Save mural paintings—our heritage

Aye Min Soe

MURAL paintings created on the walls of caves and pagodas can be found in many parts of Myanmar. However, such kind of heritage in the country’s sub-urban areas have been abandoned and left without preservation for many decades.

Of these is from the cave of the Htigyi Pagoda in Minbu. The mural paintings on the wall of the cave have been left to ruin. Rain seeks through the cracks of the concrete walls in the rainy season, damaging the works.

Some parts of the upper layer of the concrete walls on which the mural paintings were created have been collapsing gradually for many decades.

The wall paintings have also been damaged by the rubbing of cattle from nearby villages on the paintings.

“The wall paintings on this pagoda are in urgent need of preservation. If not, all of these works will degenerate beyond preservation in the future,” said U Kyaw Sein Win, 60, a local art master.

The veteran artist has estimated that the paintings were created in the 18th century.

The subjects of the paintings are related to the life of the Buddha and His Teachings. During the period of the Nyaungyan, Inwa (Ava) and Konbong dynasties from the 14th to 18th centuries, which came after Bagan era, paintings were also created on walls of caves of stupas and pagodas though in a different, distinct style.

The lines used in the paintings have become thicker than those in the Bagan era and the composition of the paintings is not as good. However, the life of ordinary people are found for the first time in the paintings of those eras.

Myanmar traditional painting developed with the arrival of Buddhism to Bagan Kingdom because most of the paintings date back to the period of Bagan, which began in the 11th century AD.

Tourism via border gates increasing in Myanmar

MYANMAR has become a popular tourist destination thanks to its many cultural sites and its political, economic and social changes in the recent years. The tourists visit Myanmar, by air, by sea and via border gates from neighboring countries.

The visitors who cross the border gates, enter by convoys of cars, motorcycles and bicycles. They also travel along Ayeyawaddy and Chindwin rivers in yachts.

With the cooperation of Ministry of Hotel and Tourism and Pega Travels and Tours Co., Ltd, 13 tourists on nine motorcycles entered Myawaddy border gate of south-eastern Myanmar from Thailand and visited Myawaddy, Phaung, Kyauktawgyi, Bago, Yangon, Pagan, Mandalay, Sagaing, Amarapura, PyinOoLwin, Kalaw, Inlay, Ayeyawady, Taungyi, Namsam, Monypin, Kyaintong and Tachilek towns. They went back to Thailand via Htikhee border gate on 14 December.

Likewise, with the cooperation of the ministry and Mother Ayeyawaddy Travels & Tours Co., Ltd, 16 Thai tourists on eight motorcycles came on 2 December, via Myawaddy border gate and traveled to Taungoo, Bagan, Magwe, Mrauk-U, Sittway, Thandwe, Pyi, Yangon, Mawlamyaing, and Dawei towns. They left for Thailand from Htikhee border gate on 15 December.

According to World Tourism Federation, there were 1138 million tourists in 2014, which was an increase of 4.7 per cent from 2013.—GNLM
The Bo Ba Htoo Housing Complex Project, approved by the Yangon Government, is being implemented under the Yangon City Development Committee’s supervision and constructed by the Myanmar V-Pile Company. Construction has now entered phase 2 which is set to be completed in three years. Construction began earlier this month.

The Phase 2 section is located on 14.89 acre plot of land at the corner of Bomhu Ba Htoo and Bayinnaung roads in Dagon Myothit (North) township of Yangon. The cost of the construction is estimated to be over K 20 billion. The nearby Phase 1 section of the complex is completed and the apartments are now occupied.

There will be 20 eight-story buildings with 900 sq ft apartments, and eight-story buildings with 600 sq ft apartments totaling 896 units. Each building will have elevators and four units (apartments) on each floor and like the Phase 1 section, a children’s playground, a park and parking lots are to be included.

Eight engineers and 70 construction workers are assigned to the site.

“The prices of the 448 apartments of the Phase 1 section were determined by the Yangon region government. There were 13000 applications to buy the apartments in installments and the people had to draw lots. The second phase has to be implemented soon to fulfill the demand for low-cost apartments,” said Phase 2’s Project Manager Daw Soe Soe Tin.

She added that the electricity supply will be insufficient and they are in discussions with the city’s Electricity Supply Enterprise to ensure the supply of power.

At the Phase 1 section, 600 sq ft apartments were sold at K 25.5 million and 900 sq ft apartments were sold at K 34.7 million. The construction of the 14 eight-story buildings on a 5.26-acre land cost K 12 billion. Those buildings were also constructed by Myanmar V-Pile.—Soe Win

**KOICA Fellowship Program Annual Meeting celebrated**

2015 Fellowship Program Annual Meeting was celebrated with enthusiastic participation by KOICA Alumni at Novotel Max Hotel in Yangon at December 19 in order to celebrate and strengthen the friendly relations between Myanmar and South Korea.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) held its highly anticipated annual event of the year known as “2015 Fellowship Program Annual Meeting”.

Fellowship program is one of the KOICA’s core programs continuously supporting human resources development of its partner countries.

In case of Myanmar, KOICA has invited nearly 1,746 Myanmar government officials and this year, over 130 officials have already participated in various training courses including 15 scholarship courses in Korea.

Korean Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Mr. Lee Back-Soon remarks on his opening speech, “Korea is putting effort on promoting and contributing to find the right way for Myanmar’s sustainable development. However, the most critical factor to maximize the outcome of our development cooperation is the strong collaboration between two countries.”

The event featured presentation of the KOICA Alumni to sharing memories and the fellowship program they anticipated in and the Myanmar traditional dance, K-POP dance, and WFK volunteer’s signing performances.

Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation-MOAI) U Myint Hlaing, Union Minister for Construction(MOC) U Kyaw Lwin, Economic Advisor to the President and Chair of Central Committee of MDI U Aung Tun Thet, Chairman of Myanmar KOICA Club(MMKC) U San Lwin, Chief Resident Representative of KOICA Myanmar Office Mr. Nam Kwon Hyong, and 100 government officials were present at the event.—GNLM

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**Free Medical Service for Dental Patients in Mon State**

The Mon Medical Association provided free dental care service to middle schools in Potpawaddy village, Mon State on Thursday. Some of the patients were from the nearby Potpawaddy village. The dental care teams were led by Dr. Myint Thein, chairman of the Mon Medical Association and 13 volunteers from Yay township and health staff from Ahyuthaung and Potpawaddy villages. — Nay Myo Htau

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Dr Sai Mauk Kham inspects Muse CEZ development

VICE President Dr Sai Mauk Kham yesterday inspected the central economic zone in Muse, northern Shan State, giving instructions on closer coordination in regional development between the local administrative bodies.

The Shan State government and New Star Light Company are joint developers of the central economic zone that was founded on 4 July 2013 with the permission of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

Located on 294 acres of land near the Shweli river, the Muse CEZ project is now 70% complete and will comprise apartment complexes, market stalls, three-star hotels, recreation parks and playgrounds.

In the evening the vice president proceeded to Lashio airport where he called for tight security and the timely completion of the extension work.

—Myanmar News Agency

Former DSA graduates pay respects to retired faculty members

FORMER graduates of the Defence Services Academy (DSA) paid respects to their retired military and civil faculty members at the Tatmadaw Exhibition Hall in Yangon yesterday.

Graduate officers from Intakes 14 to 19 paid their respects to 109 retired faculty members in their third ceremony, which drew over 250 retired graduate officers alongside the incumbent commander-in-chief of defence services and other senior military officers.

Vice President U Nyan Tun and Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered messages expressing their deep sense of gratitude to the instructors.

On behalf of the retired teachers, ex-Lt-Gen U Kyaw Ba gave advice on upholding the good tradition of the army in protecting the rights of the people and defending the country from internal and external threats. The former lieutenant general stressed the need to bring the armed forces up to modern standards.

Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing had lunch together with former DSA graduates and faculty members.

—Myawady

Respect paying ceremony to doyen literati held for marking Myanmar Sarsodaw Day

ORGANISED by the Myanmar Writers’ Association, a respect paying ceremony to the doyen literati was held to mark the Myanmar Sarsodaw Day at Yangon City Hall yesterday.

Chairman of Myanmar Writer’s Association U Tin Hlaung (Letwinthar Saw Chit) spoke words of greeting to the doyen literati.

The association’s secretary U Nyunt Tin (Maung Nyein Thu-Gyobinggauk), master of ceremonies, introduced the doyen literati to the guests. U Ohn Maung (Myinmu Maung Naing Moe), chairman of fund raising working committee, read out a list of the donors.

After paying respect to the doyen literati Vice Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swar, Minister for information U Ye Htut, Vice chairman of USDP U Htay Oo, Mayor U Hla Myint, and officials of the Myanmar Writers’ Association presented gifts and cash.

