran were probably less than 50 percent, saying he would seek to ratchet up economic sanctions if discussions broke down.

Kerry’s prime reason for travelling to Paris was to honour 17 people killed by Islamist gunmen in the city last week. Zarif was in France to see French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. “The meeting was an opportunity to reiterate France’s determination to reach an agreement that guarantees the peaceful civilian nature of Iran’s nuclear programme,” foreign ministry spokesman Romain Nadal said after the 45-minute encounter.

The major powers hope to persuade Iran to curb its nuclear programme, which the West blames as aimed at developing atomic weapons. Iran says the programme is for civilian purposes.

Talks are due to resume at political director level in Geneva on Sunday as the two sides look to reach a framework accord that sets key parameters by 31 March and a final deal by 30 June that completes the detailed technical aspects.

A senior Western diplomat close to the negotiations said that while everybody wanted to find a solution, there had been very little progress since then.

“The Iranians have still not made the necessary gestures to reach a good deal,” the diplomat said. “I have the feeling that things have not radically evolved and that we’re still relatively far from getting there.”

There has been growing pressure on negotiators from hawks in Teheran and Washington. US lawmakers are seeking to impose further sanctions on Iran, although Obama said on Friday he would veto any such attempts for now.

“We should not put ourselves under artificial pressure,” said the Western diplomat. “Striking a weak deal with Iran would be a disastrous signal for the world and would encourage other countries in the region to follow this bad example.”
Haiti president to announce new government after parliament dissolved

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 17 Jan — Haitian President Michel Martelly announced plans on Friday to form a consensus government within the next 48 hours, a bid to rescue the impoverished Caribbean nation from a looming political crisis.

Martelly in a major speech urged anti-government demonstrators to maintain order as he seeks to steer the country toward new elections despite the dissolution of parliament earlier this week.

Speaking before an audience of political leaders and the foreign diplomatic corps, Martelly said he would swear in a new prime minister later on Friday before using his executive authority to appoint a cabinet and a new electoral authority.

“The weakness of our institutions and in particular the failure of the ... legislature, cannot and should not last. It is urgent to correct these deficiencies as soon as possible because the big loser in this crisis remains our Haitian nation,” Martelly said.

Haiti has not held legislative or municipal elections for three years, leaving parliament without a quorum as terms expired and Martelly ruling by executive authority. Under normal circumstances, the prime minister and the electoral authority would have to be ratified by parliament.

In a phone call with Martelly on Friday US Vice President Joe Biden commended his efforts to reach a negotiated agreement with the parliament, but Biden expressed disappointment with the failure of parliament to pass an electoral law before it lapsed.

As he announced last month, Martelly said he would install former Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul as prime minister, with the composition of the new government to be announced over the weekend.

For months Martelly battled opposition senators over an electoral law required before any vote can take place. He recognized on Friday that he had failed to hold elections, municipal or legislative since he assumed power in May 2011.

“Today, as president of all Haitians, I take the responsibility for this situation,” he said.

Some of his opponents have taken to the streets to protest poverty, corruption and what they consider his autocratic rule. They accuse Martelly of deliberately bringing about the crisis in order to rid himself of stubborn opposition in parliament.

“Martelly wanted to control everything and now he is controlling everything,” said Arnold Elie, who joined a protest of about 1,500 people in downtown Port-au-Prince on Friday morning.

“We are protesting to tell Martelly: This country is not just for you. We want him to be arrested and judged for his financial crimes,” said Elie.

Martelly invited protesters to join a national dialogue that started in recent weeks with political parties.

“I recognize the right of all those who have chosen the path of peaceful demonstrations to express their demands and frustrations,” he said. Adding a touch of political mystery to his speech, Martelly said he would encourage a major discussion over Haiti’s constitution, including “necessary amendments,” but did not elaborate.

He stressed he had no intention of changing the constitution to seek re-election, which is currently banned. “To avoid any misunderstanding ... I want to emphasize clearly and loudly, that in no case will I be a candidate in the next election,” he said.

Haiti is scheduled to hold presidential elections at the end of the year. Municipal and legislative elections are unlikely to be held before this summer due to complicated logistics and the need to find foreign donors to foot the bill. — Reuters

UN’s Ban Ki-moon worried by El Salvador violence as murders soar

SAN SALVADOR, 17 Jan — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks during a press conference at the presidential house in San Salvador on 16 Jan, 2015.— Reuters

SAN SALVADOR, 17 Jan — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on Friday he was concerned by violence in Central America and El Salvador, where there has been a sharp spike in murders and police assassinations over the last year.

Visiting the poor Central American country to celebrate the 23rd anniversary of peace accords that ended a 12-year civil war that killed around 75,000 people, Ban urged El Salvador to remember that spirit of reconciliation as it grapples with a rising spate of gang warfare.

Central America is home to some of the bloodiest countries in the world, blighted by corrupt institutions, widespread gang culture and chronic unemployment which last year sparked a wave of child migrants that overwhelmed the southern US border. “We’re very worried at the levels of insecurity and violence across Central America and El Salvador,” Ban told reporters in San Salvador. Hondurans have the world’s highest murder rate of 90.4 per 100,000 people, according to the UN. Neighbouring El Salvador is in third place with 41.2 murders per 100,000 people.

Last year, 39 cops were executed by suspected gang members, and seven have died so far in 2015, according to official figures. “These are cowardly acts,” said police chief Mauricio Ramirez, adding that kidnappings were also up.

On Wednesday, around 300 people abandoned the village of San Luis La Herra, south of the capital, after gang members threatened to raze it if they did not pay extortion money. President Salvador Sanchez Cerro, a former Marxist guerrilla leader, has criticized the previous government’s efforts to negotiate with the gangs, vowing to go after them while strengthening state institutions. According to one study, around 73,000 people have died in El Salvador since the end of the civil war — almost the same number as those killed during the fighting. — Reuters

Venezuela’s ‘protest city’ on edge as economic crisis worsens

SAN CRISTOBAL, 17 Jan — Masked youths are once again blocking streets and burning tires in the Venezuelan city of San Cristobal, the epicentre of last year’s massive anti-government protests.

The groups are small and the unrest contained, but dissent is rising in this volatile Andean city, a barometer of frustration with nationwide shortages that are putting pressure on the socialist government of Nicolas Maduro.

Students, who also accuse the government of corruption and repression but whom Maduro labels “coupsters,” are threatening to unleash larger demonstrations again.

“It’s time,” Deiby Jaime, 21, said from behind a barricade of burning trash as police gazed down. “There’s a social, economic and political crisis. Economically we’re completely lost and in a delimium.”

But Jaimes and other students said they were re- straining themselves to see if other Venezuelans also take to the streets.

Last year’s protests split the opposition and failed to attract widespread support from Venezuela’s poor, meaning mainstream anti-government leaders like Henrique Capriles are calling for less radical tactics including peaceful rallies and a good showing at upcoming parliamentary vote.

“People are scared,” said Jaimes, an accounting student, as dozens around him knocked rocks together menacingly. “But fear is disappearing due to short ages. We’re expecting a social explosion.”

High demand and a Christmas lull in distribution have aggravated shortages across the nation of 30 million people. Queues sometimes snake around entire blocks, prompting isolated scuffles for coveted milk or diapers.

