

Vice President U Nyan Tun visits industrial park in Ayutthaya



Vice President U Nyan Tun looks around rice quality promotion factory of Khao C.P Co., Ltd.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan— Vice President U Nyan Tun visited Rojana Industrial Park in Ayutthaya, Bangkok in Thailand on Saturday.

Managing director of the industrial park welcomed the vice president

and explained the facilities. U Nyan Tun and delegation visited small and medium scaled industries and power supply system to these factories.

Rojana Industrial Park established in 1988 on 15,000 acres of land has

employed 120,000 workers to manufacture auto parts, electronic gadgets, machine parts and food items.

Vice President and party then looked around Panasonic Electric Works (Ayutthaya) Co.,Ltd, F&N Dairies (Thai Land)Co.,Ltd

and Khao C.P Co.,Ltd.

U Nyan Tun and party arrived back Yangon International Airport in the evening and were welcomed by Yangon region's chief minister and officials of Thai embassy in Yangon. —MNA

Little danger of Yangon's housing bubble deflating soon, say market experts

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 31 Jan— Despite dire predictions of the imminent bursting of the Yangon property bubble, some housing agents and experts have rejected the hypothesis that Yangon's real estate boom is about

to burst.

Although housing prices skyrocketed in many parts of Yangon, the country's commercial city, in the past few years, the overheated property market has cooled with sales slumping since the start of this year.

But housing prices remain unchanged.

"I don't believe the forecasts on the property market, which is stalling, may cause housing bubbles to burst," Yangon-based economist U Khin Maung Nyo told The Global New Light of Myanmar.

"House sales might be muted this month compared to last month. There may be a seemingly stagnant property market over a few months, but it is impossible to exert downward pressure on prices in the market", he said.

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Photo of a building under construction and workers near downtown Yangon.—PHOTO: YE MYINT

President U Thein Sein's radio message to be broadcast on 1-2 February

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Feb — A radio message by U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will be broadcast on radio on 1 and 2 February. Myanmar Radio, Mandalay FM, Pyinsawady FM, Shwe FM, Cherry FM, Padamya FM, FM Bagan and Thazin Radio will broadcast the message at 7 am, 11 am, 6 pm and 8 pm.

The full text of the message in Myanmar Language will be published in Myanmar dailies to be published on 1 February.—MNA

Joint Press Conference The 3rd Myanmar—Thailand Joint High-level Committee Meeting for the Comprehensive Development in the Dawei Special Economic Zone and Its Related Project Areas

30 January 2015 Bangkok, Thailand

The Third Myanmar-Thailand Joint High-level Committee Meeting regarding the Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ) was held in Bangkok on January 30, 2015.

The meeting was co-chaired by His Excellency M.R. Pridiyathorn Devakula, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, and His Excellency U Nyan Tun, Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

During the meeting, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to the development of the Dawei SEZ, located in the Taninthayi Region in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. With a total size of 196 square kilometers, Dawei SEZ is a strategic development project, with the objective to sustainably boost the economic development of Myanmar and the region overall.

Showcasing the commitment to Dawei SEZ and the strong ties between the two countries, His Excellency M.R. Pridiyathorn Devakula stated that "Today bilateral relations between Thailand and Myanmar are at their best. Given its scale and economic significance, the successful implementation of Dawei SEZ project will further enhance our cooperation to a new height, not only for mutual benefit of our

two countries, but also for the entire region".

As part of the Joint High-level Committee Meeting, an Official Tri-lateral Meeting with Japan also took place, during which Japan offered its support to the development of Dawei SEZ and to contribute financial and technical assistance.

In order to accelerate job creation in the short term show the benefits of the project to the local communities and kick-start the development of Dawei SEZ, an initial phase will first be launched. The initial phase, which is expected to see construction works start in 2015, will consist of industrial estate (up to 27 km²), a two-lane road between Dawei SEZ and Thailand, initial township for the workers, LNG terminal, telecom landline, power plant, small port, and water reservoir.

Exclusive negotiations are currently ongoing with a Thai consortium regarding the concession agreements for this initial phase development.

In parallel, a long-term master plan for Dawei SEZ is being developed, with the support of Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) from Thailand. This long-term master plan will be in line with the initial phase development and will include

(See page 3)

GGP provides over US\$ 1.1 million for construction of schools, bridge, health centres

YANGON, 31 Jan—Mr Tateshi Higuchi, Ambassador of Japan and chairmen of the committees from regions and states signed grant contracts for six projects on 27 January.

Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme will provide US\$ 1,115,251 to regions and states.

GGA gave US\$ 271,893 to construction of Basic Education High School to admit over 1,200 students in Tonzang Township, Chin State; US\$ 343,494 to construction of BEHS to give seats to 760 students in Falam, Chin State; \$ 119,413 to construction of a rural health centre to provide health care services to local people in Aibur Village, Thantlang



Township, China State; \$ 127,142 to construction of BEPS No 2 to admit 320 students in Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State; \$ 71,617 to construction

of a rural health branch to give medical treatment to the local people in Yaythaung Village in Sedoktara Township, Magway Region; and \$ 181,692 for

construction of a bridge for smooth transport of local people in Ketkyayseik Village in Kyaukkyi Township, Bago Region.

GGP/GNLM

Hockey players under sports trial for taking joint training in Malaysia



YANGON, 31 Jan—A tentatively selected hockey team was formed with 20 players from Army, five from Navy, two from Air Force, two hockey technical officers of the Ministry of Sports and one from Theinbyu Youth team, totalling 30.

Arrangements are being made for a one-month joint training of Myanmar team with Malaysian clubs in Malaysia.

Twenty players and five manager and coaches of the tentatively selected team will be chosen to take joint training in Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Myanmar team will play at least 10 tune-up matches with Malaysian teams.

The remaining players of Myanmar team will be under training.

Reporter Than Swe (Pabedan)

Construction of low-cost housing in Yangon's suburb Shwepyitha 60% completed

YANGON, 31 Jan—Construction of a low-cost housing in Shwepyitha, one of Yangon's suburban townships, is 60 per cent complete and the project is expected to be finished in March, according to the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

The project was implemented the previous year.

It will have 192 apartment units, an official from the YCDC engineering department said.

"Those apartments will also be sold to the public at around K10 million

each through a draw-lot system this year," the official added.

But Ma Thuza, a company accountant, said that in her opinion the price of a low-cost apartment "should be lower than K10 million".

The YCDC on Tuesday provided permission to buy condominium apartments to winners among applicants for the Shwemyara Condominium in Mingala Taungnyunt Township in Yangon.

Construction of this joint venture project be-

tween the YCDC and Ngapali Construction Co., Ltd is 80 per cent completed. It has 76 apartments at 2,203 sq ft and 2,683.5 sq ft, pricing out at K264.36 million and K322.02 million, according to the department.

The YCDC is also developing an "affordable housing" project in Dagon Seikkan Township in Yangon, which will be sold at more than K20 million each.

It also has a plan to develop additional housing in the future.

GNLM

Book show and sales attracts readers in Tatkon

TATKON, 31 Jan—Organized by Shwe Thinkha education foundation, the book show and sales 2015 was held at Alin Ein library in Anawrahta Ward, Tatkon, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

Over 3,000 books are displayed at the show from 30 January to 8 February.

The book show and sales is aimed at enabling the readers to save time and money in purchase of books in cities like Yangon, writer Maung Taw Lu (U Po Than Win) of Yangon told media.

Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)



Wellwishers donate cash to fund of education foundation

TATKON, 31 Jan—A ceremony to donate books to libraries was held in conjunction with the ceremony to set up the fund for library at Alin Ein Library in Anawrahta Ward, Tatkon, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 30 January morning.

Shwe Thinkha education foundation donated books and journals to eight libraries.

Officials of the foundation presented prizes

es to the winners in the Thukhabon community welfare, essay contests (central level) in World Teacher's Day and the International Literacy Day.

U Tun Oo and family of Meiktila donated K 540,000, U Po Than Win and family of Yangon K 700,000 and Lt-Col Maung Maung Tin (Rtd) and family K100,000 to Shwe Thinkha education foundation.

Tin Soe Lwin (IPRD)



YCDC members, applicants are seen at sale of apartment through draw lot system at the City Hall in Yangon.—PHOTO: KHAING THANDA LWIN

NATIONAL

Protest students reach Chauk Township



Student protesters continue marching against National Education Law in Chauk Township, Magwe region, on January 31.—MNA

CHAUK, 31 Jan— Students who are protesting against National Education Law reached Chauk, Magwe region, on Saturday morning after an overnight stay in Kyaukpataung

Township.

They continued marching into Chauk Township after defying suggestions of the elder and officials of Chauk Township near the milepost 391/2 to make

protest legally.

About 100 protesters, including monks, stayed at the monastery of Htanchaukpin village at 7 p.m. for night.

MNA

Myanmar, Laos hold collaboration meeting on friendship bridge project

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan— Senior ministers of Myanmar and Laos held a collaboration meeting Saturday on the project of friendship bridge that crosses Mekong River.

The ministerial meeting at the Myanmar side was attended by U Kyaw Lwin, Union Minister for Construction, U Sao Aung Myat, Shan State's Chief Minister and U Sai Naw Kham, Transport Minister of Shan State government.

At the meeting, officials from both sides elaborated the construction project, including border control facilities and electricity supply for the bridge.

Laos is now constructing border control facilities and a road up to Xiengkong.

Union minister and officials looked into the construction of bridge which will link Kyaing Lap Township of Tachileik District, Shan State and Laungnamtha Province of Laos.

The iron bridge will be 1,181 feet in length and 20 feet wide with two-lane motorway capable of withstanding 75 tons of load per vehicle.

Upon completion of the bridge, the two countries will see smooth and speedy road transportation and the bridge will contribute towards swift flow

of commodities and better economic development.

Myanmar and Laos had sought the possibility of constructing the friendship bridge across the Mekong River in order to facilitate and enhance road connectivity between the two countries on the occasion of a visit to Myanmar of Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong in July 2011.

Myanmar and Laos established diplomatic ties in July 1955. However, the volume of trade between the two countries is still low compared to that with Laos' other neighbouring countries.

MNA

Myanmar Maritime University hosts scholarship presentation ceremony

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan— A scholarship award presentation ceremony took place at Myanmar Maritime University in Yangon on Wednesday.

MJ Technology Co., Ltd from Japan presented scholarship awards of US\$ 600 each to 11 outstanding students. The presentation of scholarship awards is held annually.

The MJ Technology Co., Ltd which was re-

named from M JB Co., Ltd, employed 40 students graduated in engineering (port and harbour) to work in Japan.

Myanmar Maritime University under the Ministry of Transport made necessary arrangements for more than 960 graduates to get employed at 25 shipping companies, three private companies and other international maritime companies.

MNA

Little danger of Yangon's housing bubble deflating...

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"Despite slowing sales in the real estate market triggered by various measures to cool down the escalating housing prices, it is hard to see that there will be a drop in prices in the housing market this year," a senior property agent added.

Defending his belief, U Khin Maung Nyo pointed out no one wants to put their invested property on sale at low prices immediately as lands are irreplaceable.

"Myanmar's econo-

my is expected to continue to grow and the country is also expecting to more see vast throng of foreign investors in a range of sectors, including construction and hospitality, he continued.

Despite seeing increased interest in the booming property market, foreign developers and potential investors who are gathering information about the market tend to hesitate for an appropriate amount of time, some sources said.

Strengthening some

New salaries and fringe benefits to MPs with effect from April

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan— President U Thein Sein signed a law approved by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to amend the law on salaries and fringe benefits to members of parliament Saturday, with effect on April 1.

Salaries for members of parliament at different levels range from K1 mil-

lion to K300,000, the law stated.

MPs with a monthly salary of K300,000 will now receive K1 million those with K200,000 will receive K500,000; those with K200,000 will receive K500,000; and those with K100,000 will receive K300,000.

As for benefits packages, former K2,000 and K3,000 will now become K5,000, while former K5,000 will be doubled.

Income tax will be collected on salaries, while there will be a tax exemption on fringe benefits, according to the new law.

MNA

The 3rd Myanmar—Thailand...

(from page 1)

infrastructure such as a deep sea port and a highway connecting the Dawei SEZ with Thailand. It will also elaborate on phased industrial development plan.