On behalf of the doyen literati, U Maung Maung (Maung Nyein Chan-PhyarPon) counselled the attendees.

—0Fee Yee Myint, Ohmmar Tham

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing pays respects to retired faculty members of DSA. PHOTO: MYAWADY

Union Minister U Ye Htut presents gifts to doyen literati at the ceremony to mark Sarsodaw Day in Yangon. Photo: Zaw Min Latt
Migrant birds arriving at Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

MIGRANT birds from the northern hemisphere have been arriving in Myanmar since October to inhabit the Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary for the winter. They are now together with the native birds, according to an official of the sanctuary administration office.

He said there are 64 species of 11477 native birds and 18 species of 8795 migrant birds at the sanctuary.

The spacious Inlay Lake in Shan State, with its famous floating natural islands, was designated as Myanmar’s first Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program, in June of this year.—Nay Myo Thu Rein (Nyaungshwe)

Hot-air balloon trips over Bagan a hit with tourists

HOT-AIR balloon trips over the skies of Bagan, a cultural heritage city, have seen an increase in passengers year by year, reaching 17,802 in 2014, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The balloon business there has seen consistently increasing income, reaching US$4.23 million in 2014, a substantial increase from the US$ 0.97 million gained from 4,886 passengers in 2010.

More than 20 hot-air balloons belonging to three private companies are in the air every day in Bagan, one of the country’s most popular and lucrative tourist attractions.

It can cost between $250 to $380 USD for a person to enjoy Bagan’s aerial views dotted with thousands of pagodas constructed between the 11th and 13th centuries.

According to the Travel & Tourism Economic Impact-2015 report released by the World Tourism Organization, a single tourist to Bagan can generate US$78.44 for the economy, with over 200,000 tourists arriving at the sanctuary each year.

The 8th senior official level conference on fighting human trafficking, arrest 396 traffickers and rescuing 230 persons.

Wut Hmone said.

In cooperation with neighbouring countries, the police force exposed 139 cases of human trafficking from 2007 to 2015, arresting 396 traffickers and rescuing 230 persons.

The 8th senior official level meeting on fighting human trafficking between Myanmar and China will be held on 23 December, 2015, at the Ngweasung Beach in Pathein.—Thun Oo (Lay Myat Hnin)

Police expose 139 cases of human trafficking, arrest 396 between Jan and Nov

120 reported cases of human trafficking occurred between January and November 2015.

Among those cases, 68 people were trafficked for forced marriage, 17 for prostitution, 33 for forced labour and two cases involved children, according to the Anti-human Trafficking Force.

Of those, 73 prisoners were destined for China, 16 for Thailand and 13 for Malaysia while 18 cases occurred inside Myanmar.

Man commits suicide in Aung Lan Township

A SUICIDE occurred in Shwe Pa Taung Village, Aung Lan Township on Thursday. According to the police investigation, Thein Htut, 52, stabbed himself in the neck with a kitchen knife in the middle of the night.

According to his mother, the man was a former alcoholic suffering from mental illness caused by drinking.—Kyaw Zay Ya

Artist Nyein Chan Su to exhibit his works at Yangon Gallery

More than 20 oil paintings will be on display at the Yangon Gallery during the five-day exhibition.

Khaing Thanda Lwin

THE Yangon Gallery will host a solo show of the artist Nyein Chan Su, one of the more prominent contemporary artists in Myanmar, this month featuring the artist’s selected works, event organiser Lynn Whut Hmone said.

“Journey to the West-Back” will run from 23 to 27 December, showcasing more than 20 oil art works. All works are available for sale at the five-day event but the prices for the paintings have not been set yet.

The 42-year-old artist said he will fix the exact prices after negotiating with the event organiser, he added that he would normally sell his works at around US$2,500 per painting.

Since entering the art scene Nyein Chan Su has had many art exhibitions both at home and abroad, particularly in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore and Germany.

He has donated more than 50 of his own works worth around K10 million (US$7670.18) to aid flood victims nationwide this year.

The Yangon Gallery is located within the compound of People’s Park near the Planetarium Museum on Alon Road.

Motorbikes charged with 2015 vehicle law in Yangon Region

FOLLOWING a crackdown on motorbike drivers who break the traffic laws the Yangon Region Police Force arrested 207 motorbike drivers who did not follow traffic rules.

During the campaign which started on 11 December motorbike drivers were charged under the 2015 Vehicle Law.

The police also took action against drivers who were found with drug and knives.

The move is aimed at reducing the death toll from traffic accidents in the region.—Myanmar News Agency

Most road accidents involve small vehicles

YANGON Region has seen a rise in car accidents this week compared with previous weeks, according to the local police press conference on Friday. Official statistics show that the region has seen 54 accidents over the last week week, up from 43 last week including 22 small vehicle, 10 taxis, 11 passenger vehicles, 3 trucks and 8 motorbikes. Police major Myo Aung Myint noted that the car accidents mostly involved small vehicles though there were slightly more accidents during day light than night time.
India and Russia eye nuclear, helicopter deals before Modi’s Moscow visit

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to promote deals for Russian nuclear reactors and military helicopters worth billions of dollars on a trip to Moscow next week, attracted by promises to transfer technology that Western nations have been slow to make.

Russia and India will manufacture 200 Kamov-226T helicopters in a joint venture, a Russian and an Indian government official said, in the first big step for Modi’s campaign to build a domestic industrial base and reduce the military’s dependence on expensive imports.

Modi, who heads for Moscow on 23 December, will also offer Russia a site in Andhra Pradesh to build six nuclear reactors of 1,200 megawatts (MW) each, the same sources added.

That is in addition to the six Russian plants being constructed in neighboring Tamil Nadu, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

New Delhi has turned to Russia as US firm General Electric and Westinghouse, a US-based unit of Japan’s Toshiba, are still weighing an entry into India’s nuclear energy sector because of a law that makes reactor suppliers liable in case of an accident.

Modi’s “Make-in-India” push for a military that has been the world’s biggest importer for the last four years has also made little headway, with negotiations stalled over issues including technology transfer and the local assembly of equipment.

Russia, India offers an alternative, fast-growing outlet for its exports as sanctions imposed by the West squeeze the economy.

“While others are making promises, Russia is moving forward with the Make-in-India programme,” the Russian government source said.—Reuters

Organised crime costs Australia more than 26bn USD each year

CANBERRA — Serious and organised crime is costing Australia more than 26 billion US dollars every year, according to Justice Minister Michael Keenan on Friday.

Keenan said research conducted by the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) revealed the shocking figures, which more than double previous estimates.

He said drugs such as “ice” — which command prices of up to 50 times that in other countries — were enticing more and more organized crime gangs to set up shop in Australia.

“Organised crime represents an ongoing threat to this country. They are violent predators who profit from the misery of evil trades,” Keenan said on Friday.

“Australia has become a target for organised criminals from all around the world because Australians are paying top dollar for the misery these crooks peddle like the drug ice.”

“Users are not only bankrolling the criminals that are infiltrating and destroying our communities with their dangerous drugs, but they are ensuring our nation remains a lucrative market for international crime syndicates.”

He said the 25 billion US dollar figure took into account both the cost or serious and organised criminal activity (15 billion US dollars) as well as the cost of preventing it (11.5 billion US dollars) as well as the cost of organised criminal activity (15 billion US dollars) as well as the cost of preventing it (11.5 billion US dollars).

Recently, he said, Australia has embarked on stopping criminals from reaching its shores by setting up joint taskforces with nations such as China.

“The ACC is boosting our international cooperation to crack down on organised criminal syndicates responsible for the exportation of ice to Australia, including through Taskforce Blaze — a joint agency taskforce between the Australian Federal Police and the Chinese National Narcotics Control Commission,” Keenan said on Friday.

“It is focused on investigating organised criminal syndicates responsible for the exportation of ice to Australia. This is the first ever joint agency taskforce of its kind.”

Keenan said the revelation — the first in Australia’s history — would further help the government crack-down on organised crime, as law enforcement agencies now have a greater understanding of dire situation.

“This is the first time the ACC has estimated the cost of serious and organised crime on the economy. It does not represent an explosion in crime, rather an improved understanding of the cost impacts to government, the community and the private sector,” he said in the statement.

“This will assist government and our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to make an informed response to tackling this evolving market.” —Xinhua

Indonesia to deploy 150,000 security personnel for year-end celebrations

CILANGKAP — Indonesia will deploy more than 150,000 security personnel and several religious organisations to safeguard churches and public places around the country during Christmas and New Year’s Eve celebrations, the military chief said late on Friday.

Indonesia, with the world’s largest Muslim population, has already stepped up security and surveillance in some areas in the wake of attacks in Paris last month that killed nearly 130 people and for which militant group Islamic State claimed responsibility.

