Maungtaw commission continues investigation

The Investigation Commission on Maungtaw will probe some of the accusations included in the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said Vice-President U Myint Swe.

The remarks came at meeting 4/2017 of the Maungtaw Investigation Commission held at the Office of the President in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

“The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report on the situation of human rights in northern Rakhine State on 3rd February 2017. Among the facts and accusations included in the report, there may be something special to be investigated by our commission, hence the need for us to negotiate and consult,” the Vice President said.

In the report, the State Counsellor said that “where there is clear evidence of abuses and violations, the Government will take necessary measures.” After the approval of the commission’s meeting report (3/2017), U Zaw Myint Pe, Secretary of the investigation commission, clarified that “the commission report we have been compiling cleared some accusations and there have been some matters we should continue to investigate, having arranged to include the full text of the commission report.” In addition, Police Major General Zaw Win, a member of the commission, clarified the facts included in the report of OHCHR.

After discussions by the commission members, Vice-President U Myint Swe gave a concluding speech. — Myanmar News Agency

MOFA issues press release

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release yesterday regarding the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report titled “Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016” based on a report written by its delegation, which visited Bangladesh from 8 to 23 January. The following is the full text of the report.

Press Release
1. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report entitled “Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016” on 3 February 2017. The Government of Myanmar considers the allegations contained in the report very serious in nature and is also deeply concerned about the report. Thus, the Government is investigating these allegations through the investigation commission led by Vice-President U Myint Swe. As State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made it clear in her telephone conversation with OHCHR High Commissioner Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein on 3rd February, where there is clear evidence of abuses and violations, the Government will take necessary measures.

Background to the situation in Rakhine State
2. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar places high priority on addressing the situation in Rakhine State, and is striving to find a durable solution. The Government is taking a comprehensive approach with the aim of fostering peace and stability in the State. It has adopted short and long term programmes to promote understanding and trust. The Government has formed the Central Committee on Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of Rakhine State on 30th May 2016 with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as Chairperson. Four working committees have been set up to facilitate the work of the Central Committee.

4. The Government of Myanmar has also established the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Dr. Ko Ni, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, to support the Government’s efforts in addressing the issue comprehensively. Prior to issuing its final report in second half of 2017, the Commission will be submitting its interim report to the Government of Myanmar.

5. Even as constructive steps were being undertaken, three police border outposts in northern Rakhine State were attacked by armed men funded and inspired from abroad on 9 October 2016. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) noted in their recent report, the attack seriously threatens the prospects of stability and development in the State. In these circumstances, the Government is taking steps to ensure the safety and security of its people. The Myanmar security forces have been instructed to act within the parameters of rule of law in compliance with human rights refraining from use of excessive force. The Government will spare no effort to take legal action against any perpetrators if there is clear evidence of human rights abuses.

6. On 1 December 2016, an investigation commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe was formed to look into the causes of 9 October and 12-13 November attacks and their consequences.
JICA loans for maintenance of hydroelectric power plants discussed

THE possibility of borrowing 10.78 billion yen (Ks131.15 billion) from JICA for implementing an all-inclusive maintenance project for hydroelectric power plants sent from the President of the State was discussed at the morning session of 9th day meeting. 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 4th Regular Session by Hluttaw representatives yesterday morning.

“The agreement for getting the loan covers a 10-year suspension period and a 30-year payment period — 40 years in all, at the interest rate of 0.01 per cent. Bal-uchang No.1 hydroelectric power plant has been producing electric power the country has needed for over 24 years. And the machines of the plant have lasted for a long time. So frequent maintenance works are being made, just after stopping its operation. Substitutions of the machines are greatly needed for producing power. Upon the completion of maintenance, production will be able to be done to its fullest,” said Dr Khin Sithu of Lounk constituency.

U Sharye Shumaung of constituency 2 of Kayah State agreed that maintenance was necessary to achieve full production, which would benefit his constituency.

“Kayah State’s development is still low, as there is not yet peace and stability in the region. Although Kayah has been sending electric power across the nation through the Lawpita Great Grid Line for over 50 years, more than 50 per cent of Kayah State is living in the dark without electricity. Kayah State and the whole nation will develop with the availability of power to the extent it delivers sufficient megawatts. We — the locals from the mother region of Lawpita, support the discussion with heart-felt pleasure on behalf of the whole populace,” U Sharye Shumaung said.

But U Kyaw Ni Naing of constituency 11 of Shan State suggested the loan should be used to build new plants instead of maintaining the old ones.

“The present loan amounts to US $96.3125 million at the market exchange rate. So, instead of maintaining plants to operate, it should be assessed to build 100 mega watt new power plants,” U Kyaw Ni Naing said.

U Myo Win of constituency 8 of Mon State said it was important to upgrade the grid so that more electricity could be delivered to areas that are still without power.

“We support the project by policy. In implementing the project, it should be considered to upgrade the grid-lines that will lessen the wastage of power, and to extend the grid lines to the area where it did not reach yet, to balance the economic development,” U Myo Win said.

Similarly, U Khin Maung Thi of Loolin constituency said he was in support of the motion.

Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced matters on re-explanation and getting the approval from Hluttaw by the respective Union-level members concerning the foreign loan.

Afterward, Daw Nwe Nwe Aung, Law Drafting Cooperative committee and Daw Cho Cho Win of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Public Accountant cooperative committee read out the reports.

Dr Aung Khan, vice-chairman of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission, explained to the Hluttaw the activities of the commission during the ten month period from 1 March 2016 to 31 December 2016.

The representatives then expressed support for the special fund for the socio-economic development of Rakhine State. —Myanmar News Agency
State Counsellor accepts credentials from Dr. Stephan Paul Jost, WHO Representative to Myanmar

May Yu FM Radio programme refutes rumours of invented stories in Rakhine

In effect since 1 February 2017, regarding the part-time broadcast as a test May Yu FM Radio Programme that can be received within the area of Buthidaung, Maungtaw and Yathedaung townships in Rakhine State, the following statement has been released to the public:
1. The May Yu FM Radio Programme is broadcasting for local residents living in northern Rakhine State to give news and information to keep up with the times. The permit has never been granted to what so ever organization and who so ever individual to broadcast.
2. Conflicts have taken place recently in the region, causing rumours and invented stories to circulate. It is urged to release the news for the local people living in the region to know the true stories and to know the programmes being carried out by the government and the ministries.
3. May Yu FM is the programme implemented for current needs within the restricted area, and it is broadcast with a view to reaching all local people, in multiple languages —Rakhine, Myanmar and Bengali.

MOFA issues press release

>> FROM PAGE 1
The mandate of the Commission which inhere the guarantee of security and human rights for all the people of Rakhine, requires it to verify all allegations including those related to area clearance operations. The Commission was tasked to submit a report on 31 January 2017. However, the submission date has been extended so that a thorough report could be prepared after necessary investigations. Myanmar also facilitated the visits of Ambassadors, media and international experts including Ms. Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur of the situation of human rights in Myanmar, to the affected areas in Rakhine State. International aid organizations are resuming humanitarian aid to many affected areas in Rakhine.
7. Since the new Government took office, promotion and protection of human rights has been high on its agenda. The work of the National Investigation Commission with regard to all allegations will continue and action will be taken against the perpetrators of illegal acts and human rights violations. The Government of Myanmar stands firm in its commitment to national reconciliation and peace throughout the country.

Vice President U Myint Swe: Private sector development the key to boosting economy

STRONG encouragement on the development of the private sector, which can promote technology, human resource capability and job opportunities, is essential for pulling up the country’s economy, said Vice President U Myint Swe.

“Private sector development is crucial, it is the engine that powers the growth of the economy,” said U Myint Swe at the meeting of the Private Sector Development Committee held at the Ministry of Commerce.

“Everyone knows that the government is making concerted efforts to improve the private sector and amend policies to modernize and create a level playing field in the market economy,” the Vice President said.

“If we help the development of the private sector, we will get not only the improvement of nation’s economy, but also improvements for various other sectors. Which is why we highlight it,” the Vice President said at the meeting where Union Ministers, the Union Attorney General, Presidents from the Central Bank, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Bank Association and from the Myanmar Product Association attended.

As the private sector owns 90 per cent of the nation’s economy, the role of entrepreneurs, industrial experts and skilled labourers are important to improve trade and investment and from which it can get job opportunities, higher production and international market penetration”, he said. The government formed the Private Sector Development Committee in November 2016 to implement more effective development programmes for the private sector by taking the role of guiding and coordinating policies and programmes and to improve private-sector related laws and regulations. This would solve commercial conflicts and enhance and make more transparent policies and regulations related to the financial sector. In turn, this would stimulate private sector trade and investment, reform state-owned enterprises and promote public-private partnership activities, strengthen human capital, reduce poverty and develop the education sector.