To support the further development of Dawei SEZ, the Thai government would offer financial assistance to Myanmar for the Two-lane Road connecting DSEZ project to Myanmar-Thailand border

which will not only promote regional connectivity by completing the South-eastern Economic Corridor on the Myanmar side, but will also enhancing international investors' confidence in the Dawei SEZ project. Both countries agreed to continue exploring the possibility of such financial assistance, which may also bring in Japan as a financial contributor.

Both the Myanmar and Thai governments are committed to the develop-

ment of Dawei SEZ and fully support the project. His Excellency U Nyan Tun, concluded by stating that "The Dawei SEZ project will significantly accelerate the economic growth of Myanmar and ASEAN region while ensuring compliance with international best practice on social and environmental matters, create jobs and opportunities for international as well as local companies, and foster an even further cooperation between the countries in the region".

KNU/KNLA (PC) members return to legal fold



10 members of KNU/KNLA (PC)'s Battalion 709 seen in Myawady on 30 January.

MYAWADY, 31 Jan— A group of 10 member from KNU/KNLA (PC)'s Special Commando Battalion

709 returned to the legal fold together with three family members on Friday night.

The 10-member group led by Saw Black (a) Saw Win Myint handed over their arms including 10 small weapons, one mine and eight sets of equipment and ammunition to Police Lt-Col Moe Nyo, commander of Myawady District Police Force.

They were warmly welcomed by the district police commander and members and their families.

Tun Tun Oo
(Myawady Town)

RU's Physics Dept pays respect to old teachers



Physics students of Yangon University seen at their get-together dinner under the Thitpoke tree after paying respect to teachers.—MNA

YANGON, 31 Jan — Old students from all classes of the Physics Department of Yangon University paid respect to their teachers at the age of 65 and above on

Saturday on the university campus.

Among over 1500 old students majoring in Physics who attended the ceremony were Union Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe, Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr Ko Ko Oo, and Parliamentarian U Htay Oo.

Dr Htin Aung, on behalf of the teachers, gave admonition to his pupils and Parliamentarian U Htay Oo spoke words of thanks. After the respect paying ceremony, a dinner was hosted under the Thitpoke tree, a symbol of Yangon University.

Physics Department of Yangon University was established in 1920.—MNA

Myanmar to celebrate Children's Day and 100th Anniversary Birthday of Bogyoke Aung San on 13th Feb

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan — Myanmar will celebrate Children's Day and 100th Anniversary Birthday of Bogyoke Aung San on 13 February.

The collaboration meeting were held Saturday to celebrate the two events across the country. At the meeting, Dr Myat Myat Ohn Khin, Union Minister for Social Welfares, Relief and Resettlement, said the events are

aimed to develop national spirit in the mind of young generation and mimic Bogyoke Aung San who energetically tried for the country's independence.

The competitions of writing essays, articles and poems about the chronicle of Bogyoke Aung San will be started on 1 February, and prizes will be awarded on 13 February.

MNA

New Pun Creek bridge on Loikaw-Shadow Road in Kayah Sate



LOIKAW, 31 Jan — Chief Minister of Kayah State U Khin Maung Oo inspected the construction site of the Pun Creek bridge Saturday, where he heard briefings on progress of the construction presented by the chief engineer.

The 200 feet bridge is with a 24-foot motorway and a three-foot sidewalk on both sides. Constructed at a cost of about K620 million from the Kayah State's

Funds, the transport facility is said to withstand 60 tons of loads.

He also witnessed the issuance of National Registration Cards to local people from two villages in the township of Loikaw, Kayah State, under the Moe Pwint programme.

Chife Minister made a speech and urged local departments to fulfil the needs of villagers.

Kayah State IPRD

Commerce minister witnesses signing MoUs in Thailand

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Jan — Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint attended signing memorandums of understanding between Myanmar and Thailand in Tak province, on Thursday.

Before signing ceremony of these agreements, Union Minister and delegations attended the business meeting held at Centara Mae Sot Hill Resort.

At the meeting, Tak province governor explained Thai authorities' efforts in implementation of 'Sister City' between Mae Sot and Myawady, plans to open new Asia highway in July 2015, construction of second Mae Sot-Myawady bridge and cooperation in bilateral trades.

Officials from both sides signed Thailand-Myanmar Business Meeting 2015 Joint Statement.

Businesspersons from Tak province, Kayin state and Mon state signed MoUs for cooperation.

An MoU was also signed between Thonburi Holding Company Limited of Thailand and Ga Mone Pwint Co.,Ltd of Myanmar to set up a 200-bed private hospital in Tamwe Town-

ship, Yangon.

U Win Myint then attended 'Tak Border Trade Fair 2015' being held at Mae Sot municipality Stadium from 28 January to 1 February.

The event is aimed to offer both Thai and Burmese business operators an opportunity to meet and

talk about future trade partnership.

The organizers comprising the Ministry of Commerce, Tak Chamber of Commerce, and Mae Sot Municipality expect the fair to pave the way for future trade expansion between the two countries.

According to the Tak provincial governor, the border trade in this area grows by 20 percent each year on average.

MNA



Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint opens Tak Border Trade Fair 2015.—MNA

CDIA pledges financial assistance to heritage conservation project in Yangon

By: Khin Yadana
Photo: May Oo Moe

YANGON, 31 Jan — The Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA) has pledged US\$350,000 for a heritage conservation project in Yangon, saying it plans to carry out its pre-feasibility study in cooperation with the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) and the Yangon Heritage

Trust (YHT).

With the participation of international and local experts, the pre-feasibility study is expected to start in the first week of February and last six months.

The project will be of great help to upgrading historic buildings as well as delineating a more comprehensive heritage regeneration initiative among investors, architects and developers.

Dr Toe Aung of YCDC said, "Lack of knowledge has led to scores of heritage losses, for example ancient pagodas in Bagan," adding that great care should be taken as cultural heritage is prone to vulnerability.

YHT Chairman Dr Thant Myint U said ways should be sought to combine heritage conversation projects with cities development initiatives.



Japan says hostage negotiations with militants 'deadlocked'

TOKYO, 31 Jan — Efforts by Japan and Jordan to secure the release of two of their nationals held captive by Islamic State militants remain "deadlocked" and the situation remains highly unpredictable, Japanese officials said.

Militants had threatened to kill Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasaesbeh unless a would-be suicide bomber being held on death row in Amman was handed over by sunset on Thursday.

Japanese journalist Kenji Goto was also being held by the militants.

"The situation is deadlocked," Japan's deputy foreign minister, Yasuhide Nakayama, said in Jordan late on Friday according to Japanese public broadcaster NHK.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said in Tokyo on Saturday that the situation was unpredictable and that anything could happen, NHK reported.

"Anything could happen," he said. "We can't predict it at all. While preparing for every situation, I want to make every effort for Mr. Goto's release."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga arrived at the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office on Saturday afternoon, and the prime minister is on standby to receive regular updates on the situation, NHK said.

Jordan's army said on Friday state agencies were "working round the clock".

An audio message purportedly from Goto said the pilot would be killed if Jordan did not free Sajida al-Rishawi, jailed for her role in a 2005 suicide bomb attack that killed 60 people in Amman.

The message extended a previous deadline set on Tuesday in which Goto said he would be killed within 24 hours if al-Rish-



Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yasuhide Nakayama speaks to the media in front of the Japanese Embassy in Amman on 28 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

awi was not freed.

The hostage crisis comes as Islamic State, which has already released videos showing the beheadings of five Western hostages, is coming under increased military pressure from US-led air

strikes and by Kurdish and Iraqi troops pushing to reverse the Islamist group's territorial gains in Iraq and Syria.

Abe has repeatedly said Japan would not give in to terrorism and would keep cooperating with the

international community.

The hostage crisis erupted after Abe announced in Cairo \$200 million in non-military aid for countries opposing Islamic State, but his government has rejected suggestions it acted rashly

and stressed the assistance was humanitarian.

Goto went to Syria in late October. According to friends and business associates, he was attempting to secure the release of Haruna Yukawa, his friend and fellow Japanese citizen who was captured by Islamic State in August.

In the first video purportedly of Goto, released just over a week ago, a black-clad masked figure with a knife said Goto and Yukawa would be killed within 72 hours if Japan did not pay Islamic State \$200 million.

A video last Saturday appeared to show Goto with a picture of a decapitated Yukawa, saying his captors' demands had switched to the release of al-Rishawi. Tuesday's video featured an audio track over a still picture that appeared to show Goto holding a picture of Kasaesbeh.

Reuters

India testfires longest-range nuclear-capable missile

NEW DELHI, 31 Jan — India on Saturday successfully testfired its home-made, nuclear-capable, longest-range Agni-5 ballistic missile off the coast of eastern Odisha state, sources said. "The missile, with a range of 5,000 km, was testfired from a mobile launcher at the Integrated Test Range. The testfiring was successful," the sources said. The three-stage missile can travel faster than a bullet and can carry 1,000 kg nuclear weapon, but it can be fired only on orders from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This was the third successful test of the missile with the previous in 2012 and 2013, though the development started five years back.

Xinhua



A security staffer sits outside a book store during the 39th Calcutta International Book Fair in Calcutta, capital of eastern Indian state West Bengal, on 30 Jan, 2015. The 39th Calcutta International Book Fair runs from 27 January to 8 February.—XINHUA

National workshop on reproductive health closes in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, 31 Jan — A two-day workshop on a plan of action to address issues related to Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), including HIV or AIDS, and teenage pregnancy in the country has been closed, the state broadcaster Ridio Television Brunei (RTB) reported on Friday.

Sixty participants who are school leaders from across the country received certificates from the Acting Director General at the Ministry of Education, Awang Haji Abdul Rahim bin Haji Derus.

During the two-day course, they discussed measures already implemented or are being implemented by several government and non-government agencies in preventing and eliminating social issues.

The issues included high-risk behaviour, prevention of STI and pregnancy among young girls.

There were also talks and briefings on the status of and basic on STI including HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy in the country. —Xinhua

Deadly clash in Philippines a setback to peace with Muslim rebels

KUALA LUMPUR, 31 Jan — A deadly clash between Philippines police and Muslim rebels in the south of the country has dealt a temporary setback to peace talks, Manila's chief peace negotiator said on Saturday, appealing for renewed efforts to keep the process on track.

The government has described last Sunday's clash, which shattered a three-year ceasefire, as a "misencounter" during a bid by police to arrest two wanted militants who had

taken refuge with Moro Islamic Liberation Front fighters. Forty four police commandos were killed in the assault. "We have been temporarily set back by the Mamasapano incident," Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, the government's chief peace negotiator, told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur.

"Please stay the course with us," she said. "The other alternative is simple unthinkable ... I don't think we want to go back to the 1970s."

Government and rebel

peace panels met in Malaysia on Friday to sign protocols for the surrender of weapons by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in a bid to underscore their commitment to the peace process, brokered by Kuala Lumpur.

The two sides signed an agreement in March 2014, ending a conflict that has killed more than 120,000 people, displaced 2 million and stunted growth in one of the poorest but resource-rich regions in the country.—Reuters



Children cry in front of the casket for their father, one of the slain members of the Special Action Force who were killed in a clash with Muslim rebels, during a service inside a police headquarters in Taguig city, south of Manila on 30 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

Russia says nuclear arms to keep military edge over NATO, United States

Moscow, 31 Jan — Russia's top general said on Friday a strong nuclear arsenal will ensure military superiority over the West as Moscow forges ahead with a multi-billion dollar plan to modernise its forces by 2020.

Russia, facing a likely recession because of a fall in oil prices and sanctions over Ukraine, must deal with new forms of Western aggression, including economic confrontation, said Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov.

But despite the deep economic woes, he said the Russian military would receive more than 50 new intercontinental nuclear missiles this year.

"Support for our strategic nuclear forces to ensure their high military capability combined with ... growth of the military potential of the general forces will assure that (the



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov watch military exercises in Russia's Zabaykalsky region on 17 July, 2013.—REUTERS

United States and NATO) do not gain military superiority over our country," said Gerasimov.

Tensions between Russia and the West have risen over the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where the United States and Europe

say Moscow is fuelling an insurgency by sending in troops and weapons. Moscow denies this.

Russia has criticized NATO expansion in eastern Europe and President Vladimir Putin has accused the Ukrainian army, which

is fighting separatists in eastern Ukraine, of being puppets of NATO with a policy of "containing" Russia.

