Investigation Commission conducts second round of field trips to northern Rakhine State

Investigation Commission on Rakhine State led by Chairman Vice President U Myint Swe has begun its second field trip to Maungtaw yesterday morning, to investigate violent attacks that took place in October and November.

The aim of the commission’s second visit to the area is to investigate into the real causes of violent attacks in Maungtaw, to find means to prevent further attacks and to find out whether measures taken there during the incidents were in accordance with the law and in order to report its findings and recommendations to the President on time.

The commission led by the Vice President left Nay Pyi Taw for Sittway and proceeded to Zinpampaignya and Myothugyi Villages which experienced violent attacks.

First, the Vice President and commission met with residents of Zinpaingnya Village at the post-primary school and discussed about security and development of the village. The village was the place where about 15 people had come and beaten family members of U Nu Mamau before abducting his two sons, one was 18 years old and another was 12 years old, on 7 November 2016. The commission interviewed some residents and attended to their needs.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, who accompanied the commission, presented 99 bags of rice and 16 bags of chickpeas to residents through the village administrator. The Muslim village has a population of 8821 people of 920 households.

Then, the Vice President and the commission met with locals of Myothugyi Village at the post-primary school and talked about security, the socio-economic situation, trade and transportation difficulties and organizing religious events in freedom, before attending to their needs.

Members of the commission Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin and Daw Kyain Ngai Man met with Muslim women of the village at the school and asked them individually whether violence against women were committed during the incidents but the local women told the commission that there had not been any violence against women in their village and that there were only rumours of such things.

Afterwards, the Vice President and the commission members visited the scene of clashes between security forces on area clearance duty when about 20 violent attackers armed with knives and other weapons attacked the security forces. Later seven bodies of the attackers, a homemade gun and three of its bullets were seized on 10 October 2016. The village is resided mostly by Muslims and has a population of 8,879 from 1,240 households. Not a house was burnt down in the village and residents live peacefully.
PHILIPPINE ambassador H.E. Mr. Alex G. Chua, who had completed his tour of duty, called on Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U Win Myint at 2pm at Pyithu Hluttaw Building yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries, further strengthening of existing good relations between the two countries and promotion of cooperation.

Likewise, Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U Win Myint received Mr. Peter M. Manikas, Senior Associate and Regional Director of Asia programs of National Democratic Institute (NDI) at 3:00 pm on 6 January in Nay Pyi Taw. At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to providing assistance for strengthening the Hluttaw activities and for Hluttaw development tasks.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U T Khun Myat and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw Office. —Myanmar News Agency

UNION Minister for Defense Lt-Gen Sein Win received a delegation led by Chinese Military Attaché to Myanmar Senior Colonel Xiong Shaowei at 2 pm yesterday at the Ministry of Defence in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to cooperation between the two armed forces and providing advanced military technology assistance stability of territory of the two countries.

Also present were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and officials. —Myanmar News Agency

UNION Minister for Ethnic Affairs Daw Ni Win Khine received H.E. Mr. Khaled Mohamed Abdelrahman Abdelsalam, the ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Myanmar at 10 am yesterday at Ministry of Ethnic Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, the minister and the ambassador discussed matters relating to measures taken in regard to ethnic affairs, the progress of Union Peace Conference — 21st Century Panglong, and delicate handling of sensitive and subtle Rakhine State affairs. —Myanmar News Agency

ALL the bus lines plying in the city of Yangon will be abolished with effect from January 16, 2017, to be replaced with newly changed 58 bus lines, according to the Yangon Region Cabinet.

“Reduce the traffic jam facing presently in Yangon and to make bus lines systematically formed, the new arrangement was said to have been made,” said U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Cabinet’s Chief Minister in a press conference held at the Office of Yangon Region Cabinet yesterday.

He added, “Our government is changing into a new system. Starting from January 16, bus lines plying presently will be liquidated and substituted by new bus lines. Later, the system of public-owned bus lines in which the government itself will partially be stakeholders, will be changed.

There are 20 companies in all, which applied to the Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board to allow them to run in Yangon. It is learnt that by the end of 2017, public-owned bus lines that the Yangon Region government itself will invest their shares will be introduced.

It is said that the existing All Bus Line Control Committee controlling more than 300 bus lines will cease to exist as of January 16.

The said 58 bus lines which will commence their operations starting from January 16 will be supervised by Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board which will review the situations of the operations quarterly, it is said.

Under the new system, bus fare will be collected according to the phase of the journey ranging from K 100, K 200 & K300, and for the convenience of passengers signboards will be posted at bus stops. In addition, assistant helpers will be stationed at bus stops, it is learnt.

Daw Ni Lar Kyaw, minister for electricity, industry and transport, Yangon Region Cabinet said, “Now, there are many bus lines on the same route. So bus lines on the same routes will be combined into one. This had been made in consultation with experts and professionals.

To manage the system, arrangements are required to be submitted to the Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board starting from 7 January.

Naw Pan Thinzar Myo, minister for Kayin ethnic affairs said that Buses plying in the city will be made to run every five minutes and to be connected with bus lines coming from suburban areas.

Dyna and BM buses will be no longer allowed to ply, it is said.

Presently over 2000,000 people are depending on bus lines in Yangon where 6 million people are residing.

On February 7, 2016 the first-ever BRT buses were made to run in Yangon as a private-owned company for the convenience of the people. — Ko Moe
State Counsellor receives members of MISIS

State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the members of Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) led by MISIS’s President U Nyunt Maung Shein, Ambassador (Rtd) in the Ayeyarwady Hall, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Nay Pyi Taw) at 10:00 am on 6th January 2017. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin, Permanent Secretary U Kyaw Zeya and Directors-General from respective departments of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


AL Jazeera warns of fake news, pictures on Rakhine issue

AL JAZEERA warned about fake news about human rights abuses in Rakhine on social media, disclosing a man who sent fake news and photos to AL Jazeera.

The name of the man is Ro Nay San Lwin and he posted fake photos of human rights abuse in northern Rakhine on Twitter social media after the Human Rights Watch released satellite photos of burnt houses in northern Rakhine, said Leah Harding, the presenter of AL Jazeera, in Twitter In Chief#Rohingya Fake News on AJNews Grid program.

The program is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBiXhOsbMJc.

Ro Nay San Lwin has sent fabricated news and photos to a producer of Al Jazeera.

Many pictures have flowed into the AJ News Grid program and they had made the programme team very frustrated, she said.

Myanmar has been accused of human rights abuses due to pictures of an incident that happened in Nigeria five years ago, she said.

The program has warned other media and social media to be careful of news and pictures in northern Rakhine as there are many fake news and pictures online.

Ro Nay San Lwin also posted a fake picture on the social media and news that a child died due to forced vaccination in Rakhine State.

An Oversea community, which has received financial assistance from many donors, has been instigating conflicts in Myanmar, said the press release of the State Counsellor’s Office Information Committee. —Myanmar News Agency.

Eleven Media CEO, chief editor released on bail

TAMWAY Township Court granted bail for Chief Executive Officer Dr Than Tun Aung and Chief Editor U Wai Phyo of the Eleven Media, who have been sued by the Yangon Region Government, yesterday morning.

At today’s trial, U Moe Hein, one of the twelve witnesses presented by the plaintiff, was questioned by the judge and the two defendants were granted bail.

The defendants were denied bails for three times before being granted. —Zaw Gyi (Panitsa)
Flyover Art Projects under Myenigon, Kaba-Aye overpasses nearly finished

FLYOVER Art Projects which are being implemented under Yangon’s Myenigon and Kaba-Aye overpasses are almost finished, with plans to open to the public in December 2017, project implementers say.

With the aim of transforming the arterial roads into public parks, the project was initiated by the Yangon Region government with technical assistance of the French Embassy in Myanmar since the first week of November.