“We call on all communities, such as Islamic and Hindu youth organisations, to participate in safeguarding churches during Christmas,” armed forces chief Gatot Nurmantyo told reporters at the national military headquarters on the outskirts of the capital Jakarta.

“Some of the youth organisations have stated their readiness,” he added.

Over 80 percent of Indonesia’s population is Muslim, but the country recognises five other religions including Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Police in Indonesia will be on their highest alert level between 24 December and 2 January, national police chief Badrodin Haiti told reporters earlier this week.

Military and police troops will be on standby at airports, train stations, houses of worship, and public celebrations.

Haiti said as many as 100,000 people travel across the archipelago for the holidays.

The government has warned that Indonesians fighting for IS in Syria and Iraq could attempt to return and mount attacks, though security officials have said they do not see credible or specific threats of an attack here in the near future.—Reuters

Thailand, Cambodia to triple bilateral trade in 5 years

BANGKOK — Thai Prime Prayut Chan-ocha and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed in talks here Friday to triple the value of their bilateral trade to $150 billion within the next five years, according to the Thai government.

As part of the agreement, the two sides will start cross-border rail services, upgrade roads connecting the neighbouring countries and develop special economic zones, deputy spokesman Maj. Gen. Werachon Sukondhapatipak said after the meeting at Government House.

Hun Sen arrived in Thailand earlier in the day for a two-day visit that included a joint Thai-Cambodian Cabinet meeting yesterday.

To commemorate the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the leaders also agreed to hold a friendly soccer match that will be broadcast live in both countries.

According to a draft of the agreement, a rail service between Bangkok and Phnom Penh will be operating by the end of 2016.

By the first half of next year, a cross-border rail linkage will be established between the Thai border town of Aranyaprathet and Poipet on the Cambodian side, it said.

This route forms a part of the Southern Economic Corridor, a transportation route that will eventually be extended to the Dawei Special Economic Zone in south-eastern Myanmar.—Kyodo News
637 terrorists killed, 710 arrested in Pakistan in 2015

ISLAMABAD — At least 637 terrorists have been killed and 710 others arrested by the police and security forces in Pakistan during the year 2015, the interior ministry informed the country’s Upper House Friday.

The Senate was informed that a total of 373 terrorists were killed in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), 98 in southwest Balochistan province, 55 in east Punjab province and 36 in south Sindh Province.

One miscreant was killed by police in the capital city Islamabad and another in north Gilgit-Baltistan area this year.

All the terrorists have been killed under the National Action Plan (NAP) launched by the country in January this year to curb militancy in restive tribal and sensitive settled areas of the country.

The Senate was informed that a number of steps have been taken by Frontier Corps in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces to check infiltration of terrorists from Afghanistan into Pakistan through the porous border lying between the two countries.

The Senate was also informed that the country has banned 14 militant organisations this year, bringing the total number of banned outfits in the country to 61.

The banned outfits included the Islamic State (IS), sectarian outfits, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah Muhammad Pakistan, Jaish Muhammad and Sipah Sahaba, and separatist organisations; Balochistan Republican Army and Lashkar-e-Balochistan among others. Extremist groups Tehreek Nafaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi, Tehreek-e-Islami Pakistan and Shia Talaba Action Committee are also among the 61 banned organisations.

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon said on Friday it was looking at Chinese complaints that a B-52 bomber recently flew near a Chinese artificial island in the South China Sea, a sensitive issue because the two powers disagree over Beijing’s territorial claims in the region.

Navy Commander BillUrban, a Pentagon spokesman, said the United States regularly conducts B-52 training missions throughout the region but there was no plan for the B-52 to fly within 12 nautical miles of any artificial island.

“This was not a freedom of navigation operation,” said Urban, referring to regular US Navy missions conducted to challenge what the United States believes are excessive territorial claims made by other countries.

“The Chinese have raised concerns with us about the flight path of a recent training mission,” Urban said. “We are looking into the matter.”

China’s defence ministry said in a statement on its website on Saturday that its forces had closely monitored the plane and warned the aircraft to leave.

Referring to the manoeuvre as “provocation”, the ministry said it urged the United States “to immediately adopt measures to put an end to such kind of dangerous actions, in order not to impact the two countries’ military relations.”

The US guided missile destroyer USS Lassen sailed within 12 nautical miles of Subi Reef in late October to deliberately challenge China’s claims of territorial waters there. The decision drew an angry rebuke from China, which called it “extremely irresponsible.” —Reuters

NEW DELHI — A court granted bail to opposition leaders Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul yesterday in a case involving the alleged misappropriation of party funds that has become a political flashpoint with the ruling party.

The mother-son duo made a rare appearance in a dingy Delhi courtroom to answer summons in the lawsuit brought by a member of the party.

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal said the court granted bail to party chief Sonia and vice president Rahul without any conditions after a brief hearing.

Hundreds of members of the Congress party were massed outside the court premises in a show of support for the torchbearers of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that ruled India for more than one country, a reform apparent in line with a Japanese request, sources familiar with the matter said Friday.

Congress party leaders blamed Modi for unleashing a political vendetta against the mother-son duo, saying he was trying to snuff out those opposed to him since his election in 2014.

“We will fight this vendetta on every front. Make no mistake about it,” said Kamal Nath, a senior leader as he arrived in court along with other senior members of the party.

BJP leader Subramanian Swamy who has brought the lawsuit has pledged to send the Gandhis to jail, alleging they formed a shell company and illegally gained control of properties worth $300 million belonging to first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

The family has denied any wrongdoing. —Reuters

A Pakistani policeman checks the identity card of a passenger due to security high alert in northwest Pakistan’s Peshawar, on 18 December 2015. Photo: Xinhua

Six wounded in blasts at mosque in Bangladesh naval base

DHAKA — At least six naval personnel were seriously wounded in explosions at the end of prayers on Friday at a mosque inside a Bangladesh naval base in Chittagong, police said.

 Twice were arrested in connection with the blasts. Police said they had confessed to being members of banned militant group Jama’at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

The group wants to establish a sharia-based Islamic state in Bangladesh and tends to target government facilities.

TOKYO — UNESCO has urged its members to coordinate in advance and jointly apply for documentary heritage registration if documents are located in more than one country, a reform apparent in line with a Japanese request, sources familiar with the matter said Friday.

Japan has called on the UN body to improve the Memory of the World listing system of its cultural heritage body, following the registration of China’s “Documents of Nanjing Massacre” in October despite Japanese objections.

Japan and China differ over the number of victims in the 1937 Nanjing Massacre.

UNESCO said in a document released Wednesday that it is reviewing guidelines for the listing system.

Tokyo has called for greater transparency and fairness in the screening and registration processes, calling into question the closed-door screening of the International Advisory Committee.

UNESCO is expected to discuss detailed reform measures next spring.

The organisation plans to extend the deadline for applications to the end of May next year, rather than the end of March. UNESCO screens documentary heritage applications every two years.

Officials of Japan’s education and foreign ministries said the new timetable apparently encompasses improved procedures and they expect a change for the better. —Kyodo News

UNESCO calls for joint documentary heritage proposals

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Obama urges Americans remain vigilant against homegrown threats

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama urged Americans to remain vigilant against the potential threat of homegrown Islamic State militants on Friday, acknowledging the difficulty of tracking “lone wolf” attackers like those who went on a shooting spree in California.

Obama appeared in the White House press briefing room for a year-end news conference shortly before travelling to San Bernardino, California, where the 2 December shootings took place, to meet privately with families of the victims en route to spending the holidays in Hawaii.

Obama talked tough about the prospects of defeating Islamic State militants who control broad swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq but admitted US law enforcement agencies have limitations in tracking the threat at home.

“It’s not that different from us trying to detect the next mass shooter. You don’t always see it. They’re not always communicat- ing publicly,” Obama said.

A day after telling Americans that there is no current credible militant threat in the United States, Obama said that “lone wolf” plotters are difficult to track, particularly if they are a husband and wife like the two radicalized Muslims who killed 14 people in San Bernardino.

As for US efforts to track potential attackers, Obama said social media postings by potential militant suspects are constantly being reviewed by law enforcement agencies but that private online communications are far more difficult to track.

He said he believes law enforcement officials have struck the right balance between privacy concerns and making sure information gathering is carried out.

But the White House plans to work with tech companies to try to find ways to “discern more rapidly” potential threats in private communications, he said.

Concern about terrorism threats has spiked sharply since the 13 November attacks by Islamic State militants in Paris, with more than 30 percent of Americans citing terrorism as the most important problem facing the United States, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling.

Obama will discuss the future of the US war in Afghanistan when he travels to Europe next week as part of his year-end trip, his top aide said.

Obama is expected to discuss how the 2009-2011 war in Afghanistan, which cost the US $800 billion, can be brought to a close.