Russian war planes have increasingly been spotted over Europe in recent months. Britain sum-

moned the Russian ambassador on Thursday to complain about two Russian long-range bombers that flew over the English Channel, forcing British authorities to reroute civil aircraft.

Russia promises to push through by 2020 a more than 20-trillion-ruble (190.27 billion pounds) military modernization plan conceived by Putin, and military expenditures will remain unchanged even in the face of a growing economic crisis that has cut the budgets of other ministries. The modernisation project aims to revamp Russia's weapons systems to assure that 70-100 percent of the armed forces weapons and equipment has been modernized by the end of the decade — a plan confirmed by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.

"We plan to fulfil the government armament programme and reach by 2020

the intended quantities of modern weapons systems," he said at the meeting.

Russia keeps its state nuclear capabilities shrouded in secrecy, but its military has approximately 8,500 warheads in total, including those non-deployed — some 1,000 more than the United States possesses — according to a study last year by the Centre for Arms-Control and Non-Proliferation.

Speaking against a backdrop of rising prices brought on in part by a weaker rouble, Gerasimov said Russia had to deal with new kinds of Western aggression.

"Western countries are actively using new forms of aggression, combining military as well as non-military means. Political, economic and information methods are also being used," *Interfax* news agency cited him as saying.

Reuters

Australia wants clear UN rules on extended searches after MH370

TORONTO, 31 Jan — Australia, which has led a nearly year-long hunt for a missing Malaysian airliner, wants the United Nations' aviation agency to issue clear guidelines on who should be responsible for such searches once rescue efforts are called off.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, with 239 mostly Chinese people on board, was en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing last March when it went missing in the world's greatest aviation mystery.

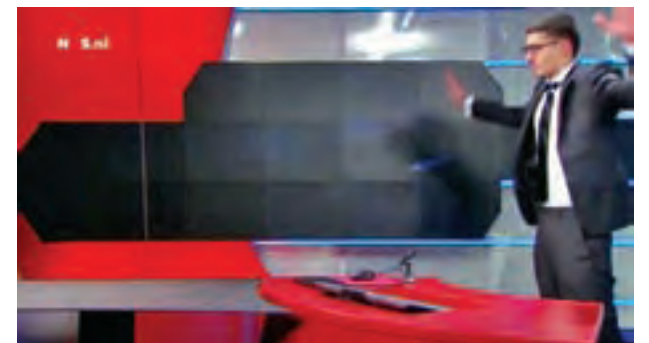
More than two dozen countries have been involved in the air, sea and underwater search for the *Boeing 777*. The current phase is focused on the sea floor about 1,600 km (1,000 miles) west of the Australian city of Perth.

"The potential for difficulties to arise is likely to exist (when an) aircraft is believed to have gone missing in a search and rescue zone that is not the responsibility of the State with the onus to conduct the investigation," Australia said in documents released ahead

of a major UN International Civil Aviation Organization conference on airline safety in Montreal on 2-5 February.

"In the case of MH370, the aircraft was believed to have gone missing in Australia's search and rescue zone but Malaysia had responsibility for the accident investigation (under ICAO rules). "In the event that a similar tragedy happens in the future... without ICAO guidance, there may be uncertainty on how to proceed." The Australia-based Joint Agency Coordination

Center (JACC) is running the search operations which involve Australian, Chinese and Malaysian search equipment. Australia had set aside A\$80-A\$90 million last year for the search, already the most expensive ever undertaken. Malaysia has said it would split the costs. Malaysia declared the flight's disappearance an accident on Thursday, clearing the way for airlines to pay compensation to victims' families. Malaysia said it, China and Australia remained committed to the search.—*Reuters*



A man surrenders to the police in a TV studio of Dutch national broadcaster NOS in Amsterdam in this still image taken from a 29 Jan, 2015 video.—REUTERS

Hostage-taker at Dutch TV had no terrorist links: police

AMSTERDAM, 31 Jan — A man who forced his way into the studios of Dutch national broadcaster NOS and demanded to go on live television had no known links to terrorist organizations and acted alone, police said on Friday.

During the incident on Thursday evening the 19-year-old took a hostage, waving a replica pistol and demanding to address the nation, apparently about a conspiracy theory. Television footage showed the youth, who wore a suit, offering no resistance when police arrested him at gunpoint.

Police said on Friday he had admitted fabricating claims of having explosives and belonging to a 'hackers' organization. "There is no evidence of any connection with other events in the Netherlands or abroad," a police statement said.

No one was harmed in the incident in Hilversum, 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Amsterdam. But it raised questions about the effectiveness of security measures in the wake of the deadly attacks on satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.

It also forced the NOS off the air for the 8 pm news — the most widely viewed evening news programme in the country.

The suspect, whose name is not being released due to Dutch privacy laws, was to be arraigned in a closed court hearing later on Friday.

Police spokeswoman Hilde Bakker said the man faces charges of kidnapping and making threats of violence. Dutch media identified the man was a first year student at the University of Delft, and quoted classmates saying he led a rich fantasy life.—*Reuters*

NATO set to create new joint units in eastern Europe

BRUSSELS, 31 Jan — NATO defence ministers are expected to agree next week to set up command units, staffed with national and NATO soldiers, in six eastern European allies as part of a new strategy in response to the Ukraine crisis, NATO's chief said on Friday.

Creating the units in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the three Baltic countries is one of the most concrete steps NATO has taken to show that the alliance will protect its eastern allies, some of which are nervous about Russian intentions following Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg denied

the creation of the units could be considered provocative by Russia.

"It is completely within all our international obligations and what we are doing is defensive and it is proportionate," he told *Reuters* in an interview.

The posting of small numbers of NATO soldiers at existing bases in eastern European countries falls short of requests by Poland to have a large NATO base on its soil but creates a symbolic NATO presence and would help the alliance to reinforce the countries rapidly in a crisis.

A NATO diplomat said the units were expected to consist of 40-50 people, split roughly equally between

soldiers from the host nation and those from other NATO allies. The units will organise exercises and plan for NATO reinforcement if required.

NATO is working on setting up a rapid reaction force, with some elements able to deploy within two days, that could be sent to eastern Europe in a crisis.

Stoltenberg said the situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine was getting worse and separatists were gaining some ground thanks to "heavy support" they had received from Moscow.

"They have received heavy equipment during a long period of time, hundreds of new pieces of heavy equipment, tanks,

rocket systems, artillery and additionally we have seen Russian forces in eastern Ukraine," he said.

"This is in violation of the Minsk ... ceasefire agreements and it undermines the efforts of creating a negotiated peaceful solution based on the Minsk agreements," he said, referring to a peace deal reached in September in the Belarus capital.

Russia denies having soldiers in eastern Ukraine.

Stoltenberg said NATO would remain the "strongest military alliance in the world," but Russia's spending, including on nuclear weapons, showed Moscow was determined to improve its capabilities.

Reuters

WORLD

Russia wants UN Security Council help on conflict zone flight risk

TORONTO, 31 Jan — Russia is calling on the United Nations Security Council to help protect civilian jets from anti-aircraft weapons after the downing of a Malaysian airliner in Ukraine last year.

The Russian position comes after it dismissed proposals by the UN's aviation body, the International Civil Aviation Organization

(ICAO), as "superficial."

The Security Council is much more powerful than Montreal-based ICAO, a specialised agency that sets safety standards for global aviation. Its guidelines typically become regulatory requirements in its 191 member states.

ICAO needs "a mechanism of cooperation with the UN Security Council, state

military authorities and military-political unions in order to timely detect potential threats to civil aviation flight safety and to respond to these threats," said Russia's Interstate Aviation Committee, which oversees civil aviation in the former Soviet Union.

Russia outlined its stance in documents released ahead of a major UN air safety conference in Montreal on 2-5 February. ICAO's proposal, which is on next week's agenda, has gotten US backing.

ICAO has been under pressure to come up with new systems to protect aircraft from risks in conflict zones after Malaysia Airlines MH17, flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down in Ukraine last July, killing all 298 people on board.

The incident occurred during fighting between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatist rebels in eastern

Ukraine. The United States said the plane was hit with a ground-to-air missile by rebels. Russia says a Ukrainian military aircraft downed it.

Last week, *Reuters* reported that the United States would back an ICAO proposal on flight safety over conflict zones, which would test a central website where states and agencies could publish public warnings about conflict zones.

Russia has not commented on that proposal, but in October the country lashed out in a paper obtained by *Reuters*, calling ICAO's ongoing work on conflict zones "superficial" and outside its mandate.

Russia is in an unusual position at ICAO. Blamed by the West for supplying rebels with anti-aircraft missiles, a charge it denies, it must still work closely with Ukraine and other powers at ICAO to keep the global aviation system running smoothly.—*Reuters*

Mexico tests DNA of babies who survived blast in search for parents



A crew member works to clear debris the day after a deadly gas truck explosion ripped through a maternity hospital in Mexico City, on 30 Jan, 2015.—*REUTERS*

MEXICO CITY, 31 Jan — Plunged into chaos just hours after entering this world, nine babies found alive after a gas blast in a Mexican maternity hospital underwent DNA tests on Friday in a bid to reunite them with their parents.

Thursday's blast devastated the hospital on the western edge of Mexico City, sending a fireball into the air and killing a nurse and two infants. But dozens of people, including mothers and newborns, who were inside at the time survived, many cut by broken glass.

"We have nine DNA tests pending," Mexico City Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said. "There are

parents who have identified their children, but as the babies did not have bracelets on, we have to follow a protocol to identify them."

Mancera said several babies survived because their mothers sheltered them with their own bodies during the blast.

A leak in a hose from a gas truck, which was fueling the hospital's tanks, was believed to have triggered the explosion, officials said.

Many areas of Mexico City have no mains gas supply and rely on deliveries from gas trucks. Mancera said the gas truck company involved had been working in Mexico City since 2007.

—*Reuters*

US's Kerry to visit Ukraine next week — State Department

WASHINGTON, 31 Jan — US Secretary of State John Kerry will visit Kiev on Thursday for talks with President Petro Poroshenko and other Ukrainian officials, the US State Department said on Friday.

President Barack Obama this week voiced deep

concern about renewed fighting between Russian-backed separatist and government forces in eastern Ukraine and said the United States is considering all options short of military action to isolate Russia.

"The Secretary's visit will highlight the United

States' steadfast support for Ukraine and its people," the State Department said in a statement. It said Kerry will then travel to Germany from on 6 to 8 February for the 51st Munich Security Conference. While in Munich, he will meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lav-

rov, US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters.

While Psaki did not provide any detailed description of the subjects they will discuss, they are likely to include Ukraine, Syria and nuclear negotiations with Iran.

—*Reuters*

Ukraine peace talks aborted as civilians die in east

DONETSK, (Ukraine)/MISK, 31 Jan — Civilians were killed on both sides in heavy fighting in eastern Ukraine on Friday, while an attempt to reopen peace talks in neighbouring Belarus was aborted before it began.

Rebel delegates flew to the Belarus capital Minsk, only to announce that no talks would take place on Friday and they were flying straight back to Moscow. Any talks would be the first since a five-month-old ceasefire collapsed with a new rebel advance last week.

The main rebel stronghold Donetsk echoed to the sound of heavy artillery fire, including salvos from multiple rocket launchers and heavier thuds from artillery coming from the direction of the airport, a constant battlefield.

A *Reuters* cameraman in Donetsk saw four covered

bodies near a cultural centre that had been hit by artillery while residents were queuing outside for humanitarian aid. A fifth body lay in a badly-damaged car nearby. A woman was weeping by one of the bodies. A kilometre (half mile) away, a sixth dead person lay where a trolleybus had been hit.

The separatists said the total death toll in those two strikes was seven, blaming government forces. Kiev said the shelling was carried out by the rebels to ruin the chance of peace talks. Both sides have made similar allegations throughout the conflict, which are impossible to verify.

"We are already used to this artillery and there's nothing we can do about it. Our boys are defending us," said Alla, a shopkeeper in downtown Donetsk.

In Debaltseve, east of

Donetsk, seven civilians were killed on Friday by separatist shelling of their homes, regional police chief Vyacheslav Abroskin said in a Facebook post. Earlier he reported another seven civilians killed in and around the town in the previous 24 hours. The government-held town is a key rail and road junction in the east. It and nearby Vuhlehirsk have come under fierce attack from rebels encircling government garrisons there, with water and electricity supplies cut off.

