President attends Christmas gathering at Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker’s residence

A MYOTHA Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than welcomed President U Win Myint to a Christmas gathering at his residence in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, wife Daw Nant Kyin Kyi and family, welcomed President U Win Myint, former President U Htin Kyaw, Union Ministers, the Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, members of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union, and wife Daw Htay Yi, the Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw and his wife, the Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw and his wife, Union Ministers, the Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, members of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union, Deputy Ministers and their wives, the Deputy Attorney-General and his wife, departmental heads, bishops from Christian Churches, and invited guests. Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and family extended Christmas blessings on all the guests.

The President and invited guests enjoyed the Christmas meal and then took documentary photographs together.

During the Christmas gathering, bishops in attendance said Christmas prayers, read verses from the Bible, preached sermons, and sang Christmas songs. —MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

SEE PAGE-3

New flight service from Yangon to Pathein operational

A NEW Yangon-Pathein-Yangon flight began its maiden trip from Yangon to Pathein in Ayeyawady Region yesterday.

The aircraft landed in Pathein Airport in the evening where its passengers and crew were welcomed by Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, the regional Hluttaw Speaker, regional ministers and department officials.

The Chief Minister said the Yangon-Pathein air route supports his region’s development. It takes 4 hours from Pathein to Yangon by car; therefore a direct flight will get tourists and business persons to their destination in a much shorter time, he said.

The new air route will employ an ATR 72-600 72-seater aircraft from Myanmar National Airlines and it is operated by International Travel Asia Co. Ltd, a subsidiary of Asia World.

Yang Jin, CEO of International Travel Asia Co. Ltd, said there are not many beaches in China and as such, its citizens are attracted to the beautiful beaches of Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung. He said the flow of Chinese tourists will significantly contribute to Myanmar’s tourism industry. He also mentioned upgrading Pathein Airport and his company’s desire to keep providing smoother travel experiences at affordable prices.

SEE PAGE-3
Cash donation ceremony for Eternal Peace Pagoda held in Yangon

THE fourth cash donation ceremony for the Eternal Peace Pagoda which is under construction in Nay Pyi Taw was held at Vijaya Mingalar Dhamma Hall on Thiri Mingalar Kaba-Aye Hillock in Mayangon Township, Yangon yesterday morning.

The cash donation ceremony was attended by Dhammakathika Bahujanahitadhara Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Shwe Parami Tawya Sayadaw Ashin Sanda Dhika, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Yangon Region Social Affairs Minister U Naing Ngan Lin, Director General of Department of the Religious Affairs U Myint Oo and donors.

First Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko and the audience received five precepts from Dhammakathika Bahujanahitadhara Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Shwe Parami Tawya Sayadaw Ashin Sanda Dhika. Union Minister then presented offertories to Shwe Parami Tawya Sayadaw. Following that, the audience shared the merits gained. A total of K 456,871,300 from 71 donors together with jewelry worth K 13,300,000 from four donors was presented for the construction of Eternal Peace Pagoda at the ceremony. — MNA

(Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)

People celebrate Christmas in Yangon

Emmanuel Church in downtown Yangon is crowded with people celebrating Christmas on 25 December, 2018. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

The lane to Emmanuel Church in downtown Yangon is decorated with lights and is crowded with people celebrating Christmas on 25 December, 2018. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Christmas lights in the shape of candy canes and present boxes adorn Bogyoke Aung San Road near the Holy Trinity Cathedral in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Myanmar-Bangladesh conduct coordinated patrol

A coordinated patrol between Myanmar and Bangladesh was conducted from the border post No. 51 to 51/5 at 10:30 a.m. on 24 December.

The Myanmar patrol was led by Acting Police Major Aung Swe Oo from No. 5 Border Police Force sub-division (Aung Thabyae), Area 1, Maungtaw Township, and the Bangladesh patrol was led by Naib Subedar Md. Salim Uddin of No. 11 Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB), according to the Myanmar Police Force. — GNLM

(Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)

Drugs seized in Maungtaw Tsp

A COMBINED team, comprising officials of the Border Guard Police Force, seized drugs worth K 931 million from a boat in Magee creek near Paik Seik Village in Maungtaw Township on 24 December.

The combined team found 465,500 Yaba tablets and two mobile phones from the boat and arrested four men, identified as Hua-nsaung Nar Moat, Adu Yar Moat, Nohuta, and Marmoat Arryut, under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.— GNLM

(Translated by Hay Mar)
Tatmadaw refutes TNLA statement claiming gunfire exchanged

THE Tatmadaw has disputed a statement made by the TNLA (Ta’ang National Liberation Army) saying they fought with Tatmadaw troops on 24 December near Shwemaw Village, Kutkai Township, according to Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun, Deputy Director of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army).

He said the statement made by the TNLA and coverage by RFA and The Irrawaddy were both false. He said the TNLA claimed the Tatmadaw launched an offensive while the two media outlets reported they interviewed local villagers who said Tatmadaw troops ambushed TNLA troops. Both accusations are false, said the Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun.

The Office of the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief has issued an announcement on ceasefire and eternal peace on 21 December. In the announcement, the Tatmadaw declared a unilateral ceasefire in five regional command areas (Northern Command, Northeastern Command, Eastern Command, Central Eastern Command and Triangle Command) from 21 December 2018 to 30 April 2019 in order to facilitate peace talks with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) that have not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

The National Reconciliation and Peace Centre and various EAOs have welcomed the announcement as a constructive gesture.

Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun said all five regional commands were given specific directions to observe ceasefire immediately after the announcement was made. He said there has been no fighting since then. However, the Tatmadaw has not directed the Western Command in Rakhine State to cease its military operations.

Concerning the Western Command, Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun said since there are armed terrorist groups active in Rakhine State, they cannot stop military operations as the area is not classified as peaceful or stable region.

The Tatmadaw made the ceasefire announcement after three members of the Northern Alliance; MNTJP/MDAA (Kokang), PSLF/TNLA (Ta’ang Palaung), and ULA/AA (Rakhine); pledged to seek solutions through political dialogue in a resolution issued on 12 December. — Ye Khaung Nyunt

New flight service from Yangon to Pathein operational

FROM PAGE 1
The new air route will depart from Yangon to Pathein at 3:30 pm, and from Pathein to Yangon at 4:30 pm, every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. A direct flight will only take 40 minutes.

Flight tickets from Yangon to Pathein cost K 55,000 for a local passenger and US$ 55 for a foreign passenger; while tickets from Pathein to Yangon cost K 53,000 for a local passenger and US$ 53 for a foreign passenger.

The Ayeyawady Region Government and the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism are also planning to run ferry services for tourists plying to Pathein Airport, according to the regional directorate.

— Thi Thi Min
(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)
Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu provides cash assistance to displaced people

RAKHINE State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu together with officials visited Taungminkalar village in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State yesterday.

The Rakhine State Chief Minister and party met with displaced people residing at the Taungmin and the Kan Saut Monasteries in Taungminkalar and Kansauk villages, Kyauktaw Township.

The Chief Minister and party then gave words of encouragement to the displaced people who took shelter at the monasteries due to security reasons and provided them with cash assistance. During the meeting, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu said that people had to abandon their homes and business places mainly for the security reasons, and the Rakhine State government made efforts to restore tranquility and peace in the region while striving to return to normalcy.

As for the Rakhine State government, we were fulfilling the requirements of food and shelters in all possible ways. In case of need, we would supply more assistance such as doctors, nurses and medical aids. Besides, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Red Cross Society were supporting the requirements of basic needs.

Thus it was needed to discuss openly if they needed any help, he added. Next, the State Chief Minister and officials coordinated with the basic requirements of the displaced people at the meeting.

There are a total of 693 displaced persons from 168 households residing at the Taungmin Monastery, Taungminkalar Village, Kyauktaw Township.