The committee also cooperates with key persons from the public and private sector to develop a framework, with the help of Asia Development Bank, to implement a system to enhance and improve private sector development.

“Committee members must be in touch with the public to assess their difficulties and to recommend the amendment of laws if needed to change for the betterment of the public,” said the Vice President, adding that the committee would make efforts to meet the public twice a month at the UMCCI.

The meeting concluded with presentations from committee members for the activities related to their respective sectors.—Myanmar News Agency
Law Amending the Translation Commission Law
(2017 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No.1)
12th Waxying of Tabodwe 1378 ME
February 8, 2017

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has promulgated the law.

1/ The law shall be named “The Law Amending the Translation Commission Law.”
2/ Section 4 of the Translation Commission Law must be replaced as follows:

“4” The President of the State shall form the commission with the following persons.

(A) Union Attorney General Chairman
(B) two translators skilled in law translation nominated by Union Chief Justice
(C) two translators skilled in law translation nominated by Union Attorney General
(D) two advocates skilled in translating law
(E) two professors/lecturers from English Department, university and college (in service/retired)

The President of the State hereby signed under the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

(Sd) Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Workshop for Disaster Management Collaboration held

THE “Workshop for Disaster Management Collaboration Dialogue” was held jointly by Japan and Myanmar yesterday at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

Officials from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure & Tourism from Japan and officials from the Irrigation and Water Utilisation Management Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation attended at the meeting, where they discussed matters relating to “Dam Operation, Management and Improvement”.

Present at the workshop were 29 officials led by Dr. Hitotada Matsuki, Director of International Affairs, MLIT from Japan and 50 officials led by U Kyaw Myint Hlaung, Director-General of Irrigation and Water Utilisation Management Department.—Than Oo (Lemyethna)

Five cars crash on Yangon-Mawlamyine Road

FIVE cars crashed on the road between Yangon and Mawlamyine Tuesday evening, according to a police report.

The wreck happened on the road near Pawtawmu Village in Thaton Township in Mon State. No life-threatening injuries were reported, police say.

A truck heading to Mawlamyine from Yangon being driven by Tha Ha Tin Htui, 26, collided with an eight-wheeled vehicle being driven by Aung Myint Naing, 12, damaging a major part of body of the truck, which continued to crash into three other cars including an express car and two luxury cars.

Actions are being taken against the two drivers under Section 279 of the Penal Code.—Mymitaka News Agency

Correction

Please read “Our party was established on 1 June 2010” in “Inn National Development Party presents policy and programs” covered on page-9 of 6th February Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar.—Ed

Crime News

ICE, heroin, stimulant tablets seized

A local anti-drug squad discovered 200 stimulant tablets in a car driven by Aung Myint with Kyaw Zin Oo on board. Also found were 13.47 grams of heroin, 4,000 stimulant tablets and 48 grams of ICE in the vehicle at the corner of Bogyoke Aung San Street and Bo Aung Kyaw Street in Botataung Township, Yangon on Sunday.

Similarly, another anti-drug squad searched a house owned by Maung Ohn in Tin Htet village, Sin Taung village-tract in Pyin Taung on Tuesday. The police seized 12.5 kilos of raw opium, Ks5.86 lakh, two mobile phones and a motorcycle. Arrested were Maung Ohn, Ma Tha Nwe, Ma Ngwe Lar, Maung Win and Khin Thein Aye for possession of stimulant drugs.

Likewise, police from Dawei District searched a vehicle driven by Aung Paing Soe with Ma Le Le Ei and Tin Myo Aung on board on the Yay-Dawei road in Maung Macaung village in Dawei and found 2,000 stimulant tablets from Ma Le Le Ei. Police also discovered three mobile phones and Ks19,700 from three suspects.

Police have taken action against them under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Man found hanging from tree at coffee farm in Nawngkhio

A MAN was found hanging from a tree at a coffee farm in Bantbway Village in Nawngkhio Township in northern Shan State Tuesday evening, police reported.

Investigators say the man is Naing Soe, also known as Naing Kyi, a worker at the farm located in Ward-3 in the village.

The body was found by a worker who came to the farm to prepare soil for planting. Authorities are still investigating the case.—Mymitaka News Agency

Five cars crash on Yangon-Mawlamyine Road

Olea, Melia Yangon’s new restaurant, opens recently to bring the heart and soul of the Mediterranean to all of Yangon’s culinary followers. With a capacity for 60 people and located on Melia Yangon’s 1st floor, Olea features a country style dining room with different atmosphere.

Five cars crash on Yangon-Mawlamyine Road on Tuesday.

Photo: Mymitaka News Agency

Aung Myint and Kyaw Zin Oo.

Photo: MYPF
Watermelon price drops at 105-Mile Muse Trade Zone despite heavy influx of trucks

THE price of watermelons are on the decline at 105-Mile Muse Trade Zone in spite of the large inflow of trucks carrying fruit, according to the Muse trade zone.

After Chinese New Year, many trucks loaded with the fruits entered the Muse market. But the Chinese merchants did not come promptly, resulting in a decline in price, said a fruit depot owner at Muse trade zone. Additionally, rain on 2 February in Muse district further brought down the watermelon price, said the owners of fruit depots.

“Prior to the rain, the watermelon price was not that low but the price has since then has been on a downward trend,” said a local watermelon merchant. About 300 truckloads of fruit arrived at 105-Mile Muse Trade Zone on 2 February, with the watermelon price of 3.5yuan to 4.3yuan per kilo. On 3 February, over 350 truckloads of fruit entered the Muse market with the price about 3.5 to 4 yuan per kilo, it is learnt.—Myitmakha News Agency

Price of Myanmar eel dropped during New Year festival

MYANMAR’s eels did not fetch a good price during the Chinese New Year Festival, even though they have historically been sold at a high price in previous New Year festivities, according to eel market experts.

Merchants are forced to send the eels to the Chinese market because the eels cannot be preserved for a long time. China is the main buyer of Myanmar’s eels. During this year’s New Year festival, the eels were offered at a lower price than the actual-market price, it is learnt from the eel association.

Eels are traditional caught in Ayeyawady, Sagaing, Bago, Magwe, Yangon regions and Mon state and the China market is the main buyer of Myanmar’s eels.—Mon Mon

26 companies selected for Thilawa low-cost housing complex

A total of 26 companies have been preliminarily selected to develop the Thilawa low-cost housing complex in Thanyin Township, Yangon Region, according to the Urban and Housing Development Department under the Ministry of Construction.

The private companies have been invited to carry out phase 2 of the housing project, which includes the Kyansittha housing complex and the Thilawa Industrial low-cost housing project in Thanyin Township. Twenty six companies have been selected in the initial stage, it is learnt.

“We selected those companies who are in compliance with tender rules and regulations,” said an official from the Tender Evaluation and Selection Committee.

The Thilawa Industrial low-cost housing project will be conducted on 20 acres of land, which will consist of three five-storey buildings having four, six and eight-teraced houses. There will be a total of 1,720 rooms 20x20 feet width.

Those interested can purchase the units through the links with the Construction and Housing Development Bank if they cannot make the full payment.

The low-cost housing complexes are being developed in Dagon (Seikkan), Thanyin, Hlaingthaya and Mingaladon townships, it is learnt.—200

SACHA Inchi unable to reach export market due to lack of production

SACHA Inchi products will not reach the export market as there is no self-sufficiency even in the domestic market, according to the Myanmar Sacha Inchi Growers and Producers Association.

Sacha Inchi leaves can be used to make lappet, or tea leaf salad. The Incha peanut is also being sold as fried Incha nut. Sacha Inchi can bring health benefits for people suffering from diabetes and hypertension, it is learnt.

“There is a mismatch between sales and the demand of the Sacha Inchi. We are linking the growers with the buyers. A purified Sacha Inchi sells for Ks5,000 to Ks10,000 per kilo. However, it cannot be easily purchased. Thailand proposed to purchase a container loaded with value-added products of Sacha Inchi oil. But, there is only a small scale plantation,” said U Than Aung, the vice-chairperson of Myanmar Sacha Inchi Growers Association.