Reporting by Amanda Hunter and Bill Sapington; Editing by Howard Goller

Bigotry, panic reflected in media coverage of migrants and refugees

LONDON — From Bulgaria to Brazil, journalists reporting on the global migration and refugee crisis often fail to tell the full story, and regularly perpetuate negative stereotyping used by politicians looking to score points, research shows.

A study of media coverage in 14 countries said a lack of resources and journalists able to provide indepth and sensitive reporting contributed to a distorted picture of the refugee crisis — one of the biggest global stories of the year.

The report by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), issued in November, said that the media’s portrayal of migrants and refugees across Europe, the US and Africa is often coloured by a focus on the suffering and plight, alongside thousands fleeing the danger and hardship of war and conflict.

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Water resource

Htin Tin Htun

Water is essential to human survival and well-being and important to many sectors of the economy. However, resources are irregularly distributed in space and time, and they are thus under pressure placed by human activity. Nearly 97 per cent of the world's water supply by volume is held in the oceans. The other large reserves are groundwater (4 per cent) and seas and glaciers (2 per cent), with all other water bodies taking up only a fraction of 1 per cent. Residence times vary from several thousand years in the oceans to a few days in the atmosphere.

Although public awareness of the need to better manage and protect water has grown over the last decade, economic criteria and political considerations still tend to drive water policy at all levels. Humans need water for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, and industry, and contaminated water can spread illnesses and disease vectors. So, clean water is both an environmental and a public health issue. Meeting a continuous and ever increasing demand for water requires efforts to compensate for natural variability, and to improve the quality and quantity available. The world's water exists naturally in different forms and locations: in the air, on the surface, below the ground, and in the oceans. Freshwater accounts for only some 6 per cent of the world’s water supply, but is essential for human uses such as drinking, agriculture, manufacturing, and sanitation. Two-thirds of global freshwater is found underground. If you dig deep enough anywhere on Earth, you will hit water. Some people picture groundwater as an underground river or lake, but in reality it is rarely a distinct water body (large caves in limestone aquifers are one exception). Rather, ground-water typically fills very small spaces (pores) within rocks and between sediment grains, thus I have learned.

Earth’s water resources, including rivers, lakes, oceans, and underground aquifers, are under stress in many regions. Millions of people worldwide depend on groundwater stocks, which they draw from aquifers—permeable geologic formations through which water flows. Geologic formations are desirable because water levels in wells decline little even when pumping rates are high, so the wells do not need to be drilled as deep as in less transmissive formations and the energy costs of lifting water to the surface are not excessive. Under natural conditions many aquifers areartesian: the water they hold is under pressure, so water will flow to the surface from a well without pumping, thus I have learned.

River flows can vary greatly from one season to the next and from one climatic region to another. Rivers contain a relatively small share of fresh water, but the flux of water down rivers is a large part of the global hydrologic cycle and they are centrally important to shaping landscapes. Their flow erodes solid sediment and carries it toward the sea, along with dissolved minerals. These processes shape land into valleys and ridges and deposit thick layers of sediment in flood plains. Over geologic time the erosion caused by rivers balances the uplift driven by plate tectonics. Much of Earth’s freshwater flow passes through several of the planet’s largest rivers: the Amazon carries 15 per cent of total river flow on Earth, the Congo carries 3.5 per cent, and rivers that flow into the Arctic Ocean carry 8 per cent. The average residence time of water in rivers is less than a year, thus I have learned.

Overall, water shortages severely reduce biodiversity in both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, while water pollution dilutes the spread of serious human diseases and diminishes water quality.

Underground water is often overexploited and polluted. Unmanaged systems are likely to be most vulnerable to climate change challenges, existing water resources management practices by adding additional uncertainty and atmospheric carbon dioxide, climate change, and the increased competition for land and water are likely to increase vulnerability to food insecurity, particularly Africa and Asia. The challenge of providing sufficient food for everyone worldwide has never been greater.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

My heartfelt congratulations Mr. Kailash Satyarthi for the global recognition for his selfless and dedicated efforts in securing safe childhood for millions of unfortunate, helpless and defenseless children in India. As a huge country with substantial human population, India represents an important global stake in any social movement that is undertaken. I am sure that Mr Satyarthi’s monumental struggle in India will continue to address this serious question of preventing child abuses and for securing a better future for them. However, I sincerely feel that helpless children from the Indian subcontinent or the SAARC neighborhood such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Sri Lanka; and the adjoining SE Asian nations like Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos that do not have a figure like Mr Satyarthi to help protecting them. While I extend my prayers and best wishes for his continual success in working towards improving the life of millions of kids in India; I humbly beg him through your esteemed newspaper to extend some of his service and/or training, guidance and consultancies to dedicated individuals, governments, non-government organizations and allied agencies in all these countries too. My humble request to Mr Satyarthi is to kindly advocate to the governments of South and SE Asia to kindle the SAARC and ASEAN platforms to extend cooperation and collaboration to the neighboring countries to save millions of highly deprived, exploited and unfortunate children for a better future; and for their education and security. I sincerely believe that a stable and economically and socially secure neighborhood will contribute to the further development and progress of India too. Honourable Mr. Satyarthi’s support and attention could change the underprivileged children in the SAARC and ASEAN neighborhood significantly.

Thanking you

Sincerely yours

Saikat Kumar Basu
A New Era of Opportunity

Ban Ki-moon

SEVENTY years ago, the United Nations was created from the ashes of the Second World War. Seven decades later, in Paris, nations have united in the face of another threat – the threat to life as we know it due to a rapidly warming planet.

Governments have ushered in a new era of global cooperation on climate change – one of the most complex issues ever to confront humankind. In doing so, they have significantly advanced efforts to uphold our Charter mandate to “save succeeding generations”.

The Paris Agreement is a triumph for people, the environment and a new era of global cooperation on climate change. It is a health insurance policy for the planet. For the first time, every country in the world has pledged to curb their emissions, strengthen resilience and act internationally and domestically to address climate change.

Together, countries have agreed that, in minimizing risks of climate change, the national interest is best served by pursuing the common good. I believe it is an example we could gainfully follow across the political agenda.

The victory in Paris caps a remarkable year. From the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, from the historic Sustainable Development Summit in New York to the climate conference in Paris, this has been a year in which the United Nations has proved its ability to deliver hope and healing to the world.

Since my first days in office, I have called climate change the defining challenge of our time. That is why I have made it a top priority of my tenure. I have spoken with nearly every head of state about our common cause and encouraged them to embrace climate-resilient development.

All countries have agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius and, given the scientific consensus, to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 1.5 degrees. This is especially important for the nations of Africa, Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

In Paris, countries agreed on a long-term goal to cap global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible in the second half of the century. One hundred and eighty-eight countries have now submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, which show what they are prepared to do to reduce emissions and build climate resilience.

Currently, these national targets have already significantly bent the emissions curve downwards. But, collectively, they still leave us with an unacceptably dangerous 3 degrees Celsius temperature rise. That is why countries in Paris pledged that they will review their national climate plans every five years, beginning in 2018. This will allow them to increase ambition in line with what science demands.

The Paris Agreement also ensures sufficient, balanced adaptation and mitigation support for developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. And it will help to scale up global efforts to address and minimize loss and damage from climate change.

Governments have agreed to binding rules of the road to ensure that all countries do what they have said they will do. Developed countries have agreed to lead in mobilizing finance and to scale up technology support and capacity building. And developing countries have assumed increasingly responsible roles to address climate change in line with their capabilities.

In acknowledging this historic achievement, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the leadership and vision of the business community and civil society. They have highlighted both the stakes and the solutions. I salute them for their outstanding display of climate citizenship.

Now, with the Paris Agreement in place, our thoughts must immediately turn to implementation. By addressing climate change we are advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Paris Agreement has positive implications for all the Sustainable Development Goals. It has paved the way to enter a new era of opportunity.

As Governments, business and civil society begin the mammoth project of tackling climate change and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations will assist Member States and society at large at the climate conference in Paris, in December, I will convene, as requested by the Agreement and by the Convention, a high-level signing ceremony in New York, on 22 April next year.

I will invite world leaders to come to help keep and implement the Paris Agreement. By working together, we can achieve our shared objective to end poverty, strengthen peace, and ensure a life of dignity and opportunity for all.