There are a total of 430 displaced persons from 144 households staying at the Kansauk Monastery, Kansauk village, Kyauktaw Township.

Following that, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu handed over cash assistance to 168 households and each household would receive K 50,000.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement provided rice, longyis for men and women wears, towels, soap papers, detgents, cups, combs and paper containers to them.

Maungtaw Tsp security officers seize illegal drugs from runaway suspects

SECURITY forces conducting an undercover surveillance operation near Maungtaw Tsp Area 4 discovered 5 suspects approaching the border fence 100 yards away from their hiding place yesterday. The officers called out the suspects to halt, but the suspects ran away, prompting officers to fire 3 warning shots. The suspects ran into a nearby field and vanished, leaving behind 22 packets containing a total of 209,000 stimulant tablets (worth K 418 million at a rate of K 2,000 per tablet).

The officers have opened a case with Kyein Chaung Area Police Station Drug Case (Pa) 7/2018 under Section 19 (a) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law and are continuing investigations.

Fake 10,000-Kyat notes confiscated in Tamway, North Okkalapa townships

tamway police officers arrested a man in possession of 19 fake 10,000-Kyat notes at a local festival on Kyaunk Myayung Street at 8:45 pm on 24 December. The man, identified as Nyunt Hlaing from Minthar Taung Village in Kyauktaw Township, admitted to having purchased 800 fake 10,000-Kyat notes in Mae Soe, Thailand together with his roommate Aung Min Soe from Minthar Seik Village, Kyauktaw Tsp.

Police entered their house on Aung Theikdi Lane 6, Ward 12 in North Okkalapa Tsp, where they confiscated 336 fake kyat notes and arrested Aung Min Soe.

Investigations revealed the two men were jobless and had purchased the fake kyat notes from Mae Soe for their own use. Tamway Police Station has opened a case against the two men and are continuing investigations into related cases.
Domestic investments top K18,000 bln as of Nov-end; real estate sees largest fund inflows

By Nyein Nyein

DOMESTIC investments in My-anmar for the period between the 1994-1995 fiscal year and the end of November this year have exceeded K18,000 billion, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

As of November-end, a total of 1,502 enterprises have been allowed to invest in 11 sectors in Myanmar, with an estimated capital of over K18,063 billion.

According to figures from the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, the real estate sector has accounted for 23 per cent of the total fund inflows, with K4,166 billion in investment from 77 enterprises. The manufacturing sector has attracted investments of K3,264 billion from 835 enterprises. The service sector has seen investments of K2,834 billion from 50 businesses, the hotels and tourism sector received over K1,863 billion from 156 enterprises, and the construction sector has pulled in K1,075 billion from 68 projects.

The industrial estate sector has received K862 billion from 11 projects, the energy sector has obtained K652 billion from 18 businesses, the mining sector has pulled in K189 billion from 69 enterprises, the livestock and fisheries sector has raked in K153 billion from 83 businesses, while the agriculture sector has seen investments worth K51.8 billion through 11 projects. Other service sectors have attracted investments of K2,948 billion from 124 enterprises.

“Domestic investments have increased this year compared with recent years,” said U Kyaw Win Tun, the director of the DICA.

Under the incumbent govern-ment, 51 enterprises have invested K1,572 billion in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, 119 enterprises have put in K3,978 billion in the 2017-2018 FY, 165 enterprises have invested K895 million in the mini-budget period from April to September 2018, and 36 projects have brought in K266 million in the last two months of the 2018-2019 fiscal year, according to data from the DICA.

Under the Myanmar Investment Law, region and state investment committees are autho-rized to endorse investment proposals with a capital of not more than $5 million (K6,000 million), in order to simplify the verification of investment projects.

While some projects no longer need MIC’s approval, businesses that are strategic to the government require an MIC permit. Businesses with large capital investments exceeding $5 million and projects which can impact the environment and the local community need to get a nod from the DICA proposal assessment team. Such projects usually involve State-owned land, or are designated by the Government.

In order to fast-track sett-ling up of businesses in Myan-mar, the government is now allowing investors to apply to the MIC or the State and Regional investment committees for endorsing their investment proposals, depending on the business type.

(Myanmar Investment Commission’s work in October and November 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of investments</th>
<th>Capital Kyat million</th>
<th>No. of investments</th>
<th>Capital Kyat million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 Agricultural sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Animal husbandry and fishery sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 Industrial sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,264*</td>
<td>10,072*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 Transport and communications sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 Hotel and tourism sector</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 Oil and natural gas sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 Other service sector</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>11,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Increase number of jobs created was included in the increase jobs.

(Myanmar national investment during October and November of 2018 are as follow:)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of jobs created for local workers</th>
<th>In October 2018</th>
<th>In November 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 Agriculture sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Animal husbandry and fishery sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 Industrial sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,264*</td>
<td>10,072*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 Transport and communications sector</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5 Hotel and tourism sector</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 Other service sector</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>11,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Increase number of jobs created was included in the increase jobs.

Regional trade rises to $1 bln in first month of current fiscal year

MYANMAR’S regional trade with the ASEAN countries in the first month of the current fiscal year is estimated to be over US$1 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Imports surpasssed exports, with imports valued at $662.8 million and exports pegged at over $350.9 million. Since April, Thailand has ranked as Myanmar’s top trade partner among the ASEAN countries with the largest trade value totalling $478.2 million, followed by Singapore with $328.04 million, Indonesia with $91.4 million, Viet Nam with an estimated $75.3 million, and Malaysia with $50.5 million. The value of bilateral trade with the Philippines stood at $7.95 million, trade with Cambodia reached $2.4 million, while trade with Laos and Brunei was less than $1 million.

Myanmar mainly exports agricultural and fishery products, and minerals, and imports food and beverages, electronic tools, motor vehicles, and consumer goods.

Apart from its main trade partner China, Myanmar mostly conducts external trade via the sea and border with its regional partners. Trade with countries in the European Union remains non-competitive compared with regional trade partners. —GNLM (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Press Release No. 29/2018
2nd Waining of Natraw 1380 ME
(24 December 2018)

Additional statistical bulletin on drug seizures, acting on information

1. In order to prevent and eradicate the dangers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs, the Office of the President has formed the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department on 26 June 2018 to systematically accept and respond to reports on drug abuses and other related cases from the general public.