In the nearby rebel-held frontline town of Horlivka, eight civilians were killed in rocket attacks the previous day, the mayor's office said. Ukraine authorities did not comment. Kiev's military said five of its servicemen had also been killed and 23 wounded in fighting in the past 24 hours, describing the



Vladislav Deinego, representative of the separatist self-proclaimed Luhansk republic, speaks to the media before leaving Belarus at Minsk's International airport on 30 Jan, 2015. —*REUTERS*

situation in the conflict zone as "hard".

"They are repeatedly using Grad (missiles), artillery, mortars, tanks and rocket launchers," spokesman Andriy Lysenko said in a televised briefing.

The past week has seen by far the worst fighting since the ceasefire was signed five months ago, with rebels announcing an offensive that Kiev says amounts to a repudiation of the truce.

NATO and Kiev accuse Russia of sending thousands of troops to support the rebel advance with heavy weapons and tanks. Moscow denies it is directly involved in fighting over territory that the Kremlin refers to as "New Russia".

European Union foreign ministers agreed at an emergency meeting on Thursday to extend for another six months economic sanctions against Russia that had been due to expire soon. Washington has promised to tighten its own sanctions, which have helped feed an economic crisis in Russia.

The arrival of two rebel negotiators in Minsk was the

first sign of a reopening of negotiations since the rebels launched their latest advance.

But neither Kiev nor Moscow confirmed that they were ready for talks, and one of the rebel delegates, Denis Pushilin, swiftly announced they were heading back to Moscow. He said the rebels were prepared to press on with their offensive and seize more territory if artillery continues to fall on their cities.

"If shelling resumes, then we reserve for ourselves the right to continue the offensive and go to the very borders of Donetsk and Luhansk regions," he said, referring to the two provinces where separatists have declared "people's republics".

The Ukrainian foreign ministry said it was ready to participate in talks either Friday or Saturday but was waiting for an agreement on draft documents.—*Reuters*

PERSPECTIVES

Sunday, 1 February, 2015

A community should not retain divide and discrimination

By Aung Khin

Community represents all the people living in a particular area or region and sharing feeling and things belonging to a group by another. If groups of people or countries are presumed to be a community, no words such as 'divide' or 'discrimination' are worth to be used together with community.

ASEAN member countries are now making efforts to form a community at the end of 2015. However, some senior government officials have

forecast it would be able to operate as a single market in full swing till 2020. He pointed out income gaps and different economic levels.

While some member countries are standing atop in the list of world's most developed and wealthiest countries, few countries remain under poverty line. In this circumstance, financial and material supports of developing countries for least developed countries are very fundamental for development.

Adequate infrastructure has long been viewed as an important issue in economic development. Actually, better infrastructure, both equality and quantity, promotes income equality, while the link between investment and income distribution is weak.

There are strong evidences in many countries that infrastructure improves productivity and growth at both macroeconomic and microeconomic levels. Infrastructure development is an underlying reason to promote equality through enhancing access to productive opportunities by the poor and the disadvantaged.

Investment is the only reason to promote income equality. Enhancement of equality also relies on the policies to promote education, employment in formal sectors and financial development.

The development divide within ASEAN is multi-faceted, while a striking feature is differences in per capita incomes. The difference of per capita income among the member countries are up to 40 times among some countries. However, a community should not have divides and discrimination to ensure a solid unity.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

SELF - RELIANCE

U Kyi Mun

Attā hi attano' nātho'

- Gotama Buddha

Self - reliance means: Main faith in oneself, Overwhelming belief in oneself; sure of one's own capability; certainty about one's uprightness. Using One's own ability to do something or to attain some achievement.

S	for	Self-Confidence
E	for	Energetic Effort
L	for	Learning
F	for	Fortitude
L	for	Live & Love & Laugh
I	for	Inspiration
A	for	Audacity
N	for	Never-Giving-Up
C	for	Commitment
E	for	Earnest Fervour

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is the basic prerequisite for any worthwhile achievement. In the Bible, it is said:

"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can remove the mountain".

"Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid".

"Be strong and of good courage;

Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed."

ENERGETIC EFFORT

A Self-reliant person usually has:

- Positive Mental Attitude
- Can-Do-Spirit
- Habit of Going the Extra Mile

A Self-reliant person always follows the advice:

"Be resolute, fear no sacrifice, and surmount all difficulties to win victory."

Such a person is always active, earnest and effervescent.

LEARNING

A Self-reliant person is never complacent. Such a person is neither apathetic nor inert. He or she is always alert, agile, awake and careful. They usually have a strong passion to learn from practice, from life, from people, from experience and also from books. Since self-reliant people are more practical-minded than theoretical, or academic, they prefer to learn from trial and error, from testing, experimenting, from exploration,

from travelling and observing. Their motto is: **"Learn More & Earn More".**

FORTITUDE

Fortitude means calm courage, self-control, in the face of pain, danger or difficulty. They usually have FIRE in their heart, FIRE being:

- F = Fearlessness
- I = Iron Mind
- R = Resilience
- E = Endurance

Self-reliant people are usually "Do or Die" types; and they are not quitters, they love to be winners:

LIVE AND LOVE AND LAUGH

Self-reliant people are emotionally stable, strong and passionate. They have strong emotions to live and love and have laughter. They usually want to live to a full hilt, to love with great passion and to laugh heartily. They are people with inside-out strength and creative power. They have strong inclination to live and move and have their being in working hard, loving hard and playing hard.

INSPIRATION

Inspiration means: (1) influence arousing creative activity in literature, music, art, etc: Many poets and artists have drawn their inspiration from nature. (2) Person or thing that inspires, i.e. that puts uplifting thoughts, feelings, or aims into somebody with hope, enthusiasm, and confidence. Self-reliant people usually are both inspiring people as well as people who seek or receive inspiration from outside powers or influences or experiences.

AUDACITY

Synonyms of audacity are courage, bravery, boldness, temerity, valiance, fearlessness. Self-reliant people are more or less daring people. They usually dare to think, dare to do, dare to fight and dart to win. They also dare to sacrifice, to adventure, to explore, to test, to experiment, to create new and better ways of doing things and to innovate to get greater, better, faster, cheaper and more sustainable products, services or results or relationships.

NEVER GIVING UP

Self-Reliant people are people who:

"Never give up

Never give in

Stand up to it,

And fight it through."

**"Dare nobly,
Will strongly, and
Never falter in the
path of duty."**

**"Have the determination and
Capability to turn heaven and earth
up side-down in order to win victory."**

COMITMENT

Commitment means: Promise, Pledge, Undertaking. Self-reliant people are usually committed people, dedicated souls who promise to WALK THE TALK. Self-reliant people with commitment are people who are trustworthy, loyal, consistent who never waver in their commitment to deliver to deliver value. People with commitment are people who have self-respect, ability and willingness to be always upright, straight-forward, and honest under all circumstances.

EARNEST FERVOUR

Earnest means serious, determined; and fervor means strength or warmth of feeling, passion or effervescence.

A self-reliant person usually is a person whose heart is usually aglow with a fervor for some uncommon accomplishment, or even perfection. If he or she is in religion, he or she aims to be a saint; if in the military career, to be a top general, if in teaching to be a guru.

A self-reliant person usually aims to be a masterpiece.

CONCLUSION

A Self-reliant person usually becomes a first-rate person with superb character and competence who always strives for perfection.

U Kyi Mun residing in Yangon is a consultant of NAING Group Capital Co.,Ltd.

GOLD PRICE, FE RATE (31-1-2015)

Yangon Gold Price

Buying K699,000 per tical: Selling K700,000

Mandalay Gold Price

Buying K699,000 per tical: Selling K700,000

FE RATE

USD Buying K 1023: Selling K1028

SGD Buying K 761: Selling K771

Euro Buying K 1,145: Selling K1,170

ICT in brief and pragmatic application of E-Governance in Singapore

By Sayar Mya

(continued from 31-1-2015)

UN e-Government Development Index

The United Nations Public Administration Network conducts a bi-annual e-Government survey which includes a section titled “e-Government Readiness”. It is a comparative ranking of the countries of the world according to two primary indicators: (a) the state of e-government readiness; and (b) the extent of e-participation. Constructing a model for the measurement of digitized services, the Survey assesses the 193 member states of the UN according to a quantitative composite index of e-government readiness based on website assessment; telecommunication infrastructure and human resource endowment.

Top 50 countries that have been ranked according to the UN’s 2014 e-Government Development Index is as follows.

South Korea stands top with index 0.9462; followed by Australia with index 0.9103; and Singapore comes out third with index 0.9076.

Kuwait stands out at 49 slot with index 0.6268 and Colombia at 50 with index 0.6173.

As Singapore has taken up the third slot in the index, the writer of this article looked into the condition of e-government in that country.

Ministry of Finance as the e-Government Owner

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) in Singapore is the e-Government owner. As the owner, MOF sets the policy direction on use of ICT in Government, champions and provides funding for whole-of-government programs and projects.

Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) of Singapore as the Government CIO

Working closely with MOF, the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) is acting as the Chief Information Officer for the Government.

[Note: The term Info communications, or in short form, Infocomm or Infocomm(s) first emerged in the beginning of eighties at scientific conferences and then was gradually adopted in the 1990s by the players of telecommunications sector, including manufacturers, service providers, regulatory authorities and international organizations to clearly express their participation in the convergence process of the telecommunications and information technology sectors].

IDA provides technical advice and recommendations, master planning and project management services to MOF and other government agencies in the implementation and management of e-government programs.

IDA also plays a key role in defining government-wide ICT policies, standards and procedures and conceptualizing and managing whole-of-government projects.

Mr. Chan Cheow Hoe, Assistant Chief Executive (Government Chief Information Office) of IDA, currently holds the position of the Government CIO of Singapore. He champions and oversees whole-of-government ICT initiatives to maintain Singapore Government’s leadership position as an innovative user of infocomm technologies to provide public services; and to co-create and connect with its people. This includes “eGov2015 masterplan” and sectoral infocomm initiatives to support the transformation of the education, financial, tourism, trade, healthcare sectors.

Agency CIOs

Every government agency also appoints agency CIOs who are responsible for agency-specific infocomm technologies, infrastructure and services within their own organizations. Agency CIOs assist Permanent Secretaries of Ministries, Heads of Organs of State and Chief Executive Officers of Statutory Boards to oversee the following.

- Articulate the organization’s vision in the exploitation of ICT;
- Align ICT policies, standards, projects, systems and infrastructure with those of the central authority, to meet business needs and priorities;
- Provide leadership in the planning and prioritization of IT initiatives, in alignment with the “eGov2015 Masterplan”;
- Ensure appropriate management attention, manpower and monetary resources are given to implement infocomm technology initiatives.

Introduction of Singapore e-governance

In line with the “eGov Masterplans” over the past three decades, various e-Government programs have been or will be launched to realize Singapore visions.

These programs will cater to the needs of one or more groups of users including Citizens, Businesses and Government.

A number of such programs capitalize on the strong leadership of the “eGov Council”, the highest approving authority for e-Government in Singapore, to enable a whole-of-government transformation in ICT to realize greater integration and efficiency across government agencies.

Separately, government agencies also embark on developing their own e-Government initiatives, and this flexibility allows agencies to meet the different needs of their customers. These initiatives are also aligned with the vision and thrusts of “eGov Masterplans”.

The section describes some of the main programs that are ongoing in implementation or have been launched. Some programs have undergone revamp and enhancement. They are grouped according to user groups (Citizen, Business and Government). Program information can also be found under each “eGov Masterplan”.

Latest Program in Singapore

“OneInbox”: OneInbox is a one-stop official and trusted platform for citizens and businesses to receive electronic correspondences from the Government, in place of hardcopy letters.

“data.gov.sg” provides easy discovery of and access to publicly-available government datasets.

“mGov@Sg”: mGov@Sg is a one-stop mobile site that allows individuals and businesses to easily search for, identify, and access services provided by the Government.

Program for citizens (e-Government 2015)

- (1) “data.gov.sg” provides easy discovery of and access to publicly-available government datasets.
- (2) “OneInbox” is a one-stop official and trusted platform for individuals and businesses to receive electronic correspondences from the Government, in place of hardcopy letters.
- (3) To bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of government websites.