The writer is Secretary-General of the United Nations

Water Our Resource

>>from page 8

The world’s population continues to rise. Today’s population of around 7 billion is expected to increase to about 9 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2009). By this time, another one billion tonnes of cereals and 200 million extra tonnes of livestock products will need to be produced every year (Brumisna, 2009). The imperative for such agricultural growth is strongest in developing countries, where the challenge is not just to produce food but to ensure that families have access that will bring them food security. Today almost 1 billion people are undernourished, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (239 million) and Asia (578 million). In developing countries, even if agricultural production doubles by 2050, one in twenty still risks being undernourished – equivalent to 370 million hungry people, most of whom will again be in Africa and Asia. Such growth would imply agriculture remaining an engine of growth, vital to economic development, environmental services and central to rural poverty reduction. For nutrition to improve and for food insecurity and undernourishment to recede, future agricultural production will have to rise faster than population growth. This will have to occur largely on agricultural land. Improvements will thus have to come from sustainable intensification that makes effective use of land and water resources as well as not causing them harm. The policies, practices and technologies needed to boost production and strengthen food security need to be further discussed. Institutional mechanisms, the development of trade and markets and the financial facilities needed to raise productivity in a sustainable way have been negotiated at the international level. At national level, measures to raise output and strengthen food security are being put in place, including investment in pro-poor, market-friendly policies, institutions and incentives, as well as the infrastructure and services needed to improve productivity.

Yet the challenge still remains. Of the freshwater which is not frozen, almost all is found on land. Improvements will thus have to come from sustainable intensification that makes effective use of land and water resources as well as not causing them harm. The policies, practices and technologies needed to boost production and strengthen food security need to be further discussed. Institutional mechanisms, the development of trade and markets and the financial facilities needed to raise productivity in a sustainable way have been negotiated at the international level. At national level, measures to raise output and strengthen food security are being put in place, including investment in pro-poor, market-friendly policies, institutions and incentives, as well as the infrastructure and services needed to improve productivity.

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At UN, Turkey accuses Iraq of undermining Islamic State fight

UNited Nations — Turkey accused Iraq on Friday of undermining the global fight against Islamic State militants by taking its complaint about the deployment of Turkish troops in northern Iraq to the United Nations Security Council. The 15-member council met on the issue on Friday at the request of Iraq and Foreign Minister Ibrah-im al-Jaafari who asked the body to adopt a resolution demanding Turkey withdraw its troops immediately.

Jaafari signalled the request for council action was a last resort. “Iraq has spared no effort to exhaust all diplomatic channels and bilateral negotiations with Turkey, in order to withdraw its forces that are unauthorised in Iraq,” he said.

Turkey deployed around 150 troops in the Bashirqa area earlier this month with the stated aim of training an Iraqi militia to fight Islamic State. Turkey, for its part, described as assailants.

UNited Nations — Three Israeli soldiers killed three Palestinians in a border protest, medics said.

The army said a motorcycle was driven at border police Friday during a violent attempted car-ramming attempt at the West Bank checkpoint of Qalandia, a police spokeswoman said.

Another Palestinian soldier was shot and wounded by Israeli police Friday during a car-ramming attempt at the West Bank checkpoint of Qalandia, a police spokeswoman said.

The surge in violence has been partly fuelled by Palestinian frustration over the collapse of US-sponsored peace talks in 2014, the growth of Jewish settlements on land they seek for a future state and Islamist calls for the destruction of Israel.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen voiced deep concern at “numerous reports of violations of the cessation of hostilities”, a UN statement said on Friday.

DOha — Yemeni negotiators taking part in UN-sponsored peace talks agreed Friday to form a committee to oversee a fragile ceasefire after fresh fighting imperilled their efforts to end Yemen’s civil war, sources close to the talks told Reuters.

They said the committee would be headed by a Lebanese army general and consist of representatives from the Saudi-backed government of Yemen’s President Abdrabbu Mansour Hadi and from the Houthi movement, which is allied to Iran.

Both sides arrived at a hotel in the Swiss city of Biel yesterday to attend a fifth day of talks aimed at halting the eight-month conflict in the Arab world’s poorest nation, which has killed thousands of people and caused widespread destruction and a major humanitarian crisis.

A supposed one-week truce came under strain on Friday when troops loyal to Hadi seized an important northwestern city and a military base from Houthis who still control the capital Sanaa, residents and tribal sources said.

planes and gunboats from a Saudi-led military coalition also bombarded targets in northern Yemen, residents said.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen voiced deep concern at “numerous reports of violations of the cessation of hostilities”, a UN statement said on Friday.

Yemen, which was swept by mass Arab Spring-inspired protests in 2011, was this year plunged into war after the Houthis overthrew the Sanaa government, prompting Saudi Arabia and other Arab states in March to launch a wide-scale bombing campaign.

The UN talks started away from television cameras on Tuesday and have been marked by distrust, with each side accusing the other of violating the truce.

Face-to-face talks between Hadi’s government and the Houthis group have not occurred since Wednesday evening, after the Houthis rejected demands for the release of detained senior officials, including Yemen’s defence minister and Hadi’s brother, said sources close to the talks.

Israeli troops kill three Palestinians in West Bank, Gaza clashes

Jerusalem — Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian who tried to ram them with a car and another who took part in a violent demonstration in the occupied West Bank on Friday, the military and medical officials said.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli army fire killed another Palestinian during a border protest, medics said.

A campaign of stabbing, shootings and car-rammings by Palestinians has killed 19 Israelis and a US citizen since October. Israeli forces or armed civilians have killed at least 117 Palestinians, 69 of whom authorities described as assailants.

The army said a motorist tried to run over Israeli soldiers during a violent demonstration by Palestinians near the West Bank town of Silwad. An Israeli police spokeswoman said the Palestinian had a knife with him in the car.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, medical officials said a Palestinian was shot and killed by Israeli troops during a violent protest. In central Gaza, Palestinians massed near the Gaza fence in what it described as a precaution against Palestinian infiltration or ambush attempts.

The army said it discovered and destroyed two improvised explosive devices on the fence on Friday.

Another Palestinian was shot and wounded by Israeli police on Friday during a car-ramming attempt at the West Bank checkpoint of Qalandia, a police spokeswoman said.

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Yemeni negotiators to form ceasefire committee as UN peace talks resume

A soldier loyal to Yemen’s President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi stands atop a tank as he uses binoculars in Majaz district, in the country’s northwestern province of Marib, after the pro-Hadi forces took the area from Houthis rebels, on 18 December.

A supposed one-week truce came under strain on Friday when troops loyal to Hadi seized an important northwestern city and a military base from Houthis who still control the capital Sanaa, residents and tribal sources said.

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German spies cooperating again with Assad’s secret service: Bild

Berlin — Germany’s spy agency is working again with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s secret service to swap information on Islamist militants, the Bild daily said, despite Berlin’s opposition to Assad staying in power under any peace deal for Syria.

Well-informed sources, the mass-circulation newspaper said German foreign intelligence BND agents had been travelling regularly to Damascus for some time for consultations with Syrian colleagues.

Two weeks ago Germany’s parliament approved a plan to support a US-led air strike campaign against Islamic State insurgents in Syria by sending Tornado reconnaissance jets, a frigate to help protect the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, refueling aircraft and up to 1,200 military personnel.

German media have dubbed the mission Chancellor Angela Merkel’s “first war” and have highlighted the risks of German pilots crashing in Islamic State-held territory. The aim of renewed BND contacts with Damascus is to exchange information about militants, especially those in Islamic States’ darkest and set up a fixed communication channel in case a German Tornado pilot is downed over Syria, Bild said.

—Reuters

Turkish’s ambassador to the United Nations, Yasar Halit Cevik, addresses the Security Council during a meeting about the situation in the Middle East, including Palestine, at United Nations headquarters in New York. Photo: Reuters

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Energy Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (Invitation for Open Tender) (17/2015)

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

Sr.No  Tender No  Description  Remarks
(1) IFB-059(15-16)  Spares for HDD Rig Model 11-046 (HK 250 T)  (3 Items)  US$ 372, 700, 2 - Rig (5 Items)  US$ 111, 700
(2) IFB-060(15-16)  Spares for Nigita Transmission and Reduction Gear Box Ex TM 3500 Drilling Rig (55) Items  US$ 1,150
(3) IFB-061(15-16)  Myers and a US citizen since October. Israeli forces or armed civilians have killed at least 117 Palestinians, 69 of whom authorities described as assailants.

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—Reuters
BlackBerry results trounce expectations on software; shares rally

TORONTO — BlackBerry’s pivot to software began to show traction on Friday, after the company reported a smaller quarterly loss and its first quarter-to-quarter revenue increase in over two years, sending its stock soaring 13 percent.

Significantly, gains in software revenue more than offset a steepening decline in legacy system access fees for the first time, and the Waterloo, Ontario-based company said this trend should continue.

The company may break even in the current quarter, but this could be complicated by investments being made toward growing both software and hardware sales, said Chief Executive John Chen, who sees a turnaround on software and the possible entry of a new player that could spark a price war.

BlackBerry has staked its future on software and more aggressively licensing its patents, said the Priv. Its new Android-powered device.

“We’re planning on other Android phones, but it all hinges on how we do with the Priv,” said Chen at a media roundtable, adding the Privs will be hitting 30 countries this quarter.