2. With orders from the Office of the President, the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department relayed information on reports on drug-related offenses up to 22 December 2018 to the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action, as displayed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Nature of report</th>
<th>Details on seizure and legal action taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Information received of Tun Wai from Tapaw Village, Indaw Township, Sagaing Region, selling illegal drugs.</td>
<td>On 16-12-2018, police arrested Tun Wai, 54, Chattee, 46, Myo Lwin, 34, Kyaw Soe, 42, and Min Thu, 36, near cemetery in Tapaw Village, Indaw Township. Police discovered the suspects together with opium. A case has been opened against five suspects with MaMaSa (Indaw) MaYa(Pa) 144/2018 under Section 16-C of the Anti-Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Information received of Ko Naing from Pyinpin Village, Indaw Township, Sagaing Region, selling illegal drugs.</td>
<td>On 21-12-2018, while police were patrolling near farm of the Thitkhone Village, Indaw Township. Police discovered Ko Naing, 29, and Min Min Oo, 24, together with heroin. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Indaw) MaYa(Pa) 146/2018 under Section 19-A/21 of the Anti-Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Information received of Thita Soe (a) Noe Noe, living in Shweminwon (Indaw) Ward, Pathein Township, Sagaing Region, selling illegal drugs.</td>
<td>On 16-12-2018, Thita Soe's (a) Noe Noe's motorcycle was stopped for investigation on a street Nagaryone Pagoda, Kawahtung Township. Police discovered Thita Soe (a) Noe Noe, 30, and Aung Naing Phyo (a) Shantopie, 18, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Kawahtung) MaYa(Pa) 141/2018 under Section 19-A/21 of the Anti-Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information received of Tun Tun from Kokkogone Village, Thabeikkyin Township, Mandalay Region, selling illegal drugs.</td>
<td>On 19-12-2018, police searched Tun Tun (a) Ko Tu’s house at No (148), Kokkogone Village, Thabeikkyin Township. Police discovered Tun Tun (a) Ko Tu, 37, and elder sister; Khin Win (a) Daw Win, 56, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened against two suspects with MaMaSa (Takaukng) MaYa(Pa) 13/2018 under Section 19-A/20-A/21 of the Anti-Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Information received of selling illegal drugs on the hill in Group (10), Ward 4, Kutkai Tsb, Shan State (North).</td>
<td>For so far 29 cases have been opened as of last weeks, 26 men and 3 women have been arrested, together with heroin and stimulant tablets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Information received of selling illegal drugs near Agricultural Science School in No (1) Ward, Kyaukme Township, Shan State (North).</td>
<td>On 18-12-2018, further investigation led to patrol in Ward 1, Kutkai Tsb and a motorcycle driven by Khun Aung, 37, from Kyaing Lan Village was stopped for investigation then police discovered him, together with heroin and ‘801’ psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Kutkai) MaYa(Pa) 138/2018 under Section 19-A of the Anti-Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Out of the information sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs, so far 436 cases have been opened as of 22-12-2018, and 576 men and 110 women have been arrested with seizures of 5,283.37 g of heroin, 25.01 g of ICE, 38,573.84 g of opium, 329.25 g of low-quality opium, 12,283.28 g of opium powder, 7,273.99 g of speciosa, 205,309 stimulant tablets, 7,273.99 g of crushed stimulant tablet powder, 2589.49 g of ephedrine, 1,000 stimulant tablets. In No (8) Ward, Hlinethaya Tsp, Yangon Region, 30,000 stimulant tablets. In No (5) Ward, Indakaw Tsp, Bago Region, 966 stimulant tablets were seized without owner. In (8) Ward, Hlinethaya Tsp, Yangon Region, three men were arrested with 2,000 stimulant tablets. In Thantthumar road, (24) Ward, Thingyangyin Tsp, one Fielder car was stopped for investigation then two men and one woman were arrested with 700 stimulant tablets and one car. At (5) mile junction, Myangmyaung Tsp, Ayeawady Region, one man was arrested with 1,000 stimulant tablets from express bus. In (13) Ward, Pathein Tsp, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 13 stimulant tablets. Further investigation led to the arrest of one man with 530 stimulant tablets and 2.1 g of marijuana in (14) Ward. There has been one arrest case of shooting. In Kawtyazha Village, Hpa-an Township, Kayin State, one man resisted with one sharpened knife then the suspects ran away and arrested by a warning shot, together with 4,200 stimulant tablets and 35 g of heroin. Near Lawaw Village, while police were clearing the area, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with one motorcycle and further investigation led to the seizure of 868,000 stimulant tablets and 5,280 g of heroin at a hut where no one lives near Kyauklongyi Village. On the road of Lashio-Hsipaw, near Malin Village, Lashio Tsp, two men were arrested with 2,873 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. Further investigation led to the arrest of two men and one motorcycle. In Hopate Village, near Toll Gate, one Canter car was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 9,680 g of heroin and one car. At milepost (144/3), near Lwehnowtote Village, Hopong Tsp, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 4,005 g of heroin and one car. At the junction of Pankaytu Village, Mongkai Tsp, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 9,360 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. In Shwethesa Village, Mongnitt Tsp, eight men and one woman were arrested with 6,574 g of heroin and 8,250 stimulant tablets. On Myanghyawon road, Kangung’ Ward, Myssk Tsp, Tunthiary Region, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then three men were arrested with 20 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. Further investigation led to the arrest of one man with 1,553 stimulant tablets. In Sakhantthi Village, Kyunsu Tsp, one woman was arrested with 4,085 g of opium powder. In Shwezinyaw Ward, Kawthuang Tsp, one man was arrested with 90 stimulant tablets. Further investigation led to the arrest of one man with 30,000 stimulant tablets. In No (5) Ward, Indakaw Tsp, Bago Region, 966 stimulant tablets were seized without owner. In (8) Ward, Hlinethaya Tsp, Yangon Region, three men were arrested with 2,000 stimulant tablets. In Thantthumar road, (24) Ward, Thingyangyin Tsp, one Fielder car was stopped for investigation then two men and one woman were arrested with 700 stimulant tablets and one car. At (5) mile junction, Myangmyaung Tsp, Ayeawady Region, one man was arrested with 1,000 stimulant tablets from express bus. In (13) Ward, Pathein Tsp, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 13 stimulant tablets. Further investigation led to the arrest of one woman with 530 stimulant tablets and 2.1 g of marijuana in (14) Ward. There has been one arrest case of shooting. In Kawtyazha Village, Hpa-an Township, Kayin State, one man resisted with one sharpened knife then the suspects ran away and arrested by a warning shot, together with 45 stimulant tablets, one sharpened knife and one motorcycle. There has been one seizure of ammunitions. At Kyauklyi (North) Village, Loikaw Tsp, Kayah State, one woman was arrested with 815 g of epidrine and further investigation led to the arrest of one man with one gun.(22) and five bullets. There have been 293 cases being opened between 16-12-2018 and 22-12-2018, and 236 men and 30 women have been arrested. Seizures were made of 22,216,412 g of heroin, 1.5 g of ICE, 95.3 g of opium, 4,196.65 g of speciosa powder, 152 g of speciose, 2,157,703 stimulant tablets, 9 g of crushed stimulant tablet powder, 2589.49 g of ephedrine, 15 g of opium blocks, 815 g of epidrine, one gun (22) and five bullets. To seize further drugs and to arrest drugs dealers, people are urged to inform the Ministry of Home Affairs, region and state governments and to inform huge cases of drug trafficking and other suspicious cases directly to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President via following contact numbers:

Contacts
- Auto telephone No.: 067-590200
- Fax Phone No.: 067-590233
- Email Address: antinarcotics@presidentoffice.gov.mm

NATIONAL
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
26 DECEMBER 2018
VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis called for peace and “fraternity” among peoples, as millions across the world celebrated Christmas on Thursday while US President Donald Trump caused a festive furor by asking a child whether he still believed in Santa Claus.

Some 30,000 worshippers gathered at the Vatican to hear the pontiff’s sixth “Urbi et Orbi” (To the City and the World) message appealing for peace in conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen, whose populations face some of the world’s most desperate humanitarian crises.

“My wish for a happy Christmas is a wish for fraternity,” he told pilgrims in Saint Peter’s Square on Thursday, when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

“Fraternity among individuals of every nation and culture. Fraternity among people with different ideas... Fraternity among persons of different religions.”

Francis, the head of the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics, had earlier used his mass on Monday night to urge people to curb “insatiable greed”.

The pontiff said he hoped a truce in conflict-ravaged Yemen would end a devastating war that has killed around 10,000 people since 2015 and pushed 14 million Yemenis to the brink of famine.

“My thoughts turn to Yemen, in the hope that the truce brokered by the international community may finally bring relief to all those children and people exhausted by war and famine,” he said.

The pope also spoke of the war in Syria, which has forced millions from their homes and reduced swathes of the country to rubble.

He called for a “political solution” to the conflict “so that the Syrian people, especially all those who were forced to leave their own lands and seek refuge elsewhere, can return to live in peace in their own country”.

Francis also said he hoped for renewed peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians “that can put an end to a conflict that for over 70 years has rent the land chosen by the Lord to show his face of love.”