Although there has been scattered violence around the OPEC nation, many eyes are once again on the opposition hotbed of San Cristobal, where clusters of demonstrators have been facing off with security forces since the New Year. It was here that the attempted rape of a student last year prompted protests that spread into a wave of national demonstrations. — Reuters

Students block a street as they clash with national guards during a protest against the government in San Cristobal on 14 Jan, 2015. — Reuters

Former officials call for India-Pakistan anti-terror cooperation

OTTAWA, 17 Jan — Retired senior intelligence officials from India and Pakistan have called for anti-terror cooperation between the two neighbours.

The security and intelligence services in India and Pakistan should learn from each other’s experience and lessons in their respective efforts to deal with terrorism, said the former officials, who met on Thursday in the framework of a University of Ottawa programme. The two countries should cooperate to stem cross-border crimes and jointly fight terrorist groups that pose threat to both countries. India and Pakistan should establish and formalize contacts at official level to materialize cooperation, they said.—Xinhua
Eleven more air strikes hit Islamic State in Syria, Iraq

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — The United States led six more air strikes against Islamic State in Syria and five in Iraq since early Thursday, according to the US-led military coalition.

The strikes in Syria centered around the key border town of Kobani, destroying nine of the militants’ fighting positions, the Combined Joint Task Force said in a statement on Friday. In Iraq, the five strikes near Ramadi, al-Qaim, al-Asad and Mosul struck various fighting positions as well as a building, boats and a barge used by Islamic State, according to the statement.— Reuters

About 200 Tajik citizens fighting in Syria: Iraq: interior minister

DUSHANBE, 17 Jan — Tajikistan’s law enforcement authorities instituted criminal proceedings against 53 Tajik nationals last year for participation in foreign armed conflicts. Tajik Interior Minister Ramazon Rahimzoda said here on Friday that 12 of them were fighting in Syria and Iraq.

The minister also said about 200 Tajik nationals are fighting in Syria and Iraq, adding that the government has asked their relatives to help return the name of these Tajik militants.

He stressed that all Tajik nationals participating in foreign armed conflicts will be annulled if they return to Tajikistan.— Xinhua

30 militants killed in operations in E Afghanistan

ASADABAD, (Afghanistan), 17 Jan — About 30 militants have been killed after Afghan security forces waged offensives in two provinces, police said on Saturday. Afghan army and border police, backed by army helicopter gunships, pounded several hideouts of militants in Dangam District in eastern Kunar Province, provincial police chief Abdul Habib Sayyedkhel told Xinhua, adding “The raid was launched on Friday. It is still going on there, and 21 militants have been killed so far.” The operation will continue before the militants in the area are cleared, he said.

The district has been the scene of fierce fighting after Taliban militants launched frequent attacks in apparent efforts to take control of the district centre in the mountainous province over the past couple of months. Three injured militants have been detained, and no causality have been reported on the side of security force, the police chief noted.— Xinhua

Lebanan absorbs bomb shock as talks ease tensions

BEIRUT, 17 Jan — A double suicide bombing at a cafe in the Lebanese city of Tripoli was meant to ignite a new round of civil strife in a country whose stability has been repeatedly strained by the war in neighbouring Syria.

Instead, the fragile Lebanese state appears to have emerged a little stronger from the Sunni militant attack that killed nine people in an Alawite neighbourhood, helped by new political talks that are containing sectarian tensions.

The state’s response to the bombing — an operation that re-established control over a sector taken over by its Islamist inmates — points to common ground among Lebanese on opposite sides of the region’s wider, sectarian-fuelled conflict.

Lebanon, with its own combustible sectarian mix, has felt the force of that conflict in bloody confrontations between the army and militant groups.

More durable is expected: a car bomb rigged with 120 kg (265 lb) of explosives was found on Thursday near the Syrian border.

Sunni militant leaders remain at large, with plenty of opportunity to return among displaced Lebanese, in Palestinian refugee camps, and from a pool of well over a million Syrian refugees.

But Lebanese politicians see the outcome of the Tripoli attack as further proof their country will contain instability in Lebanon, whose 1975-90 civil war was driven by sectarianism.

Reuters

French centre, churches attacked in Niger in Charlie Hebdo protest

NIAMEY, 17 Jan — Demonstrators in Niger attacked the French cultural centre, set fire to churches and raided Christian shops on Friday, as protests erupted against Charlie Hebdo’s cartoons in several Muslim West African countries.

Staff of the satirical French weekly, which had angered Muslims by publishing images of the Prophet Mohammed, were shot dead by Islamist gunmen in Paris last week.

Police in Niger’s southern city of Zinder, the second largest in Niger, fired tear gas at a crowd of hundreds of people who burned French flags and threw the streets on Friday.

“The protesters are crying out in local Hausa language: ‘Charlie is Satan’ — let hell engulf those supporting Charlie,” said Aboubacar Mamane, a shopkeeper, by telephone.

Witnesses said the demonstrators ransacked the French cultural centre and threw stones at the homes of police officers.

Peaceful marches took place after Friday prayers in the capital cities of former French colonies Mali, Senegal and Mauritania.

Demonstrators said they were angered by the latest front cover of Charlie Hebdo this week, which despite the Paris killings again featured a cartoon of Mohammad.

“Charlie Hebdo in the toilets,” said one placard held by a protestor in Nouakchott. The presidents of Niger, Mali and Senegal last week met in Dakar alongside more than a million French citizens to show solidarity with the victims of the Paris bloodshed, which began with a shooting attack on Charlie Hebdo’s Paris office.

But in an indication of the shifting mood, Macky Sall, president of one of Africa’s most stable democracies Senegal, said late on Thursday: “Freedom of the press should not, in our view, head in the direction of a totally pointless provocation.”— Reuters

First round of Libya political dialogue “constructive,” says UNSMIL

GENEVA, 17 Jan — The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) on Friday hailed the first round of Libyan political dialogue as “constructive” after participants concluded two days of intensive discussions at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

The new round of political discussions seeks to end Libya’s deepening political and security crisis. Attendees include representatives from the country’s political, social, economic and civil society.

“The talks were constructive, conducted in a positive atmosphere, and reflected the participants’ sincere commitment to reach a common ground,” UNSMIL said in a statement.

After extensive deliberation, participants agreed on an agenda that includes reaching a political agreement to form a consensus national unity government. Necessary security arrangements will also be worked upon to end the fighting and secure the phased withdrawal of armed groups from all Libyan cities.

Participants called on all parties to cease hostilities to create a conducive environment for the dialogue. Confidence building measures were discussed to safeguard national unity and to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan population.

Xinhua
Dangers of chemical pesticide on humans

By Aung Khin

Pesticide is an umbrella term that encompasses herbicides and insecticides. Both of them are pervasive chemicals in the environment, while herbicides are believed to pose a bigger threat because they are highly concentrated in the water supply, due to runoff from agricultural use.

Experts remarked that majority of Myanmar farmers lack knowledge how to use pesticides systematically, while pesticide companies concentrate only on their increasing sale amount of their products. Abundant use of low quality insect killers is currently practiced in Myanmar as many farmers are using substandard insect killers due to runoff from agricultural use.

By 2003, demand for even bigger exhibition space prompted the Singapore Expo to go ahead with its expansion plans. It was especially in response to the needs of IMTA Asia, (Integrated Multi-Tropic Aquaculture --- IMTA), which was held from 17 to 21 October 2005.

With the inaugural show already occupying the full 60,000 square meters of space, high and intense pressure was on the venue to expand. Otherwise the prestigious event may have to move somewhere else since there is no other bigger venue available in Singapore. In response, a new 40,000 square meter expansion comprising a further four halls was constructed adjacent to the existing halls across Expo Drive on the double march and quick time to meet the expected exhibition period, and was completed in June 2005.