Chen, who sees the hard-ware business possibly turning around this quarter, said BlackBerry is open to licensing some of its proprietary software features.

“I’ve said that if we cannot make money, we’re going to get out of the phone business, and I mean hardware. We have tons of software that absolutely could run on the earnings, but Apple and Windows phones too,” said Chen.

“We will remain in the phone business one way or the other,” said Chen, stressing that ideally he would like to keep making devices and licensing at the same time.

In the quarter ended 28 November, BlackBerry reported a loss of $89 million, or 17 cents a share. That compared with a year ago loss of $148 million, or 28 cents a share.

Excluding restructuring charges on one-time operations, the company posted a loss of $15 million, or 3 cents a share.

Quarterly revenue fell 31 percent to $548 million from a year earlier, but rose 12 percent from the prior quarter, after nine consecutive quarters of declines.

Analysts, on average, expected BlackBerry to post a loss of 14 cents a share on revenue of $489 million.

Software revenue more than doubled in the quarter, putting BlackBerry within striking range of its $500 million target for the fiscal year ending 29 February, 2016.

Device sales also rose for the first time in four quarters to $214 million from $201 million in the second quarter on the back of the Priv.

BlackBerry sold 700,000 devices, down from about 800,000 in the prior period, but average selling prices jumped to $315 from $240.

Toshiba to incur several hundred billion yen net loss in FY 2015

TOKYO — Toshiba Corp. estimates it will report several hundred billion yen in group net loss for the business year ending in March, much larger than its losses the previous year, as it makes greater efforts to streamline operations following its profit-padding scandal, a company source said yesterday.

The loss, which was 3.78 billion yen in fiscal 2014, may exceed its record of 398.8 billion yen logged in the year through March 2009 in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the source said.

Stated to announce Monday a restructuring plan for its home electronics business, including white goods, telecommunications and personal computers, it will also unveil plans to cut costs in the current fiscal year, which has so far been withheld.

The company is considering slashing several thousand jobs in Japan and abroad, sources said earlier.

Alibaba avoids being named on US blacklist for fakes

WASHINGTON — Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd has avoided being named on a US blacklist for sites hosting the sale of fake goods, a victory for the firm after lobbying hard to avoid inclusion on the list.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) said, though, it was “increasingly concerned” about Alibaba’s enforcement programmes and warned it must make a greater effort to stop the sale of pirated and counterfeit products on its online platforms.

Inclusion on the annual list of the world’s most “notorious markets” for sales of pirated and counterfeit goods, while not car-}

rying direct penalties, would be a blow to Alibaba’s efforts to shed perceptions its sites are riddled with fakes.

The firm has pushed hard over the last few months to avoid being named on the list, concerned it could drag down its share price after under renewed pressure this year over suspected counterfeiters on its platforms.

Counterfeiting is an issue all global e-commerce companies face, and we are doing all we can to address and fight it,” an Alibaba spokesman said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

“We will continue to work with brands, governments and our sellers to maintain the integrity of our marketplace places,”

Alibaba’s Taobao Marketplace and Alibaba.com were both previously on the piracy blacklist, which highlights markets linked to significant intellectual property infringement.

Alibaba.com was removed in 2011 and Taobao in 2012 after efforts to work with sellers of legitimate goods to clean up the sites.

Since then, the Chinese e-commerce giant has worked toward enforcing anti-counterfeit procedures, but the US trade office said it was unclear what effect these measures have had.

“Despite these new procedures, USTR is increasingly concerned by rights holders’ reports that Alibaba Group’s enforcement programme is too slow, dificult to use, and lacks transparency,” the trade office said in a statement on Thursday, referring to complaints from trademark holders that sell merchandise on the site.

In October, The American Apparel and Footwear Association urged the trade office to blacklist Taobao for persistent intellectual property rights violations.

The trade office said on Thursday it would continue to monitor the sites over the coming year to see if overall efforts to remove fakes and penalize counterfeit sellers are effective.

Toshiba to incur several hundred billion yen net loss in FY 2015

TOKYO — Toshiba Corp. estimates it will report several hundred billion yen in group net loss for the business year ending in March, much larger than its losses the previous year, as it makes greater efforts to streamline operations following its profit-padding scandal, a company source said yesterday.

The loss, which was 3.78 billion yen in fiscal 2014, may exceed its record of 398.8 billion yen logged in the year through March 2009 in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the source said.

Stated to announce Monday a restructuring plan for its home electronics business, including white goods, telecommunications and personal computers, it will also unveil plans to cut costs in the current fiscal year, which has so far been withheld.

The company is considering slashing several thousand jobs in Japan and abroad, sources said earlier.

Alibaba avoids being named on US blacklist for fakes

WASHINGTON — Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd has avoided being named on a US blacklist for sites hosting the sale of fake goods, a victory for the firm after lobbying hard to avoid inclusion on the list.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) said, though, it was “increasingly concerned” about Alibaba’s enforcement programmes and warned it must make a greater effort to stop the sale of pirated and counterfeit products on its online platforms.

Inclusion on the annual list of the world’s most “notorious markets” for sales of pirated and counterfeit goods, while not car-}

rying direct penalties, would be a blow to Alibaba’s efforts to shed perceptions its sites are riddled with fakes.

The firm has pushed hard over the last few months to avoid being named on the list, concerned it could drag down its share price after under renewed pressure this year over suspected counterfeiters on its platforms.

Counterfeiting is an issue all global e-commerce companies face, and we are doing all we can to address and fight it,” an Alibaba spokesman said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

“We will continue to work with brands, governments and our sellers to maintain the integrity of our marketplace places,”

Alibaba’s Taobao Marketplace and Alibaba.com were both previously on the piracy blacklist, which highlights markets linked to significant intellectual property infringement.

Alibaba.com was removed in 2011 and Taobao in 2012 after efforts to work with sellers of legitimate goods to clean up the sites.

Since then, the Chinese e-commerce giant has worked toward enforcing anti-counterfeit procedures, but the US trade office said it was unclear what effect these measures have had.

“Despite these new procedures, USTR is increasingly concerned by rights holders’ reports that Alibaba Group’s enforcement programme is too slow, dificult to use, and lacks transparency,” the trade office said in a statement on Thursday, referring to complaints from trademark holders that sell merchandise on the site.

In October, The American Apparel and Footwear Association urged the trade office to blacklist Taobao for persistent intellectual property rights violations.

The trade office said on Thursday it would continue to monitor the sites over the coming year to see if overall efforts to remove fakes and penalize counterfeit sellers are effective.

Alibaba Executive Chairman Jack Ma delivers his speech during the World Climate Change Conference 2015 (COP21) at Le Bourget, near Paris, France, on 5 December. Photo: Reuters

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Inclusion on the annual list of the world’s most “notorious markets” for sales of pirated and counterfeit goods, while not car-
BRUSSELS — NATO allies agreed on Friday to send aircraft and ships to Turkey to strengthen Ankara’s air defences on its border with Syria, the alliance’s chief said.

Diplomats said the package is partly designed to avoid more shoot-downs of Russian planes.

Envoy to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation approved the plan and must now decide what military assets to send to Turkey, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told Reuters, stressing that it was a defensive measure.

“We have agreed on a package of assurance measures for Turkey in view of the volatile situation in the region,” Stoltenberg said, although he avoided any reference to Russia’s military involvement in Syria and its air incursions.

Given that Turkey already has a formidable air force, NATO diplomats and military experts say the alliance’s involvement is to minimise the risk of any repeat of Turkey’s 24 November shooting down of a Russian warplane that flew into Turkish airspace.

That was the first known incident of its kind since the Cold War and the most serious of several air incursions since early October, leaving relations between Turkey and Russia at their lowest ebb in recent memory.

Moscow has retaliated with sanctions and called it a “hostile act”.

Due to be assembled in the coming weeks, the package will include NATO’s AWACS surveillance planes and what Stoltenberg described as “enhanced air policing, and increased naval presence including maritime patrol aircraft.”

The ships will be provided by Germany and Denmark, which are exercising in the eastern Mediterranean.

AWACS monitor airspace within a radius of more than 400 km (250 miles) and exchange information via digital data links, with ground-based, sea-based and airborne commanders.

Asked if this was about managing Turkey’s airspace with more caution than Ankara has shown in the past, Stoltenberg said: “This will give us a better situational awareness as we are looking for more transparency and predictability and that will contribute to stabilising the situation in the region and also calm tensions."—Reuters

KIEV/MOSCOW — Ukraine and Russia appear all but certain to take their dispute over a $3 billion Eurobond to court after Ukraine said it would not re-pay the bond when it matures on 20 December in view of the volatile situation in the region.

Russian Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak said Ukraine’s decision was not a default and that Kiev was geared to fight the issue in court.