-Little town” celebrations -
Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, located near Jerusalem but cut off from the city by Israel’s separation barrier, has seen an increase in visitors this season after several down years because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Palestinian tourism officials and hotel operators have reported their strongest season in years.

“This year is much more calm, much better than last year,” said Abeer Nasser, a Palestinian from the nearby town of Beit Sahour celebrating in Bethlehem with her son and daughter.

“Every year I feel more in the mood to celebrate despite the political situation,” the 37-year-old added, referring to the Israeli occupation.

Beyond Bethlehem, Christians worldwide were marking Christmas, with services held from Indonesia to Iraq — AFP

NEW DELHI — The number of Japanese companies registered in India increased 5.2 percent in 2018 from the previous year as they continue to tap business opportunities in Asia’s third-largest economy.

The figure totalled 1,441 as of October, 72 more than a year earlier, with manufacturing firms accounting for half the total, according to the latest joint survey by the Embassy of Japan in India and the Japan External Trade Organization known as JETRO.

The number of Japanese business establishments in India grew 5.5 percent this year to 5,102 from 2017, the survey released last week also showed.

They include liaison and branch offices in India as well as local subsidiaries. “There was a significant increase in the number of companies in such sectors as metal manufacturing as well as services this year,” the survey said.

It also found that some companies in India became non-Japanese due to corporate restructuring and change of ownership, among other reasons. By region, the western state of Maharashtra and the southern state of Tamil Nadu have emerged as the top destinations for both Japanese companies and establishments, numbering 810 and 620, respectively, according to the report.

The survey showed, however, that despite a target agreed four years ago between India and Japan to double both Japan’s foreign direct investment and the number of Japanese companies in the South Asian country by 2019, there are only about 25 percent more firms now than there were in 2014. Although the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in India, or JCCII, has engaged in promoting economic cooperation between the two countries, several issues remain to be addressed to improve both investment and business environments in India.

— Kyodo News

5% more Japanese firms operating in India in 2018

TEHRAN, Iran — President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday unveiled Iran’s first annual budget since the return of US sanctions, saying it had been adjusted to take account of Washington’s “cruel” measures.

The president announced a 20 percent increase in public sector wages in a sign of the economic challenges the Islamic republic has faced since the United States pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal earlier this year.

The speech gave only a few general points of the budget — which will now be scrutinised and voted on by parliament — but acknowledged the pressure Iran was under.

“Last year we faced some problems,” Rouhani told parliament in a televised speech, referring to the widespread protests that hit the country almost exactly a year ago, sparked by anger over economic and political conditions.

“Those events caused the Americans to change their position regarding the Islamic republic and the nuclear deal,” he said.

“The real objective of the US in all of this conspiracy and sanction and pressure... is to bring the powerful Islamic republic of Iran to its knees,” he said, vowing that the US “will definitely be defeated.”

The renewed US sanctions include an embargo on Iran’s crucial oil sector.

The new budget did not say how many barrels of oil Iran hopes to sell in the next financial year, which starts in late March, but analysts believe it will be considerably less than the approximately 2.5 million it sold per day prior to Trump’s withdrawal.

The US granted waivers to eight key buyers of Iranian oil — including China, India and Turkey — though this has been a double-edged sword for Iran since it also helped push down the global price.

Forex ‘practically zero’
Rouhani came to power in 2013 representing the more moderate side of Iran’s ruling elite, hoping a compromise on the country’s nuclear programme would reduce tensions with the West and allow foreign investment to boost the stunted private sector.

The return of sanctions has ended that hope and forced Rouhani more towards the self-sufficient “resistance economy” preferred by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Concern over the economy pushed many Iranians to secure their savings in dollars and gold, triggering a run on the Iranian rial, which has lost around half its value since Trump announced the pullout.

“At one point early this year our foreign exchange cash reserve was practically zero, forcing the government to take hard decisions to save the country,” Rouhani told parliament. — AFP

Iran presents budget to counter ‘cruel’ US sanctions

This handout picture released by the Vatican press office on 25 December 2018 at St Peter’s square in Vatican shows Pope Francis delivering the “Urbi et Orbi” message from the balcony of St Peter’s basilica during the traditional “Urbi et Orbi” Christmas message to the city and the world. PHOTO: AFP

Pope urges peace, ‘fraternity’ as millions celebrate Christmas
Building a democracy which glows brightly, for all citizens

Maung Khine Mar (Atheit Min Hla)

In fact, the Aung San – Attlee Agreement was signed on 23 June 1947 for detailed informal consultation. Following the signing of the agreement, the Burma Communist Party (BMP) was established. At the 1st BMP Congress held in February 1948, the party announced a People’s Democratic Front which was composed of the Burma Communist Party, the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), and other like-minded groups. By the end of 1948, the People’s Democratic Front was formed.

The British could grip the whole country around 1948 but, 10 May 1948 saw the emergence of an independent Burma under Aung San. From 1920, the association transformed to the General Council (GC) of General Burmese Association, and the year saw the first student strike. On 12 June 1922, the Burma Students’ Union held a meeting, which was a landmark event for Burma students. On 11 August 1943; that of the ill treatment to the people; that of the combined forces of Japan and the British Empire were rebuilt into strong Empire, and the Third Burmese Empire, and the First Burmese Empire, which is our historical duty and pride to keep it alive.

As part of rebuilding efforts, he held talks with traders and merchants to ensure the smooth transition to an independent country. He also stressed the importance of unity among the people, which are essential to an independent nation. The country achieved freedom. However, the plans could not be realized to 20 years after independence to carry out the task of rebuilding and developing the country.

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Japan approves steps to help make life easier for foreign workers

TOKYO — Japan approved on Tuesday a set of measures to ensure that foreign workers entering the country under its new visa system enjoy proper working conditions and access to broad support in their daily lives.

The government came up with a 126-point policy package aimed at facilitating the daily lives of foreigners who may not be used to Japanese culture and customs, earmarking 22.4 billion yen ($201 million) through the current and next fiscal year starting April.

The programmes include a plan to set up around 100 consultation service centres across Japan that will provide information and advice on a range of issues such as on employment, medical services, child-raising and education.

The so-called one-stop consultation centres will offer services in 11 languages, including English, Chinese, Vietnamese and Indonesian.

The enlargement of the government's basic policy on the new visa system and the support package came as Japan prepares for the entry of more foreign workers from April to tackle serious labor shortages in the country.

Under the basic policy, the government pledges to offer “proper” working conditions for foreign workers in terms of pay, working hours and safety.

Amid some criticism that the government is moving too quickly and has not sufficiently prepared for an influx of foreign workers, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe instructed at a meeting attended by Cabinet ministers that the assistance programs be implemented properly.

“I'd like you to make utmost efforts for the system to operate in a way that will make foreign people want to work and live in Japan,” Abe said.

Those applying for the new visas are mainly expected from nine Asian countries — Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam — and they will be able to work in 14 industrial sectors, including construction, the restaurant business, farming and nursing care.

The government aims to work with the nine Asian countries to shut out unscrupulous brokers from collecting fees from foreign workers on the pretext of assisting them to come to Japan and find jobs.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said in a press conference that Tokyo plans to reach bilateral agreements with the Asian countries to that end.

Calls have been growing to tackle the activities of such brokers, seen as one of the possible reasons why some foreigners already working in Japan under the so-called technical internship programme are saddled with debts and end up being exploited.

With Japan expecting up to 345,150 foreign workers to acquire the new residency statuses in the first five years, the government said it will take steps to avoid having foreign workers settle "excessively" in large city areas, where wages are typically higher compared with regional cities.

Suga, the top government spokesman, said the Justice Ministry will regularly make public the number of foreign workers by sector and region once the new scheme begins.