The Flyover Art Project is being implemented into three phases. The first phase is now 90 per cent complete, while the second and third stages of the project are 50 per cent finished, organizers said.

Similar art projects are planned under the Hledan Flyover, 8-mule Flyover, and Shwedgeondaing Flyover.

Thanks to the new scheme, the public can relax at a pleasant place decorated with artwork, which will be open 24 hours a day.

As part of a cleaning programme across the city, different types of recycling bins will be placed at those decorated public areas.—200

Third-party liability insurance compensation raised two times in 2016-2017 FY

MYANMA Insurance Dawei town has raised the compensation rate twofold for third-party liability in 2016-2017 financial year, it is learnt from Myanmar Insurance Dawei region office.

There are two types of third-party liability insurance: bodily injury liability covers costs and death compensation. In 2015-2016, Myanmar insurance paid Ks 500,000 in case of death and Ks 201,600 in case of injuries.

In 2015-2016, third-party liability insurance compensation raised two times in 2016-2017 financial year. The compensation for injuries has increased their compensation twofold in 2016-2017 financial year.

“The third-party insurance will be paid for registered motor vehicles only. As for the passengers, they will get the third-party insurance only when the vehicle they are taking must be registered, and the license needs to be valid,” said Daw Thundar Soe, an in charge of Myanmar Insurance Dawei region office.

This is double the amount offered at the moment. Beginning from 2016-2017 financial year, Myanmar Insurance pays Ks 1 million in case of death and Ks 20,000 up to Ks 800,000 for injuries. If the driver dies in an accident, his beneficiaries will be issued with the third-party insurance only if he is holding a valid driving license.

“Most of the people do not know they are entitled to get the compensation. So, the authorities need to promote the awareness of the third-party insurance when they issue the licenses alone with giving the awareness the traffic rules and regulations,” said Ko Kyaw Min Khant, a local from Dawei region.

The victims involved in traffic accidents can apply for the third-party insurance within one year after the accident having occurred. The applicant needs to bring the driver license, national ID, the household list, recommendation letters from the police station, the hospital and township administration they and apply for the compensation at the Myanmar insurance office. To claim death compensation requires a death certificate from a hospital.

In 2015-2016 financial year, there was only one person who applied for the third-party liability insurance. It is learnt from Myanmar Insurance Dawei region office.—Myitmyakha News Agency

Crime

Police rescue about 100 trafficked victims in 2016

POLICE exposed a total of 130 human trafficking cases in 2016, arresting 11 traffickers with 40 others still remaining to be at large, according to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division.

The authorities rescued 93 trafficked victims, who were sold out to work as forced labour or to enter into a forced marriage in neighbouring countries, between January and December last year.

Police failed to save over 200 victims of human trafficking last year, accelerating their investigation to rescue them in cooperation with relevant organisations.

Shan State remains to be an area with highest cases of trafficking in persons numbering 47, while Yangon was the next highest with 24 cases.

The majority of victims were sent to China, followed by Thailand and Malaysia. Most women victims were sold into forced marriages in China whereas men were made forced labours in Thailand, with the most of them being helpless women.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime in both developed and developing countries. Forced labour and sexual exploitation are serious international crimes.—200

Almost 70 million yaba pills sized nationwide in past 11 months of 2016

POLICE uncovered 8,117 drug trafficking cases over the past 11 months of last year across Myanmar, confiscating nearly 70 million yaba pills from the illegal drug dealers, according to the official figures released by the Myanmar Police Force.

From January to November, the authorities collected opium weighing over 616 kilos, heroin weighing over 544 kilos, 69,835 million yaba tablets, marijuana weighing 146,338 kilos, poppy oil weighing over 44 kilos, low-quality opium weighing 21,726 kilos and ICE weighing 2,369 kilos.

Over 471 kilos of brown opium, more than 340,000 diazepam tablets, 171 bottles of morphine, 0.46 litres of methadone, 700 bottles of fentanyl, and 11,800 kilos of sodium carbonate, 3,827 kilos of ammonium chloride, over 1,775 litres of sulphuric acid, 1,053 litres of phosphoric acid and other illegal chemical substances were also seized last year.

Police could arrest a total of 12,265 people including 10,770 men, 495 women relating to illegal drug trading in 2016.

In collaboration with relevant government departments and organisations, the Ministry of Home Affairs is exerting sustained efforts to reduce drug related crimes in the country and prevent the spread of stimulant substances among general public especially among students and young people through various programmes.—Than Oo (Laymyatna)

One dies and two seriously injured in car crash in Paung township

ONE man was killed and two others seriously injured when a motorbike collided with an oil browser vehicle on Yangon-Mawlamyine road, close to Yin Nyein (North) village, Paung township, Mon State, it is learnt from Yin Nyein police station.

The browser was en route to Thaton from Mawlamyine driven by Ye Myint with Thant Zaw Oo aboard crashed into the motorbike heading to Mawlamyine from Thaton driven by Pyayt Son, 28, with Phyo Wai Tun, 26, and Aung Myo Oo, 26, on board in the middle of the road.

“The motorbike got hooked with the car. Pyayt Son was pronounced dead at the scene while two others were taken to hospital for treatment. The driver of browser fled the scene. The police are still investigating the case,” said an official from Yin Nyein police station.

An oil browser vehicle crashed into the motorbike on Yangon-Mawlamyine road, Mon State.

The police opened a lawsuit against the both drivers under section 304(A)/338 of the Penal Code while searching for the driver of the browser who managed to escape from the scene.—Myitmyakha News Agency
Myanmar amethysts should be promoted in gems market

AMETHYSTS are one of the most popular gems used in jewellery, particularly the Dawna amethyst, which is primarily mined in Dawna Mountain ranges of Kayin State.

Although the amethysts are exported, local demand is low, making it difficult for Myanmar amethyst traders to earn a profit, said Ko Hay Win, a local amethyst seller.

“Foreign countries such as India, China and Saudi Arabia love to buy the amethysts which are mined in Kayin state. But the amethysts are rare in local markets because we don’t have demand. So we need to promote the amethysts in the local market,” he added.

The Dawna amethysts from Kayin State are sold at showrooms in Myawady town and Bagan Myothit. To stimulate demand from local market, amethyst showrooms need to be opened in all regions and states, the sellers said.—200

MAPCO to develop Mandalay Development Bank this year

MYANMAR Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO) plans to establish a new public bank called Mandalay Development Bank this year, its spokesperson said.

The new bank will be set up in Mandalay, one of largest commercial cities in the country. The corporation already demanded granting of land for the project from the Mandalay Region government.

MAPCO will start running the new bank with a capital of Ks20 billion, planning to invite shareholders of the members of the corporation to invest in the new business.

Shares of the new banking business will be sold to public. Plans are underway to open the branches of the bank if the new project will produce successful outcomes.

The MAPCO was formally formed in August, 2012 as the Public Corporation, to mobilize public savings and to foster broader investment in agriculture and agro-based industries of Myanmar.—200

Power Eleven Public Co to run 50 air-con buses in mid January

POWER Eleven Public Company is making arrangements to run buses on the No. 45 bus line on 15 January with 50 air-conditioned buses, it is learnt.

“We are ready to run our buses. Our minister asked that we begin to operate by 15 January. The cars have already been made to be in the smoothly running condition,” said Ko Tayote Lay, managing director of Power Eleven Public Company.

The buses were bought from the local market at a high price in order to make the 15 January deadline. The buses were then reconditioned. Also, the company will give priority to the public to buy shares at a price of Ks 0.1 million per share to enable the public to participate in the public company, Ko Tayote Lay said.

“If we import the buses from Korea, we can reduce the cost. But we would not be able to start the plan in time. So, we just bought the buses from the local market. We will run only between Insein- Danyingone and Sule, he added.