The extension includes a multi-purpose event hall and auditorium for large-scale meetings, seminars, conferences, concerts and other special events. It is known as The MAX Pavilion.

Singapore Expo Venue has travelled a bumpy long journey to become a successful paramount venue. Singapore Expo Venue will be more active and crowded when it is connected to the Downtown Line scheduled to open in 2017.

John Little Department Store

Next, the writer of this article would like to present the other department store John Little Department Store. On that day, “John Little Mega Expo Sale” was in progress at the Singapore Expo Venue.

John Little is a chain of department stores in Singapore. Established in 1845, John Little is the oldest department store in Singapore. John Little is owned by Robinson & Co. Limited.

The chain currently has three stores in Singapore, at Marina Square, Tiong Bahru Plaza, and Jurong Point. The Marina Square store is John Little’s largest outlet which opened in June 2007. However, its main store at Specialist’s Shopping Centre along Orchard Road closed down on 9 July 2007.

History

John Little was founded by John M. Little in 1845 at Raffles Place, it was known as Commercial Square. Mr. Little then was an employee of F. Martin, who sold his business to Mr. Little and Mr. Curetjee. He was a well-known Parsee merchant.

On 1 July 1845, Mr. Little and Mr. Curetjee started their business as auctioneers and commission agents. They offered services in retail as well as auction of properties such as spice, household furniture. Shoppers could buy tickets to plays, musicals and other performances. Little, Curetjee & Co. became a popular hangout for locals to hold meetings, and functioned like the modern-day equivalent of a central box office.

On 30 June 1853, Mr. Little and Mr. Curetjee ended their eight-year partnership.

John Little & Co. was then formed, and John’s brother, Martin, was made a partner. The business continued in the same direction and premises. In 1894, John Little & Co. Ltd was registered by Harwood and Stephenson, London, with a capital of £75,000 in 20 shares.

As Singapore grew as a trading port in the late 19th century, John Little expanded in the same period. In addition to retail, John Little also operated a car business, a motor garage, a furniture factory, a café and a beauty salon. From its original one-storey premises in Raffles Place, the store expanded to occupy another floor.

In the early 20th century, John Little also set up branches in Malaya; there were branches in Kuala Lumpur (1914), Penang (1926), and Ipoh (1929). However, the advent of World War II and subsequent Japanese Occupation resiled in the closure of these branches.

After the Japanese occupation of Singapore ended in 1945, it took some time for John Little to re-open for business due to lack of manpower and merchandise. In June 1946, John Little re-opened its business, and subsequently registered such good sales that the store declared a 20% dividend for its ordinary shareholders in 1948.

In 1953, John Little was acquired by Robinsons. The store was re-launched as JL on 29 August 1987 with a new logo, new image and merchandise selection. Its main store moved from Raffles Place to several locations before moving into Specialist’s Shopping Centre until its closure in July 2007.

John Little Mega Expo Sale @ Singapore Expo was held from 8 to 18 January 2015. During the sale, the discount ranges from 20 per cent to 80 per cent off on over 250 brands with home free delivery for purchases above $300.

Thousands of customers have shopped at the John Little Mega Expo Sale up till this author visited the venue on Tuesday 13 January 2015 evening.

The author of this article learned two remarkable aspects in visiting the John Little Mega Expo Sale at the Singapore Expo Venue namely (a) What the executives are trying to achieve as their ultimate goal; and (b) Critically thinking from the start how the methodology of implementation could possibly be changed and evolved on the road to success.

(continued)
Creatures, comfort, modern luxuries, power, wealth, and popularity are endless cravings in human life.

By Tommy Pauk

Life span begins from the date of birth to the date of death. During that space of time, every human being tackles or overcome difficulties, problems or situations in order to survive in their existence. Besides, some people can live in the longer life-spa and some can only live in the shorter life-span. We all know that we need to maintain and sustain our life to some degree. "Life is like a roller-coaster", "Life is like a merry-go-round. It is not a bed of roses" are the metaphorical expressions pertaining to human life. These expressions are already embedded in our minds. A human life is so full of ups and downs or fluctuations and difficulties. Unexpectedly, we encounter sad events and happy events in our life. Sometimes, we overcome with unforeseen situations. We must be able to resist and endure the life struggle and troubles. The destiny controls and draws us. The destiny of individual is hidden in his or her life. Sometimes, we come across with unforeseen fame and fortune. Basically, humans beings have to struggle for their survival, but no one can predict or speculate their fate and longevity. Some people face hardship in life, but other people face easy life. Every position in life is unstable and impermanent. We have to endure the endurance, strong morale and bravery to overcome hindrances and difficulties in life. To be able to have a comfortable life, we must struggle hard. When a stroke of luck hits someone, his or her life is changed into better position. It happens once in a blue moon. In accordance with our luck, effort and intelligence, our status or social standing can be classified into two kinds of groups, the haves and the have-nots. The haves are economically advantaged and the have-nots are economically disadvantaged people. These two different circumstances can be seen in human society on earth. At present, the total population of human beings has reached six billion so far. According to the record of 2014 made by Forbes Magazine global wealth team, we have learned that the number of billionaires reached 1,645 (one thousand, six hundred forty-five) in the world. (Reference: Inside The 2014 Forbes Billionaires List: Facts And Figures). The main reason people are average or below the average in social standing in the world. Therefore, we can even count the number of rich people and countries, but the number of poor countries is uncountable. In the world, the rich population can be seen in human society. There are two different circumstances, the have-nots are economically disadvantaged, which is a metaphor that the group of the proletarian is greater in number than those of the rich all over the world. The proletarian cannot let their dream of success or worldly pleasure with modern luxuries and modern housing. They lead the mundane life although they try hard. Nevertheless, the proletarian dream of endless cravings in their life. They wish their dream had come true. A lifelong period is filled with worry about tomorrow's survival and unforeseen circumstances. Apart from these situations, we gear up to tackle the good or bad things when we are alive. Similarly, we have been seeking material wealth and comforts as much as we can. There is nobody who does not want to be a rich person in the modern secular society. We always think of making our fortunes. Human life may vary from one society to another. Individual life is also different from one society to another. The rich, the poor and the destitute are the classification of their characteristic. Every human wants to be a rich person in his or her life. It is human nature that we want a comfortable, rich, easy life with luxuries. The dream of every human is to live in the human paradise. In reality, life is very difficult for us to gain a comfortable position in our life. Even when a person dies, he or she has not satisfied with cravings or creature comforts of his or her life. So, the middle class people are standing in between the hases and the have-nots. According to different life stand- ings, people are striving hard for better life and higher mental and physical comfort. Naturally, people are seriously concerned about tomorrow's survival as they do not have adequate food or money. Obviously, they do not have savings nor the power definitively. Subse- quently, we can take advantage on them by muscling the power for our own sake selfishly. We become greedier and more selfish than be- fore when we possess some kind of power. The power makes easier to do anything and to create personal gains in life. Later, we are addicted to the power, which is given to us to do for the social welfare or the benefits or the interests of our society. We are inclined to use the power wrongfully instead of using it justly. This is also true that we have to control or tame our mind- sets which mislead immoral or unjust acts in a silly way. Some people use money as their power to influence or organize or persuade others. Power should be properly used for the sake of inter- ests of the society and the nation. Actually, we humans are fascinated by power, but we should think wisely on the usage of power. We must know that possession of power is neither perman- ent nor everlasting. This is an absurdity and nobody can deny or argue. Creature comforts are wanted by every human being on earth because nobody wants to live without gains or sustenance in the shabby shelter. However, we like to have all mod cons known as modern conveniences which are expensive or dear products. In this way, we want to live in the lap of luxury. These creature comforts must be available both in rural life and in ur- ban life. Those less fortunate cannot afford them and they feel miserable of their life standing or standard of living. They are miserably poor and they live in slums with no mod cons. Some people are struggling to make both ends meet. The poor and the destitute alike are dreaming of living in a better and comfortable life. They are miserably poor and hopeless and helpless life. They want to upgrade their life and to become somebody. Since they are humans, they crave something for their life within their reach. In the modern world, modern luxuries are motor cars, luxurious houses, house- hold things and other human dresses are alluring us. The pace of modern life style is rather fast. So people are in haste or in competitive struggle. We cannot escape from that allurement so we try hard for more earnings in order that we can afford to buy these things for ourselves. The creature comforts and modern luxuries are closely related because they both al- ways change in accordance with the modern life style in- deed. Modern durables, appuratus, utensils, devices and electronic gadgets are being manufactured greatly. As the pace of modern life is pretty fast, we have to use faster, smoother vehicles for trans- portation and sophisticated telecommunication devices for communications pur- poses. In order to cope with the unexpected activities, we must use the electron- ic telecom-devices for the convenience of our daily life communications and infor- mation among ourselves. For example; cell phone smartphone and i-pad etc., the creature comforts are of amenities for our daily life. Without them our life will be unpleasant and uneasy. Information Technology provides a great deal of ben- efits to humans, and humans have to compulsorily use the modern devices to enjoy comfort and comfort in their life. Constantly, latest model devices or appara- tus and consumer goods are being manufactured for hu- mans. Thus, we humans are overwhelmed by the endless cravings for electronic de- vices and modern durables. Human beings are seeking pleasure and creature comfort and fairly rapidly and hastily in life. Very few of them could find and enjoy these things due to their abili- ties, luck and zeal. Instead of pursuing excessive cravings and creature comforts, we should moderately strive for fulfilling our necessities of human life. Let’s create happy, pleasant and peaceful life on our own.