Seedlings of Sacha Inchi are mainly cultivated in the highland regions as a substitute for poppy. To penetrate more international markets, the growers of Sacha Inchi are needed to cultivate in a systematic way. This being so, they can seek a certificate stating that the Incha peanuts are free from pesticide residue, said U Toe Aung Myint, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Commerce.

Awareness campaigns will be conducted for the growers to expand the plantation of Sacha Inchi. The prevailing price of Sacha Inchi Oil is around Ks20,000 to 26,000 per liter. The seedlings of Sacha Inchi will be distributed free to those official departments concerned and civil service organisations, it is learnt.

There are around 5,000 acres of Sacha Inchi plantations across the country and the Sacha Inchi is mainly cultivated in Sagaing, Magwe and Bago regions and Shan State.—Myitmakha News agency
China halts construction at major Lotte project amid THAAD tension

SEOUL — South Korea’s Lotte Group said Chinese authorities have halted construction at a multi-billion dollar real estate project after a fire inspection, amid worries in Seoul that Beijing is retaliating against the country’s plans to host a US missile defence system.

Separately on Wednesday, Hyundai Motor said it may procure electric vehicle batteries from Chinese companies for a planned China model after South Korean battery makers failed to make a list of approved vendors last year.

Beijing is widely believed in South Korea to be discriminating against some of its companies and cancelling performances by Korean artists without explanation.

South Korean media have described a string of inspections at Lotte’s Chinese ventures as retaliation over the government’s decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system on land that is currently part of a golf course owned by Lotte, South Korea’s fifth-largest conglomerate.

Since December, Chinese authorities have conducted fire inspections, facility inspections or tax investigations at most of Lotte’s sites in China including some 120 retail stores, a source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The source was not authorized to discuss the matter with media and declined to be identified.

THAAD’s powerful radar is capable of penetrating Chinese territory, and Beijing has said THAAD threatens China’s own security and will do nothing to ease tension on the Korean peninsula.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang, asked if THAAD had an impact on the Lotte project, told reporters at a daily briefing on Wednesday that he had no understanding of the status of the specific project.

“On principle I can say that China welcomes foreign enterprises to invest. At the same time, relevant companies operating in China must abide by laws and regulations,” Lu said.

He said China’s opposition to the THAAD deployment was clear.

Lotte said construction on its project in the northeastern city of Shenyang was halted in December and that it was working to address a matter that needed to be remedied, adding that there had been no major disruptions so far as little construction takes place during the winter.

Lotte Group spokesman Song No-hyun declined to comment on media reports about the motives of Chinese authorities.

The proposed land swap deal with the South Korean government for the THAAD site, roughly 200 kilometres from Seoul, still needs to be approved by a board of a Lotte Trading Co unit.

Lotte’s Shenyang project, which covers 1.45 million square meters, includes a department store and movie theatre that are already open. It plans to construct residences and a theme park.

South Korea said last month it will look to improve communication and cooperation with China to resolve difficulties faced by South Korean companies there.

Hyundai said it was now considering a Chinese battery for a plug-in hybrid version of its Sonata sedan to be sold in China.

Last year, Beijing declined to award certification to South Korea’s LG Chem Ltd and Samsung SDI Co Ltd, both among the world’s largest electric vehicle battery makers, potentially excluding them from state subsidies and eroding their price competitiveness.

The South Korean automaker declined to comment on reports that its decision was due to tension with Beijing over THAAD.

“Considering various factors in Chinese market and price competitiveness, Hyundai Motor Company is also looking at cooperation with Chinese battery suppliers,” the company said in a statement sent to Reuters.—Reuters

Japanese firms joining Myanmar’s 1st economic zone on rise

YANGON — Japan’s Ryobi Holdings Co has opened a warehouse in Myanmar’s Thilawa special economic zone developed by a public-private joint venture between the two countries, joining a growing list of Japanese firms operating there.

The warehouse, operated by Ryobi Myanmar Distribution Services Co, sits on a 50,000-square-metre land plot in the SEZ on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar’s commercial capital.

Ryobi Holdings, based in Okayama, western Japan, is a bus and taxi operator diversifying into real estate, consumer goods and information technology.

The company got state approval in May last year to invest 2.97 billion yen ($26 million) in a warehousing and logistics service project in Thilawa, Myanmar’s first SEZ that has made considerable progress compared with two others. It has been developed by Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development Co, a joint venture formed by the governments and private consortiums of the two countries.

The Zone A part of the Thilawa SEZ became operational in September 2015 and half of the 78 companies that invested there as of 28 January this year are from Japan.

There are eight warehousing and logistics companies that have invested in the zone, including Ryobi.—Kyodo News

Thai king’s daughter given goodwill role with UN crime body

BANGKOK — The new Thai king’s daughter, Princess Bajraojit Yuthitha Mahidol, is to become a goodwill ambassador for the rule of law in Southeast Asia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said on Wednesday.

The princess would help to promote justice reform and had a special interest in prison issues, particularly around women in prison, the regional head of the UNODC told Reuters. She would be active in Thailand as well as the rest of Southeast Asia.

“She doesn’t see herself as above the law and is interested in helping out to advance justice reform,” UNODC regional representative Jeremy Douglas said.

The announcement of the appointment came a day after a UN human rights expert in Geneva criticised Thailand for the application of its own legal majesty law which sets out long jail sentences for anyone insulting the monarchy.

A military government has been in power in Thailand since a coup in 2014, and the foreign ministry defended the law and said it was not aimed at curbing freedom of expression.

The profile of the princess had been rising even before her father, King Maha Vajiralongkorn, took the throne in December. His oldest child, she is the daughter of his three wives.

The princess has served as Thailand’s ambassador to the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and as ambassador to Austria.—Reuters
JAPAN'S Abe hopes promises on jobs, defence will temper Trump's tone on trade

TOKYO/WASHINGTON — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe heads to Washington on Thursday hoping promises to help create US jobs and bolster Japan’s military will persuade US President Donald Trump to turn down the heat on trade and currency and stand by the decades-old alliance.

Japanese officials have been soothing security assurances from Defence Secretary Jim Mattis and others. But they worry Trump may go off script when the two leaders meet, first for a summit in Washington on Friday and then for a round of golf near the “Winter White House” in Florida.

Some in Tokyo even worry that Trump, a global businessman and author of “The Art of the Deal,” might eventually make some sort of pact with rival China that leaves Japan out in the cold.

“What we want to know is Mr Trump’s attitude towards China,” said Yukio Okamoto, a former Japanese diplomat with ties to the government. “If it becomes only an economic one, then a deal might be made at some point without the consideration of security issues in the region.”

Japanese politicians are also concerned that Abe might make hard-to-keep promises when the two play a round of golf that has echoes of one between Abe’s prime minister grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, and President Dwight Eisenhower in 1957.

US newspapers then dubbed the golf game a “triumph of diplomacy” between the former World War Two enemies. Three years later, Kishi had to resign because of a public furor over the US-Japan security pact that was signed at that time.

“A failure of the first official meeting would send a very, very damaging message to the world,” said a former Japanese diplomat familiar with government thinking.

During his election campaign, Trump complained that Tokyo and Seoul were not sharing enough of the cost of the US security umbrella.

Trump has also lumped Japan with China and Mexico as big contributors to the US trade deficit, targeted its auto trade as “unfair” and accused Tokyo of using monetary policy to devalue its currency to boost exports.

Addressing such concerns, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said on Wednesday that Tokyo’s share of America’s trade deficit had declined from historic highs and Japanese firms have invested in the US significantly.

Japan posted a trade surplus of 6.8 trillion yen with the United States last year, down 4.6 percent from 2015, but US-bound car shipments rose for a second straight year, ministry of finance data showed month.

Abe, who will be accompanied by Finance Minister Taro Aso and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, will bring a package of steps Tokyo says could create 700,000 US jobs through private-public investment in infrastructure such as high-speed trains, government sources say.

Speculation is also simmering that Japanese manufacturers like Toyota Motor Corp, whose president Akio Toyoda met Abe last week, could time announcements about investment — either already planned or new — to coincide with the summit.

Japanese display maker Sharp Corp may start building a $7 billion plant in the United States this year, a person with knowledge of the plan said on Wednesday.

Trump, who has abandoned the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact championed by his predecessor Barack Obama, wants to open talks on a bilateral free trade deal with Tokyo. He also wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) binding Mexico, the United States and Canada, the basis of many Japanese firms’ investment plans.