Currently, the No. 45 bus line is running between Insein- Danyingone and Sule with a fleet of 21 buses. A board of directors for Power Eleven Public Company was formed with seven members—Myitmakha News Agency

Maha Aung Myay Gems dealers’ market likely to raise its head in 2017

Maha Aung Myay Gems dealers’ market is likely to raise its head as Chinese merchants could possibly come to Mandalay to purchase gems after Chinese New Year, said Mandalay gems dealers.

The Chinese merchants who normally trade in the Mandalay gems market are currently back to China to participate in the New Year festival. But Mandalay gems market is expected to enjoy high demand once the merchants return, it is learnt.

Maha Aung Myay gems dealers’ market has been cool since 2014, according to the gems dealers’ market.

“The gems market is not stable yet. It is usual that the Chinese merchants come down to buy them,” said Ko Soe Lay, a gem dealer.

The market saw good demand from China and Thailand merchants in January, said Mandalay gems dealers.— Myitmakha News Agency

Myanmar’s pomelo to penetrate more international markets

MYANMAR Pomelo Producers and Exporters Association is exerting efforts to penetrate China and European Union market in 2017.

“Myanmar’s pomelo supply cannot meet the demand, even though there is demand from foreign countries. It is not pomelo season yet. We are gearing up to export pomelo to China in August and September. The export volume will depend on the production rate,” said U Win Shwe from the pomelo producers association.

“We will export the pomelo variety they prefer. Honey pomelo is mostly grown in Myanmar,” he added.

Over 12 tonnes of pomelo were exported to Singapore in fiscal year 2014-2015. There are over 3,000 acres of pomelo plantations in Myanmar, mostly in Mon State, but can also found in Kayin State and Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Mandalay regions, it is learnt.—Myitmakha News Agency
Nuclear, missile tests show ‘qualitative’ improvement in North Korea capabilities — US

WASHINGTON — The United States said on Thursday North Korea had demonstrated a “qualitative” improvement in its nuclear and missile capabilities after an unprecedented level of tests last year, showing the need to sustain pressure on Pyongyang to bring it back to disarmament negotiations.

US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a joint news conference after a meeting with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts that North Korea had conducted 24 missile tests in the past year, as well as two nuclear tests, and learned from each one.

“Every so-called failure is progress because they apply what they have learned to their technology and to the next test. And in our assessment, we have a qualitative improvement in their capabilities in the past year as a result of this unprecedented level of activity,” he said.

“With every passing day the threat does get more acute,” Blinken said, referring to comments by North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong Un, on Sunday that his country was close to test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) of a kind that could someday hit the United States.

Blinken said it was vital for the United States, Japan, South Korea and other countries to boost cooperation to defend against the threat.

“At the same time, it’s absolutely vitally important that we exercise sustained, comprehensive pressure on North Korea to get it to stop these programmes, to come back to the negotiating table, and to engage in good faith on demobilisation,” Blinken said, referring to international sanctions.

US President-elect Donald Trump responded on Monday to Kim’s comments on an ICBM test by declaring in a tweet that “It won’t happen!”

Experts say preventing such a test is far easier said than done, and Trump gave no indication what new steps the US might take to roll back North Korea’s weapons programmes after he takes office on 20 January, something successive US administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have failed to do.

Former US officials and other experts say the United States essentially had two options when it came to trying to curb North Korea’s fast-expanding nuclear and missile programmes — negotiate or take military action.

Neither path offers certain success and the military option is fraught with huge dangers, especially for Japan and South Korea, given their close proximity to North Korea.

Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shinzuke Sugiymama said Tokyo was watching closely to see what kind of Asia policy Trump would follow, but did not expect major changes.

“If it is the same as we have it now? I doubt it. But basically, I don’t see the direction as changing in a significant way,” he told the news conference, adding that the US security treaties with Tokyo and Seoul were an important pillar of US policy.

Blinken said an effective sanctions campaign required “determination” and “patience.” “I believe that as long as we sustain it and build on it, it will have an effect,” he said.

In another tweet on Monday, Trump said North Korea’s neighbour and only ally, China, was not helping to contain Pyongyang — despite Beijing’s support for successive rounds of UN sanctions.

Blinken said Washington had seen positive signs from China in recent weeks in implementing new restrictions on coal imports from North Korea, but added, “That needs to be sustained ... to be carried forward.”

—Reuters

Duterte hopes Russia will become Philippines’ ally and protector

MANILA — President Rodrigo Duterte said on Friday that he hoped Moscow, a rival of the Philippines’ traditional ally the United States, would become his country’s ally and protector as he toured one of the two Russian warships on a four-day visit to Manila.

Duterte’s remarks came a day after Russia’s ambassador said his country was ready to supply the Philippines with sophisticated weapons and aims to become its close friend.

“We welcome our Russian friends. Anytime you want to dock here for anything, for play, for replenishment supplies or may be our ally to protect us,” said Duterte while shaking the hands of Rear Admiral Eduard Mikhailov, head of the Flotilla of the Russian Navy Pacific Fleet.

Duterte has thrown the future of Philippine-US relations into question with angry outbursts against the United States, a former colonial power, and some scaling back of military ties while taking steps to improve relationships with China and Russia.

He is due to go to Moscow in April. The visit by the Russian warships was the first official navy-to-navy contact between the two countries.

Last month, Duterte sent his foreign and defense ministers to Moscow to discuss arms deals after US senator said he would block the sale of 26,000 assault rifles to the Philippines due to concern about a rising death toll in a war on drugs launched by Duterte, Mikhailov said on Tuesday Russia wanted to hold maritime exercises with the Philippines to help combat terrorism and piracy.

—Reuters

Thai PM visits flood-battered south: six dead, transport disrupted

BANGKOK — Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha visited flood-affected parts of the south of the country on Friday where unseasonable downpours have killed six people, cut road and rail links and forced an airport to close.

Thailand’s wet season usually ends in late November and heavy rain and flooding is rare in January, which is high season for beach resorts in the south.

Twenty-six flights to and from the main airport in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat airport were cancelled on Friday because the runway was flooded, the Department of Airports said.

The floods began on 1 January and are due to the unseasonable heavy rain,” said an officer at the National Disaster Warning Centre who declined to be named as she is not authorised to speak to the media. —Reuters
China nibbles at Samsung share to take 50 per cent of India’s smartphone market

MUMBAI — Chinese brands took their largest ever slice of the $10-billion Indian smartphone market in late 2016, accounting for more than one in every two phones sold — a growing market share that ate into sales from top-selling Samsung Electronics.

Samsung, the single most popular smartphone brand in India, commanded a roughly 30 per cent market share just over a year ago. That slipped to 21 per cent in November, according to a tech research firm Counterpoint, the last month for which data is available.

Meanwhile — thanks to low cost, improved technology and an advertising blitz — Chinese brands like Oppo, Lenovo, One-Plus, Gionee and Xiaomi took a combined share of over 50 per cent, compared to just 19 per cent a year ago.

Chinese brands are offering quality that is at par with Samsung, at a better price,” said Manish Khatri, who owns two multi-brand smartphone outlets in Mumbai. “Of every 10 phones I sell, almost six to seven are now Chinese brands.”

Celebrity endorsements from Bollywood actors like Hritik Roshan and Ranveer Singh, along with huge sponsorship campaigns by brands such as Oppo and Gionee of the wildly popular Indian Premier League franchise have helped improve perception of Chinese brands — once derided for their low quality.

“China is a country like India, there are two religions — one is Bollywood and the second is cricket,” said Arvind R Vohra, Gionee’s India head, noting that both avenues have helped popularize its brand.

Chinese brand executives said innovative product features such as powerful selfie cameras with flash, quicker charging and longer-lasting batteries have also helped them thrive in India, one of the world’s biggest and fastest growing smartphone markets.