In industry-specific guidelines approved the same day, the government stipulated the estimated number of workers to be accepted in each of the 14 sectors over the five-year period, such as 60,000 in the nursing assistant sector and 53,000 in the restaurant business.

The figures will be used as a ceiling and will not be altered unless there is a major change in the economic situation, according to the government.

Under the 126-point package, Japan will also enhance multilingual services at hospitals and other existing public facilities, such as job-placement offices, as well as making emergency advisories about natural disasters from the government’s warning system available in different languages.

Foreign workers will be encouraged to enroll in Japan’s public health insurance programmes, which cover a portion of medical expenses, but the government noted that it will also take steps to prevent abuse of the programme.

The new visa system allows foreign workers aged 18 or older to apply for two new residency statuses — the “No 1” type for people who will engage in work that requires a certain level of knowledge and experience, and the “No 2” type for work that requires higher skill levels.

Those with status No 1, which is valid for up to five years, will not be allowed to bring family members to Japan. But the entrants granted No 2 status will be allowed to do so and there will be no limit on the number of times they can renew their visa.

Foreign workers seeking to apply for the No 1 visa will be required to have an understanding of basic Japanese conversation and a language test is to be created for eligible applicants to take.

By creating the new visa statuses, Japan will formally open its doors to foreign blue-collar workers for the first time. In the past, the country has granted working visas only to people with professional knowledge and high skills such as doctors, lawyers and teachers.

Workers will be allowed to switch jobs if certain conditions are met. They will be employed basically on a full-time and direct basis, but the farming and fishery sectors that are influenced by seasonal factors can employ foreign workers on a temporary basis.

— Kyodo News

Tokyo stocks plunge in Christmas rout

TOKYO (Japan) — Tokyo stocks plunged on Tuesday as the few Asian markets open on Christmas suffered a holiday rout on fears about the US economy and a government shutdown in Washington.

Tokyo markets, which were closed on Monday for a national holiday, plummeted at the open on Tuesday, with the Nikkei closing down more than five percent — over 1,000 points.

It was the worst finish since April 2017 and followed a brutal holiday-shortened session on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session.

In Asia, many markets were closed for Christmas, including in Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea.

US and European markets are also closed for the holiday.

But the downturn affected those bourses that remained open, with China’s benchmark Shanghai Composite Index tumbling over two percent during the morning session, though it recovered slightly by afternoon.

Markets have been rolled by ongoing uncertainty in the United States, with Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin widely panned for holding a call with the six biggest US banks and then reporting on Twitter that the six CEOs have “ample liquidity” available.

Investors were also unnerved by weekend news reports that US President Donald Trump had asked about the possibility of firing Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, accounts that Mnuchin said Trump had denied.

Last week, the central bank hiked rates, infuriating Trump who has ignored the traditional respect for the Fed’s independence, calling it “crazy”, “out of control” and a greater economic threat than China.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average slumped nearly three percent by the close on Monday, with the broad-based S&P 500 down 2.7 per cent and the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index down more than two per cent.

The declines brought the S&P 500 to the brink of a “bear market,” considered a drop of 20 per cent from its peak — AFP

China cuts market access barriers nationwide

BEIJING — China took further steps in opening up its market to domestic and overseas investors on Tuesday by rolling out nationwide a shorter negative list for market access.

The latest version of the negative list for market access consists 151 items and 581 specific rules, down by 177 and 288 respectively compared with the previous version.

The negative list outlines sectors, fields and businesses off-limits for investors. Industries not on the list are open for investment to all market players.

China started to pilot the negative-list approach in 2016 in the country’s four provincial regions with free trade zones. The pilot practice was extended to another 11 provincial regions in 2017. The country’s top economic planner said the negative-list approach will help the market play the decisive role in allocating resources and enable a level playing field for all market players.

— Xinhua

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“I am all alone in WH”, says Trump as partial govt shutdown enters third day

WASHINGTON — Bored at the White House on Christmas Eve, a lone Donald Trump spent the day slamming his critics, as the government entered its third day of partial shutdown initiated by a rift with Democrats over the President’s long-promised wall along the US-Mexico border.

President Trump, who has cancelled his trip to his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Monday, said he was “all alone” in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come to the negotiating table to end the partial government shutdown.

Through a series of tweets and pictures, Trump showed he was working hard while the opposition Democratic lawmakers were in their homes celebrating Christmas.

“I am all alone (poor me) in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come back and make a deal on desperately needed Border Security,” Trump tweeted on Monday.

Trump wants the Democrats to fund for a border wall to stop illegal immigrants from entering the US. Democrats have refused his demands for USD 5 billion in funding for his border wall in a standoff that resulted in a partial government shutdown at midnight on Friday.

“Some time at the Demo- crats not wanting to make a deal will cost our country more money than the border wall we are all talking about. Crazy!” Trump said. Several hours later, Trump said in a tweet that he was in the Oval Office and working on border security.

“I am in the Oval Office and just gave out a 115-mile-long contract for another large section of the Wall in Texas. We are already building and renovating many miles of wall, some complete. Democrats must endShutdown and finish funding. Billions of dollars, and lives, will be saved!” he said. He also tweeted a picture of him with senior administration officials for a briefing on North Korea.

“Christmas Eve briefing with my team working on North Korea Progress being made. Looking forward to my next summit with Chairman Kim!” Trump said.

Later in the evening, he and the First lady Melania helped children across the country to track Santa. “Nothing new on the shutdown. We need more security,” he told reporters during this phone call with children.

Santa Tracker is a 63-year tradition of tracking Santa’s sleigh from the North Pole to children all over the world.

Despite the shutdown, military personnel were on the operation, as were reportedly some 1,300 people who volunteer each year. Trump told a kid named Coleman, “Hello, is this Coleman? Merry Christmas. How are you? How old are you?... Are you doing well in school? Are you still a believer in Santa Claus?”

“How are you? Are you track- ing Santa? I want to wish you a Merry Christmas. Thank you. Nice talking to you,” Melania told an unidentified child.

“What’s Santa going to get you for Christmas? Who’s with you...Have a great Christmas, and I’ll talk to you again, OK?” Trump told another kid, possibly from Indiana.

“Are you tracking Santa? Do you know where he is?... I hope your dreams come true,” said Melania to another child.

Trump also could be heard asking kids where they were from and then thanking a general, possibly from NORAD or the North American Aerospace Command.

Trump and the First Lady attended a Christmas Service at Washington National Cathedral Monday night.—PTI

At least 43 killed in Kabul govt compound attack

KABUL (Afghanistan) — An hours-long gun and suicide at- tack on a Kabul government compound killed at least 43 people, the health ministry said on Tuesday, making it one of the deadliest assaults on the Afghan capital this year.

No militant group has claimed responsibility for the raid, which caps a bloody year for Afghanistan as long-suffering civilians and security forces are slaughtered in record numbers.

Taliban spokesman Zabul- lah Mujahid told AFP the attack had “nothing to do with the mil- itants”.

Another 25 people were wounded in Monday’s massacre on a site where the Ministry of Public Works and an office that handles pensions and benefits for war veterans are located, spokes- man Waheed Majroh said.

Gummen stormed the compoun- d mid-afternoon after detonating a car bomb at the main entrance — opposite residential apartment buildings — send- ing terrified people running for their lives. Some jumped from windows several floors high to escape the militants.

The suicide blast appears to have been a decoy, according to witnesses who told AFP they saw several militants enter the compound through a back gate. Hundreds were trapped in- side the compound for hours as heavily armed security forces swarmed the area, engaging the attackers in a fierce gun battle punctuated by multiple explo- sions.

At least four militants, in- cluding the bomber, were killed and more than 350 people freed, officials said. Most of the dead and wounded were civilians, who have borne the brunt of the 17- year war.