Abe prefers multilateral trade deals, but has left the door open to talks on a bilateral pact — despite officials’ misgivings that Tokyo would come under intense pressure to open further politically sensitive sectors such as agriculture, while gaining scant economic benefits.

“We know there will be harsh treatment for Japanese agriculture if we deal bilaterally with the United States,” one Japanese official said.

“I don’t think Mr Abe will say ‘no’ to the bilateral option but I don’t think he will say it is a good idea, either.”

Financial markets are keen to see whether Trump repeats his criticism of Japan for using monetary policy to weaken the yen to boost exports. Japanese sources have said the US leader will push back on any attempts to bind its hands on a hyper-easy monetary policy central to “Abenomics” growth prescriptions.

On the security front, Abe will be eager for Trump to repeat assurances that his administration will adhere to Washington’s commitment to defend disputed East China Sea islands under Japanese control but claimed also by China. The islands are called the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China.

Abe is likely to reassure Trump that Japan is willing to play a bigger role in defence and beef up its military capabilities. A pledge to boost defense spending, however, could be contentious at home in view of Japan’s huge public debt.

Some experts cautioned that Abe, such as a government-inspired jobs creation package, risks confirming Trump’s view that old-style Japan bashing works.

“It’s a very difficult line to walk to satisfy Trump at the same time not giving the impression that Japan is bashing back again,” said Jun Okumura, a former trade negotiator who is a visiting scholar at the Meiji Institute for Global Affairs.

Others, though, said Japan has little choice.

As the Japanese official put it, “We have no choice but to ride with the United States, whoever the president is.” — Reuters

China punishes former minister, deputy in graft probe

BEIJING — China’s ruling Communist Party on Wednesday said it was punishing a former civil affairs minister and an ex-deputy for dereliction of duty, after finding that systemic corruption problems plagued the ministry they ran.

Former minister Li Liguo and former vice minister Dou Yaqei did not do their jobs properly and were negligent, the party’s anti-graft watchdog said in a brief statement.

“The work unit they had jurisdiction over had a systemic corruption problem,” the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said, without giving details.

Both men are to receive what the party called administrative punishments, following an investigation announced last month.

Li will be allowed to stay in the party but will lose many of his rights for two years, while being kept “under watch”, the watchdog added.

Dou, who received a “serious” internal party warning, will retire early, it said.

Neither man could be reached for comment.

Li was in charge of the ministry, charged with overseeing tasks such as disaster relief, from 2010 until November 2016.

China’s President Xi Jinping has waged war on corruption for the last four years, saying it threatens the very survival of the Communist Party.

Scores of senior officials in the party, the government, the military and state-owned enterprises have been caught up in the campaign and punished, many with lengthy jail terms.

— Reuters

US to cooperate with South Korea, Australia over China, North Korea

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has affirmed close coordination with South Korea and Australia in dealing with terrorism, North Korea’s development of missiles and nuclear weapons, and China’s assertive territorial claims in the South and East China seas, the State Department said on Tuesday.

In separate telephone talks on Monday with South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se and Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Tillerson and his counterparts agreed to boost cooperation in curbing the Islamic State militant group, North Korea’s “illegal” nuclear and missile programmes, and tensions in the East and South China seas, the department said.

Tillerson conveyed to the ministers US President Donald Trump’s intent to strengthen alliances, military cooperation and economic partnerships with the two countries, it said.

He also expressed interest in early meetings with Yun and Bishop, after Tillerson’s former chief executive of Exxon Mobil Corp. who took office on 1 February, had separate telephone talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida the same day. — Kyodo News
Let us exert cooperative efforts for peace and stability in our country!

Khin Maung Oo

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tecurity and Rule of Law play an important role in a country. In the absence of these, people will live in anxiety and insecurity, leading to harming and threatening peace and stability of the country. Presently, reforms are being carried out for multi-sectoral development, and necessary steps are being taken to strengthen security and rule of law. During this period, people will surely worry due to the occurrence of certain recent events which seem to show weaknesses and gaps in the security arrangements within the city of Yangon. While performing constructive efforts for peace, stability and development of the nation, we should be forever vigilant and be ready to protect our country from terrorist attacks and criminal acts of destructive elements.

Generally speaking, Myanmar can be said to be moving in the positive direction, but there are still some with pessimistic views who want to turn back to the wrong side, and those wanting to spread rumors and cause destructive activities, in our society. It is natural that the good exists together with the evil in the world. Yet, we always need to be alert and be careful so that destructive elements could not create dangerous terrorist acts that will that will harm peace and security Yangon and in the country as a whole. The whole world is fighting against anarchism and terrorism, denouncing them strongly as inhumane acts. Myanmar does not belong to countries where terrorist attacks abound, but the country cannot be said to be free from terrorist attacks. Only sporadically, in some places there are still surprise attacks, robberies, and unexpected murders. Searches and arrests of those who commit crimes are being done around the clock.

Terrorist attacks occurred only in some places, but some are doing destructive acts, by spreading rumors and invented stories. They themselves and their supporters will be the ones who do not want to see Myanmar peaceful and successful in marching towards our shared goal of a Federal Democratic Union. All our union nationals want to live in peace and live our lives without fear or worry. Unless there is peace and stability, we cannot attend to matters for our personal better future. Otherwise, a certain society can lose capable human resources and deteriorate the socio-economic development. The drug addicts are the regular customers of the drug dealers, spending a lot of money in buying drugs. Then they become useless persons for families, communities and society concerned. When they do not have money to buy drugs, they do commit crime to get money for buying drugs. The drug dealers are clever for pushing drugs to get money. Concerning illegal drug sale, some school students, celebrities of stage and screen and the rich people are targeted or persuaded by the drug dealers. The reason is that the drug addicts are totally enslaved by the sensation and influence of drugs so they are unable to tell the law enforcement agencies about the source of drug dealers. Since they are addicted to drugs, they think that if they give information of the source of drug dealers to the law enforcement agents, they might not get the drugs anymore. If there are no drug dealers, the drug will not be available for the drug addicts. For this reason, the drug addicts do not give any information of the source of drug dealers to the law enforcement agency. The drug addicts cannot live without taking drugs every day. Under this circumstance, the source of illegal drug availability cannot be found in our country.

Nevertheless, this drug trade can be cracked down with the cooperation of public, INTERPOL and sensible persons in the world. Everyone can be made aware of the importance of protecting the youth and some adults from the peril of drug abuse in our society. Any person who does not want to see our country in danger is that those who involve in law enforcement agencies and judges in any society must be incorruptible in dealing with narcotic drug related cases. It is no doubt that rectitude in law enforcement agencies and judges with the cooperation of public can wipe out drugs and drug dealers in a certain society smoothly.
National Democratic Force Party presents policies and programmes

CHAIRMAN of National Democratic Force Party U Khin Maung Swe presented the policies, attitudes and programmes of his party on 8 February 2017, on Radio and TV programmes.

The full text of his presentation is given below:

Esteemed voters,

I am NDF chairman (U) Khin Maung Swe. Our NDF party exists for the country and the countrymen, serving as a bridge between the government and the people.

Therefore, we’ll never be reluctant to stand on the side of the people in all public affairs. Regardless of whichever government coming to power, we’ll make concerted effort where Hlutaw politics and public politics are concerned. Such being the case, NDF will behave like an opposition party that stands on the people’s side with patriotic spirit disregarding whoever is ruling the nation. This is our explicit commitment.

Now is the time when a new federal, democratic nation is being built. In this regard, much public strength is needed. Only with national unity and collective effort, will the future journey of the state be smooth. That’s why the strength of the people is very much required. Why? Without public (support), democracy cannot be achieved. Under the democratic system, diverse views must be accepted. But unity is to be sought within diverse outlooks. If there prevails unity, we can reach a democratic society.

Otherwise, the dream of establishing a democratic society will never come true as long as we are holding the negative views, taking the right to hold a different view as a pretext.

Voter public,

Myanmar’s major business has been agriculture-based in successive ages. Farmers have never been prosperous, though. Confiscation of land has rendered the farmers landless. Irrespective of whoever reigned the country, the farmers were exploited since the rule of monarchs. In the post independence period, the rice procurement board fixed a price to buy paddy from the farmers. The farmers exported their rice. In the socialist era, the then government underpaid the farmers and exported their rice. What about now? The farmers are still being underpaid and rice is being exported at a much higher price. So, the life of the farmers remain the same. The erratic weather, floods, higher prices of inputs, scarce labor force and fall in the price of rice force the farmers to lead a difficult life. However, they are always neglected by the successive regimes.