In the large and ultra-competitive $120 to $440 mid-market smartphone segment, Chinese vendors have more than doubled their market share to 68 per cent, while Samsung has lost 14 percentage points since November 2015, according to Counterpoint.

“In a country like India, Samsung was the biggest curse,” says Neil Shah of Counterpoint, adding Samsung cannot compete on price like their Chinese rivals, who are focused more on low-cost markets like China, India and Indonesia.

Shah said Chinese vendors’ access to low-cost components and their expertise in designing metal casing for cheap phones has let brands like Oppo, One-Plus and Lenovo offer better quality products than Samsung, which uses plastic for its cheapest models.

Adding to Samsung’s woes last year was the arrival of billionnaire Mukesh Ambani’s new telecom venture Jio, with heavily subsidised handsets to get customers on its 4G network.

Dyaneshwar Sarde, a 33-year-old Indian farmer who earlier used a Samsung device, said he wanted to buy a 4G smartphone “Chinese phones were comparatively expensive, so I ended up buying a Lenovo a friend recommended.”

India’s home-grown brands such as Micromax, Lava and Karbonn are feeling the heat even more, according to Counterpoint, with their total market share having dropped to less than 20 per cent from over 40 per cent last year.

—Reuters

South Korean Volkswagen executive gets jail term in emissions scandal fallout

SEOUL. — A South Korean court on Friday sentenced an executive of Volkswagen’s (VOWG.p.DE) local unit to one year and six months in prison for fabricating documents on emissions and noise-level tests to achieve certification for vehicles for import.

This is the latest fallout from Volkswagen’s emissions-test cheating scandal that last year resulted in a sales suspension in South Korea, a once fast-growing market for the German automaker.

“Volkswagen has by itself undermined its credibility as a global brand as a result of this crime which has caused grave social and economic damages …,” the Seoul Central District Court said in a statement, referring to the suspension.

The court statement only gave the surname of the executive, Yun, and said he was convicted of document fabrication, obstruction of work and the violation of an environment law.

In August, South Korea’s environment ministry suspended the sales of 80 models of Volkswagens, Audi and Bentley vehicles, and fined the group’s local unit 17.8 billion won ($14.91 million) for allegedly forging documents on emissions or noise-level tests.

—Reuter

Work begins to remove debris left from massive fire in coastal city

NIIGATA, (Japan) — A city on the Sea of Japan coast began Friday removing debris left behind on privately owned land from a massive fire that broke out last month destroying some 150 buildings and injuring 11 people.

The Itoigawa city government in Niigata Prefecture said it plans to finish cleaning up the debris by the end of March following the biggest fire in 20 years not caused by a natural disaster.

The blaze on 22 December destroyed about 150 houses in 40,000 square meters of the city. While most of the debris on the roads has been removed, workers still have to clear up the debris remaining on privately owned land.

In a rare step to lessen the burden on local residents, Environment Minister Koschi Yamamoto told a news conference in Tokyo the central government is coordinating with Niigata Prefecture and Itoigawa city to cover all the debris removal costs through public funds.

Usually, when a fire breaks out on private land, owners are left to fully shoulder the costs of removing debris.

The Environment Ministry said it is planning to cover 90 per cent of the costs to remove debris as it does following natural disasters, and leave the rest to the local governments.

On 30 December, disaster management minister Jun Matsuno said the government will provide up to 3 million yen (around $25,880) to each affected household, based on a law aimed at helping people affected by natural disasters to return to normal life. The aid is given partly because the blaze inflicted damage on a wide area due to strong wind.

The next day, Toshihiro Nikai, secretary general of ruling Liberal Democratic Party, told Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama and Itoigawa Mayor Toru Yone-da after visiting the city that he does not want to see the burden of debris removal being passed on to residents.

To speed up reconstruction efforts, the city was initially thinking of paying for most of the costs, possibly asking residents to shoulder up to 20 per cent.

Still, an official of the Cabinet Office said the fire is unlikely to be designated as a disaster of “extreme severity” because the amount of damage incurred by the fire failed to meet the government-set standard.

—Kyodo News

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—Kyodo News
O N the 4th of January last week, lively and teeming ceremonies marking the 69th anniversary of the Myanmar Independence Day were held across the nation. With a view to making our younger generations value the Independence that our forefathers achieved by sacrificing their lives, ceremonies are celebrated annually. We are used to spending this day enjoying ourselves by taking part in joyous competitions in traditional and various kinds of sports in wards and villages nationwide. Out of all specific days such as National Day, Union Day etc., held in the country, celebrating joyously the Independence Day is more meaningful for us to understand the true essence of Independence.

Among the events in the Independence Day celebrations, a competitive climbing for a prize on the greasy pole team work for people in every sector of our society to take lessons. A flag or banner is planted on the top of a greasy pole. Competitors in groups are to seize it. In doing so, the flag or banner can be won only if there is team work and habits of collective efforts. It is not easy to get it through a solo selfish effort. The group will win the flag only if a group of five persons work as a team and in unity. Winning the flag is like a symbol of unity for it is team work, team spirit and unity.

Every team sport needs team spirit or esprit de corps to gain success. As for participants taking part in a competitive climbing for a prize on the greasy pole team work for people in every sector of our society to take lessons. A flag or banner is planted on the top of a greasy pole. Competitors in groups are to seize it. In doing so, the flag or banner can be won only if there is team work and habits of collective efforts. It is not easy to get it through a solo selfish effort. The group will win the flag only if a group of five persons work as a team and in unity. Winning the flag is like a symbol of unity for it is team work, team spirit and unity.

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Amphetamine tablets worth about kyats 2000 lakhs in the River Naf

DURING the patrol in the river Naf in Maungtaw Township, security forces found a suspected boat rowing into the border area of the neighboring countries at about 4:30 am yesterday and chased it. Due to the pursuit of the suspected boat, those on board escaped, leaving the boat at the bank. The security forces searched it, finding a package wrapped with black-color polyethylene bags.

In the bag, WY brand amphetamine tablets worth Kyats 2000 lakhs—100000 or so were found. Drugs and the boat seized were handed over to authorities concerned, it was learnt. —Myanmar News Agency

D:

Five more who complete training on using weapons seized in Maungtaw Township

IT IS learnt that five more villagers who completed the training on using military weapons were seized in the villages of Darpai Sayar, Maunggyitaung and Gordo Thara (East).

Upon receipt of the news that trainer Mawlawi Adu Rawzaw gave a training course to 15 trainees including Mardural for nearly one month in the yard of Sunarli residing in Darpai Sayar starting from July first week of 2016, security forces examined the villagers by checking with the family list of households in the village in the morning of January 5. Sunarli avoided, failing to be examined by the authorities.

So, security forces searched Sunarli’s house at 8 am yesterday, arresting him at his house. Similarly, security forces blocked the village of Maunggyitaung at 6 am on January 6 to search the suspects, and Marmauk Noman was seized at his house, with Ismai, Marmauk Husan and Mamad Karsein arrested in Gordo Thara village at 7 am.

It is learnt that arrangements are being made to take legal action against them in accord with the law.—Myanmar News Agency

Seized package wrapped with black-color polyethylene bags. PHOTO: MNA

KIA/TNLA armed groups attack government troops operating area clearance by exploding remote-controlled mine

WHILE making area clearance operations in Kutkai Township, north eastern part of Shan State for the peace and stability in the area, KIA/TNLA armed group comprising of about 40, attacked the government troops in ward 6 of Kutkai at about 3 pm, by exploding a remote-controlled mine and firing with artilleries and firearms.

Due to the cross-fire from the government troops, the armed group retreated into the north at 4:15pm.