Program for citizens (e-Government 2010)

- (1) Charity Portal: To improve transparency within the charity sector as well as deliver efficient services for charities and donors.
- (2) E-Visitors: The e-Visitor program is an innovative program that consists of a spectrum of e-services with streamlined processes to make it more convenient for foreigners to visit and stay in Singapore.
- (3) Enhanced Immigration Automated Clearance System (eIACS): Increase the efficiency of citizens clearing immigration.

Programs for Businesses (iGov 2010)

- (1) “OneMap” is the first major application of the Singapore Geospatial Collaborative Environment (SG-SPACE) initiative.
- (2) UEN (Unique Entity Number): A common means of identifying establishments across public sector agencies. It will thus facilitating the effective sharing of basic non-confidential information on establishments across public sector agencies to enable the delivery of better and more personalized services.

Programs for Government (eGov 2015)

- (1) Cloud Computing for Government: The Government Cloud (G-Cloud) provides a resilient and secure ICT shared environment that allows government agencies to procure computing resources on-demand, with greater ease and speed.
- (2) Cube: Cube is a collaborative social-networking platform for public officers to exchange ideas, share knowledge and work together in a virtual Whole-of-Government space.
- (3) Whole-of-Government Enterprise Architecture (WoG EA): The program aims to establish a federated view of all government agencies’ enterprise architectures to optimize government ICT assets for greater cost savings or avoidance.

Programs for Government (eGov 2010)

- (1) Standard Operating Environment: To better harness the power of “infocomm technology” for Government by

creating a standardized environment for all public officers.

Program Index in Singapore

Programs for Government

- Cloud Computing for Government
- Cube
- Government Web Services Exchange
- Infocomm Security Masterplan
- Knowledge Management
- Public Service Infrastructure
- Singapore Government Enterprise Architecture (SGEA)
- Standard Operating Environment (SOE)
- Web Services
- Whole-Of-Government Enterprise Architecture (WoG EA)
- Workplace of the Future

Media Releases in Singapore

14 November 2013

Outstanding ICT Companies Recognized for their Innovations at the ASEAN ICT Awards 2013

Eighteen Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies across ASEAN countries were lauded for their innovations at the second ASEAN ICT Awards (AIC-TA) ceremony held this evening. Six of them were also crowned Gold recipients in their categories, further raising the bar of innovation, excellence and creativity.

17 June 2013

More Government Data to be Made Available to Spur Social Innovation and Create Greater Public Value

More government data to be made available to spur social innovation and create greater public value.

30 April 2013

e-Government Excellence Awards

Media release for the Government Excellence Awards 2013

Advantages in the pragmatic application of e-governance in other countries

The ultimate goal of the e-government is to be able to offer an increased portfolio of public services to citizens in an efficient and cost effective manner. E-government allows for government transparency. Government transparency is important because it allows the public to be informed about what the government is working on as well as the policies they are trying to implement. Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access. Many changes, such as marital status or address changes can be a long process and take a lot of paper work for citizens. E-government allows these tasks to be performed efficiently with more convenience to individuals. E-government is an easy way for the public to be more involved in political campaigns. It could increase voter awareness, which could lead to an increase in citizen participation in elections. It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without having to spend time, energy and money to get it.

E-government helps simplify processes and makes access to government information more easily accessible for public sector agencies and citizens. For example, the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles simplified the process of certifying driver records to be admitted in county court proceedings. Indiana became the first state to allow government records to be digitally signed, legally certified and delivered electronically by using Electronic Postmark technology. In addition to its simplicity, e-democracy services can reduce costs. Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Wal-Mart and NIC developed an online hunting and fishing license service utilizing an existing computer to automate the licensing process. More than 140,000 licenses were purchased at Wal-Mart stores during the first hunting season and the agency estimates it will save \$200,000 annually from service.

The anticipated benefits of e-government include efficiency, improved services, better accessibility of public services, sustainable community development and more transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

This article is merely a plain and simple presentation on “ICT in brief and pragmatic application of E-Governance in Singapore” to the esteemed readers of The Global New Light of Myanmar as well as government officials and business executives who are looking forward to have e-governance in our country to witness the advantages of its application.

Islamic State attacks Kurdish outposts across Iraq

BAGHDAD, 31 Jan — Islamic State militants struck at Kurdish forces southwest of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk on Friday, while bombs in Kirkuk, Baghdad, Samarra and Ramadi killed at least 27 people.

The Sunni Islamists have often battled Iraqi security forces and Shi'ite militias further south and west, but attacks in and around Kurdish-controlled Kirkuk have been less frequent.

Oil rose above \$49 a barrel on Friday because of the violence in the oil-rich region.

Police in Kirkuk Province said the militants launched mortars and attacked positions of Kurdish fighters in four districts.

Militants later detonated a car bomb at a hotel in Kirkuk city centre and clashed with peshmerga forces.

A peshmerga officer told *Reuters* his forces had recaptured the district of Mariam Bek but said clashes were ongoing in Tal al-Ward, Maktab Khalid and Mullah Abdullah.

Kurdish military sources said the peshmerga had repelled dawn attacks by Islamic State at different points along a more than 1,000 km frontline, including Khazer, west of Arbil, and Makhmur, further south.

"Maybe they are afraid the fight for Mosul has started so they are trying to show they can operate close to Arbil or Kirkuk," Roj Nuri Shaways, Iraq's deputy prime minister and a peshmerga commander, told *Reuters*.

Senior Kurdish official Hemin Hawrami said on Twitter 45 militants and seven Kurdish "martyrs" were killed around Kirkuk. Medical sources said senior commander Brigadier Sherko Fatih was among the



People gather at the scene of bomb attack in Baghdad on 30 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

dead.

At least seven other Kurdish fighters were killed by a suicide bomb at a checkpoint near the eastern town of Jalawla, 160 km (100 miles) southeast of Kirkuk, peshmerga and medical sources said.

More than 800 peshmerga have been killed in combat since Islamic State overran their defences in northern Iraq last summer, prompting US-led air strikes.

The Kurds have now regained most of the ground they lost, but commanders complain they remain ill-equipped compared with Islamic State militants, who plundered Iraqi arms depots when they overran Mosul in June.

Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told *Reuters* in an interview on Thursday that the US-led coalition against Islamic State was inadequate and said US policy would

at best contain the resilient and carefully structured group.

Police sources said Sheikh Lawrence Metab al-Hathal, a former member of parliament and head of the Anizza tribe, and at least five others were killed when an oil tanker was rammed into his reception hall in al-Nukhaib, 400 km south-west of Ramadi.

Islamic State has sought to assassinate politicians like Hathal who fought al-Qaeda in 2006-07 during Iraq's civil war and then ran for office.

Security sources said at least 18 people were killed by two bombs in Baghdad's Bab al-Sharqi shopping district on Friday.

Three civilians were later killed and at least 10 wounded in northwestern Baghdad when mortars landed in residential neighbourhoods, police and medics said.

Reuters

Next round of Syria talks in Moscow in a month

Moscow, 31 Jan — The next meeting between some Syrian opposition figures and the Damascus government in Moscow will take place in about a month, Qadri Jamil, a participant in this week's consultations, said on Friday.

The Moscow talks, which ended on Thursday, are not seen as yielding a breakthrough as they were shunned by the key political opposition and did not involve the main insurgent groups fighting on the ground in Syria.

"The key thing is that the process started rolling," said Jamil, a member Syria's tolerated internal opposition who served as deputy prime minister from 2012 to 2013. He was speaking through a translator at a news conference.

At the end of the talks, Russian moderator Vitaly Naumkin, presented what he called "the Moscow principles" — a list of provisions he said the government and the opposition delegations endorse in principle.

The 10-point list largely echoes Moscow's own stance on the conflict, which has killed more than 200,000 people since protests against President Bashar al-Assad started in early 2011 and then descended into a war in which radical Islamists have now gained the upper hand among the anti-Assad forces.

"We were hoping for better results than those reached in the end," Majid Habbo of the opposition National Coordination Committee said, speaking through a translator.

"But it is very important that it creates better conditions to continue the Geneva process," he said of peace talks that stalled early last year.

The "Moscow principles", among others, urge fighting terrorism in Syria. But they do not include opposition calls to free political prisoners and address the problem of those kidnapped or



Syrian opposition group National Coordination Committee senior representative Majid Habbo speaks during an interview with *Reuters* in Moscow on 26 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

missing.

Speaking by a large Assad portrait in the Syrian embassy in Moscow, the head of the Damascus government delegation, Bashar al-Ja'afari, said after the talks that the opposition members attending failed to come up with a unified stance.

Moscow has been a long-standing ally of Assad, whose government has dubbed many of its opponents as terrorists.

Russia says combating terrorism should be a top priority in Syria. It called on the opposition to join forces with Assad to that end and criticised Washington for refusing to cooperate with Damascus over air strikes on Islamic State positions.

Syria opposition figures who shunned the meeting in Moscow dismissed it as an attempt to prop up Assad and quoted Russia's backing for the Syrian president as the main reason. They said they would only take part in talks that lead to his dismissal.

Those who attended broadly agree that fighting Islamic State and other extremist Islamic groups on the ground comes first, and that the fate of Assad could only be decided later.

Reuters

US drone strategy in trouble as Yemeni al-Qaeda gathers support

SANAA, 31 Jan — Schoolboy Mohammed Taeiman died this week on a remote Yemeni road, a casualty of a US drone campaign against the local branch of al-Qaeda that seems to be sliding into disarray.

The sixth-grader's death as he returned home with a family friend aroused the kind of anger that has long helped al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to recruit fighters.

But in recent months convulsions in Yemeni politics have pushed President Barack Obama's strategy close to failure as the group,

known locally as Ansar al-Shariah, has broken out of its mountain bastions to stage attacks across the country.

While the exact circumstances of Monday's incident remain unclear, relatives say the boy was travelling in a car with the family friend, Abdullah al-Zindani, to his village in the central province of Marib.

Returning from visiting an acquaintance in southern Yemen, they were driving along a 160 km (100 mile) road that threads its way between mountains and desert. But just after 11 am, mobile phones of people in



Mohammed Saleh Qayed Taeiman (R) poses for a photo with his younger brother outside their family's house in Marib Province, Yemen, in this 29 Oct, 2013 photo.—REUTERS

their home area began beeping with pictures showing the remains of a black Suzuki, hit by what appeared

to have been a devastating force.

"Zindani's name started circulating, and I knew my brother was with him," said Mohammed's 17-year-old brother, Ezz el-Deen. "My brother was not armed. Mohammed was killed, he was a child," said Ezz el-Deen, who himself survived a drone strike that killed his father and brother in 2011.

"Bring justice to those who killed him otherwise we will cut off the oil, we will be saboteurs. We will join Ansar al-Shariah," he yelled down the phone to *Reuters*.

The drone campaign

against AQAP, Obama's preferred tactic in fighting the Sunni Muslim group that claimed responsibility for the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper in Paris on 7 January, has always caused public anger in Yemen. Critics say the attacks often kill low-level militants and sometimes civilians, not the top plotters Washington says it goes after.

But AQAP has begun winning more allies among Yemen's majority Sunnis since Shi'ite Houthi rebels began pushing into the capital Sanaa and other areas in September.

Reuters

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Saudi Arabia reports two new MERS cases

RIYADH, 31 Jan — Two new Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus cases were reported in Saudi Arabia in the last 24 hours, Saudi Health Ministry said on Friday. The new cases were reported in Riyadh and Hafaf that brought the total cases up to 845 since the first case in 2012. There are

six cases receiving treatment, while 475 recovered and 364 died. The ministry announced last week the appointment of US experts to halt the spread of infectious and noncommunicable diseases, including MERS coronavirus.

The experts hail from the Atlanta-based Center for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) in the United States.

The decision forms part of a recently signed agreement between the ministry's command and control centre and the CDC and includes training and support for Saudi professionals under the Field Epidemiology Training Programme. — *Xinhua*

Brazil sees first-ever primary deficit

BRASILIA, 31 Jan — Brazil registered a primary deficit in 2014, the first since records have been kept, the Central Bank said on Friday.

Last year's deficit valued at 32.536 billion reais (12.324 billion US dollars) accounted for 0.63 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). According to a Central Bank report, the figure took into account fiscal deficits at all government levels, from federal to state and local, as well as in state-owned firms, with the exception of banks, oil giant Petrobras and energy company Eletrobras. In December alone, the deficit amounted to 12.894 billion reais (around 4.884 billion dollars), up 24 percent year-on-year.