Now is the time when the government mandated by the people is reigning. Nevertheless, do the farmers get back their land confiscated by the (previous) government? No, not yet. If we really want a change, we’d like to encourage the government to handle the land issues first. Our party has proposed to the Hlutaw for launching a land census.

We submitted a proposal to redistribute land after confiscation of land by the governments concerned have done under the 1953 land confiscation law and 1963 peasants rights protection law. But the hlutawas failed to promulgate such laws.

Therefore, we’ll never be a government that leniently enables the farmers to have the right to own the land and do cultivation. This is our very daring promise, Believe us.

Esteemed voters,

After dealing with peasants’ affairs, we’d like to talk about the affairs of the workers.

There are millions of workers in the factories. We’d like to raise a question as to whether or not the workers are being paid decent salaries and/or wages, they are forced to overwork, they can bear the burden of high commodity prices, they are feeling safe and secure and they are provided social security benefits. The business community is saying that the new foreign investment law will work well. However, we are not seeing the big foreign investors yet.

So, both the entrepreneurs and labors are being faced with difficulty. Though they are going, they can reach their goals. Expansion of industrial zones requires a much higher labor force. Throughout the history of the workers, this era is witnessing the greatest labor force. Worksite injustice has become worse, creating workers’ strikes. These things are not new, for the successive regimes could not have solved the labor issues.

This being so, the workers are not feeling secure, suffering from exploitation. We, therefore, would like to call on the government and the hlutawas to expose the misdeeds of the previous administrations and make transparent changes.

Thank you.

(Unofficial Translation)
Defence Ministry reveals details of Aerospace Force’s snap check

MOSCOW — The snap combat readiness check of Russia’s Aerospace Force that kicked off on Tuesday will last through 9 February, Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin said on Wednesday.

The Aerospace Force’s sudden check started in the morning of 7 February by decision of Russian President and Supreme Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Putin.

“The check aims to assess the readiness of military command bodies and troops’ practical preparedness for accomplishing combat training tasks,” the deputy defence minister said at a meeting with foreign military attaches.

Units of the 1st Special Designation Air Defence and Anti-Ballistic Missile Defence Army, the 15th Special Designation Aerospace Force Army stationed in the Moscow air defence area, and also units of the command of long-range and military transport aviation are being placed on combat alert, the deputy defence minister said.

“Checks are underway in units and formations of the Aerospace Force to assess the readiness of the troops and weapons control system and compliance with the standards of placing them on heightened combat alert. Simultaneously, military command bodies and troops are being checked for their ability to accomplish assigned missions and hold planned measures,” the deputy defence minister said.

“The check is paying special attention to accomplishing the tasks of deploying air defence means and the readiness of air task forces to repel an aggression,” he added.

Units and formations of air defence divisions within the Moscow air defence zone are making marches for their combat deployment in new positioning areas, the deputy defence minister said.

“Radio-technical units are performing a maneuver and the re-deployment of mobile radars to unprepared positions. A check is being held to assess compliance with the standards for organizing combat duty and providing radar data to the command posts of aviation and antiaircraft missile troops. Special attention is being paid to detecting aerial targets flying at low altitudes,” he said.

The aircraft of Russia’s long-range and military transport aviation will perform flights at various altitudes to check the readiness of radar units for accomplishing assignments in new positioning areas, the deputy defence minister said.

“In addition, military transport planes will deliver units of antiaircraft missile troops to the Ashuluk practice range where they will hold verification fire against targets,” Fomin said.— TASS

Politics drives Italy, France bond yield gap with Germany to multi-year highs

LONDON — Political uncertainty in France and Italy widened the gap between their 10-year government bond yields and those of safe-haven Germany to multi-year highs on Wednesday.

Upcoming elections in France, Germany, the Netherlands and possibly Italy, plus the ongoing debt crisis in Greece, have made investors risk averse in recent sessions, particularly given that bond purchases by the European Central Bank are on a downward trajectory.

“This time the ECB is in a less strong position to deal with the problems,” said ING rates strategist Benjamin Schroeder. “Though they bought at a faster clip in January, the market knows that this will fall off.”

The ECB is set to reduce its bond purchases from April onwards from the current rate of 80 billion euros per month to 60 billion euros until the end of 2017.

Market speculation is that the central bank will taper purchases altogether soon after that, particularly given signs of improved growth and inflation in the eurozone and pressure from Germany.

ECB President Mario Draghi looked to play down these concerns this week, saying the eurozone’s economic recovery is picking up strength but still requires stimulus.

Uncertainty has been surrounding the single currency bloc in recent weeks. At the forefront are the anti-euro, far-right leader Marine Le Pen’s bid for the French presidency and the potential toppling of Chancellor Angela Merkel when Germans go to the polls in the autumn.

In addition, investors in cash-strapped Greece appear to be losing faith in a pledge from European officials five years ago that the country’s default would be one-off.

The gap between France’s 10-year government bond yield and the German 10-year bond yield — the benchmark for the region — rose to almost 79 basis points, the highest since November 2012. The fresh high came amid news that Japanese investors — one of France’s key investors — sold $23.2 billion yen (1.94 billion euros) in French bonds in December, logging their biggest net selling since June 2015. — Reuters
Turkish army and Syrian rebels close in on Islamic State town

ANKARA/BEIRUT — Syrian rebels supported by Turkish armed forces have seized control of strategically important hills around the Islamic State-controlled town of al-Bab, Turkey’s military said on Wednesday.

It said in a statement that 58 Islamic State militants were killed in air strikes, artillery fire and clashes. Two Turkish soldiers had been killed and 15 slightly wounded.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the operations had made important progress and the next target would be the Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto capital of Islamic State.

“The al-Bab operation must be completed immediately in the period ahead ... In recent days our special forces and the Free Syrian Army (rebels) have made serious progress,” Cavusoglu told a news conference in the capital Ankara.

The battle for al-Bab has raised the prospect of confrontation between the Turkish military and the Syrian army, which has pushed to within a few kilometres of the city’s southern outskirts.

A Syrian rebel official and a monitoring organisation said the advancing rebel and Turkish forces had captured the western outskirts of al-Bab, some 30 km (20 miles) south of the Turkish border.

“We shot a rocket at the Turkish forces,” the rebel official said.

A monitoring organisation said the Turkish forces and the Free Syrian Army rebel fighters had captured the western outskirts of al-Bab. A Turkish military reinforcements had been sent to the area about a week ago, the rebel added.

Al-Bab has been a major target of a Turkish offensive launched in northern Syria last August to drive Islamic State away from the border and prevent further gains by US-backed Kurdish militia that are also fighting the jihadist group.

Syrian government forces and allied militia have mounted their own rapid advance towards al-Bab in the last few weeks.

The city was encircled earlier this week when Syrian government forces cut the last way into the city. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based organisation that reports on the war, said the Turkish forces and their Free Syrian Army rebel allies had captured a hill on the western periphery of the city.

“We don’t know if Daesh (Islamic State) will be able to recover it, or if it is in a state of collapse,” Observatory Director Rami Abdurahman said.

In a video sent by the rebel official, three Syrian rebel fighters with the Sultan Murad faction said they were speaking from inside al-Bab. It was not possible to confirm the authenticity of the footage.

“I am in Bab now but not at the centre. We are on the outskirts. Thank God, we have reached this place,” said one of the rebels. Blasts were heard in the background.

The Observatory said at least six people had been killed and 12 more wounded in the latest shelling of al-Bab.

The observation says Turkish bombardment has killed scores of people since December. Turkey says it has been careful to avoid civilian casualties.

Turkish presidency sources said on Wednesday President Tayyip Erdogan and US President Donald Trump agreed in a phone call overnight to act jointly against Islamic State in al-Bab and Raqqa, another Syrian city held by IS.

The White House said in a statement that Trump spoke about the two countries’ “shared commitment to combating terrorism in all its forms” and welcomed Turkey’s contributions to the fight against Islamic State, but it gave no further details.

—Reuters

Rebel fighters fire their weapon during an offensive against Islamic State militants, on the outskirts of al-Bab in February 2017. Photo: REUTERS

Strike by Berlin airports’ staff forces flight cancellations, delays

BERLIN — German ground staff went on strike at Berlin’s two airports on Wednesday, forcing the cancellation of 137 flights and delaying many more.

Ground crew, represented by union Verdi, went on strike at Tegel and Schoenefeld airports at 0400 GMT and were due to resume work at 1000 GMT. They want a pay rise of roughly 10 per cent to 12 euros (£10.22) an hour.