It is said that the government troops are making area clearance operation, seizing a body of the armed group, with some troops from the government force injured.—Myanmar News Agency

Armaments and ammunitions seized nearby the village of Monepaw

DURING the area clearance operation in Muse township at 2 pm on January 4, the government troops found 5 small palm-thatched-and-walled huts for couples and 5 fighting pits, seizing two M21 guns, one M 22 gun, two M 22 magazines and 57 bullets, one K-3 sniper rifles with binoculars, 3 magazines and 60 bullets, one bullet-proof helmet, one solar plate and one cycle battery, it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency

Three suspects accused of remote-controlled explosion under instructions of AA detained

THREE people suspected to have involved in a remote controlled detonation about three miles from Mayhllawn Village in Minbya on Yangon-Sittway Highway on 1 January were detained by authorities.

A combined team of the government troops and Myanmar Police Force conducted area clearance operations to expose the perpetrators and questioned 15 suspects who worked in an iron workshop in Yotayoke Village in Ponngayun Township on 3 January, and discovered that Naing Naing, Aung Aung and Yin Maung were suspected to have involved in the explosion.

Naing Naing was found to have masterminded the highway under instructions of the AA, while the two others assisted him. Action has been taken against them in accordance with the law and security forces are conducting area clearance operations in the region.

The AA has also been involved in violence attacks in northeastern Shan State together with the KIA and has now resort ed to violence acts in Rakhine State with the aim of undermining the stability in Rakhine State. —Myanmar News Agency

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for a documentary photo with Philippine ambassador at Byintnaung guest house. PHOTO: MNA

Philippine Ambassador calls on Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

DEFENSE Services Command-er-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Philippine ambassador H.E. Mr. Alex G. Chua, who had completed his tour of duty, at 10am on 6 January at Byintnaung guest house in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to strengthening of ASEAN community as well as to enhancing bilateral relations between the two armed forces and co-operation of mutual benefit.—Myanmar News Agency

Armed groups attack Tatmadaw camp operating area security

AN ARMED group comprising of about 30 attacked the government troops at the Monepaw Camp in Muse township in north eastern part of Shan State operating area security from 1000 meter or so, of the Monepaw camp with firearms and artilleries, at about 6:45 pm. Due to the cross-fire, the armed group stopped firing and retreated.

It is learnt that the government is making area clearance operations nearby the area.—Myanmar News Agency

Vehicle explodes in Laukkai

AN EXPLOSION on a Mark II parked in Kyelmin Street in Ward-1 in Laukkai, Shan State (North) forced firefighter to put out the resulting fire yesterday afternoon.

The vehicle and its driver, who left the vehicle and took a taxi, were seen on CCTV camera nearby and the authorities are taking measures to arrest the suspect.—Myanmar News Agency

Firefighters put out the fire of Mark II in Laukkai. PHOTO: MNA
Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Raul Castro Ruz, President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba
Mr President,

On the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar’s Independence, I offer you my warmest congratulations. Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mohammed VI King of Morocco

As the Republic of the Union of Myanmar celebrates Independence Day. It gives me great pleasure to send you my warmest congratulations and my best wishes for good health and happiness. I also wish your people further progress and prosperity.

I should like to take this opportunity to say how keen I am to continue working with you to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our countries and enhance our cooperation in all sectors of common interest, bilaterally as well as within the framework of the ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. This would serve our peoples’ interests and reinforce the spirit of South-South cooperation.

From Mr. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Mr President,

It is with pleasure that I extend to Your Excellency heartfelt congratulations on the anniversary of the Independence Day of Myanmar.

I take this opportunity to confirm the importance of promoting and developing the strong relations between our two friendly countries and peoples.

I wish you all the best of health and happiness and your people evermore progress and prosperity.

From Mr. Jacob Gedleyhiweka Zuma President of the Republic of South Africa

On the auspicious occasion of the celebration of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January 2017, the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa join me in conveying to Your Excellency, the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Warmest greetings and sincere congratulations.

May I take this opportunity to express the wish for Your Excellency’s good health and also reaffirm our desire to further enhance and consolidate the excellent bond of friendship that exists between our countries.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan President of the Republic of Turkey

Yours Excellency,

On behalf of my nation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate Your Excellency with my heartfelt wishes on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I sincerely believe that the friendly relations and cooperation existing in many fields between Turkey and Myanmar will develop further on the basis of the interests of our people by our mutual endeavours.

I would like to assure Your Excellency of Turkey’s continued support to your efforts to establish an inclusive democracy that embraces all segments of the nation in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Myanmar.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my best wishes for Your Excellency’s well-being and happiness as well as for the welfare and prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

Foreign Ministers send felicitations to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Ministers sent to State Counsellor, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January.

From Ms. Claudia Ruiz Massieu Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

Your Excellency,

In commemorating the anniversary of Myanmar’s National Holiday, I am pleased to send you a warm and sincere congratulations.

I am sure that through open dialogue and understanding we will continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship that will enrich our nations.

I take this opportunity to send a cordial greeting and reiterate to you, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar’s Independence, I offer you my warmest congratulations and reaffirm our resolve to continue developing the relations of friendship between our countries.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar

On the occasion of the day of Declaration of Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I am delighted to convey to Your Excellency my earnest congratulations, with my best wishes of ample health and well-being, and to your friendly nation, evermore development and prosperity, as we look forward to working together on enhancing and developing cooperation between our two friendly countries.

Kindly accept Your Excellency, my highest regard.

From Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Yours Excellency,

I would like to convey to Your Excellency my warm congratulations on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I reiterate our sincere desire to further develop the existing friendly relations and enhance our cooperation in every field to the mutual benefit of our nations.

Turkey will continue to support your efforts to establish an inclusive democracy in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Myanmar.

Please accept my best wishes for your health and happiness as well as for the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Receives Director of National Democratic Institute—Asia

U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and chairman of cooperation and coordination on the development of Hluttaw received Mr Peter M Manikas, director of the national democratic institute—Asia and party at 11 am yesterday at the guest room of the Office of the Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, in the Hluttaw Premises.

In the meeting, matters of NDI’s plans to cooperate in the development of the Hluttaw, matters of MoU to be signed between the Pyithu Hluttaw and NDI, conditions of the formation of JCC, cooperation with international organizations, cooperation between JCC and NDI were cordially discussed.

Present at the meeting were Daw Aye Aye Mu, member of the Assessment Commission Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases, and representatives from the Offices of Pyithu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw—Myanmar News Agency.

Food delivered to nearly 1,300 households in Maungtaw Township

Aids from the government were delivered to 1,279 households in 12 villages in Maungtaw Township yesterday.

The team led by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye delivered 320 bags of rice and 639 viss of peas to the villagers in villages in Zinpyaungya Village-tract, Hlaplokaung Village, Kyaukpyinseik Village, ThauOoLar Village, Thayet-ka Village and Einkya Village in Maungtaw Township.

Meanwhile, a mobile medical team comprising doctors and nurses from Kyainchaung Station Hospital, who were along with the union minister and party, also provided health care to the villagers during the trip. —Myanmar News Agency
Regeneron, Sanofi to appeal US judge’s ban on cholesterol drug sales

NEW YORK — Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc and Sanofi SA said on Thursday they would appeal the US District Court ruling which banned the two companies from selling their cholesterol drug, Praluent, on grounds of patent infringement.

A federal judge had earlier blocked Sanofi and Regeneron from selling the drug after Amgen Inc accused them of infringing its patents.

US District Judge Sue Robinson in Delaware had ordered that the ban not take effect for 30 days to give Sanofi and Regeneron time to appeal.

“It is our longstanding position that Amgen’s patent claims are invalid and that the best interests of patients will be greatly diserved by an injunction preventing access to Praluent,” Sanofi’s Executive Vice President Karen Linehan said in a statement.