Tommy Pauk is the pseudonym of U Thein Swe, who is B.A. (English) and (Registered Law) R.L.I. degrees holder. He has English Teaching experience at Yangon University English Department and Workers’ college in Yangon, and now is working as freelance writer and English Teacher cum Translator/Interpreter for foreign firms.
Stocks rally on US data, euro slides further

New York, 17 Jan — Wall Street stocks rebounded on Friday on signs the US economy was on track for solid growth with consumer sentiment hitting an 11-year high, while the euro slid further against the dollar a day after Switzerland ditched its currency cap.

Crude prices rallied on the US sentiment report and after the International Energy Agency said lower prices had begun to curb production in some areas, including North America. The IEA said prices might fall further, but “signs are mounting that the tide will turn.”

US gasoline prices fell again in December, leading consumer prices to post their biggest decline in six years, while a gauge of underlying inflation was flat. The data could make the Federal Reserve cautious about raising interest rates.

Global equity markets rebounded with US stocks capping five straight sessions of losses. European shares rose on growing expectations of economic stimulus from the European Central Bank.

Wall Street surged at the close. Major US indexes rose more than 1 percent in what Ken Polcari, director of the NYSE floor division of O’Neil Securities in New York, said had the makings of a relief rally.

“The market has been under complete distress for five or six days, the tone has been very ugly. Today it seems most things have calmed down, so buyers have started to step back in,” he said. The University of Michigan said US consumer sentiment rose in January on employment and income gains, with spending power boosted by sliding gasoline prices.

The “outstanding” report countered fears that tumbling oil prices would cut off from water and electricity.

In all, 5.1 million people are affected by the humanitarian crisis, including 1.4 million deemed highly vulnerable, the United Nations health agency said in a statement. “We have special concerns for children, infants, and the lack of vaccines. Vaccines in the past month had no vaccines in the country, we are worried,” Dr Donit Nitzan, WHO Representative in Ukraine, told a news briefing in Geneva.

There is a “huge risk of vaccine-preventable diseases” she said. “Measles and polio are first on the list.”

Nitzan said that as of 6 January, the death toll from the conflict between the Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists stood at 4,808, with 10,468 wounded, based on reports from morgues and hospitals. At least 32,500 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Donetsk and Luhansk and are “at high risk for interruption of care and control services”, the WHO said, adding that only 10,000 were in treatment before the crisis began.

Cases of tuberculosis also appear to be increasing, and an estimated 40 percent of new TB patients are now believed to have the multi-drug-resistant form (MDR-TB), Nitzan said.

Ukraine’s health ministry has asked the WHO to take over responsibility for procuring and distributing all essential medicines, the agency said. WHO is organizing mobile emergency units to provide primary health care in the east.

Girma Haile, Country Director of UNAIDS in Ghana, said the incident came at a time the country was making significant progress and achievements in the fight against the epidemic.

Crude prices rallied on the US sentiment report and the International Energy Agency said lower prices had begun to curb production in some areas, including North America. The IEA said prices might fall further, but “signs are mounting that the tide will turn.”

US gasoline prices fell again in December, leading consumer prices to post their biggest decline in six years, while a gauge of underlying inflation was flat. The data could make the Federal Reserve cautious about raising interest rates.

Global equity markets rebounded with US stocks capping five straight sessions of losses. European shares rose on growing expectations of economic stimulus from the European Central Bank.

Wall Street surged at the close. Major US indexes rose more than 1 percent in what Ken Polcari, director of the NYSE floor division of O’Neil Securities in New York, said had the makings of a relief rally.

“The market has been under complete distress for five or six days, the tone has been very ugly. Today it seems most things have calmed down, so buyers have started to step back in,” he said. The University of Michigan said US consumer sentiment rose in January on employment and income gains, with spending power boosted by sliding gasoline prices.

The “outstanding” report countered fears that tumbling oil prices would cut off from water and electricity.

In all, 5.1 million people are affected by the humanitarian crisis, including 1.4 million deemed highly vulnerable, the United Nations health agency said in a statement. “We have special concerns for children, infants, and the lack of vaccines. Vaccines in the past month had no vaccines in the country, we are worried,” Dr Donit Nitzan, WHO Representative in Ukraine, told a news briefing in Geneva.

There is a “huge risk of vaccine-preventable diseases” she said. “Measles and polio are first on the list.”

Nitzan said that as of 6 January, the death toll from the conflict between the Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists stood at 4,808, with 10,468 wounded, based on reports from morgues and hospitals. At least 32,500 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Donetsk and Luhansk and are “at high risk for interruption of care and control services”, the WHO said, adding that only 10,000 were in treatment before the crisis began.

Cases of tuberculosis also appear to be increasing, and an estimated 40 percent of new TB patients are now believed to have the multi-drug-resistant form (MDR-TB), Nitzan said.

Ukraine’s health ministry has asked the WHO to take over responsibility for procuring and distributing all essential medicines, the agency said. WHO is organizing mobile emergency units to provide primary health care in the east.

The US government has also been contacted to support Ghana with the
**Science & Technology**

**Last year was Earth’s hottest on record, US scientists say**

Reuters

Last year was Earth’s hottest on record in new evidence that people are disrupting the climate by burning fossil fuels that release greenhouse gases into the air, two US government agencies said on Friday.