Verdi says ground staff, whose roles include loading and unloading planes and directing them on the tarmac, are paid too little considering safety is paramount in the industry and the workload is increasing due to rising passenger numbers.

Passenger numbers to Tegel and Schoenefeld rose a combined 11 percent in 2016.

About 500 take-offs and landings were planned for Wednesday at Berlin’s airports, an airports spokesman said. He said no more specific figures were immediately available.

Ground crew were also on strike at smaller airports in Hamburg and Stuttgart.

“It is a pay level that for the amount of work we do simply isn’t enough,” Verdi negotiator, Enrico Rumeker, told Reuters TV at Tegel. “We’re due to negotiate for the fourth time on February 10 and if no offer is put forward then further strikes are very likely.”

Airlines that serve the German capital, including Lufthansa, easyJet, Air Berlin and Ryanair, had to cancel or delay flights.

Hotel rooms are hard to find as Berlin is hosting a trade fair this week, and easyJet said on its website that it was offering hotel accommodation in Cottbus, about 125 km (78 miles) from Berlin.—Reuters

Members of Germany’s mighty Verdi union take part in a warning strike by ground services, security checks and check-in staff at Berlin Tegel airport, Germany, on 8 February, 2017. Photo: REUTERS
US conducts 1st F-35 fighter jet training near Okinawa

NAHA, Japan — The US Marine Corps in Japan said on Wednesday that it had begun training with its newly arrived F-35 fighter jets near the southern island prefecture of Okinawa this week, although details were not disclosed for security reasons.

Ten F-35 fighter jets arrived in Japan in January, marking the first deployment of the cutting-edge stealth aircraft outside the United States. They have been deployed at the US Marine Corps’ Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture, western Japan.

The 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, which leads the US Marines in Japan, called the activity that began this week “regularly scheduled training.”

It also said in a press release that the fighters will “operate on a transient basis out of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and Kadena Air Base,” both in Okinawa.

The F-35B fighters, the marine variant of the F-35 plane, are capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings. They are equipped with high-performance radar that can detect ballistic missiles and are capable of escaping radar detection.

They are successors to the F/A-18 Hornet and AV-8 Harrier jets that are currently based at Iwakuni. A total of 16 F-35Bs are scheduled to be deployed at Iwakuni.—Kyodo News

Japanese government working to clear backlog of 435,000 asylum cases

BERLIN — Germany’s migration agency hopes to clear a backlog of 435,000 asylum cases within months, the organization’s new director said in an interview with Germany’s Handelsblatt newspaper on Wednesday.

Jutta Cordt, who took over as head of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) this month, told the newspaper her top priorities were to accelerate the processing of asylum applications, deepen integration, and step up deportations of those whose applications were rejected.

“We carried over 435,000 cases into the new year and we want to have dealt with those this spring,” the paper quoted Cordt as saying.

She told the paper the agency had received 40 million euros ($42.57 million) in additional funding in 2017 to work on repatriation processing and wanted to start that process sooner.

“The BAMF is virtually no prospect for a migrant to stay here, it makes sense to push for an early repatriation and to encourage that financially,” Cordt told the newspaper.

More than a million migrants from the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere have arrived in Germany since the beginning of 2015, prompting concerns about security and integration.

Polls show that migration will be a key issue in September’s national election.

The issue of repatriation, and better identification of refugees, has taken on new urgency after a spate of Islamist attacks carried out by failed asylum seekers, including Anis Amri, the 24-year-old Tunisian man who rammed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market in December, killing 12 people.

Amri, who was shot dead in December, lived in Germany under at least 14 different names, police have said.

Cordt told the Passauer Neue Presse newspaper in a separate interview that local authorities should be taking fingerprints from migrants to better track their identities and avoid multiple asylum applications.

Migrants are currently fingerprinted by police if they cross the German border without a valid passport, then again in a migrant intake centre and for a third time when they file an asylum application.

BAMF has said that it has now biometric data on all migrants, but it is not clear how many multiple applications for asylum benefits have been filed.—Reuters

Japans smoking ban exception for small bars, clubs, restaurants

TOKYO — The health ministry is considering allowing smoking in small bars, clubs and restaurants as exceptions to a contemplated smoking ban, ministry sources said on Wednesday.

The move comes after the restaurant industry voiced opposition to a comprehensive smoking ban being imposed ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

The Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry plans to submit to parliament during the current Diet session revisions to the Health Promotion Law to prevent secondhand smoke, and has worked out two ideas for possible exceptions to the planned nonsmoking rule.

One is to allow smoking in bars and nightclubs with floor space of no more than 30 square metres on the condition that a sign is displayed at the entrance indicating smoking is allowed inside and a ventilator is installed.

The other is to allow smoking inside certain types of small restaurants offering alcohol.

Smoking in restaurants serving customers of all ages would be prohibited under either idea, they said.

Japanese restaurant industry groups held a meeting in Tokyo in January and expressed opposition to a total ban, saying that would drive small operations into closing. They said Japan should aim to become a leading country in promoting separate smoking areas.—Kyodo News

Kenya arrests three over UK-linked voting forms scandal

NAIROBI — Kenyan investigators arrested the former chief executive of the electoral commission and two others in dawn raids on Wednesday, the latest twist of a scandal that has already led to Britain’s first conviction of a company for foreign bribery.

The scandal is one of several to engulf the administration of President Uhuru Kenyatta, who is under increasing pressure to curb endemic corruption before elections due in August.

On Wednesday, former election official James Oswago was charged in court with receiving bribes from Trevy Oyombra, the agent for British firm Smith and Ouzman Ltd, a printing firm that won contracts to print election material in past votes.

The men appeared in court with Hamida Ali, who covered her face with a golden veil stamped with the Chanel logo as prosecutors alleged she facilitated payments using her bank account. All three have denied any wrongdoing.

Prosecutors have accused the woman the accused used the word “chicken” to refer to cash, asking “have you eaten the chicken?” as code for receiving money.

“As long as Kenyans can see that some people have been taken to court over what has been popularly known as the Chickengate scandal, we believe that the current commission is going to be more much careful in its observance of the procurement laws,” said Julius Maruya, a deputy director at the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Oswago was charged in an interview that published in a separate story that the commission is doing something about corruption in Kenya,” he said.

Oswago and other officials were charged in 2014 in cases related to the procurement of voter identification devices and solar lanterns. Those two cases have not yet been concluded.

The government is also facing other corruption scandals, including allegations of missing funds in the Health Ministry and National Youth Service.

Adding to pressure on the president in the build up to the August vote, university lecturers and doctors in state hospitals have been on strike for weeks over pay and working conditions.—Reuters
Women pregnant with babies with cardiac ailments see ray of hope

Yukie Saburi

TOKYO — Advances in ultrasonic diagnostic technology have given a ray of hope to women pregnant with babies having serious cardiac ailments.

“My baby wouldn’t have been here if we had not gotten to know of her disease” before she was born, Nobuko Hiratsu, 29, of Kanagawa Prefecture, said, recalling her ordeal.

She was alerted to the possibility of a medical condition in December 2014 shortly after her pregnancy was confirmed when an obstetrician noticed a swelling of her baby’s body in a medical exam.

In the eighth month of pregnancy, the baby, named Mitsuki, was found to have a cardiac disease and the obstetrician recommended Hiratsu consult with the Kanagawa Children’s Medical Center in Yokohama near Tokyo.

The Kanagawa prefectural government-run center has been promoting fetal diagnoses of cardiac diseases.

After an intense echographic examination, a doctor at the Kanagawa center diagnosed severe aortic stenosis, or narrowing of the aortic valve resulting in obstruction of the flow of blood out from the heart. Mitsuki needed surgery as soon as she was born to prevent the possibility of death in a few days, the doctor said.

The center formed a team of cardiovascular surgeons and other doctors for the operation. Hiratsu prepared herself for the worst-case scenario.

Mitsuki was born at the center in June 2015 and immediately given surgery. She was released some four months later and now lives with the assistance of an oxygen inhaler.

The centre performed 276 cardiac surgeries on 78 babies within 24 hours of birth between 2004 and 2015, of whom 61 were found to have serious heart ailments through fetal diagnoses, said Toshihide Aso, head of the cardiovascular surgery department.

“Few other institutions have such a high rate of fetal diagnoses,” he said.

Echography shows the configuration of heart structures relatively clearly when fetuses become 18 weeks old or so, said Motoyoshi Kawatki, a doctor at the center. Serious ailments, such as the presence of one atrium rather than two, can be found more readily than other minor diseases, Kawatki added.