Amgen was up about 4 per cent in after-hours trading, while Sanofi’s US shares were down 3.6 per cent. Regeneron was down 1.1 per cent before the company requested that trading be halted.

Amgen had sought the ban in an October 2014 lawsuit against Paris-based Sanofi and Tarrytown, New York-based Regeneron. It said Praluent, a drug intended to lower “bad” LDL cholesterol, is a protein known as PCSK9, infringed its patents related to the protein.

Thousands of Californ, California-based Amgen makes a rival drug called Repatha.

A jury found Amgen’s patents valid in March. The defendants said after the verdict that they planned to appeal to the US Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, which reviews patent disputes.

The companies could still decide to reach a settlement that would give Amgen royalties on Praluent sales.

The US Food and Drug Administration approved Praluent and Repatha to reduce bad cholesterol in 2015.

The drugs are more costly than other cholesterol drugs, with a list price topping $14,000 annually.

Sales of the expensive new drugs, seen as potential blockbusters, have been very slow to take off as health insurers and other payers have been reluctant to pay for them. Amgen reported just $40 million in Repatha sales in the third quarter.— Reuters

South Korea court convicts ex-Reckitt Benckiser unit chief in steriliser case

SEOUL — A South Korean court convicted on Friday a former head of the local unit of the British consumer goods maker Reckitt Benckiser (R.B.L.) over the sale of humidifier sterilisers linked to deadly lung injuries, sentencing him to seven years in prison, Yonhap news agency said.

The Seoul Central District Court found the former executive, Shin Hyun-woo, guilty of criminal negligence for failing to inspect the safety of the product and allowing its sale, Yonhap reported.

In May last year, the current head of the company’s South Korean unit apologised and accepted responsibility.

The South Korean government said in 2015 that 92 people were believed to have died from causes related to humidifier steriliser products, not all of them made by the Reckitt Benckiser unit.— Reuters

A protester poses with a sample bottle during a demonstration ahead of Reckitt Benckiser’s annual general meeting, over claims that a sterilising hygiene product made by the company has led to deaths in South Korea, in London, Britain on 5 May 2016. Photo: Reuters
Leader of 2004 Haitian coup extradited to US on drug rap

PORT-AU-PRINCE — A Haitian politician and former coup leader was arrested and extradited on Thursday to the United States, where he is wanted for alleged drug trafficking and money laundering, authorities said.

Guy Philippe, who led a coup that drove Jean-Bertrand Aristide from the presidency in 2004, had been due to take up his seat in the Senate on Monday, which could have afforded him immunity from some criminal proceedings.

Jory Margelus, head of the anti-drug unit in the Caribbean nation, said Philippe was arrested by police acting on an international warrant for drug trafficking.

Philippe, who was elected senator from the southwestern Grand Anse region on 20 November, was picked up after giving a radio interview in Petionville, near the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Garry Desrosiers, spokesman for the Haitian national police, said that while agents from the US Drug Enforcement Administration did not participate in the operation, they were at the police station where Philippe was taken.

Philippe was later put on a plane in Port-au-Prince and extradited to the United States, a Haitian official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Philippe was suspected in 2015 of involvement in an attack on a police head-quarters in the southern city of Les Cayes in which at least six people were killed.

Haitian officials issued a warrant for Philippe’s arrest over the incident, but his lawyers said it was invalid because he was a candidate in the November election.—Reuters

Merkel’s conservatives gain support despite Berlin attack — poll

BERLIN — Support for Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative bloc is up despite the Christmas market attack in Berlin that killed 12 people, and most Germans are not worried about terrorism, an opinion poll showed on Friday.

Merkel’s conservative “Union” alliance of her Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) rose 2 percentage points from a month ago to 37 per cent, the survey by pollster Infratest dimap for broadcaster ARD showed.

The poll of 1,505 voters was conducted from 2 January to 4 January. The Berlin attack, in which a rejected asylum-seeker from Tunisia drove a truck into a Christmas market, took place on 19 December.

Merkel and her broad grand coalition, slipped 2 points to 20 per cent. The anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained 2 points from a month ago to 15 per cent, the poll showed.

Merkel’s government has proposed new security measures in response to the Berlin truck attack claimed by Islamic State, triggering fierce debate in an election year in which the chancellor, 62, is seeking a fourth term in office.

A separate Infratest dimap survey for ARD showed 73 per cent of Germans felt safe despite the Berlin attack. Aid supporters were an exception — two thirds of them did not feel safe.

Refugee policy will be the biggest issue for voters in September’s federal election, the poll showed.

Merkel’s conservatives have been bleaching support to the AfD over her open-door policies that allowed in Germany about 1.1 million refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere since mid-2015. The Bavarian CSU has long bristled at Merkel’s migrant stance and insisted on a limit of 200,000 refugees per year, which she rejects.—Reuters

Princess Diana letter about troubles on Harry sold at auction

LONDON — A collection of handwritten notes by the late Princess Diana, one of which reveals that her younger son Prince Harry was constantly in trouble at school, went under the hammer on Thursday, selling for well above target prices.

The six notes, sold at Cheffins auction house in Cambridge, were written to Cyril Dickman who served as chief steward of Buckingham Palace for over 50 years. Diana’s sons Princes William and Harry feature prominently.

One message dated 20 September 1984, five days after Harry’s birth, reads: “William adores his little brother and spends the entire time swapping Harry with an endless supply of hugs and kisses, hardly letting the parents near!”...

“The reaction to one tiny person’s birth has totally overwhelmed us and I can hardly breathe for the mass of flowers that are arriving here!” That note sold for £3,200 pounds ($4,050), comfortably exceeding its estimate of 400 to 600 pounds.

Another, from October 1992, said both young princes “are well and enjoying boarding school a lot, although Harry is constantly in trouble”! It fetched 2,400 pounds against an estimate of 600 to 900 pounds.

Other items auctioned by Dickman’s family included letters, cards and photographs from other members of the royal family, including Prince Charles, Princess Margaret, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.—Reuters

Mexico gas price hike spurs looting, blockades as unrest spreads

MEXICO CITY — Mexicans angry over a double-digit hike in gasoline prices looted stores and blocked roads on Wednesday, prompting over 250 arrests amid escalating unrest over the rising cost of living in Latin America’s second biggest economy.

Twenty-three stores were looted and 27 blockades put up in Mexico City, Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said, days after the government raised gasoline costs by 14 to 20 per cent, outraging Mexicans already battling rising inflation and a weak currency.

“Mexicans’ association ANTAD urged federal and state authorities to intervene quickly, saying 79 stores had been sacked and 170 forcibly closed due to blockades.

Deputy interior Minister Rene Juarez said over 250 people had been arrested for vandalism and that federal authorities were working with security officials in Mexico City and the nearby states of Mexico and Hidalgo to address the unrest. “These acts are outside the law and have nothing to do with peaceful protest nor freedom of expression,” Juarez said in a press conference late on Wednesday.—Reuters

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Yangon Region Government Yangon City Development Committee Invitation for Bids

Date 3rd January 2017

Name of Project: Installation, Maintenance and Operation of Street Furniture Items in the City of Yangon.

1. YCDC invites bids from the interested bidders for the Installation, Maintenance and Operation of Street Furniture Items in the City of Yangon.
2. The interested bidders may obtain further information about this invitation for bids from the following office during office hours:
   Engineering Department (Road and Bridge), Yangon City Development Committee, City Hall, Yangon.
   Telephone no. 09-431 93314
3. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased upon submission of a written application to the above address and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ks 50000 (fifty thousand kyats only) to YCDC.
4. Bids shall be delivered in person to the above office on or before 15 hrs. on 17th February 2017. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Any bid submitted after the designated date and time will be rejected.
5. All Bids must be accompanied by bid security (tender guarantee) in the amount of Ks 300,000,000 or USD 250,000 issued by local bank as described in the bidding documents.
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Snow storm takes aim at US South, Southeast

WASHINGTON — A winter storm packing heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain is on track for the US South and Southeast where roads may become impassable and power outages are possible starting on Friday and into the weekend, forecasters said.