At the beginning of

2014, the government had set a primary surplus target of 1.9 percent of GDP. But in September, due to a rise in public spending in an electoral year, the government succeeded in getting the Congress to approve a law that authorized reversing that target. Adding interest payments on the public debt to the primary deficit pushed the nominal deficit to 343 billion reais (129.434 billion dollars) in 2014, or 6.7 percent of GDP. Brazil's new Finance Minister Joaquim Levy pledged on Friday to rein in spending and balance the budget, with an eye to achieving a primary surplus of 1.2 percent of GDP in 2015. Levy said the government plans to spur investment and economic activity

by pushing infrastructure development.

Addressing a business seminar in Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city, Levy stressed that port building is one area that could draw foreign investment. "We need to re-optimize the state-owned ports," he said, "the cargo transport industry has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, as have the demands of our partners. So their physical condition is something that we have to resolve as quickly as possible." Officials are also looking to expand trade accords with other countries to boost exports and trade exchange, he said, adding that Brazil has "to think about reentering deeper into the international market." — *Xinhua*

Oil rallies on US rig count drop; dollar up seventh month



US dollar bank notes are seen in a bank in Budapest on 8 Aug, 2011. — REUTERS

NEW YORK, 31 Jan — Oil prices rallied on Friday following the sharpest weekly drop in US oil rig count in nearly 30 years, while the dollar index ended January with its longest run of gains since the greenback was floated in 1971. US stocks finished the day down more than 1 percent as data showed US economic growth slowed sharply in the fourth quarter. Major US stock indexes posted losses for the week and month, with the declines driven by falling oil prices and concern about weak overseas demand. The S&P 500 was

down 3.1 percent for January, its biggest monthly slide since January 2014.

In a rally that may spur speculation that a seven-month price collapse has ended, US crude futures jumped 8.3 percent to settle at \$48.24 a barrel and Brent crude shot up 7.9 percent to settle at \$52.99, its biggest one-day gain since 2009. Sparking the rally was data that showed drillers were cutting back on shale activity.

European stocks ended lower, but registered their biggest monthly gain in three years. The US dollar index advanced for a

seventh straight month in January, marking the longest streak of monthly gains since the greenback was floated in 1971. It was up 5.0 percent for January, but off 0.1 percent for the day.

Weighing on stocks and the dollar, US gross domestic product expanded at a weaker-than-expected 2.6 percent annual pace after the third quarter's spectacular 5 percent rate, the Commerce Department said in its first snapshot of fourth-quarter GDP.

The headline number was "well below consensus expectations and that is definitely one of the data points that many bulls were looking for to justify staying bullish," said Peter Kenny, chief market strategist at Clearpool Group in New York.

For the day, the Dow Jones industrial average fell 251.9 points, or 1.45 percent, to 17,164.95, the S&P 500 lost 26.26 points, or 1.3 percent, to 1,994.99 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 48.17 points, or 1.03 percent, to 4,635.24. — *Reuters*

China Focus: Chinese smartphone makers rise to rival Samsung, Apple

BEIJING, 31 Jan — China's top smartphone companies challenged Samsung and Apple with surging sales and revenue in 2014, vowing to scramble for a larger share in a global turf war with the top two makers. As one of the major competitors, telecom behemoth Huawei Technologies reported a 45-percent rise in smartphone shipments in 2014, reaching more than 75 million units.

Sales revenue of Huawei's consumer goods branch, which makes mobile phones and other

gadgets, increased 30 percent to 12.2 billion US dollars last year.

Currently, Huawei is the world's third largest smartphone maker following Samsung and Apple, according to market tracker Gartner. They held a global market share of 5.3 percent, 24.4 percent and 12.7 percent respectively in the third quarter of 2014.

Last year, 52 percent of Huawei's smartphone sales revenue came from overseas markets. The tech giant's presence in Africa, Asia and Latin America

was rapidly consolidated.

"We will try to rival Samsung and Apple globally in 2015," said Shao Yang, vice president of Huawei Consumer Business Group. He said the company will work to improve its overseas brand reputation. Huawei aims to hike smartphone shipments to 100 million units and sales revenue to 16 billion US dollars in 2015.

Another homegrown smartphone maker Xiaomi said it sold 61.1 million units in 2014, surging 227 percent year on year. Its

revenue grew 135 percent to 74.3 billion yuan (about 12 billion US dollars).

Xiaomi is now marketing products in six foreign countries and regions. More than one million units have been sold in India, for example, one of the company's most successful markets abroad. "We will enter more overseas markets in 2015 and strive for better performance there," said Xiaomi founder Lei Jun, who is called China's Steve Jobs by fans. Steve Koenig, director of Industry Analysis of the Consumer Elec-

tronics Association, said Chinese smartphone brands are putting pressure on their global competitors.

Referencing Xiaomi Mi5 and Huawei Mate 7, Koenig said Chinese brands are not just focused on making cheap phones, but also on creating quite sophisticated devices.

Huawei's helmsman Ren Zhengfei said earlier this month at the World Economic Forum that the company will shift away from a growth route based on low price and low quality. Gartner estimated that

the combined global share of Huawei, Xiaomi and Lenovo increased 4.1 percentage points to 15.5 percent. Analysts predicted there is still great potential for further growth at their "home court", although China's mobile phone market is almost saturated.

"China's western regions, especially the rural areas, will see double-digit growth in smartphone sales in coming one to two years," said a research note from market intelligence firm International Data Corporation (IDC). — *Xinhua*

Sun Pharmaceutical wins US approval to buy Ranbaxy

WASHINGTON, 31 Jan — India's Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd has won US approval to buy Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd on condition that it sell its interest in a generic antibacterial medicine, the US Federal Trade Commission said on Friday. Sun Pharmaceutical said in April that it had agreed to buy the Indian generic drugmaker from its current owner, Japan's Daiichi Sankyo Co, for \$3.2 billion.

Ranbaxy has been involved in a wrangle with the US Food and Drug Administration, which has barred a range of its medicines from the United States after finding that some of the company's plants did not meet US standards.

The FTC, whose job is to ensure that anti-monopoly laws are enforced, did not weigh in on the safety issue but said it would allow the transaction if Ranbaxy sold

its interests in generic minocycline tablets and capsules to generic maker Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd, which is also based in India.

The medicine is commonly used to treat pneumonia, urinary tract infections and acne. Ranbaxy is one of three companies to sell the antibacterial drug, and Sun is expected to begin selling the medicines soon, the FTC said in a statement. — *Reuters*



A logo of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd at its research and development centre in Mumbai on 7 April, 2014. — REUTERS

EU-wide toll could end road spat with Germany — transport chief

BRUSSELS, 31 Jan — A European-wide road toll could be a solution to a dispute between the EU and Germany over its plans to introduce a tolling system Brussels believes may be illegal, the bloc's transport chief said on Friday.

The European Commission and Berlin are in a stand-off over Berlin's plans to introduce a road toll in 2016 aimed at foreign drivers using Germany's Autobahn motorways. German drivers would also pay the toll but would be compensated with a reduction in existing automobile taxes.

Some other EU member states already have toll systems to help fund the upkeep of their motorways but the Commission fears the German plan discriminates against non-German EU citizens.

European Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc said the issue Germany was trying to address was one facing Europe as a whole.

"That's why we started to think about a universal European toll system that could address especially the needs of the users for small travel throughout Europe," said the Slovenian former computer scientist.

The scheme would be voluntary, meaning member states could decide whether to opt in, she said.

The EU toll system would be based on distance travelled instead of time travelled and all revenues would go back to member states, ideally for channelling into spending on infrastructure, Bulc said.

The Commission is monitoring any national schemes closely to make sure they are in line with EU law, she added.

Any attempt to introduce a pan-EU tolling system would be sure to face political resistance in many member states.

The Commission also wants to reverse what Bulc referred to as decades of short-term thinking by governments that has resulted in the neglect of infrastructure.

"Now we are faced with obsolete, old ... infrastructure which is really hurting our industry," she added. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has launched an investment package designed to mobilise up to 315 billion euros (\$356 billion) of public and private investments to kickstart growth in the 28-member bloc.

The Commission has drawn up a wish list of over 2,000 projects worth more than 1.3 trillion euros (\$1.47 trillion), of which just under a third are in the transport sector.

Bulc said the EU needed to cut the contribution of transport to greenhouse gas emissions, saying it accounted for almost a third of all energy use in Europe. But 94 percent of that is oil-based, she added.

"We are working in the direction of electrification of transport."

Reuters

Argentina's Fernandez dents credibility by playing victim

BUENOS AIRES, 31 Jan — President Cristina Fernandez hunkered down in her presidential residence for a week before speaking about the mysterious death of a state prosecutor who claimed she sought to whitewash Iran's alleged involvement in a 1994 bomb attack on Argentine soil.

When she did, Argentines were left in little doubt who she viewed as the victim in the scandal.

It was not Alberto Nisman, whose body was found in a pool of blood with a single bullet to the head a day before he was to detail his investigations, and to whose family Fernandez offered no condolences.

It was herself, the target of a murky plot to smear her name orchestrated by rogue agents kicked out of a spy agency that she said had failed to act in the interests of the country.

"Twenty one years after the attack and today somebody

comes up with a baseless claim that we wanted to derail the investigation," Fernandez said in her hour-long televised address, dressed all in white and seated in a wheelchair.

"Let them say what they want, let them make any allegations they want, let judges summon me, I'm not bothered."

Nisman's death has triggered one of the biggest political crises of Fernandez's seven-year rule and may bolster the opposition's chances of a win in October's presidential election.

Fernandez herself is barred from running, but some officials close to the president worry her handling of the scandal is denting the government's credibility.

"This is going to hurt us," said one government source close to the presidency who is not authorized to talk publicly. "How badly, we don't know. Only she decides what she is going to do."

Fernandez, who has been recovering from a fractured ankle

Argentina's President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, sitting in a wheelchair, addresses the nation during a televised speech in Buenos Aires on 26 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

in her residence, speculated in a rambling post on Facebook that Nisman's death might be suicide. Days later she wrote that he had been murdered.

Her inconsistencies have helped fan conspiracy theories, some pointing directly to her. A poll by the local political consultancy Management & Fit showed 63 percent of respondents believed Fernandez's image would be significantly weakened.

The day after Nisman's

death, protesters marched on Fernandez's official residence. Some banged on the gate shouting "murderer".

"She's not in the habit of recognizing her errors, be it Nisman or inflation. And so she stays inside," said Roberto Lavagna, a former economy minister under Fernandez's late husband predecessor, Nestor Kirchner, now working with opposition presidential hopeful Sergio Massa.

Reuters



Republican Romney opts out of 2016 run for president

WASHINGTON, 31 Jan — Republican Mitt Romney bowed out of the 2016 US presidential race on Friday after considering a third run, telling supporters it was time for the next generation of party leaders to seek the White House.

Romney's decision helps clarify an emerging Republican field split between potential establishment candidates like former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and conservative voices represented by Texas Senator Ted Cruz and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

The move will likely boost Bush, the brother of former President George W Bush and son of former President George

HW Bush, even though Romney has privately made known to aides he is not convinced that Bush can defeat Hillary Clinton if she becomes the Democratic presidential nominee.

But Romney's decision also helps other potential candidates such as Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who was on Romney's vice presidential short list in 2012; Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, all of whom will have a better chance for money and media attention with Romney on the sidelines.

The former Massachusetts governor felt he would win the Republican presidential primary, a former adviser said. But

Romney did not think he would present a sufficient "new versus old" contrast for the battle against Clinton, the former first lady, New York senator and secretary of state, who is the early favourite for the Democratic nomination.

"He thinks Jeb would be a perfectly credible nominee but that there are others who might be able to hold up that 'new versus old' banner a little better," the former adviser said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee, announced he would not run in a statement he read to supporters in a conference call from New York.

"After putting considerable

thought into making another run for president, I've decided it is best to give other leaders in the party the opportunity to become our next nominee," Romney said in his statement.

He made clear he felt he would be able to raise enough money for a campaign, rejecting a narrative that has grown in recent days as some major 2012 fund-raisers expressed concern about another Romney run.

Those fund-raisers said that since Romney opened the door to a possible candidacy three weeks ago, he had not made clear how his message and inner circle would improve in 2016.