The White House said the studies, by the US space agency NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), showed climate change was happening now and that action was needed to cut rising world greenhouse gas emissions.

The 10 warmest years since records began in the 19th century have all been since 1997, the data showed. Last year was the warmest, ahead of 2010, undermining claims by some skeptics that global warming has stopped in recent years.

Record temperatures in 2014 were spread around the globe, including most of Europe stretching into northern Africa, the western United States, far eastern Russia into western Alaska, parts of interior South America, parts of eastern and western coastal Australia and elsewhere, NASA and NOAA said.

“While the ranking of individual years can be affected by chaotic weather patterns, the long-term trends are attributable to drivers of climate change that right now are dominated by human emissions of greenhouse gases,” said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies in New York. “The data shows quite clearly that it’s the greenhouse gas trends that are responsible for the majority of the trends,” he told reporters. Emissions were still rising “so we may anticipate further record highs in the years to come.”

UN studies show there already are more extremes of heat and rainfall and project ever more frequent flooding, food and water supplies. Sea levels are rising, threatening millions of people living near coasts, as ice melts from Greenland to Antarctica.

Next December, about 200 governments will meet in Paris to try to reach a deal to limit global warming, shifting to renewable energies. China and the United States, the top emitters of greenhouse gases, say they are cooperating more to achieve a UN accord.

The new data “is another reminder that climate change is not a problem for the future — it’s happening here and now and we can’t wait to take action,” a White House official said in a statement.

The message was repeated by US Senator James Inhofe, a Republican who is the Senate’s leading climate change skeptic, said the temperature difference between 2014 and 2010 was so insignificant as to prove there was no need for more stringent regulations by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

NY Post says Twitter feed was hacked after erratic Tweets

**Google in talks to buy mobile-payments company Softcard -TechCrunch**

Menlo Park, (California), 17 Jan — Google Inc is in talks to buy mobile-payments company Softcard, technology news website TechCrunch reported on Friday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The deal may be valued below $100 million, the report said citing sources.

Softcard is jointly owned by AT&T Inc, Verizon Communication Inc’s Verizon Wireless Inc and T-Mobile US Inc Google was not immediately available for comment outside regular US business hours.

“A great success” on Friday for being found on Mars 11 years after going missing.

Beagle 2, part of a European Space Agency’s Mars Express mission searching for extraterrestrial life, had been due to land on Mars on Christmas Day 2003 but disappeared on 19 December, 2003. Until now, nothing had been heard from it.

But at a packed news conference at London’s Royal Society scientific institution on Friday, space experts said the tiny Mars lander had been found on the surface of the red planet. “Beagle 2 is no longer lost,” said David Parker, chief executive of UK Space Agency.

He said recent images from the HiRISE camera on NASA’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter showed “good evidence” that the spacecraft landed on Mars on the date it was due — 25 December, 2003 — but had only partially deployed.

“The entry, descent and landing sequence for Beagle 2 worked and the lander did successfully touch down on Mars on Christmas Day 2003,” UK Space Agency said in a statement.

“Beagle 2 — measuring less than 2 metres across — was named after the ship Charles Darwin sailed when he formulated his theory of evolution. It was built by British scientists led by Colin Pillinger for about 40 million pounds ($85 million).

The plan was for it to report back from the Mars’ surface using instruments on its body to look for signs of life, but nothing was heard after it was dropped off to make its landing. “We were left with a mystery, a mystery that has continued to this day,” Parker said.

Mark Sims, Britain’s Astronomer Royal, last year praised Beagle 2 and its eccentric creator Pillinger, who had died at age 70, saying: “This was a failure, but a heroic failure.”

Sims said the find was exciting, frustrating and “tinged with sadness” because Pillinger did not live to see it. Also that Pope had suggested what might have gone wrong, Sims said: “It was most probably a bad luck scenario — a hard landing.” —Reuters
Singapore/Beijing, 17 Jan — North Korea’s chief nuclear envoy arrived in Singapore from Beijing on Friday for talks with former senior US diplomats.

Ri Yong Ho, a vice foreign minister of North Korea, said, “Yes,” before his departure from Beijing’s international airport when asked if he is traveling to the Southeast Asian island country.

Ri is scheduled to meet with former senior US diplomats for North Korean negotiations Stephen Bosworth and Joseph DeTrani, as well as security experts, for two days from Sunday to discuss nuclear and bilateral issues, diplomatic sources said earlier this month.

The trip by Ri comes as Pyongyang is seeking talks with Washington, as North Korea is seeking to discuss nuclear experts, for two days from Sunday to discuss nuclear issues.

An Uber taxi driver shows an application software in his mobile phone used to track the taxi's location, during a protest against the ban on online taxi services, in New Delhi on 12 Dec, 2014. — Reuters

New Delhi, 17 Jan — A woman who was allegedly raped by an Uber taxi driver in India’s capital has hired a prominent lawyer to sue the online-hailing taxi service in US courts. The financial executive, who cannot be named under an Indian law that grants rape victims anonymity, has hired Douglas Wigdor, a New York-based employment lawyer. “We have been in talks over the last few weeks, which led to me being retained,” Wigdor said in an email, declining to comment on the basis or timing of any case.

Among recent work, Wigdor represented the hotel maid who accused former International Monetary Fund chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn of sexual assault.

The Delhi government blacklisted Uber from operating in the capital last month after the alleged attack on the passenger as she returned home from seeing friends. The case triggered protests and reignited a debate about the safety of women in Asia’s third-largest economy, especially in New Delhi, which has been dubbed India’s rape capital.

Public outrage was further fuelled when it was revealed the man was out on bail for sexual assault and Uber acknowledged that it did not carry out background checks on drivers in India. An Uber spokesman declined to comment on the case. He said the company was in talks with the Delhi government to restart operations in the city. The US company, which was valued at $40 billion last month, has also been dogged by controversy surrounding its aggressive approach to local governments, traditional taxi services and concerns about safety. — Reuters

Pakistan forces kill 2,000 militants in operation “Zarb-e-Azb” in North Waziristan

Islamabad, 17 Jan — Pakistani security forces have killed about 2,000 terrorists since a major offensive launched in North Waziristan tribal region in June, the military said on Friday.

The army spokesman, Major General Asim Saleem Bajwa, said that a total of 200 soldiers have been killed and 800 injured in the operation codenamed “Zarb-e-Azb.”

Bajwa was speaking at a think-tank of Royal United Services Institute in London, Radio Pakistan reported. He is accompanying the Army Chief, General Raheel Sharif, on a three-day official visit to Britain. The operation was launched after the rare peace talks with the Taleban collapsed and they increased attacks on sensitive installations and security forces.

The spokesman said that effective military operations in North Waziristan and Bajaur tribal region are underway to purge the area of terrorists.

General Bajwa said the army chief has clearly directed to carry out the operation against terrorists without any discrimination.

He said the United Nations has acknowledged the achievements of Pakistan Army against terrorists in the operation “Zarb-e-Azb.”

Meanwhile, the army chief has said the operation in North Waziristan is making good progress and that there are no favorites and all terrorists of any kind being hit.

General Raheel Sharif said the recently launched anti-terrorism “National Action Plan” is comprehensive to address extremism and terrorism being implemented, exclusively in collaboration with the government.

The parliament approved the plan after last month’s Taleban attack on an army-run school in Peshawar that killed 140 children and 10 staff members.