A large swath of the United States, from Louisiana northeast through the Appalachian Mountains and into southern Pennsylvania, is expected to get as much as 8 inches (20 cm) of snow with 1 inch (3 cm) of sleet, according to the National Weather Service.

“If you don’t have to travel, don’t travel,” said Matthew Grantham, a NWS meteorologist in Alabama, adding that conditions were expected to worsen after dark on Friday.

A weather warning was in effect until Saturday afternoon for most of North Carolina along with northwest South Carolina and northern Georgia where heavy snow, freezing temperatures and wind gusts of up to 25 miles per hour (40 kph) were expected.

“The heavy snow will make many roads impassable and may produce widespread power outages,” the weather service said.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for 79 counties and Alabama Governor Robert Bentley issued a state of emergency for his entire state.

The poor weather forced the postponement of the inauguration events that were scheduled over the weekend for North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, who was elected in November. — Reuters

Macron gains on Fillon, Le Pen in new French election poll

PARIS — Conservative candidate Francois Fillon’s lead in France’s presidential election race has narrowed according to an opinion poll showing independent Emmanuel Macron gaining on both the former prime minister and far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

In a series of scenarios, Fillon was seen winning up to 28 per cent of the first-round vote — down by between 7 and 8 points since the Elabe polling institute’s last poll, published just after he won the centre-right primary in November.

Le Pen was seen arr...
Streaming overtakes US digital music sales for first time: Nielsen

NEW YORK — Canadian rapper Drake helped music streaming services explode in 2016, rising by 76 per cent in the United States to overtake digital sales of music for the first time in history, Nielsen Music said on Thursday.

Americans used on-demand streaming platforms, such as Apple Music, Google Play, Spotify, Pandora and Amazon Music, to listen to 431 billion songs in 2016, led by hip hop and R&B artists like Drake, The Weeknd, Kanye West and Rihanna, Nielsen said in its 2016 US year-end report.

Some six songs, including New York rapper Desiigner’s “Panda” and Rihanna’s “Work,” surpassed 500 million total on demand streams in 2016, compared with just three that hit that mark in 2015.

The growth in streaming was more than enough to offset declines in other formats, particularly digital sales, leading to an overall 1.3 per cent increase in music consumption compared with 2015, the report said.

The music industry continues to grow at a healthy rate, and 2016 showed us that the landscape is evolving even more quickly than we have seen with other format shifts,” said David Bakula, senior vice president of industry insights at Nielsen Music.

Drake, 30, was far by the biggest beneficiary. The singer had the most digital song sales, the most streams — more than 5.4 billion — by a huge margin, and the most heavily consumed album of the year with “Views.”

But the “Hotline Bling” singer had competition from Britain’s Adele and rock star Prince.

Adele’s 2015 release “25” was the best-selling album of 2016 for the second straight calendar year with total sales of 1.7 million units. It was also the best-seller for 2015. Prince became the best-selling artist in terms of album sales, selling more than 2.2 million units following his death in April at age 57 of an accidental painkiller overdose.

The day after his demise, Prince sold over 1 million digital songs and more than 200,000 digital albums. His catalog was tightly controlled on streaming services.—Reuters

**Bollywood mourns veteran actor Om Puri’s sudden demise**

MUMBAI — Bollywood celebrities including Akshay Kumar, Priyanka Chopra, Karan Johar and Javed Akhtar expressed their shock over veteran actor Om Puri’s sudden demise, calling it a huge loss to Indian cinema.

The actor, who gave countless memorable performances in movies of diverse genres, died at his residence here Monday morning after a massive heart attack. He was 66.

Taking to social media, Puri’s former co-stars and friends mourned his death.

Akshay Kumar, who worked with Puri in films like “Aam: Men at Work”, “Hera Pheri”, “Awara Paagal Deewana” and “OMG Oh My God!”, tweeted, “Sad to hear about the passing away of the very talented Om Puri, my co-actor in many films..heartfelt condolences to the family.”

Director Karan Johar said in Puri’s death cinema had lost a brilliant artist.

“Solid actor...Solid filmmaker...immense talent... RIPOnPuri ...cinema has truly lost a brilliant artist,” Johar tweeted.

Actor Om Puri arrives for the British gala screening of ‘The Hundred-Foot Journey’ at the Curzon Mayfair in London on 3 September 2014. Photo: Reuters

Actor Anupam Kher, who also worked with Puri in many films, said the actor’s death came as a shock to him.

“Seeing him lying on his bed looking so calm can’t believe that one of our greatest actors #OmPuri is no more. Deeply saddened and shocked.”

Priyanka Chopra, posted, “The end of an era... The legacy lives on. RIP #OmPuri.”

Veteran scriptwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar said Puri was not only a great actor but also a brilliant human being.

“It’s really a great loss, wonderful person, great actor and with such an impressive body of work right from Satyajit Ray to any commercial Hindi film to films in US and Pakistan. He played all kind of roles.

“Om puri will be missed as a friend. It’s a bit shocking at the moment and I’m feeling a bit numb. In the moment all of us are taken aback.”

Mahesh Bhatt said, “Goodbye Om! A part of me goes with you today. How can I ever forget those passionate nights we spent together talking about cinema and life.”

Shoojit Sircar, tweeted, “RIP Om puri... interactions with you were one of the finest artists we are proud of...”

Madhur Bhandarkar, wrote, “Shocked to know that the immensely talented actor #OmPuri passed away. Big loss to our film industry.”

While, Ritupanesh Deshmukh, posted, “Shocked beyond words to learn that #OmPuri ji is no more. Will miss you sir.

Condolences to the family. RIP #Hugless.—PTI

Cast member Ryan Gosling poses at the premiere of ‘La La Land’ in Los Angeles, California US, on 6 December 2016. Photo: Reuters

**Tom Holland, Ruth Negga among BAFTA awards Rising Star nominees**

LONDON — Tom Holland, the latest actor to don the ‘Spider-Man’ suit, and ‘Loving’ actress Ruth Negga are among the nominees for this year’s EE Rising Star Award, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) said on Thursday.

The list of five nominees includes Spanish actress Laia Costa, known for “Victoria”, “The Witch” actress Anya Taylor-Joy and “Manchester by the Sea” actor Lucas Hedges.

Past winners, who are voted for by the public, include “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” actor John Boyega and Oscar nominee Tom Hardy. BAFTA will announce the full list of nominees for this year’s film awards, which will be held on 12 February, next week.—Reuters

**Escapism or realism? Awards season gets serious with Golden Globes**

LOS ANGELES — Independent films, diversity and the tussle between escapism or realism mark Hollywood’s 2017 awards season, which swings into high gear on Sunday with the Golden Globes ceremony.

The laid-back Globes dinner in Beverly Hills kicks off two months of red carpets and black tie events punctuated by Oscar nominations on 24 January and culminating in the Academy Awards ceremony on 26 February.

Musical “La La Land,” indie grief drama “Manchester by the Sea,” and black coming-of-age film “Moonlight” are leading the awards buzz in a season that has been dominated by small, intimate fare.

“I think ‘La La Land’ is the one to beat overall this year, and also it’s doing really well at the box office and that’s another mark,” said Pete Hammond, awards columnist for entertainment website Deadline.com.

“La La Land,” a romantic musical about a jazz pianist and an actress struggling in Hollywood, has a leading seven Golden Globe nods, including for best musical/comedy, stars Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, and writer-director Damien Chazelle.