Reuters

UN chief condemns bomb attack in Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS, 31 Jan — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Friday condemned the

bomb attack on a Shiite mosque in Pakistan, which has reportedly killed at least 54 people.

"The Secretary-General is appalled by such vicious targeting of people on account of their

religious affiliation," said a statement issued by Ban's spokesperson.

Ban also called upon the authorities to redouble their efforts to protect religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan and to combat terrorism in all its forms, said the statement.

A suicide bomber on Friday ripped through a mosque of Shiite Muslims in Pakistan's south Shikarpur district, Sindh Province, killing at least 54 people and injuring 50 others.

Reports said a teenage suicide bomber blew up himself in the mosque where around 400 people were offering prayers.

According to bomb disposal squad, at least 5 kilograms of explosives along ball bearings were used in the bomb and it was detonated with a remote-controlled device.—Xinhua



People gather around a covered body of a victim in a mosque at the blast site in southern Pakistan's Shikarpur on 30 Jan, 2015. At least 54 people were killed and over 50 others injured as a blast hit a Shia Mosque in Pakistan's southern district of Shikarpur on Friday afternoon, officials said.

XINHUA

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1. Open Tender is invited for the Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise, the Ministry of Energy for the supply of Lube Base Oils & Additives (403.73 Metric Tons).
2. Tender Closing Date : **6.3.2015** at (12:00) noon.
3. Tender Opening Date : **6.3.2015** at (13:00) hrs.
4. Delivery Time : **Within July 2015**
5. Tender Documents and details information are available at the Department of Finance, Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise, Nay Pyi Taw, during office hours commencing **2.2.2015** on payment of the Myanmar Kyat One Hundred Thousand (Kyat 100,000) per set.
6. Only bid from tenderer who has purchased tender document officially from Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise will be accepted for evaluation.

Managing Director
Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise
Contact Phone no. 067-411108/411193



Photo taken on 28 Jan, 2015 shows an archaeologist showing ancient coins discovered on the Nanhai (South China Sea) No 1 ship at the "Crystal Palace" at the Marine Silk Road Museum in Yangjiang, south China's Guangdong Province. After seven years of excavation, more than 60,000 porcelain artifacts from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) have been discovered on the ship, which had lain undersea for more than 800 years and was put into protection in the Marine Silk Road Museum after its salvage in 2007.—XINHUA

Number of foreign travellers by cruise ships more than doubles in 2014

Tokyo, 31 Jan — The number of foreign travellers arriving in Japan on cruise ships in 2014 more than doubled from a year earlier to around 416,000, the government said on Friday.

The number of dockings by such ships hit a record high at 1,203 due mainly to increasing services from China, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism said in a preliminary report.

By destination, Yokohama port, near Tokyo, marked the highest number of dockings with 146, followed by Hakata in southwestern Japan at 115 and Kobe in western Japan at 99, the report said.

In 2014, there was a marked rise in the number of tourists from Asian countries drawn by the weaker yen and the expansion of consumption-tax-free items, such as foods and cosmetics, for overseas visitors from October.

"Cruise ships are convenient for shoppers, as unlike aircraft, there is no limitation for carry-on items," said a ministry official.

The government plans to renovate ports across Japan that can accept large-scale ships, with a view to boosting foreign travellers by cruise ship to 1 million in 2020, when the Tokyo Olympic Games are scheduled to be held.

Kyodo News



Artists from China Gansu Art Troupe perform on the occasion of 60th Anniversary of China-Nepal Diplomatic relation in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 30 Jan, 2015.—XINHUA

AirAsia resumes online promos, adverts after Indonesia jet crash

JAKARTA / SINGAPORE, 31 Jan — Budget airline AirAsia Bhd resumed online promotions and advertising this week, a month after a plane operated by its Indonesia affiliate crashed into the Java Sea, killing all 162 people on board.

AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes had imposed a moratorium on advertising after the 28 December crash of the Indonesia AirAsia plane, which Indonesian investigators said on Thursday was being controlled by the co-pilot when it fell into the sea.

Fernandes recently told Reuters Television the airline's sales in Indonesia were slowly recovering after the crash, which was the first involving an AirAsia plane and which cast a spotlight on the

patchy safety record of Indonesian airlines.

"We were 50 percent behind where we were after the incident," Fernandes said from Davos. "We are now about 12 percent behind and it's fast recovering."

Indonesia AirAsia, in

which AirAsia has a 49 percent stake, declined to give details about passenger numbers for January or December.

One of its competitors, Garuda Indonesia, said it had seen an increase in passenger load factor this month.



A woman stand in front of an AirAsia check-in machine at Soekarno Hatta airport in Jakarta, on 21 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

Garuda Chief Executive Arif Wibowo told Reuters the average passenger load factor was around 74 percent for Garuda and 79 percent for its budget unit Citilink. This compares with 67.6 percent for Garuda Indonesia Group for January last year, according to the airline's website.

Several travel agents said many customers were still afraid of flying AirAsia. Some passengers, like Jakarta-based finance executive Cynthia Nadeak, however, said they would continue to fly AirAsia.

"I'm not afraid to fly AirAsia because its reputation so far has been proven to be quite good," said Nadeak, who takes at least one AirAsia flight every three months.

Reuters

Death toll rises to six from east China coal mine flooding

HEFEI, 31 Jan — The death toll from a coal mine flooding in east China's Anhui Province has risen to six, as another body was retrieved on Saturday.

The accident happened at the Zhuxianzhuang coal mine in Yongqiao District under Suzhou City at 6:55 pm on Friday when 34 miners were working under-

ground. Twenty-seven miners managed to escape while seven others were trapped, according to the Huaibei Mining (Group) Co Ltd, the owner of the coal mine.

Rescuers are continuing the search for another missing miner.

The cause of the accident is under investigation. *Xinhua*

UN chief welcomes AU's decision to deploy 7,500 troops to battle Boko Haram

ADDIS ABABA, 31 Jan — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday welcomed the decision by the African Union (AU) to deploy up to 7,500 troops to battle Boko Haram, a movement that has wreaked havoc in west Africa over the past years.

The UN chief made the

remarks on the sidelines of the 24th AU summit, which is ongoing here in the Ethiopian capital.

The Peace and Security Council of the AU on Thursday decided to authorize the deployment of a multinational task force to address terrorism in west Africa.—*Xinhua*

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 1st February, 2015: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin and Northern Shan State, weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Mon State and fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight increase night temperatures in the Upper Myanmar areas.

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Miranda Lambert again leads ACM Awards with eight nods

LOS ANGELES, 31 Jan — Miranda Lambert on Friday led all nominees for the second consecutive year at the Academy of Country Music Awards (ACM), collecting eight nods, including entertainer of the year and top female vocalist, in some of country music's highest honors.

Dierks Bentley, buoyed by his break-up anthem "Drunk on a Plane," followed Lambert with seven nominations while duo Florida Georgia Line collected five nods.

The nominations were scheduled to be announced on Tuesday, but were pushed back due to a snow storm that swept through New York and the northeastern United States.

Lambert, a 31-year-old Texan, will look to repeat her success from the rival Country Music Association Awards in November where she took home a leading four trophies on the success of her album "Platinum" and wistful hit "Automatic."

The 50th ACM Awards will be handed out on 19 April in a televised ceremony from the 80,000-seat AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, and will be

co-hosted for a third time by singer Luke Bryan and Lambert's husband, singer Blake Shelton.

Lambert joins Jason Aldean, Garth Brooks, Florida Georgia Line and Bryan as nominees for the fan-voted top prize of entertainer of the year.

The Academy of Country Music honors big stars as well as small market radio deejays and concert promoters, and the awards are voted on by members of the Encino, Calif.-based professional organization.

Lambert has been country music's top female performer over the past half decade, so far winning a record five consecutive CMA and ACM female vocalist of the year awards.

Other top nominees include Bryan, Kenny Chesney and Eric Church with four nods apiece while Aldean, Kacey Musgraves and Carrie Underwood each scored three nominations.

The new artist of the year award is a combined fan and academy vote that will narrow the current eight semi-finalists down to three nominees and eventual winner.—Reuters



Miranda Lambert

Michael Jackson's family denied new trial in negligence case

LOS ANGELES, 31 Jan — A California state appeals court on Friday denied Michael Jackson's family its latest attempt to reverse a jury's decision that cleared concert promoter AEG Live of negligence in the singer's death.

The three-judge panel ruled that Jackson's mother and children did not have standing for a new trial after their attorneys argued last week that AEG Live was liable for Jackson's treatment, and that jury instructions were confusing and not wide enough in scope.

A Los Angeles jury in 2013 cleared privately held AEG Live, the organizer of Jackson's ill-fated 50 "This



Brian Panish, attorney for the Michael Jackson family delivers his closing argument to jurors in a packed courtroom in Los Angeles, on 24 Sept, 2013.—REUTERS

Is It" comeback concerts in London, of negligently hiring cardiologist Conrad Murray as Jackson's personal physician.

The sensational five-month trial offered a

glimpse into Jackson's private life and final days in which Murray administered surgical anaesthetic propofol to the "Thriller" singer as a sleep aid.

The child star turned

King of Pop, who set the world dancing but whose musical genius was overshadowed by a bizarre lifestyle and sex scandals, died in 2009 at age 50 in Los Angeles from an overdose of the powerful anaesthetic.

The lawsuit against AEG Live was filed by Katherine Jackson, 84, and the singer's three children.

The Los Angeles Superior Court jury found that Murray was sufficiently qualified for the job he was hired to do as general practitioner.

Murray was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2011 for Jackson's death and served half of his 4-year sentence in a Los Angeles prison.—Reuters

Jay-Z to snap up music streamer Aspiro in \$56 million deal



Jay-Z

STOCKHOLM, 31 Jan — Hip-hop star Jay-Z is buying a Scandinavian music streaming company for \$56 million to add to a business empire that has spanned clothing and sports bars.

Project Panther Bidco Ltd, a company controlled by the 45-year-old rapper, said on Friday it had agreed to buy Sweden-listed Aspiro for 464 million Swedish crowns (\$56 million) in cash.

Shares in Aspiro, which runs music streaming service WiMP, leapt 59 percent in early trading to the bid level of 1.05 crowns per share.

Jay-Z, real name Shawn Corey Carter, is one of the world's best-selling music artists of all time, having sold more than 100 million records. Forbes estimated last year that his net worth was \$520 million.

Married to pop star Beyonce, Jay-Z has had a number of business interests, including 40/40 Club sports bars and Rocawear clothing.

His mix of music and entrepreneurial interests mirrors that of other rappers, including De Dre, who sold his Beats headphones business to Apple, and 50 Cent, who sold his vitamin water

business to Coca-Cola.

Project Panther said it had followed the development of Aspiro for some time, believing it to be "an innovative high-quality company with strong future growth potential".

Norwegian media house Schibsted, Aspiro's main shareholder, said it had accepted the offer, while Aspiro's board said it was united in recommending the bid, virtually ensuring its success. Schibsted owns around 75 percent of Streaming Media AS, which in turn owns about 76 percent of Aspiro.—Reuters

Selena Gomez to attend Grammys with Zedd?

LOS ANGELES, 31 Jan — Singer Selena Gomez will reportedly attend the upcoming Grammy Awards with rumoured boyfriend Zedd. The news has upset the 22-year-old singer's ex Justin Bieber, reported *Hollywood Life*.

"Selena's totally with Zedd now. They're going to the Grammys together and Justin is super depressed about it," a source said.

Grammy Awards will be held on 8 February at the Staples Centre in Los Angeles, California.—PTI



Selena Gomez & Zedd

Shakira gives birth to second child



Pop star Shakira and her longtime partner Gerard Pique have welcomed their second child, a baby boy.—PTI

LOS ANGELES, 31 Jan — Pop star Shakira and her longtime partner Gerard Pique have welcomed their second child, a baby boy.

The 37-year-old Colombian superstar had her baby on schedule by Cesarean section in a Barcelona hospital, reported *Billboard* magazine.

Shakira, and Pique, 27, had reserved an entire floor for the birth at the Teknon clinic, which is in an upscale neighbourhood. The couple's other son Milan, who turned two on 22 January, was delivered at the same hospital by the same doctor.

The name of the baby was not immediately known, but a Spanish radio DJ and friend of Pique announced earlier this week that it could be Andrea or Sacha.