“The world needs to understand our environment. Our cooperation with the United Kingdom in security and social sectors is growing,” General Raheel said. — Xinhua

Singapore printer refuses to print Charlie Hebdo’s latest cover in The Economist magazine


The page was meant to publish a picture of French magazine Charlie Hebdo’s latest cover, but the magazine’s local printer refused to do so, local media reported on Friday.

The 22nd page of the magazine was left with nothing but two words “Page Missing”, Lianhe Zaobao reported. The Economist explained that it was because their local printer in Singapore refused to print the latest cover of Charlie Hebdo, which depicts Prophet Muhammad shedding a single tear and holding up a sign reading “Je Suis Charlie” (I am Charlie).

Times Printers, who prints the magazine, said in a media statement on Friday that The Economist told them that it had decided to publish the cover in their Britain, Asia, United States and Europe editions, and asked the printer to let them know if it had any concerns, the Strait Times reported. — Xinhua

Chefs serve free soup samples to the public during the Chef Soup Experiment event at Granville Island in Vancouver, Canada, on 16 Jan, 2015. The 13th Dine Out Vancouver Festival kicked off on Friday with a Chef Soup Experiment event. Each of the 50 top chefs brought one ingredient and put them together to make one soup that served to the public for free. — Xinhua
Floods displace 22,000 people in central Mozambique

Maputo, 17 Jan — Mozambique’s National Institute for Disasters Management opened 14 temporary accommodation centers that are currently taking 22,000 people displaced from floods in central Zambezia Province.

The authorities are so far distributing food kits in isolated areas and also securing reaction in case there is a breakout of water borne diseases given that significant health units were forced to close down due to the heavy rains.

“We have at least 5 health units in the province, and the health authorities are also creating other alternatives to mitigate health needs of the people,” said Rita Almendra, spokesperson of the management institute.

The institute says it is currently providing support in clean water, hygiene methods to avoid the breakout of diseases every aspects important to guarantee that the displaced people have the basic to continue to survive. The victims of the floods are also benefiting from support coming from South Africa.

South Africa and its troops are also distributing non-food items among them tents, tarpsaulns.

According to Almeida, South African troops are also assessing the affected areas to be better informed about the needs of the affected people.

Seven hurt after plane overshoots in C Philippines

Manila, 17 Jan — At least seven people were hurt when a plane carrying senior Cabinet officials overshoots a runway in central Philippine city of Tacloban, which Pope Francis visited on Saturday.

Presidential Spokesperson Edwin Lacierda said that those hurt, including the plane’s crew members, were brought to Remedios T Romualdez Medical Centre for further medical examination due to minor injuries. Among those on board the aircraft were Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa Jr, President Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr, Undersecretary Emmanuel Bautista, Undersecretary Felizardo Serapio, Jr, seven staff members, two pilots, 1 flight engineer and a steward.

Lacierda said that the government officials were in Tacloban to ensure that the activities of Pope Francis in Tacloban and Palo would go as planned.

The Pope, who was supposed to stay in Leyte until 5:00 pm local time, cut short his trip by staying there for only four hours due to Tropical Storm Amang (Mekkhala).

Pilot error caused crash that killed Brazilian presidential candidate

Rio de Janeiro, 17 Jan — A succession of human errors caused the plane crash that killed Brazilian presidential candidate Eduardo Campos and six others last year, O Estado de Sao Paulo daily reported on Friday.

An air force investigation concluded that pilot Marcos Martins lacked training for flying that particular aircraft, a Cessna 560 XL, and made several mistakes that led to the August 2014 crash, according to the daily.

The official conclusions are yet to be released.

The accident took place on a rainy day with low visibility. The poor weather and state of the runway were also contributing factors, the paper quoted investigators as saying, though they placed most of the blame on the pilot.

There was no evidence of mechanical failure and no other evidence was available as the flight recorder had not been turned on, said the paper.

Campos’ brother Antonio Campos questioned the daily’s story, noting that such investigations, as a rule, offer possible causes, not conclusions. He said the investigation was not expected to be completed until next month, and called the daily’s decision to publish the report premature.

The paper said Martins apparently disregarded recommended landing guidelines for the local airport in Santos, Sao Paulo state, which has a short runway considered challenging even by experienced pilots, and failed to land on his first try.

During a second attempt, he suffered from a “spatial disorientation,” the paper quoted investigators as saying. That explained why he descended at a 70-degree angle at full speed. The pilot thought he was pulling up, instead of heading down, said the paper.

Martins had posted that he was very tired on social media several days before election day.

The pilot and co-pilot, and four of Campos’ campaign assistants also died in the crash.

Campos’ death disrupted Brazil’s presidential campaign, forcing the opposition to find a new candidate, only two months before election day.
Eddie Murphy won’t do ‘Beverly Hills Cop 4’ without good script

Los Angeles, 17 Jan — Actor Eddie Murphy, who is expected to reprise his role as Axel Foley in the fourth ‘Beverly Hills Cop’ film, says he won’t do the movie without an incredible script.—PTI

Late singer’s corneas donated

Chengdu, 17 Jan — Late Chinese pop singer Yao Beina, who lost her battle with breast cancer on Friday afternoon, has had her corneas donated. One of her corneas will be delivered to an ophthalmic hospital in Chengdu, southwest China’s Sichuan Province, on Saturday night, and will be donated to a 23-year-old man from Sichuan’s Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

Her other cornea will be delivered to the southern metropolis of Shenzhen, in accordance with Yao’s last will. Yao died in a Shenzhen hospital at the age of 33.

A professional singer, Yao shot to fame with the theme tune of “The Legend of Zhen Huan”, a popular TV drama that depicts life in the imperial court. Her career skyrocketed after she attended the Voice of China in 2013.

While prompting a massive wave of condolences online, her death spurred discussions about the extent of news coverage, as rumours swirled around that several journalists posed as medical staff to take pictures of Yao’s body in the hospital morgue.

Her death has brought breast cancer to the fore. The Hollywood Reporter.

Michael Keaton may star in film on McDonald

Los Angeles, 17 Jan — Golden Globe-winner Michael Keaton is in talks to star as the lead in ‘The Founder’, the story of the rise of the McDonald’s fast food empire.

John Lee Hancock is on board to direct the drama, said The Hollywood Reporter.

Written by Robert Siegel (‘Big Fan’), ‘The Founder’ is a drama that tells the true story of how Ray Kroc, a salesman from Illinois, met Mac and Dick McDonald, who were running a burger operation in 1950s Southern California. Kroc was impressed by the brothers’ speedy system of making the food and saw franchise potential.

He manoeuvred himself into a position to be able to pull the company from the brothers and create a billion-dollar empire. The tone of the script has been described as being similar to ‘The Social Network’ and ‘There Will Be Blood’.—PTI

Golden Globe-winner Michael Keaton is in talks to star as the lead in ‘The Founder’, the story of the rise of the McDonald’s fast food empire. Reuters

Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run ends in April

London, 17 Jan — Marvel Comics has announced the end of Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run in April.

Avengers #44 and New Avengers #33 will end the writer’s work on the franchise ahead of the ‘Secret Wars’ event, reported Digital Spy.

The ‘Time Runs Out’ storyline — which jumped eight months into the future — will conclude with a final incursion with a parallel ‘Earth’.

Mike Deodato will illustrate Avengers #44, with Kev Walker on New Avengers #33.

Dustin Weaver has illustrated interlocking covers for the two issues.

Hickman has said that he will take a break from Marvel after ‘Secret Wars’.