A moratorium on repayments would be in place “until the acceptance of our restructuring proposals or the adoption of the relevant court decision... We are prepared for court action from the Russian side,” he said.

The finance ministry in Kiev said it was still committed to negotiating a restructuring agreement in good faith with Russia, but the Kremlin said the moratorium sent a clear message.

“This is the recognition of our default,” Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, told reporters on a conference call. “Effective-ly, there are only legal prospects for the Eurobond.”

“The Eurobond in question was issued by the government of former President Viktor Yanukovich just two months before he fled in the face of bloody street protests triggered by him seeking to halt Ukraine’s swing toward European integration in fav-our of closer economic ties with Russia.

After he fled, Russia annexed Ukraine’s Crimea in March 2014 and threw its backing behind a rebel-

Kiev has included the two-year bond which matures on 20 December in external commercial debt it is restructuring to shore up its war-torn economy.

But Russia, whose po-itical relations with Ukraine are at rock bottom, has re-fused to accept these terms, insisting the bond is an offi-cial country-to-country loan, not commercial debt.

Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk said on Friday, that the moratorium was not a de-fault but a restructuring agreement in good faith with Russia, but the Kremlin said the moratorium sent a clear message.

“This is the recogni-tion of their default,” Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, told reporters on a conference call. “Effective-ly, there are only legal prospects for the Eurobond.”

The Eurobond in ques-

Cuba’s Castro says US can do more to normalise relations

CASTRO also reiterated Cuba’s commitment to so-cialism and bemoaned US programmes aimed at under-mining the Cuban gov-ernment, such as support for dissidents.

“No one should expect that, in order to normalise relations with the United States, Cuba will renounce the principles and ideals for which several generations of Cubans have struggled throughout more than half a century,” Castro said.—Reuters

Obama told Yahoo News in an interview re-leased on Monday about the anniversary that he hopes to visit Cuba in 2016, but only if he is able to meet with political dissidents and if he can possibly “nudge the Cuban government in a new direction.”

“Human rights, Castro said, was one area “on which we have profound differences and about which we are having an exchange on the basis of respect and reciprocity.”

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Russian sees court fight after Ukraine ‘defaults’ on $3bn bond
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Katy Perry launching app to help upcoming singing talent

LONDON — Pop star Katy Perry is coming up with an app through which aspiring singers can get career advice from her.

The 31-year-old “Roar” hitmaker has titled the app “Katy Perry Pop” and it will allow users to create their “own pop star persona,” reported Mirror.

An animated version of Perry will be available to give advice to the users. According to the official description, the game lets players “feature in their own interactive journey from aspiring artist to pop stardom with Katy Perry in the fun and whimsical world of Katy Perry Pop.”

“Get discovered by Katy Perry and chart your course to music stardom by recording songs, making music videos, and performing for thousands of fans around the world,”

Users can also customise their pop star look with various outfits to choose from and can create their own music and music videos to further their career.—PTI

Marc Anthony to honour Bill Clinton

The American politician will receive the 2016 Global Humanitarian Award from Anthony’s The Maestro Cares Foundation at a gala in New York on 16 February, when Anthony will perform with his The Gozadera collaborators Gente de Zona, reported Billboard magazine.

“It’s a privilege to официally announce this year’s honourees and celebrate their tangible and meaningful contributions to our society,” a statement from Anthony reads.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to recognize their leadership and their commitment to help and empower disadvantaged children around the world.”

Anthony’s announcement comes two months after he showed his support for Clinton’s wife, US presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, by bringing her onstage at a gig in Florida in October.—PTI

Rekha to receive Yash Chopra Memorial Award

NEW DELHI — Veteran Bollywood actress Rekha is set to be honoured with the Yash Chopra Memorial Award in recognition of her talent and contribution to the film industry.

The award has been instituted by the TSR Foundation of T Subbarami Reddy in the memory of the producer-director, who died in 2012.

The Foundation annually honours a distinguished senior film personality for outstanding contribution to film industry with a Gold Medal and a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh. A jury consisting of Hema Malini, Jaya Prada, Simi Garewal, Boney Kapoor, Padmini Chopra and Reddy declared Rekha’s name for this edition of the award, a statement read.

Rekha, 61, who worked with Chopra in 1981 romance “Silsila”, will be given the honour on February 2 next year by the Governor of Maharashta at a glittering ceremony in Mumbai.

Previous recipients include Melody Queen Lata Mangeshkar and megastar Amitabh Bachchan.—PTI

‘Star Wars’ sales surge toward opening weekend record

LOS ANGELES — “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” hurtled toward $125 million in US and Canadian ticket sales on Friday and a potential record-breaking $225 million through Sunday, giving the long-awaited movie a shot at the biggest opening weekend of all time.

The projections from Walt Disney Co (DIS.N) late Friday indicated the film could eclipse the $208.8 million record set by dinosaur adventure film “Jurassic World” in June. Disney said theaters were adding showtimes to meet “unprecedented demand.”

Fans eager to see the first “Star Wars” movie in a decade came dressed as Stormtroopers or Jedi.

Ticket sales Thursday night and Friday surpassed previous records set by the final “Harry Potter” film in 2011.

The movie has opened in 44 countries outside North America, earning $72.7 million in total through Thursday.

At the White House, R2-D2 and two Stormtroopers surprised reporters with a quick appearance in the briefing room. First lady Michelle Obama hosted a screening for children of families that lost members to war.

The new “Star Wars” film is the seventh installment in the series created by George Lucas in 1977. Disney bought “Star Wars” producer Lucasfilm for $4 billion in 2012 and spent more than $200 million to produce “Force Awakens.”

The company’s shares dropped 3.8 percent on Friday, however, after BTIG analyst Rich Greenfield cut his rating on Disney to “sell” from “neutral.” Greenfield said the success of “Force Awakens” would not offset the impact of subscriber losses at ESPN.

Nomura Securities analyst Anthony DiClemente, who rates Disney a “buy,” said he was more confident after seeing the movie that it could become the top-grossing film of all time. The record is held by “Avatar” with $2.8 billion.

Critics lavished praise on “Force Awakens,” which features newcomers Daisy Ridley, John Boyega and Oscar Isaac alongside original stars Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher.

The movie scored a 95 percent positive rating on review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences awarded an “A” rating in polling by survey firm CinemaScore, Disney said.

—Reuters

Vanessa Hudgens launches lifestyle website

LOS ANGELES — Vanessa Hudgens has become the latest celebrity to launch her own lifestyle website. The former “High School Musical” star is joining the ranks of actresses such as her co-star Ashley Tisdale, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Shay Mitchell, who have all founded popular blogs, reported E!Online. Hudgens’ site, Astral & Opal, focuses on topics including beauty, music, fashion, and health.

“I love surfing the web but nothing ever stuck with me,” Hudgens wrote in her first letter posted to the site. “So, I thought it was time to create the site I needed in my life. As for me, I believe that life is as you make it. I want to feel good, look good and live a colorful life full of adventure. You are in the drivers seat, on an open road and only get one lifetime to make it count. We gotta live it to the fullest!”

Hudgens’ launch comes nearly three months after “Gossip Girl” star Blake Lively shut down her own lifestyle website, Preserve, after one year, confessing it did not fulfill the potential she hoped it would.—PTI

Entertainment 20 December 2015
London Santa says leap of faith is part of Christmas magic

LONDON — When Father Christmas is not at home with the reindeer preparing for his Christmas is not at home with the reindeer preparing for his Christmas with Syrian refugees, Father Christmas says.

John Field, 66, a former teacher turned actor, has taken on the role of Santa for the past 12 years. “I’m playing a part but it is one of the most truthful parts I can play,” he says.

“Being a Father Christmas you have to make an agreement, a non-written agreement with both the parent and the child to believe.”

Amid the excitement as Christmas approaches, Santa is often run off his feet and needs help sorting through all the letters he receives. Britain’s Royal Mail, which helps him process the wish-lists, says Lego, bikes and Play-Doh were the top three requests from children who wrote to Santa, with Peppa Pig in at number 10.

Santa’s job is not without its dangers, but after more than a decade of welcoming children, Santa says it’s rare for anyone to break into tears or to make it to the bathroom on time.

The rewards of the job, chief among them thank-you messages, more than outweigh any downsides.

Last year a girl made a poster with photos of her visits over the last seven years. “Father Christmas,” she wrote, “thank you for being there every year for me. You make Christmas.” — Reuters

Susan Sarandon spending Christmas with Syrian refugees

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood veteran Susan Sarandon is spending Christmas with Syrian refugees. The “Dead Man Walking” star travelled to the Greek Island to meet with refugees who are fleeing the war-torn country, but Sarandon, 69, said she also has a personal reason for the visit, reported People magazine.

“I have come to Lesbos and will stay through Christmas, to listen and learn the stories of refugees who are fleeing from war and persecution,” she said.