Kawatki and other doctors at the center now offer training programmes to other hospitals via the Internet in detecting cardiac ailments in fetuses because experience and skill are required. More than 300 people participate when the programs are held.

Also important is support for families whose babies are suddenly diagnosed with serious cardiac diseases. Mayu Okamoto, 6, a first-year elementary school student, was diagnosed with a cardiac ailment at the Kanagawa center before she was born and had a pacemaker installed in her heart when she was 1 year old.

The doctor “spent enough time to explain her condition and allowed me to ask questions until I could understand it,” Mayu’s mother Aiko, 42, said. Ayami Gonnokami, a nurse at the Kanagawa hospital, said a considerable number of pregnant women become hesitant to give birth when they are informed that their babies have cardiac ailments. “To people with anxieties, I talk about other babies who have grown despite heart diseases. I will continue to support them by offering accurate information so that they can make choices after understanding their situation,” Gonnokami said.—Kyodo News
Madonna granted permission to adopt twins from Malawi

LOS ANGELES — Halle Berry, Scarlett Johansson and Samuel L. Jackson are just some of the stars set to take the stage at the 89th annual Oscars later this month. Others added to the list of presenters include Chris Evans, Gael Garcia Bernal, Shirley MacLaine, Kate McKinnon, Hailee Steinfeld and “Fifty Shades” stars Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Last week, the Motion Picture Academy announced that last year’s acting winners would present at this year’s awards ceremony, suggesting they would continue the tradition of having the previous year’s winner present the Oscar to the next trophy recipient.

Berry won the best actress Oscar for her role in “Monster’s Ball” while Jackson earned a best supporting actor nomination for his role in “Pulp Fiction.”

MacLaine won a best actress Oscar for her role in “Terms of Endearment” and was nominated for her leading roles in “The Turning Point,” “Irma La Douce,” “The Apartment” and “Some Came Running.”

Steinfeld was nominated for best supporting actress for her role in “True Grit.”

Evans and Johansson have appeared together in various Marvel films and will co-star again in “Avengers: Infinity War.”

“These actors are why we love to go to the movies,” producer Michael De Luca and Jennifer Todd told in a statement announcing the latest group of presenters. “From blockbusters to art house films, these artists deliver every time and we’re thrilled to welcome them to the 89th Oscars stage.”

Keanu Reeves gets deadlier in ‘John Wick 2,’ talks ‘Bill & Ted’ sequel

LOS ANGELES — Keanu Reeves did not need much persuasion to reprise his role as a lethal retired hitman whose path to revenge sees him killing dozens more in the upcoming sequel “John Wick: Chapter 2.”

“I love John Wick,” the actor told Reuters ahead of the film’s opening in theaters on Friday. “We had great ideas, we opened up the world … making a damn good action movie.”

After the death of his puppy and the theft of his car led the hitman on a bloody rampage in 2014’s hit action thriller “John Wick,” the sequel dives into the character’s murky past.

It includes the emergence of a rival assassin and a nefarious Italian playboy who destroys Wick’s home, the only reminder of his once-happy life, and sets a bounty on Wick’s head, causing the hitman to go back underground.

“John Wick,” the slick 2014 action thriller from Lionsgate made for around $20 million, earned critical praise and marked a box office comeback for Reeves, 52, after a handful of low-performing films. For the second chapter, Reeves said the budget was higher, which allowed for expensive locations, such as the catacombs in Rome and Lincoln Center in Manhattan. A third chapter is already in discussion, the director Chad Stahelski said.

Reeves’ career in Hollywood spanned more than 30 years, with hits including 1989’s quirky time-travel comedy “Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure,” 1994’s action thriller “Speed” and the mind-bending “Matrix” sci-fi franchise. More recently, he was starred as a menacing motel owner in last year’s Hollywood thriller “Neon Demon” and as a doctor helping a girl battling anorexia in this year’s Sundance premiere “To The Bone.”

“My whole career, I’ve tried to do different kinds of genres and different scales of film,” the actor said. Reeves said plans for a sequel to “Bill and Ted,” a cult favorite among film lovers, is currently in the works. “Bill and Ted were supposed to change the world and write the song that saves the world, so the pressures of having to do that and not having succeeded yet — what that’s done to their relationships, their marriage their children and their lives, it’s a cool premise,” he said.
Obama kiteboards in Caribbean with billionaire Richard Branson

Former US president Barack Obama is trying some new and dangerous water sports that the Hawaii native had to miss out on for safety reasons while serving in the White House.

Obama, whose eight years as president ended last month when he was succeeded by Donald Trump, learned to kiteboard while vacationing last week on a Caribbean island owned by British billionaire and adventurer Sir Richard Branson, who published an account of their trip on Tuesday.

Photos and video on the website of Branson's Virgin Group show the former president, a life-long surfer, figure out the increasingly popular sport in which people ride a board while being pulled behind a kite. "Being the former president of America, there was lots of security around, but Barack was able to really relax and get into it," Branson wrote. Obama and his wife, Michelle, were spotted last week in the British Virgin Islands, and people posted photos on their social media. Branson owns 120-acre (48-hectare) Moskito Island, which is part of the archipelago.

Kiteboarding was chosen in 2012 as a sport for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, replacing windsurfing. The decision was criticized at the time because the sport can be lethal, and it was reversed within months. According to Branson, Obama studied the pastime for two days and flew a kite from the beach, "as if going back to being a child again," before heading out into the waves.

Branson was trying to learn a similar sport, foilboarding, which uses a modified board that rises a few feet above the water. He wrote that he challenged the ex-president over which of them would succeed first.

"Obama triumphed, he said, by kiteboarding for 100 metres (328 feet). "After all he has done for the world, I couldn't begrudge him his well-deserved win," Branson wrote.—Reuters

Orwell’s ‘1984’ back as bestseller amid focus on ‘alternative facts’

NEW YORK — George Orwell’s “1984” novel about a dystopian future under an authoritarian regime is back as a bestseller and being reprinted decades after it was written as readers grapple with Donald Trump administration’s defence of “alternative facts.”

The book, first published in 1949, features a devious “Big Brother” government that spies on its citizens and forces them into “doublethink,” or simultaneously accepting contradictory versions of the truth.

Sales spiked after a senior White House official, Kellyanne Conway, used the term “alternative facts” on NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday during a discussion about the size of the crowd at Trump’s inauguration.

Some commentators denounced her expression as “Orwellian.”

By Monday, the novel by the late British author had Amazon’s list of top 10 bestsellers, which is updated hourly. On Wednesday, it was No 1.

Responding to the renewed interest, its publisher ordered a 75,000-copy reprint this week, Signet Classics said in a statement. A company spokesman told CNN late on Tuesday that was more than would normally be reprinted.

The West Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has vowed to “resist” the president’s policies on immigration and other issues, said on Twitter it picked “1984” as the read of the month for its book club.

"We feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there,” said Schneider, said in a statement.

"Snollygoster," an unprincipled but shrewd person, has also returned to the dictionary after being dropped in 2003 because it had “fallen nearly completely from use,” according to the dictionary’s website.

Orwell originally used in the name-calling politics of 19th-century America, snollygoster was brought back into the mainstream due to conservative TV host Bill O’Reilly’s frequent use of recent years.—Reuters

If you ghost do you throw shade? US dictionary adds new words

NEW YORK — The next time someone throws shade at you for ghosting them so you can binge-watch a TV show or retreat to your safe space, you can let them know your behaviour has been recognized by the United States’ leading dictionary publisher.

Merriam—Webster on Tuesday added more than 1,000 new words and definitions, ranging from conversational to scientific, to its website, Merriam-webster.com, the dictionary’s most significant update in years, said Merriam-Webster spokeswoman Meghan Lungi.

The last time the dictionary updated its website and print edition was in 2014, when it added only 150 words, she said.

"Throwing shade,” for example, originated from black and Latino gay culture in the 1980s and has been popularized recently through social media. It means to express contempt through indirect or subtle insults.

"Ghosting,” meanwhile, is to abruptly cut off contact with another person, usually a former friend or romantic partner.

"Microaggression,” a discriminatory comment or action that subtly and sometimes unintentionally expresses prejudice toward a member of a marginalized group.

Other terms include “binge-watch,” meaning to view many or all episodes of a TV series in quick succession; “prosopagnosia,” an inability to recognize faces; “arancini,” fried rice balls; and “safe space,” a place intended to be free of bias, conflict and criticism.