It was the deadliest assault in the Afghan capital since a suicide bomber blew himself up in the middle of a religious gathering last month, killing at least 50 people. President Ashraf Ghani, whose government has been skewed over its security failures, said “terrorists attack ci- vilian targets to hide their defeat on the battleground”.

Afghanistan’s de facto prime minister Abdullah Abdullah also sounded a defiant note as he blamed the Taliban for the attack.

“Every attack they carry out against our people, our resolve is further strengthened to eliminate them,” he said.

But their statements belie the grim reality on the battlefield where the Taliban have the upper hand. Afghanistan’s largest mil- itant group has made significant territorial gains this year as its fighters inflict record casualties on government forces.—AFP

Netanyahu says wants similar right-wing coalition after elections

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday he hoped for a similar right-wing coalition after early elections that his govern- ment agreed to hold in April.

Netanyahu, speaking to journalists after the polls were announced, laid out what he sees as his achievements and said he hoped the current coalition, seen as the most right-wing in Israel’s history, serves as the “core” for the next one. “The current coalitio- n is, in my eyes, the core of the next coalition,” Netanyahu said.

“We ask for a clear mandate from the voter to continue to lead the state of Israel in our own way.”

Elections were not due until November, but there had long been speculation that the coa- lition would not last that long, especially in recent weeks.

Netanyahu has been clinging to a one-seat majority in parlia- ment since defence minister Av- igdor Lieberman resigned over a controversial Gaza ceasefire in November.

He is also under pressure after police recommended his indictment in three different corrup- tion probes.—AFP
N Korea blasts UN resolution on rights abuse

SEOUL (South Korea) — North Korea on Tuesday hit back at a latest UN resolution that con- demned Pyongyang’s rights abuses, calling it a “serious... provocations” that would under- mine peace efforts on the Korean peninsula.

The UN General Assembly adopted last week a resolution — which passed by consensus without a vote — condemning the “systematic, widespread and gross” human rights violations in the isolated North.

The impoverished but nuclear-armed nation, ruled by the Kim family through three generations, has been accused of state-sanctioned abuses including torture, rape and extra- judicial killings.

It marked the 14th consec- cutive year the UN has passed such a document.

The North has constantly denied any rights abuses in the country and labelled the UN criticisms as smear cam- paigns aimed at undermining its leadership.

The North’s state-run Rodong newspaper slammed the latest resolution as a “serious political provocation against the (North) and a vicious move to tarnish its international image”.

“The wicked intention of the US... in getting vocal about the non-existent ‘human rights issue’ of the DPRK is to broaden the scope of the sanctions and pressure and escalate them,” it said in an editorial, using the North’s official name.

The editorial also lashed out at a “thoughtless” South Ko- rea for backing the UN bill — a move that would be “tarnishing the atmosphere of improving the north-south ties”. Washington had separately sought to organize a Security Council meeting on human rights in the North but gave up on the option earlier this month because it was unsure of the support it would get from part- ners.

But the US hopes to hold the meeting next month with the arrival of new non-permanent country members that could be more favourable to doing so.

The South’s President Moon Jae-in has advocated dialogue with the North to nudge it to denuclearization negotiations and has met with its leader Kim Jong Un three times this year.

Kim also met with US Pres- ident Donald Trump in a historic summit in June but progress has stalled with both sides ac- cusing each other of dragging their feet and acting in bad faith. —AFP

High-speed railway starts operation in China’s coldest region

HARBIN — A high-speed rail- way line officially went into operation on Tuesday, linking cities in China’s northernmost province of Heilongjiang, where the temperatures dip as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius.

The 300-km line designed to allow trains running at 250 km per hour cuts the travel time between the provincial capital of Harbin and Mudan- jiang, known as “snow city,” from over four hours to one hour and 28 minutes, according to the China Railway Harbin Group.

The line is China’s north- ernmost high-speed railway. Construction of the railway started in December 2014, as one of the key projects in Chi- na’s high-speed rail network scheme.

At its destination of Mu- danjiang, the railway with 11 stops connects with an exist- ing rail line between Mudan- jiang and Sui fenhe, which is Russia’s major border city with China.

China’s railway network is expected to hit 175,000 km in length by 2025, compared with 127,000 km of operating tracks by the end of last year. —Xinhua

Thai prisoner electrocuted during botched jailbreak

BANGKOK (Thailand) — A Thai prisoner died early Tuesday after being electrocuted by high-volt- age barbed wire as he attempted to escape, police said.

Wiwat Aksorsom, 32, broke free from his cell just after mid- night along with two other prison- ers and tried to scale the six-metre (20-ft) walls of his prison in southern Surat Thani province.

But he accidentally touched the electrified barbed wire creas- ting the prison walls killing him instantly, Colonel Wanchai Pal- awan, superintendent of Chaiya district police, told AFP.

“Prison officials found his body on the wall after he was electrocuted,” he said.

Wiwat had been arrested in possession of 38 methampheta- mine tablets, and was remanded in custody while pending police investiga- tion. The two other prisoners — also jailed for drug offences — made it through without making contact with the fatal wiring. But one was promptly re-arrested after breaking his arm as he landed on the other side of the wall, while the other was found hours later in a police search around the perimeter.

“They said they are home- sick,” Wanchai added.

Thai prisons are all equipped with high-voltage electrical fenc- ing to serve as a deterrent to es- caping prisoners. Most facilities are also massively overcrowded in a country which has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world due to harsh penalties for drug offences. Those push small- time drug dealers and users, including women, behind bars for long periods. Authorities are mulling ways to ease overcrowd- ing including the widespread use of electronic ankle tags. Thailand was criticised in June for putting a 26-year-old convicted murder- er to death by lethal injection — its first execution since 2009. —AFP
Attacks hit Libya foreign ministry in Tripoli, one dead

TRIPOLI (Libya) — Gunfire and explosions rocked Libya’s foreign ministry on Tuesday as attackers stormed the building in the capital Tripoli, killing at least one person, witnesses and a security source said.

A car bomb exploded in front of the ministry, after which “three or four assailants” entered, the source told AFP from the scene.

A suicide bomber then struck inside and gunfire broke out, according to the source, who said the victim was a civil servant.

Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the building as ambulances, paramedics and security forces gathered outside.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Torn apart by power struggles and undermined by chronic insecurity, Libya has become a haven for jihadists since the ouster and killing of Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

Two competing administrations, rival militias, tribes and jihadists have been competing for control of territory and the country’s vast oil wealth.

The Islamic State jihadist group (IS) took advantage of the chaos to gain a foothold in the coastal city of Sirte in 2015.

Forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) regained control of the city in December 2016 after eight months of deadly fighting.

Since then, some jihadists have returned to the desert in an attempt to regroup and reorganise.

In September, IS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the headquarters of Libya’s National Oil Company in the heart of Tripoli which left two dead and 10 wounded. Four months earlier, it claimed an attack on the electoral commission’s headquarters which left 14 dead.

In April, the GNA launched an operation to track down IS fighters in southeastern Libya under its control.

Last month IS claimed responsibility for an attack on militia forces in eastern Libya in which at least nine people were killed.

The US military has regularly carried out strikes on jihadists in Libya, particularly south of Sirte.

The GNA was set up under a 2015 UN-brokered deal, but a rival administration based in the country’s east aligned with military strongman Khalifa Haftar refuses to recognise its authority.

Rival Libyan leaders agreed to a Paris-brokered deal in May to hold a nationwide election by the end of the year.

But instability, territorial disputes and divisions have delayed plans for elections.

Two days of meetings last month in Italy laid bare deep divisions between key players in the crisis with some delegates refusing to sit side by side.

AFP

Five killed in China as hijacked bus crashes into pedestrians

BEIJING (China) — At least five people were killed and 21 injured after a hijacked bus crashed into pedestrians in east China’s Fujian province on Tuesday afternoon, state media reported.