“I also came to honour my grandparents, who were immigrants. The international community must see what is happening around the world. It must realise the size of the problem and understand it. These people should stop being somebody else and must become the refugees that we must stand by.” — PTI

Chinese orchestra to stage two concerts in New York City

NEW YORK — To New Yorkers who may long for all the sorts of world-class music events, from Broadway shows to Radio City rockettes, traditional Chinese music might sound less familiar, even exotic.

This week, the China National Traditional Orchestra is to stage two performances of traditional Chinese instruments at the Apollo Theater, providing a chance for the Western ears to enjoy a repertoire of classical oriental music.

“The two shows have different highlights,” said Xi Qiang, chair of the orchestra.

The first concert — “Splendor of Folk Music” — selects seven orchestral works that are mostly based on ancient poems and prominently feature traditional Chinese instruments to showcase the diversity of the Chinese folk music. Xi said.

Meanwhile, the “Rediscover Chinese Music” programme employs an innovative storytelling technique, with the help of the lighting and sets, to lead audience into the story behind the classical music, he said. The ensemble will play the concert version of the programme at Carnegie Hall on Sunday as the equipment required for the production’s multimedia elements cannot be used in concert halls, he added.

On Wednesday, an event featuring a live “trailer” of the two programmes at the Princeton University drew more than a hundred from the university and local communities. At the event, musicians from the orchestra performed several popular pieces with traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as erhu (a two-stringed bowed musical instrument), pipa (a four-string lute), and xiao (Chinese wind instruments similar to clarinets and flutes).

“The four pieces are all very good. Such a good opportunity does not come along that often,” said Keith Lane, a local resident. He particularly mentioned the last piece played with yueqin (also called the moon guitar) accompanied with a narrative of an ancient poem. “That’s what I picked up on coz I can relate it to a lot of modern musics and the blues that I heard many years ago.”

“Music is music; it can take down language barriers. Through music, you can get what the musicians are trying to express,” he said, suggesting promoting the event on a larger scale so that “everybody can hear and understand the music.” The two programmes will be performed at Lincoln Center on Friday and Carnegie Hall on Sunday, respectively. “I will definitely consider going to the events,” Lane said. — Xinhuas

Two-year-old Elijah Pham presents his wishes to actor John Field, dressed as Santa Claus, at a Christmas grotto at the Wetland Centre in London, Britain, on 5 December. PHOTO: REUTERS

Myanmar International

(20-12-2015 07:00 am – 21-12-2015 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03 Am  News
07:26 Am  Gardener: Rose Plantation
07:33 Am Development Momentum Of Sittway
07:50 Am Philatelic Pleasure
08:03 Am News
08:26 Am Myanmar Outstanding Lady “Thin Zar Phyo”
08:39 Am Dhamma School
08:52 Am One of the Useful Purposes of Bamboo
09:03 Am News
09:26 Am Cruising To Precious Islands (Part-1)
10:03 Am News

Syndication

07:24 Pm My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake
07:45 Pm [Doctor] [Painter]
07:50 Pm Today Myanmar: Yangon Stock Exchange
08:03 Pm News
08:26 Pm Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part- 4)
08:53 Pm Myanmar Masterclass: Conceptual Art
10:00 Pm Myanmar Movie
10:26 Am A bike ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Ep-2)
10:44 Am Tigers, Lions and The Guardians
10:55 Am Cosplayer
11:00 Am – 03:00 Pm - Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
03:00 Pm – 07:00 Pm - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03 Pm News
07:24 Pm My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake
07:45 Pm [Doctor] [Painter]
07:50 Pm Today Myanmar: Yangon Stock Exchange
08:03 Pm News
08:26 Pm Bogalay Tint Aung: A Man of Versatility (Part- 4)
08:53 Pm Myanmar Masterclass: Conceptual Art
(09:00 Pm – 11:00 Pm - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm – 03:00 Am - Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am – 07:00 Pm - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmmaritv.com/schedule)
Tour organiser pulls races from 2017 calendar

PARIS — Tour de France organiser ASO is withdrawing its races from the International Cycling Union (UCI) calendar in 2017 because of a disagreement over the reform of the calendar and the selection of teams, it said on Friday.

ASO (Amaury Sport Organisation) said reform of the UCI’s World Tour means that the 2017 season would be a closed circuit whereas it wants a system based on “sporting criteria”, meaning no team can be guaranteed a spot on the Tour de France and other top events.

The calendar changes, approved by the UCI, mean teams would be handed three-year World Tour licences from 2017 — rather than the current one-year licences until 2016.

“Amaury Sport Organisation has informed this day Union Cycliste Internationale it has opted for the registration of its events on the Hors Classe calendar for season 2017,” ASO said in a statement.

“The UCI has actually recently adopted, from season 2017, a reform of the World Tour calendar characterised by a closed sport system. “More than ever, ASO remains committed to the European model and cannot compromise the values it represents: an open system giving first priority to the sporting criterion.”

Organisers cannot select more than 70 per cent of World Tour teams in a ‘Hors Classe’ race, or 15 teams in the usual 22-team lineup for the Tour de France, the most prestigious race in cycling.

It means that three World Tour teams will be omitted from the 2017 Tour lineup as the elite group usually features 18 teams.

There is no risk of the Tour and ASO’s other major races not taking place but they will do so outside the umbrella of cycling’s main calendar, which could lead to a potentially damaging split.

ASO owns the Tour de France, La Vuelta, the top-tier classics Paris-Roubaix and Liege-Bastogne-Liege and the one-week Paris-Nice and the Critérium du Dauphine.

In 2008, then defending Tour champion Alberto Contador could not enter the Tour de France because ASO had not invited his Astana team following the doping scandals they were involved in the previous year. Last year, 11 of the top-tier teams regrouped in a joint venture called VELON, seeking a bigger slice of the pie from organisers and a guaranteed three-year presence in the World Tour, which the UCI has now granted them.

ASO and the UCI were also at odds between 2005 and 2008 when Tour de France organisers refused, along with their counterparts at the Tour of Spain and Giro d’Italia, to be part of the UCI Pro Tour that later became the World Tour. ASO’s withdrawal is a massive blow for UCI president Brian Cookson as the governing body could lose its influence in top races.

The UCI, however, put on a brave face. — Reuters

Dutchman Hiddink returns to Chelsea as interim manager

LONDON — Sacked Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho will not be taking a sabbatical and remains proud of his two spells in charge at the west London club, a statement released by his sports management representatives said yesterday.

The 52-year-old Portuguese was fired by Chelsea just seven months after winning the Premier League title on Thursday following a dismal start to the campaign and a statement released by CAA Sports Management suggests he will be back in the dugout soon.

“He will not be taking a sabbatical, he isn’t tired, he doesn’t need it, he is very positive, and is already looking forward,” the statement said.

“Because of his love of football, you will see Jose at football grounds working and supporting friends. He will not be attending any high-profile games because he wants to discourage any speculation about his future.”

Despite his dismissal, Mourinho was said to be happy about his decision to return to a club where he has won three Premier League titles over two spells in charge. “Jose Mourinho is pleased that he returned to Chelsea Football Club because he was able to give the fans another Premier League title, which they had not won for many years,” the statement continued.

“He is immensely proud of his eight trophies at Chelsea (he also won one FA Cup, three League Cups and one Community Shield), and thanks the fans for all their support throughout his two spells at the club.”

“During his career, Jose has sometimes chosen to leave a club, but only at Chelsea has the club decided that he should leave.”

The statement concluded that Mourinho would continue to live in London but had no plans to comment on his “current situation for the foreseeable future.” — Reuters

Mourinho not ready to take sabbatical

LONDON — Dutch Guus Hiddink was named as Premier League champions Chelsea’s interim manager for a second time yesterday following the sacking of Jose Mourinho, the club said in a statement.

Hiddink, 69, had a caretaker spell in charge at Stamford Bridge in 2009 following the sacking of Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari and Chelsea won the FA Cup under his care. He will take charge until the end of the season. — Reuters

China Hockey Team secures first place at Men’s Asian Challenge

THE China Hockey Team secured first place after beating the Taiwan Team 12-2 at the final match of the 24th Men’s Asian Challenge. Myanmar placed third after winning against the Hong Kong Team 2-0.

The China Team also received the fair play award.

Myanmar has been hosting the tournament since 13 December at the Theinbyu Hockey Pitch in Yangon which also hosted the Asian U-18 Cup in 2009, the S.E.A Cup in 2011 and the 27th SEA Games in 2013.

Tu Yu-Chuan of the Taiwan Team received the player of the tournament award while the best goalkeeper award went to Kyaw Soe Hlaing from Myanmar and the best player award to Sun Tianjun of the China Team.

The Myanmar Hockey Team secured second place at the first Men’s Asian Challenge Cup in 2013.