"This is a significant addition of words … and it reflects both the breadth of English vocabulary and the speed with which that vocabulary changes,” the dictionary’s chief digital officer and publisher, Lisa Schneider, said in a statement.

"Snollygoster,” an unprincipled but shrewd person, has also returned to the dictionary after being dropped in 2003 because it had “fallen nearly completely from use,” according to the dictionary’s website.

Originaly used in the name-calling politics of 19th-century America, snollygoster was brought back into the mainstream due to conservative TV host Bill O’Reilly’s frequent use of recent years.—Reuters

Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(9-2-2017 07:00am ~ 10-2-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03 Am News
07:27 Am Bago: A City of Famous Historic Pagoda
07:48 Am Myanmar Weaving
08:03 Am Kayah Style
08:26 Am Discovering Tribes “MUUN (Episode - II)”
08:50 Am Kayah Style
09:03 Am News
09:27 Am Marketable Goods <Straw painting>
09:46 Am A Tourist Destination of Shan State
10:03 Am News
10:26 Am A Novitiation Ceremony in a Rural Township
10:52 Am Cultural Show: Theatrical Make Up

Prime Time
07:03 Pm News
07:27 Pm "Travelogue “Chaung Tha at its peak period”"
07:42 Pm Htan Taw Drums (Part-II) “Dobat”
08:03 Pm News
08:26 Pm The Rising Glory of Myanmar Arts
08:55 Pm Kid’s Home

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 01:00 Am) -Wednesday Repeat (07:00Am-11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

For Detailed Schedule – www.myanamaritv.com/schedule

If you ghost do you throw shade? US dictionary adds new words

NEW YORK — The next time someone throws shade at you for ghosting them so you can binge-watch a TV show or retreat to your safe space, you can let them know your behaviour has been recognized by the United States’ leading dictionary publisher.

Merriam—Webster on Tuesday added more than 1,000 new words and definitions, ranging from conversational to scien-
tific, to its website, Merriam-webster.com, the dictionary’s most significant update in years, said Merriam-Webster spokes-
woman Meghan Lungi.

The last time the dic-
tionary updated its web-
site and print edition was in 2014, when it added only 150 words, she said.

"Throwing shade,” for example, originated from black and Latino gay culture in the 1980s and has been popularized recently through social media. It means to express contempt through indirect or subtle insults.

"Ghosting,” meanwhile, is to abruptly cut off contact with another person, usually a former friend or romantic partner.

"Microaggression,” a discriminatory comment or action that subtly and sometimes unintentionally expresses prejudice toward a member of a marginalized group.

Other terms include “binge-watch,” meaning to view many or all episodes of a TV series in quick succession; “prosopagnosia,” an inability to recognize faces; “arancini,” fried rice balls; and “safe space,” a place intended to be free of bias, conflict and criticism.

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MRTV Programme Schedule (8-2-2017, Thursday)

06:00 Am • Panta by Bilty Region Missionary Sayadow
07:00 Am • Breakfast News
07:30 Am • NRC Programme (Mot)
08:30 Am • NHK Programme “Japan Job Encyloped-ia” (Animator)
09:30 Am • Beautiful ASEAN
3:30 Pm • ASEAN Spotlight
10:30 Am • MRTV Worker’s Programme
2:15 Pm • Documentary
3:15 Pm • News/ World Sport Info
4:30 Pm • Myanmar Series
5:15 Pm • 70th Anniversary Day Programme
5:35 Pm • Applied Financial Knowledge
6:15 Pm • Football Magazine
7:15 Pm • TV Drama Series
8:00 Pm • Myanmar Movie
11:45 Pm • 70th Anniversary Day Programme
12:35 Pm • TV Drama Series
1:05 Pm • Myanmar Video (Part-1)
2:00 Pm • Documentary
2:30 Pm • 70th Anniversary Day Programme
2:45 Pm • Teleplay
3:15 Pm • Weekly Sport Info
4:38 Pm • Myanmar Series
5:15 Pm • 70th Anniversary Day Programme
5:35 Pm • Applied Financial Knowledge
6:15 Pm • Football Magazine
7:15 Pm • TV Drama Series
8:00 Pm • Myanmar Movie
11:45 Pm • 70th Anniversary Day Programme
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Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)
Soccer-Suarez hero and villain as Barca reach Cup final

BARCELONA — Luis Suarez scored and was sent off as holders Barcelona reached a fourth successive King’s Cup final after drawing 1-1 with a resilient Atletico Madrid in an action-packed semi-final second leg on Tuesday.

Suarez was one of three players dismissed and will now miss the final after Barcelona edged through 3-2 on aggregate.

The Uruguayan tapped in from close range in the 43rd minute after an inspired run and shot from Lionel Messi to deliver a sucker punch to Atletico, who had dominated the first half at the Nou Camp but failed to take their chances. Kevin Gameiro blazed a penalty over the bar with 10 minutes remaining but the French striker still made for a tense finale by tapping in an Antoine Griezmann cross moments later.

Barca defender Sergi Roberto will also be suspended for the final after being sent off for a second booking in the second half and Atletico winger Yannick Carrasco was dismissed as well for a second yellow card. Suarez was then sent off in the 90th minute for an elbow on Atletico defender Luis Hernandez. Atletico had five minutes of stoppage time to snatch a winner and force extra time, but Barca withstood the pressure.

Barca, the 28-times winners, will meet either Alaves or Celta Vigo in the final in May, seeking a third successive Cup triumph under coach Luis Enrique. —Reuters

Boxers Wilder, Povetkin face-off in court after canceled fight

NEW YORK — Heavyweight boxing champion Deontay Wilder and Russian boxer Alexander Povetkin battled in court on Tuesday, at a trial over a title bout that was called off after the Russian tested positive for a banned substance.

The boxers sat on opposing sides of a Manhattan federal courtroom as jurors heard their attorneys give opening statements in a trial focused on whether Povetkin ingested meldonium after a World Anti-Doping Agency ban of the drug went into effect in January 2016.

That question has become key to dueling lawsuits the boxers have filed against each other over the championship match scheduled for 21 May in Moscow, which was called off after Povetkin tested positive on 27 April for meldonium. Judge Burstein, a lawyer for American Wilder and promoter DiBella Entertainment Inc, told jurors that positive urine test came after three negative ones earlier in April, which meant that Povetkin took meldonium after the drug went into effect in January 2016.

The Brazilian’s 18th-minute shot, which was deflected past keeper Koen Casteels by Wolfsburg’s Luiz Gustavo, was enough to beat the toothless Wolves, who did not register a shot on goal for 82 minutes.

Despite controlling possession, however, Bayern never hit top gear and failed to kill off the tie, with forward Robert Lewandowski looking desperately alone up front.

Bayern defender Mats Hummels should have done better when he was twice twitted with too much space in the box but headed wide both times. The hosts were almost punished late in the game when Yunos Malli and Daniel Didavi had a chance each with Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer keeping his cool to deny them from close range. Hamburg SV also booked a spot in the quarter-finals, beating Cologne 2-0 to underline their improving form.

Gideon Jung tapped the ball over the line after Cologne keeper Thomas Kessler palmed a shot into the 22-year-old’s path in the fourth minute. Hamburg, who are in the Bundesliga’s relegation playoff spot, hit the woodwork through Lukas Waldschmidt before Robby Wood made it 2-0 in the 76th after a powerful run. —Reuters

Spurs keen to put Liverpool’s title ambitions to bed — Kane

LONDON — Tottenham Hotspur are eager to land a fatal blow to Liverpool’s slim Premier League title hopes when the sides meet at Anfield on Saturday, striker Harry Kane has said.

Unbeaten in their last nine league games, second-placed Tottenham have emerged as the most likely contenders to halt Chelsea’s charge but will have to defy the odds as their London rivals hold a nine-point lead at the top of the table.

“It is an important game for us. We want to build the gap on Liverpool and if we beat them next week then we go seven points clear of them. That is what we want to try to do,” Kane told British media.

Liverpool’s bid for the title has collapsed in the recent weeks as a five-game winless run in the league has seen them drop down to fifth, 13 points behind Chelsea after 24 games.

“We want to catch Chelsea and it’s important that we stay as high up the table as possible. If we can build gaps over other teams behind us, that is the important thing. It is not down to us. We don’t know if Chelsea are catchable,” Kane said.

“All we can do is win our games. Hopefully they drop a few points here and there. We want to start building the gap from the others and push Chelsea all the way and see how they cope.” —Reuters