A hijacker carrying a knife had been detained and was being investigated by local police, state television CGTN reported.

The incident happened at about 3:20 pm in the city of Longyan, the local Minxi Ribao newspaper reported. A policeman was among the five confirmed dead.

A video posted by Duowei news, a Chinese media outlet based in the US, showed several injured people lying on the street near a crashed bus. It also showed police wrestling a person to the ground.

The Longyan public security bureau declined to comment when contacted by AFP. China has suffered several similar incidents this year.

In late November a car rammed into a group of children crossing a street in front of an elementary school in northeast China’s Liaoning province, killing five people and injuring another 18. Earlier that month, about 15 people died when a bus plunged off a bridge in southwest Chongqing municipality, after the driver got into a fist fight with a passenger who had missed her bus stop.

In February, a van packed with pressurised gas tanks and petrol-filled bottles caught fire and plunged into pedestrians in Shanghai, leaving at least 18 people injured.

AFP

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M.V HAN FENG VOY. NO. (H1828E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V HAN FENG VOY. NO. (H1828E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T2 where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS HANSSY SHIPPING PTE LTD
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Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANNA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S KING STAR SHIPPING
Phone No: 2301928
Emerald Bay project to launch in 2019

THE Emerald Bay housing project, jointly conducted by a Singapore company and Tet Lann company in Yangon, will launch in 2019 on 70 acres in Thakayta Township, according to a statement released by the consortium group.

The modern city and eco-smart project is located on the point where three rivers, the Yangon, Bago and Pazuntaung, meet.

The project includes a 32-story, 40 condominium high rise to be built in the first phase. Also, five 32-story buildings will be built among the remaining housing, to be completed in five years, according to the statement released by the Yangon Golden Paragon.

The showroom for the project is expected to be completed soon, with the permission of the Yangon City Development Committee. Plans call for the showroom to be open to the public in February, 2019.—GNLM

HONG KONG (China) — The frontman of a popular Taiwanese metal band which advocates independence for the island was denied a visa to Hong Kong because he lacked “special skills”, a music festival organizer said on Monday.

ChthoniC, one of Asia’s most successful black metal bands, slammed the decision as “ridiculous” after they were forced to pull out of a music festival in the southern Chinese city over the weekend because band members were unable to get a visa from Hong Kong’s immigration department.

Frontman Freddy Lim is also a pro-independence lawmaker in Taiwan and the cancellation fuelled fears about eroding artistic freedoms in Hong Kong as authorities clamp down on pro-democracy sentiment at the behest of Beijing.

Hong Kong’s immigration authorities have yet to say why the visas were refused.

But on Monday Denise Ho, a pro-democracy canto-pop star who had invited ChthoniC to perform at a festival, posted a letter from the immigration department setting out the reasons for Lim’s refusal.

“A person seeking to enter into Hong Kong … for employment should amongst other things, possess a special skill, knowledge or experience of value to and not readily available in the (city),” the letter stated.

“Having considered the information made available and all circumstances of the case, we are not satisfied that this case meets the aforesaid criteria,” it added.

Lim called the government’s reason “ridiculous” but added he remained hopeful.

“I have many friends in Hong Kong, friends from the music scene, friends who are involved in Hong Kong’s social movement, and everyone is trying so hard to change things,” Lim told AFP.

The immigration department did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for comment.

ChthoniC was founded in 1995 by Lim and has gone on to become one of the region’s most successful metal bands.

Lim became a lawmaker in 2016 and his New Power Party calls for Taiwan to be recognized internationally as a country. He was denied a travel visa to Hong Kong later that year.

Netizens in Hong Kong, where authorities have been steadily clamping down on the city’s pro-independence sentiments, ridiculed the government’s apparent excuse.

“That means Madonna wouldn’t be qualified to do a concert in Hong Kong either,” wrote one Facebook user.

AS part of a campaign to promote road safety in the New Year, IKBZ insurance is providing free dashboard cameras on every fresh motor policy or renewal from December 24, for a limited period of time.

The purpose of the campaign, launched in Yangon, is to reduce chances of death or injury due to road accidents and to create a safe environment for motor insurance customers and others, the insurance company stated in an announcement.

According to a WHO study, Myanmar ranks second in terms of the number of road fatalities in Southeast Asia. High-speed and reckless driving and consumption of alcohol and drugs are the primary causes for the increasing number of deaths in road accidents.

With the new campaign, car owners can use dash cams to monitor drivers, the company stated adding, the dash cams can also serve as a reminder to drivers to follow traffic rules.

Mr. Anil Mancham, the Deputy Managing Director of IKBZ Insurance, said that a dash cam would make a thoughtful New Year gift for new or loyal customers as it would help make the roads safer for them and their loved ones. “It will give them peace of mind when employing professional drivers. This program fits in with our brand values of providing reliability and peace of mind to our customers,” he said.

“Dashboard cameras record videos of the road and are motion sensitive. They can capture shocks even when turned off, as in the case of a parked vehicle. They help settle claims better and are being used around the world to improve road safety,” he said.

“Drivers using dash cams have been found to improve their driving etiquette. Research shows that people who know they’re being watched are less likely to act rudely or selfishly – which, on the road, can be the difference between a near miss and a crash,” he said.

“Helping drivers think twice about their own behavior is a positive step towards reducing irresponsible conduct on the road. Dash cams can act as a deterrent to thoughtless actions that may end up in tragedies,” he added.

The free New Year dash cam campaign started from 24 December.—Thura Lwin (Eco) ■
LONDON — The British Army has taken delivery of the first of its fleet of cutting edge bomb disposal units, replacing wheelbarrow-type devices troops have used for more than 45 years.

The unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), equipped with high-definition cameras, an adjustable manipulation arm and tough all-terrain treads, will become a familiar site on the streets of Britain as well as on battlefields.

The robots will allow army bomb disposal teams to neutralize a wide range of explosive threats. The delivery of the four robots are part of a £60 million-US dollars contract for 56 robots.

The game-changing platforms endured a variety of tests during an eight-week acceptance trials period at sites in Britain and the US specifically chosen to put the robots through their paces.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) said the robots were pushed to their limits by trials including multi-terrain driving, a series of battlefield missions, weightlifting and dexterity tasks, climatic and vibration testing, high stress capabilities, live-firings, maximum traversing angles and interoperability assessments.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: “These robots will go on to be an essential piece of kit, preventing harm to innocent civilians and the brave operators who make explosives safe.

“The robots will provide the army with the latest bomb disposal technology and will prove to be trusted companions both on UK streets and in deadly conflict zones.”

Col Zac Scott, who heads the military bomb disposal branch, said: “Remote Control Vehicles are critical to the safe conduct of Explosive Ordnance Disposal tasks.”

He said the new Harris T7 robots harness cutting-edge technology to provide EOD operators with unprecedented levels of mobility and dexterity. It represents a step-change in capability for our service personnel and it will save lives.”

The robots are designed to replace the army’s fleet of Wheelbarrow MkIB remote-controlled EOD robots which have been used across the world by UK Armed Forces since 1972. All 56 robots are due to be delivered to the British military, and be in service by December 2020.

Investigators question Russian cosmonaut about hole in Soyuz MS-09 hull

STAR CITY — Investigators have put several questions to Russian cosmonaut Oleg Artemiev after his return from the ISS concerning the case opened over a hole in the Soyuz MS-09 hull.

“There’s been no questioning in the usual sense of the term yet. Everything is ahead. I answered questions about how we acted in that situation put to us not only by investigators, but also by flight specialists,” he said.

Another Russian cosmonaut, Sergei Prokopiev, said he had not been questioned yet.

“It’s all ahead,” he replied.