He is also working on ‘East of West’, ‘The Manhattan Projects’ and the forthcoming ‘The Dying and the Dead’ at Image Comics. ‘Secret Wars’ will launch in May.—PTI

Marvel Comics has announced the end of Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run in April.—PTI

Late singer’s corneas donated

Chengdu, 17 Jan — Late Chinese pop singer Yao Beina, who lost her battle with breast cancer on Friday afternoon, has had her corneas donated. One of her corneas will be delivered to an ophthalmic hospital in Chengdu, southwest China’s Sichuan Province, on Saturday night, and will be donated to a 23-year-old man from Sichuan’s Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

Her other cornea will be delivered to the southern metropolis of Shenzhen, in accordance with Yao’s last will. Yao died in a Shenzhen hospital at the age of 33.

A professional singer, Yao shot to fame with the theme tune of “The Legend of Zhen Huan”, a popular TV drama that depicts life in the imperial court. Her career skyrocketed after she attended the Voice of China in 2013.

While prompting a massive wave of condolences online, her death spurred discussions about the extent of news coverage, as rumours swirled around that several journalists posed as medical staff to take pictures of Yao’s body in the hospital morgue.

Her death has brought breast cancer to the fore. The Hollywood Reporter.

Michael Keaton may star in film on McDonald

Los Angeles, 17 Jan — Golden Globe-winner Michael Keaton is in talks to star as the lead in ‘The Founder’, the story of the rise of the McDonald’s fast food empire.

John Lee Hancock is on board to direct the drama, said The Hollywood Reporter.

Written by Robert Siegel (‘Big Fan’), ‘The Founder’ is a drama that tells the true story of how Ray Kroc, a salesman from Illinois, met Mac and Dick McDonald, who were running a burger operation in 1950s Southern California. Kroc was impressed by the brothers’ speedy system of making the food and saw franchise potential.

He manoeuvred himself into a position to be able to pull the company from the brothers and create a billion-dollar empire. The tone of the script has been described as being similar to ‘The Social Network’ and ‘There Will Be Blood’.—PTI

Golden Globe-winner Michael Keaton is in talks to star as the lead in ‘The Founder’, the story of the rise of the McDonald’s fast food empire. Reuters

Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run ends in April

London, 17 Jan — Marvel Comics has announced the end of Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run in April.

Avengers #44 and New Avengers #33 will end the writer’s work on the franchise ahead of the ‘Secret Wars’ event, reported Digital Spy.

The ‘Time Runs Out’ storyline — which jumped eight months into the future — will conclude with a final incursion with a parallel ‘Earth’.

Mike Deodato will illustrate Avengers #44, with Kev Walker on New Avengers #33.

Dustin Weaver has illustrated interlocking covers for the two issues.

Hickman has said that he will take a break from Marvel after ‘Secret Wars’.

He is also working on ‘East of West’, ‘The Manhattan Projects’ and the forthcoming ‘The Dying and the Dead’ at Image Comics. ‘Secret Wars’ will launch in May.—PTI

Marvel Comics has announced the end of Jonathan Hickman’s ‘Avengers’ run in April.—PTI
**West African leaders mull new force to fight Boko Haram insurgents**

ACRA, 17 Jan — West African leaders will seek authority next week from the African Union to create a multi-national force to fight Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamist insurgents, Ghanaian President John Mahama told Reuters on Friday.

Any such force would represent the most robust international response yet to the militants who have killed thousands over the last year in their campaign for an Islamic caliphate and have also launched cross border attacks into Niger and Cameroon.

Boko Haram is seen as the most serious security threat to Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and its biggest energy producer, but Mahama said the group and militants in Somalia, Kenya, Mali and elsewhere posed a wider risk.

“Terrorism is like a cancer and if you don't defeat it, it will keep going. It threatens everybody in the sub region. When it comes to terrorism nobody is too far or too near,” he said.

It will take months before an African Union force could be set up and key issues such as who would command it, the location of its headquarters and its financing remain undecided, he said. Once set up, however, the African Union could ultimately seek a United Nations Security Council mandate to take over the force as happened in Sudan's Darfur region, he said. Mahama was speaking as current chair of West African regional bloc ECOWAS, which has been accused of not doing enough to combat Boko Haram.

“Nigeria is taking military action and Cameroons state is fighting Boko Haram, but I think we are increasingly getting to the point where probably a regional or a multinational force is coming into consideration,” he said earlier. In a further blow, Boko Haram militants seized the military base and town of Bagam, in Nigeria on the shores of Lake Chad, on 3 January. Baga was the headquarters of a planned force to fight the insurgents with troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, although that initiative stalled. The insur- gency stirred international outrage when militants seized more than 200 school girls in Chibok, northeastern Nigeria, the epicentre of the violence, last April. France must do more to help countries fight Boko Haram, President Francois Hollande told an annual conference of French and foreign ambassadors in Paris.

“Today, Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin are threatened and this situation means the international community must take appropriate action and can't let this be,” he said. France said last month it would help coordinate a regional task force against Boko Haram given signs of mistrust among West African neighbours.

Cameroon President Paul Biya this month appealed for military help against Boko Haram. On Friday, US Ambassador Michael Stephen Hoza said Washington would help train Cameroon's soldiers and offer equipment for the fight. Russian Ambassador Nikolay Ratsiborski said Moscow would supply equipment, training and arms to Cameroon and provide humanitarian assistance. Reuters

**Muhammad Ali released from the hospital for urinary infection**

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — Boxing great Muhammad Ali was released from a hospital on Friday after treatment for a severe urinary tract infection, Ali family spokesman Bob Gunnell said.

Ali, who has Parkinson's disease, was released from the undisclosed hospital in time to celebrate his 73rd birthday on Saturday, Gunnell said. He had been admitted to the hospital earlier this week as follow-up to a problem that surfaced last month.

“He's home and resting and glad to be out of the hospital,” Gunnell said, adding that the Ali family “greatly appreciates the outpouring of support and continued well wishes.”

The former three-time heavyweight world champion has been hospitalized twice in the past month.

Ali was first admitted on 20 December with what was believed to be a mild case of pneumonia. Doctors, however, later determined he was actually suffering from a urinary tract infection, Gunnell said.


**Sharapova backs super-coaches in women’s tennis**

MELBOURNE, 17 Jan — Maria Sharapova has backed the super-coach trend that will see two of her rivals tapping into the knowledge of grand slam champions at the Australian Open.

Sixth seeded Pole Agnieszka Radwanska has taken on 18-times grand slam title winner Martina Navratilova while up-and-coming American Madison Keys has former world number one and three-time major winner Lindsay Davenport as a mentor.

The appointments follow the development of a number of high-profile partnerships in the men's game, with Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray all taking on multiple former grand slam winners.

Sharapova has swapped a few coaches in recent years but has been working with Dutchman Sven Groeneveld since late 2013, a career coach who has mentored a number of top players but had no successful outcome as a player.

“Well, I think from experience-wise, there's no better person that can help you in certain situations as a coach, as a motivator, as someone that just has been there, done that,” Sharapova told reporters at Melbourne Park on Saturday.

“I think it's great to see. I think it's always nice when you've been through a career and you have the opportunity or you have the desire to share it with other players, to share your knowledge and experience.

“I think it's great. In contrast to last year's tournament, the re-energised Russian enters the year's first grand slam in peak condition and great form after winning the warmup Brisbane International with a hard-fought victory over former world number one Ana Ivanovic in the final.

With a career grand slam of major titles and a sweet-making business, the 27-year-old was asked whether she might rather stay and a sweet-making business, the 27-year-old was asked whether she might rather stay in contrast to last year's tournament, the re-energised Russian enters the year's first grand slam in peak condition and great form after winning the warmup Brisbane International with a hard-fought victory over former world number one Ana Ivanovic in the final.