Last week, Shakira and Pique invited fans to contribute to their on-line World Baby Shower to benefit UNICEF's programmes for children.—PTI

Britain marks 50 years since wartime leader Churchill's funeral

LONDON, 31 Jan — Britain marked 50 years on Friday since the state funeral of wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill, with the boat which carried his coffin under the dipping dockside cranes in 1965 retracing its journey along London's River Thames.

Britain's current leader, David Cameron, began the remembrance events at a ceremony in parliament, laying a wreath at a statue of Churchill, a man he described as "a great Briton" who should never be forgotten.

"A full fifty years since his funeral when the cranes along the Thames dipped low and the streets were lined with vast silent crowds, the sheer brilliance of Winston Churchill remains undimmed," he said.



Randolph Churchill (L), the great grandson and Celia Sandys, the granddaughter of Winston Churchill lay a wreath at the statue of Britain's former Prime Minister Churchill in London on 30 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

"He left a Britain more free, more secure, more brave and more proud, for that we will always be grateful to him."

Churchill, whose inspirational leadership and dogged spirit are widely credited with having saved Britain from invasion by

Nazi Germany, died on 24 January, 1965 aged 90.

Queen Elizabeth granted him the rare honour of a state funeral and more than 320,000 people filed past his coffin to pay their respects during three days of lying in state.

His funeral was the world's largest at the time, attended by leaders from more than 100 countries, as well as the queen, another unusual tribute for a prime minister.

The procession began at parliament, with the chimes of Big Ben silenced for the rest of the day, and the coffin was taken to St Paul's Cathedral for the funeral service. He was buried in Bladon, Oxfordshire, in central England.

Reuters

mitv Myanmar International

(1-2-15 07:00 am~2-2-15 07:00 am) MST

- | | |
|--|--|
| * Local News | * Great Shwedagon "Historic and Mysterious Places" |
| * Today Myanmar "Online Shopping" | * World News |
| * World News | * Sagaing: Gold Leaf |
| * Making of Nawarat Rings | * Local News |
| * Local News | * Thread Charm "A Kayin Threading Ceremony" |
| * Shwe Maw Daw: The Glory Of Bago City | * World News |
| * World News | * Myanmar China Friendship Tour |
| * Tea | * Local News |
| * Local News | * Sizes does Matter (Episode-II) |
| * Sagaing: Youth Leader | * World News |
| * World News | * Innovative Handiworks |
| * Image of the Monks | * Local News |
| * Local News | * Myanmar Entrepreneur "Kalayar Pyi Wai Shan" |
| * Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Mingalar Byuha) | * World News |
| * World News | * A Life In The Ring |
| * A Girl Guide | |
| * Local News | |

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(1-2-2015, Sunday)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6:00 am | 4:00 pm |
| • Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw | • News / Weather Report |
| 7:00 am | 4:35 pm |
| • News/ Weather Report | • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — First Year (Myanmar) |
| 7:35 am | 4:50 pm |
| • Business News | • 68 th Anniversary Union Day Programme |
| 8:30 am | 5:35 pm |
| • Head Line News | • MRTV's Youth Programme |
| 9:35 am | 6:35 pm |
| • Documentary (ASEAN) | • Weekly Entertainment |
| 10:00 am | 7:00 pm |
| • News /International News | • News |
| 11:35 am | 7:35 pm |
| • Hyper Sports | • Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society) |
| 12:00 noon | 8:00 pm |
| • News / International News / Weather Report | • News / International News / Weather Report |
| 12:35 pm | 9:00 pm |
| • Round up of The Week's International News | • News |
| 12:50 pm | • Tasty Trip |
| • Myanmar Movies (Part-1) | |
| 2:35 pm | |
| • Myanmar Movies (Part-2) | |

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(1-2-2015, Sunday)

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 6:00 am | 7:05 am |
| • Travelogue Programme | • Teleplay |
| 6:20 am | 7:50 am |
| • Honour Song of Alinka Kyaw Swar Myoma Nyein | • Teleplay |
| 6:40 am | 9:10 am |
| • Myanmar Series | • Dramatic Arts |
| 6:55 am | 10:20 am |
| • Fashion Show | • Myanmar Video |
| | 12:00 noon |
| | • Close Down |

Winging it: Chicago man smashes Philadelphia eating record



Patrick "Deep Dish" Bertolotti celebrates after winning the 23rd annual Wing Bowl at the Wells Fargo Centre in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 30 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

PHILADELPHIA, 31 Jan — A professional competitive eater from Chicago downed 444 chicken wings in 30 minutes at the 23rd annual Wing Bowl in Philadelphia,

narrowly edging out his nearest rival and shattering the record of 363 wings set a year earlier.

"I have the sweats but I feel a lot better because I

know I don't have to eat any more chicken wings," the winner, Patrick Bertolotti, said after narrowly beating prior record-holder Molly Schuyler, who gobbled 440 wings in front of a crowd of thousands at the area where the city's National Basketball Association franchise, the 76ers, plays.

Bertolotti ate 50 wings in the last two minutes of the contest, ripping the meat from the bone and stuffing it in his mouth, a technique that left him chewing for more than two minutes after the final buzzer rang.

The new record shocked Angelo Cataldi, the sports talk radio broadcaster who conceived of the contest as a consolation to Philadelphia sports fans,

who have seen their Eagles football team make it only twice to the Super Bowl, which they have never won.

"I didn't think it was possible," Cataldi said.

The contest, hosted by Philadelphia sports talk radio station 94 WIP, features entrants with colorful nicknames who are ushered in with immense entourages featuring scantily clad women called "wingettes."

"It's my first year, and it's really fun, but I'm cold," said wingette Amanda Dennis, who wore a bikini top made from electrical tape as she entered the arena riding in a refrigerator with its top cut off, along with another contestant who went by the name, Meat Fridge.

Reuters

Art fair turns India's capital into art hub

NEW DELHI, 31 Jan — India's biggest art fair opened in New Delhi this week with a focus on homegrown artists and exhibits inspired by contemporary themes such as the worst floods in the Kashmir region in more than a century.

A smorgasbord of works by 1,100 artists lured art lovers, gallerists and gawkers to a cavernous exhibition space in the capital, cementing the annual fair's reputation as one of South Asia's top cultural events.

Each year, an estimated 100,000 visitors flock to the four-day fair with entry tickets that cost no more than \$6.

The city's glitterati strolled past exhibits by 85 galleries at Thursday's

preview clutching glasses of red wine, with several displays sold before the seventh edition of the fair

opened for public viewing on Friday. The show runs until Sunday. "We've had five or six sell-out booths

and several galleries have done exceptionally well," founder Neha Kirpal told Reuters.—Reuters



A visitor looks at an exhibit titled "The Threshold into a Dream" by Indian artist TV Santhosh at the India Art Fair in New Delhi on 29 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

Troisi strikes in extra time to hand Australia Asian Cup



SYDNEY, 31 Jan — Substitute James Troisi scored halfway through extra time to give tournament hosts Australia their maiden Asian Cup title with a 2-1 victory over South Korea in a pulsating final on Saturday.

South Korea's Son Heung-min scored in stoppage time at the end of 90 minutes to send the match into the extra half an hour, cancelling out Massimo Luongo's strike

on the stroke of halftime.

It was just before another break with 105 minutes on the clock that Troisi put the ball into the net from close range to make Australia champions of Asia nine years after they switched from the Oceania confederation.

Former World Cup semi-finalists South Korea had ridden their mean defence to a first Asian Cup final since 1988 but despite being the better side for much of the match came up short in their bid for a first title in 55 years.

Luongo's goal was the first they had conceded in the tournament and for most of the second half it looked the goal-shyness which characterised the start of their campaign had returned to haunt them.

With regulation time running out, though, substitute Han Kook Young dispossessed Trent Sainsbury on the edge of the box and Lee Jeong-hyeop fed the ball to Son who stroked it into the net under the challenge of two defenders.

Australia had come out to attack as coach Ange Postecoglou had promised but in frenetic start to the match, the South Koreans



Australia's players celebrate with the Asian Cup trophy after winning their final soccer match against South Korea at the Stadium Australia in Sydney on 31 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS

showed they had threats up front too.

Son had his sights set just too high in the second and 37th minutes and Luongo was on hand to block his shot after Cha Du-ri's charge down the right wing in the 38th.

Seven minutes later and Luongo was down the other end to take Sainsbury's through ball with a

deft touch and lash it into the back of the net from 25 metres.

The lead was barely deserved but that did not stop the green-and-gold clad majority of the sellout crowd of 76,385 at Stadium Australia celebrating in a frenzy.

South Korea pressed forward in search of an equaliser but were grate-

ful for goalkeeper Kim Jin-hyeon for a fine save from Mathew Leckie on the hour mark, as they had been in the first half when he stopped a Tim Cahill shot.

After Son's goal had provided a dramatic conclusion to normal time and sent the match into the extra half hour, Kim was again on hand to intercept

Luongo's cross with Socceroos lining up to put it into the net.

Five minutes later, though, Tomi Juric nutmegged Kim Jin-su on the edge of the box and Kim was only able to push the striker's cross into the path of Troisi, who smashed the ball into the open goal.

Reuters



Australia's James Troisi celebrates after scoring in the extra time during the final match against South Korea at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup in Sydney, Australia on 31 Jan, 2015.—XINHUA

Serena continues mastery of Sharapova for magical 19th

MELBOURNE, 31 Jan — Serena Williams gave a gallant Maria Sharapova another serving of grand slam heartbreak to win the Australian Open on Saturday and bolster her claims to be the all-time greatest player with her 19th major title.

Though sickly, wheezing and battling coughing fits, Williams's serve was in the rudest of health and her athleticism astonishing as she closed out a nerve-shredding clash 6-3, 7-6(5) under the lights of Rod Laver Arena.

In sealing her sixth title at Melbourne Park, Williams surpassed Martina Navratilova, the woman who passed her the trophy, and Chris Evert in grand slam title wins, while drawing level with fellow American Helen Wills Moody, third in the all-time list.

At 33, the oldest Aus-

tralian Open winner in the professional era, Williams left few in doubt that the pursuit of Steffi Graf's 22 titles and Margaret Court's 24 will continue.

"Gosh, where do I start? I have to thank God for this," Williams gushed at the trophy ceremony.

"I was down and out, and he helped me today, and I just said prayers and it just — not to win but to be strong and to be healthy and in the end I was able to come through.

"I also have to congratulate Maria, who played a wonderful, wonderful match tonight, and she played so well. Gave us a great final for not only for you guys but for women's tennis."

Fittingly, she sealed the title with an ace, her 18th, on the third match point, and after shaking

hands with her opponent, bounded around the court like a woman possessed, squealing in delight.

Sharapova sat quietly in her chair, nursing the pain of a 16th straight defeat by Williams and a third loss in grand slam finals to the American champion.

"I've got to congratulate Serena on creating history and on playing some of her best tennis. It's really an honour playing against her," Sharapova, who lost the 2007 final to Williams and the title-decider at the 2013 French Open, said.

"I haven't beaten her

in a really long time, but I love every time that I step on the court to play against her because she's been the best and, as a tennis player, you wanna play against the best."

Steamrolled in the opening set, five-times grand slam champion Sharapova was magnificent as she dragged herself off the canvas and staved off defeat twice on match points with brilliant down-the-line winners.

The "un-rivalry" with Williams continues, however, her last win over the American coming when she was a 17-year-old sensation still finding her feet on tour.

She admitted she had been on borrowed time after suffering a huge scare to countrywoman Alexandra Panova in the second round, and appeared tense before her centre

court entrance.

Shuffling from side to side on the spot, Williams stood behind her, stock-still and brooding.

There was little warmth as the pair posed for the pre-game pictures on court and Williams was all over Sharapova's serve from the first point, thumping a backhand return down the line that the Russian could only net.

Second serves were despatched with contempt.

A break point was almost inevitable and Sharapova, already under pressure, double-faulted to concede serve.

At 30-30 with Williams leading 3-2, rain fell, forcing a break and the American bashed a ball away in disgust before marching to the exit and pacing a tunnel under Rod Laver Arena.

Reuters



Serena Williams (L) of the US and Maria Sharapova of Russia pose with their trophies after their women's singles final match at the Australian Open 2015 tennis tournament in Melbourne on 31 Jan, 2015.—REUTERS