Taking part in the news conference at the space training center on Monday were cosmonauts Artemiev and Prokopiev, who had patched the hole in the Soyuz MS-09 spacecraft at the end of last August.

A drop in air pressure occurred on the International Space Station last August. Soon it turned out that air was leaking through a hole in the hull of the Soyuz MS-09 spacecraft attached to the ISS. Several days later specialists on Earth arrived at the conclusion the hull had been drilled from inside. Prokopiev and Artemiev patched the hole with two layers of epoxy resin.

On 12 December Prokopiev and another Russian cosmonaut, Oleg Kononenko, who remains on board the ISS, performed a spacewalk to examine the hole in the Soyuz spacecraft from outside. They ripped through the thermal and meteorite protection shields to examine and photograph the hole and take scrapings from the surface for analysis. It was the first-ever instance of meteorite protection screens being ripped through in outer space. —Tass

Archaeologists find 2,000-yr-old tombs in Inner Mongolia

HOHHOT — Archaeologists announced that they discovered a 2,000-year-old tomb complex on the Xilin Gol Prairie, northern China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The site consists of 13 tombs of Xianbei ethnic group, nomadic minorities that used to dominate northern China, according to the regional institute of cultural relics and archaeology.

Most of the tombs contained wooden coffins, and colored drawing can be found on the exterior of some coffins.

Eleven tombs date back to the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), and the remaining were from the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-537). Archaeologists found most of the tombs had been raided. More than 80 burial objects were also excavated such as pottery, gold, jewelry, bronze mirrors, coins and iron weapons.

“It’s rare to discover a tomb complex in the vast Xilin Gol Prairie. The new discovery is significant for future studies on the burial customs of Xianbei ethnic group,” said Dong Xinglin, who heads the archaeological team.

—Xinhua

Tiny museum with big names gets back to Earth after half-year tour on ISS

NOVOSIBIRSK — A space museum of micro-miniatures designed by a craftsman from Siberia’s Novosibirsk city, Vladimir Aniskin, wrapped up its half-a-year tour on board the International Space Station before getting back home last week.

“At last my dream has come true — the space museum visited the ISS. It was the first museum outside the Earth,” Aniskin said.

“The space museum arrived on board the ISS on 23 March, 2018, spending 196 days there,” the craftsman told TASS on Monday.

The museum fits in the palm of your hand and is a piece of charoite, on which exhibits and a magnifying glass are installed. It consists of ten exhibits, among them Yuri Gagarin’s portrait painting can be found on the exterior of your hand and is a piece of jet, preventing harm to innocent civilians and the brave operators who make explosives safe.

The robots will provide the army with the latest bomb disposal technology and will prove to be trusted companions both on UK streets and in deadly conflict zones.”

Col Zac Scott, who heads the military bomb disposal branch, said: “Remote Control Vehicles are critical to the safe conduct of Explosive Ordnance Disposal tasks.”

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Guardsiola in new territory with English title fight

MANCHESTER (United Kingdom) — Pep Guardiola ends the calendar year with his Manchester City side embroiled in what has suddenly become a thrilling title race for the first time in his Premier League managerial career.

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss, seven times a league champion in the three countries in which he has managed, takes City to Leicester on Boxing Day trailing leaders Liverpool by four points.

There is also now unexpected pressure beneath him, with Tottenhams’s superb 6-2 win at Everton having hauled Mauricio Pochettino’s talented side to within two points of City.

It is a far cry from last season when, after 18 games, City held a commanding 11-point lead over second-placed Manchester United and were already, in the eyes of most pundits, as good as champions.

Twelve months earlier, in Guardiola’s first season in English football, City were seven points behind leaders Chelsea at the corresponding stage but in the middle of a run of poor form which would eventually see them end the season in third place, 15 points behind Antonio Conte’s title-winners.

City’s shock 3-2 home defeat by struggling Crystal Palace on Saturday has certainly put a new perspective on the league table heading into the busy holiday period which culminates with current leaders Liverpool visiting the Etihad to face City a week on Thursday (January 3).

For the first time since his days at Barcelona, Guardiola currently finds himself caught up in a potentially tense and exciting title race, with all that entails.

Former Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson, whose Palace side inflicted such an unexpected blow on City at the weekend, believes, however, that Guardiola will have all the necessary perspective to cope with a rare setback.

‘Long way to go yet’

“Pep Guardiola is a very intelligent guy; it means that they haven’t caught up those four points but he knows there are 20 matches left to play and one of those is going to be against Liverpool,” said Hodgson.

“I don’t think he will be concerned about that and he’ll know that no matter how Liverpool play they will come up against a game like this. They will go somewhere and someone will beat them against the odds. There is a long way to go yet.”

Certainly, Guardiola’s three seasons in Germany offered him little in terms of preparation for a close, down to the wire title race, with Bayern winning the league by at least double digits in points in each of his three seasons — including 2014 when Munich beat now Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp’s Borussia Dortmund into second place by a staggering 19 points.

But his four seasons in charge of Barcelona were more competitive, given Barca’s intense rivalry with Real Madrid, although in his first and last seasons he won and lost the league, respectively, by nine points.

In 2009/10, however, Barca pipped Real by just three points — Guardiola’s closest title race to date — and retained their crown 12 months later; this time by only four: Now Guardiola faces several selection dilemmas over a holiday period which also includes a trip to a suddenly resurgent Southampton before the showdown with Klopp.

Holding midfielder Fernandinho missed the Palace defeat with a slight injury concern and proved a major miss, while Guardiola opted to start Kevin De Bruyne and Sergio Aguero — two key attacking players who are returning from injury lay-offs — on the bench. The pair are likely starters at Leicester, although their manager will clearly also be looking ahead to the Liverpool game in which victory has now taken on added importance for his side. Perhaps more alarming for Guardiola was the performance of England right-back Kyle Walker against Palace, with the City defender badly at fault for two of the opposition’s three goals.

The City manager may opt to play John Stones in that position to take Walker out of the firing line.—AFP

Benitez says Newcastle need ‘another miracle’ to stay up

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Rafael Benitez believes it will be “another miracle” if his Newcastle side retain their Premier League status.

The Spanish manager said finishing 10th last season was an extraordinary performance but added that would be matched simply by beating the drop this term given the fact that the Magpies’ relegation rivals had all spent £100 million ($126 million), or whatever.

“Tottenham have spent £100 million, Liverpool £100 million, everyone one of them, during the summer, so we can make more mistakes,” explained Benitez.

Newcastle are currently five points above the bottom three heading into the busy holiday period after last weekend’s goalless draw with Fulham.

“I’m trying to tell everyone, realise where we are, realise what we have to do and if we do well, fine, we can finish 10th or whatever.

“But if we think we have to beat these teams which have spent £100 million ($126 million), every one of them, during the summer, if we think we can beat them easily every game, no chance. We are wrong, 100 per cent.”—AFP

Colombia midfielder Cardona joins Mexico’s Pachuca

MEXICO CITY — Colombia international midfielder Edwin Cardona has joined Pachuca on loan after parting ways with Boca Juniors, the Mexican club said on Monday.

“Welcome to the cradle of Mexican football, Edwin Cardona,” Pachuca said in a social media post, without providing details of the move. Cardona, who is contracted with Pachuca’s Liga MX rivals Monterrey until December 2020, struggled for regular first-team opportunities during an 18-month loan spell at Boca. He was left out of the matchday squad for both legs of the club’s Copa Libertadores final defeat to rivals River Plate in November and December. Boca subsequently declined to take up an option of securing the 26-year-old on a permanent deal.—Xinhua

Manchester City’s Spanish manager Pep Guardiola reacts on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Crystal Palace at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north-west England on 22 December, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Colombia’s Edwin Cardona joins Pachuca as wide-right midfielder on loan from Argentina’s Boca Juniors. PHOTO: Pachuca