With a career grand slam of major titles and a sweet-making business, the 27-year-old was asked whether she might rather stay at home and drink wine rather than grind hard on the tour. She dismissed the idea.

“I'm starting from scratch. I'm hungry. I'm determined to do better,” said 2008 champion Sharapova, who was bumped from the last 16 by eventual finalist Dominika Cibulkova last year after missing the back end of the previous season due to injury.

“I lost in the fourth round here. That’s not a result I want. I want to do much better. I'm here to try to win the title.

“I don't know if I'd be drinking wine. Maybe a sangria actually.

“But when you're holding the trophy, God, you can have as many sangrias as you want and you're in it. So that sounds a lot better.” — Reuters

**Kubota to enter farming “assist suit” market in 2016**

A woman wearing a prototype “assist suit” developed by Japanese agriculture equipment maker Kubota Corp. easily lifts a 20-kilogram container filled with sand during a presentation in Kyoto on 16 Jan, 2015. The suit can reduce the burden on a wearer when loading or unloading articles, by making use of motors. KYODO NEWS

**Russia’s Maria Sharapova hits a shot during a practice session on Rod Laver Arena at Melbourne Park on 15 Jan, 2015. — Reuters**

**A newspaper with its frontpage headline on an abduction of women from a village in northeast Nigeria, is displayed at a vendor's stand along a road in Ikoyi district in Lagos on 10 June, 2014. — Reuters**

**MRTV Entertainment Channel**

(18-1-2015, Sunday)

6:00 am  •  Travelogue Programme
6:25 am  •  Honour Song of Alinka Wutji
6:45 am  •  Game for Children
7:10 am  •  Musical Programme
7:20 am  •  Myanmar Video
8:45 am  •  Sing & Enjoy
9:30 am  •  Myanmar Movie
12:00 am  •  Close Down

**MTTV MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL**

(18-1 07:00 am~ 19-1 07:00 am) MST

* Local News  •  Today Myanmar  •  “Myanmar Quality Golf”  •  World News  •  Now in Yangon  •  “Model Management & Photo Studio”  •  Local News  •  Snow Flakes…Scenic Confluence…To Kachin State  •  World News  •  Art Studios: Their Dream  •  Local News  •  A stir about of Rainbows  •  Marketing  •  Cosplayer  •  Local News  •  Aesthetic Chinlone  •  World News  •  Myanmar Masterclass: Aung Tha  •  Local News  •  The Ten Traditional Arts & Crafts  •  World News  •  Will you feed the pigeons  •  Local News  •  The Long-Lasting Royal Tradition  •  World News  •  TECH School  •  Local News  •  ID Show  •  “Gas and Oil”  •  World News  •  Myanmar Movie Review  •  Local News  •  Myanmar Entrepreneur: Soe Nyi Nyi  •  World News  •  In the Studio: Ki Ma
South Korea upset Australia 1-0 at Asian Cup

Brisbane, 17 Jan — South Korea upset Australi-ia 1-0 at the Asian Cup on Saturday to top the Group A standings and secure a potentially easier path to the final while leaving the host nation facing a treacherous route.

Striker Lee Jeong-hyeop scored a perfectly-executed goal in the first half to give his team a surprise lead then the Koreans held on against a wave of Aus-tralian attacks to clinch the victory. The win meant South Korea finished at the top of the Group A standings with three wins and will play either Uzbekistan or Saudi Arabia in the quarter-finals.

As Group A runners-up, Australia will play the Group B winners China with the defending champions Japan lurking as a possible semi-finalist. The Australians dominated possession but paid a high price for squandering their best chances and resting some of their key players, includ-ing star striker Tim Cahill, who only came on for the last 20 minutes when the Socceroos were desperate for an equaliser.

The Korean goalkeeper Kim Jin-hyeon pulled off a series of sharp saves to keep his team ahead and the visitors were unlucky not to grab a second on the counterattack as they raised hopes of winning their first Asian Cup since 1960.

Lee, who was recalled to the starting lineup after missing South Korea's previous group win over Kuwait, broke the deadlock in the 32nd minute when he got his foot on to a perfectly angled cross from his team mate Lee Keun-ho.

The goal was just enough to divert the ball into the net at the far post, evading the diving Australian goalkeeper Mat Ryan. With both teams already assured of a place in the quarter-finals, the two regional powerhouses initially adopted a cautious approach, on a hot and hu-mid evening at Brisbane’s Lang Park that was invaded by thousands of moths.

The match began in slightly bizarre circum-stances when thousands of moths descended on the stadium field and grandstands, forcing staff to vac-uum some of the benches where players and officials were trying to sit. But once the Koreans scored, the match opened up as both teams ran them-selves to the point of ex-haustion.

Tomi Juric forced the South Korean goalkeeper Kim Jin-hyeon to make a sharp save at the near post after James Troisi just missed the target after he fooled the Korean defence in the box and turned quickly to shoot.

The Australians raised the tempo in the second half, starving South Korea of possession and pressing for an equaliser.

Milan set to sign Suso from Liverpool, says Galliani

Milan, 17 Jan — AC Milan are on the verge of signing Liver-pool’s little-used Spanish winger Suso, chief executive Adriano Galliani said on Friday.

“It is done 99.9 percent,” Galliani told reporters, adding that the 21-year-old would arrive in Italy in the “coming days”.

Suso joined Liverpool in 2010 but has never established himself, spending the 2013/14 season at Almeria back in Spain. Another player who looks set to leave the city of Liverpool is Evertson’s Samuel Eto’o, with Italian media reports saying the 33-year-old ex-Cameroon stri-ker is close to joining Sampdoria having only signed for the To-fees at the start of the season.

Doubtful Nadal rules out Australian Open glory

Melbourne, 17 Jan — Rafa Nadal has downplayed his chances of winning the Australian Open, saying he is more concerned and he lacks confidence from having little match practice in the lead-up.

Nadal made the final last year but was beaten by Stan Wawrinka in four sets, having carried a painful back injury into the match that affected his movement.

He recovered to win a record ninth French Open crown but was blighted by a wrist injury and then appendicitis late in the year.

“I cannot say (I am) completely recovered because that can happens when you compete, when you put your back under stress,” Nadal said. “It’s something that I (am) not 100 percent confident yet.

“I am confident about my knees because (they) are working very well. But my back, I don’t have enough time having good feelings to say I am 100 percent perfect, no”.

I need to take care about this for the moment. But hopefully it will be fine.” Nadal’s fitness will be put to the test in a tough first round encounter against wily Russian veteran Mikhail Youzhny, a former top 10 player.

“It’s true that having a grand slam that early in the season after injury like this is not the ideal thing. “But here we are, I worked a lot since 10th of December. “I am with calm and happy the way I did the things.”

Milan are on the verge of signing Liverpool’s little-used Spanish winger Suso, chief executive Adriano Galliani said on Friday.

“It is done 99.9 percent,” Galliani told reporters, adding that the 21-year-old would arrive in Italy in the “coming days”.

Suso joined Liverpool in 2010 but has never established himself, spending the 2013/14 season at Almeria back in Spain. Another player who looks set to leave the city of Liverpool is Evertson’s Samuel Eto’o, with Italian media reports saying the 33-year-old ex-Cameroon stri-ker is close to joining Sampdoria having only signed for the To-fees at the start of the season.