The Golden Globes are unique in having separate categories for film dramas, and musicals or comedies, assuring “La La Land” several wins on Sunday, according to awards pundits.

The drama category, both at the Globes and elsewhere, appears to be a closer race between “Moonlight,” a low-budget movie about an impoverished black boy in Miami struggling with his sexual identity, and “Manchester by the Sea” a study of family grief starring Casey Affleck.

The crunch for awards voters may ultimately come down to the mood in Hollywood after a 2016 marked by celebrity deaths and the election as U.S. president of Donald Trump, who was opposed by much of the entertainment industry.

“I think it’s a good year not so much for escapism but for up-lift,” said Tim Gray, who covers awards for Hollywood trade publication Variety.

“I think a bigger movie, something that leaves you depressed, is going to have a tough job this year. I feel like people, especially in America, have felt beat-up all year, and you don’t want another film that’s gonna make you feel beat-up,” Gray added.—Reuters
Japanese railway commemorates 10th anniversary of cat stationmaster

WAKAYAMA, (Japan) — A Japanese railway operator held an event Thursday to commemorate the 10th anniversary of a cat’s appointment as a stationmaster, drawing more than 100 fans of the iconic mascot despite it having died more than a year ago.

Tama, a female calico cat, was credited with rescuing Wakayama Electric Railway Co. from financial difficulties, as the novelty of a cat stationmaster attracted tourists from around Japan and the world.

The railway company also unveiled its newest feline recruit, Yontama, during the event. The 8-month-old cat, also a female calico, will start “working” next week as an apprentice stationmaster.

The event was also attended by managers of other railway companies.

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World heat shatters records in 2016 in new sign of global warming

OSLO — Last year was the hottest on record by a wide margin, with temperatures creeping close to a ceiling set by almost 200 countries for limiting global warming, the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service said on Thursday.

The data are the first of fossil fuels, the EU body said.

Global surface temperatures in 2016 averaged 14.8 degrees Celsius (58.6°F), or 1.3°C (2.3°F) higher than estimated before the Industrial Revolution ushered in wide use of fossil fuels, the EU body said.

In 2015, almost 200 nations agreed at a summit in Paris to limit global warming to “well below” 2°C above pre-industrial times while pursuing efforts to hold the rise to 1.5°C as part of a sweeping effort aimed at curbing carbon emissions.

Rising heat is blamed for stoking wildfires, heat waves, droughts, floods and more powerful downpours that disrupt water and food supplies.

The UN’s World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the main authority on global temperatures, compiles data mainly from two US and one British dataset that will be published in coming weeks. It also uses input from Copernicus.

Tequila makers lift imperiled bat off the mat, US says

SALMON, (Idaho) — An unusual alliance of volunteer researchers and tequila makers has helped rescue a crucial American Southwest pollinator known as the lesser long-nosed bat from the brink of extinction, according to US wildlife managers who want the bat removed from the endangered and threatened species list.

The bat, known for feeding on nectar and playing a key role in the pollination of such plants as agaves in Mexico, was protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1988, when its population had dwindled to just 1,000 at 14 known roosts, government biologists said.

Habitat destruction threatened the bat with extinction, US wildlife managers said. For instance, its roosting areas in Mexico were destroyed as part of an eradication effort aimed at rabies-infected vampire bats, while development affected other roosting and feeding areas.

Today, the lesser long-nosed bat is estimated to number 200,000 at 75 roosts across a range stretching from southern Mexico to southern Arizona and New Mexico in search of maternity roosting sites.

The nocturnal creature’s foraging is driven by so-called nectar trail made up of flowering agaves, cacti and other blooming plants that form the bat’s diet.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting public comment through March on its proposal to delist the lesser long-nosed bat.

It was declared recovered by Mexico in 2015 and removed from that country’s endangered species list.

Volunteers, tequila makers lift imperiled bat off the mat, US says

Tequila makers in Mexico provided a valuable assist by making bat-friendly varieties of the liquor, the US Fish and Wildlife Service said. This raised the profile of the bat, which is struggling to survive and popularized the campaign to protect it and its habitat.

The tequilas are marketed in Mexico by producers who rely on agaves pollinated by lesser long-nosed bats.

In the United States, lesser long-nosed bats mostly roost and forage on agaves and cacti like saguaro and organ pipe cactus in public lands where measures have been adopted to limit human interference with roost sites like caves and abandoned mines, according to the wildlife agency.

Several of the bat populations reside year-round in southern Mexico but others migrate to that country’s northern tier and across the US border to southern Arizona and New Mexico in search of maternity roosting sites.

Citizen scientists in Arizona monitored the bat’s night-time use of hummingbird feeders, providing biologists with a better understanding of the elusive creature’s migratory and other habits, US wildlife managers said.

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Lesser long-nosed bat captured during a citizen science research project is pictured in southern Arizona in this undated handout photo obtained by Reuters on 5 January 2017. Photo: Reuters
Barcelona lose first leg of cup tie in fiery Bilbao affair

BARCELONA — King’s Cup holders Barcelona have a fight on their hands if they are to remain in the competition after losing a fiery first leg of their last-16 tie at Athletic Club 2-1 on Thursday despite playing the final 10 minutes with a two-man advantage.

Spain striker Aritz Aduriz headed Bilbao in front in the 25th minute and the veteran produced an audacious flick to tee up youngster Inaki Williams to volley in the second three minutes later. Talisman Lionel Messi pulled a full-strength Barca side back into the game with a free-kick in the 52nd minute which came off the underside of the bar and over the line.

Brazilian forward Neymar had a strong penalty appeal turned down in the first half and was the victim of more aggression after the break, leading to Raul Garcia and then Ander Iturralde being shown second yellow cards late in the game.

Rooed on by the famously passionate San Mames faithful, Athletic produced a resilient display to hold on for the win despite a barrage of late attempts but was never comfortable and over the line.

The second leg takes place next Wednesday at the Nou Camp. — Reuters

Guardiola plays down ‘early retirement’ comments

LONDON — Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has clarified comments that suggested he was making plans for an early retirement, with the Spaniard insisting he was not ready to quit management.

The 45-year-old had told NBC in an interview earlier this week that his current stint at City could be one of his last managerial assignments, a view he sought to elaborate on in his first season in the Eithad.

“Maybe it was inappropriate to say I’m starting to say goodbye to my career. I’m not thinking that I’m going to retire,” the Spaniard told reporters ahead of Friday’s FA Cup third-round clash against West Ham United.

“I said in the interview that I won’t be a trainer when I’m 60. But I’m 45. I’m not going to retire in two or three years. ‘I love my job and I’m in the perfect place to do my job especially here in England,” he added.

Guardiola also reiterated that goalkeeper Claudio Bravo can adapt to the intensity of the Premier League. — Reuters

Chelsea’s Mikel joins China gold rush with move to Tianjin

BEIJING — Nigeria midfielder John Obi Mikel has become the latest big name player to join the Chinese Super League gold rush after leaving Chelsea for Tianjin TEDA.

Mikel, who failed to make a single appearance for Antonio Conte’s side this season, had a medical in the port city some 130 kilometres from Beijing on Thursday and the Asian Football Confederation confirmed the deal on Friday.

The 29-year-old, who spent more than a decade at Stamford Bridge, was given a free transfer by the London club and will earn 140,000 pounds a week in China, according to local media reports. After joining Chelsea in 2006, Mikel was part of a squad that won a Champions League crown, two Premier League titles and four FA Cups.

Chinese clubs have made several high-profile signings over the last month with Argentinian striker Carlos Tevez moving to Shanghai Shenhua for a reported 84 million euros (70.7 million pounds).

Less than a week later, Brazilian midfielder Oscar joined local rivals Shanghai SIPG from Chelsea in a deal believed to be worth 60 million euros. — Reuters