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WELCOME TO THE GOLDEN LAND

5 million foreign tourists to visit Myanmar by April

Tourists take a boat trip in Inle Lake , one of tourist attractions of Myanmar. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

THE tourism industry in Myanmar shows good prospects for 2016, with increasing number of tourists expected to arrive throughout the year.

Tourist arrivals, as of the end of November last year, reached more than 4.2 million. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism estimates that the number will rise to 5 million by April 2016. Myanmar attracted US$2.64 billion in foreign investment in 47 projects in the hotels and tourism sector in 2015, up $1.5 billion from 2011's $1.14 billion in 36 projects.

Of the total foreign investment in the sector in 2015, Singapore accounted for $1.47 billion, the highest among any country, followed by Viet Nam with $440 million. The development of the tourism sector in Myanmar in 2016 depends on the progress of investments in the previous year as well as the global and regional economies.

According to the ministry's Master Plan for 2013-2020, tourist arrivals per year are projected to hit 7.49 million in 2020.

Tourists from neighbouring countries frequently visit Myanmar on motorbikes, bicycles and boats under the arrangements by tour companies in cooperation with the ministry. A rising number of foreign tourists have been taking river cruises since the beginning of the tourism season, which generally begins at the beginning of the year.

The cruise liner MS Seven Sea Voyage, which is carrying 699 passengers and 447 crew members, will arrive in Myanmar for a three-day visit on 23 January. Several more cruise ships carrying tourists are set to dock in Myanmar in January and February. According to official statistics, Myanmar welcomed 25 luxury cruise ships carrying 26,000 visitors last year.

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Culture ministry to copyright traditional dances

THE cultural department under the Ministry of Culture will hold a press conference in Yangon on 19 January to clarify its plans to copyright the Bagan yein dance and the Apyodawyein dance.

The press conference will be held at the National Theatre on Myomakyaung Road from 1pm to 3pm on Tuesday.

After the press conference, the department will stage a Music Showcase performed by the Orchestra of the National University of Arts and Culture, while dancers will demonstrate the dances in groups.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Workers artificially inoculate the tree to produce Agarwood in Myanmar with the ues of "Allergic Stress Strain(Ass)". PHOTO: SUPPLIED

MAEA to build agarwood market

THE Myanmar Agarwood Entrepreneurs' Association is planning to build an agarwood market, according to the association.

U ThaungNyunt, the Secretary of the association confirmed the plan, but he has not yet confirmed the location of the market or whether it would be in Mandalay or Yangon.

"The move is aimed at supplying agarwood and related things under one roof," he said.

Meanwhile, the association has planned to provide plants and technology to farmers growing agarwood trees as part of its effort to fight poverty in the country.

The plan targeting those who have no capital to grow the plants would start in June and July [2016] in Yangon and Bago regions.

According to the MAEA, the quality of Myanmar's agarwood is higher than it is in other countries.

Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand and China are the main importers of agarwood from Myanmar. According to agarwood farmers in Myanmar, one kilo of first-grade agarwood can fetch between US$4,000 and $20,000.

Since 1995, Aquilariamalaccensis, the primary source of agarwood, has been listed among potentially threatened species by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Myanmar has banned illegal trading on agarwood since 1947.

The Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is planning to reduce the tax on agarwood produced by agarwood farms.

The ministry is working to set the tax on agarwood produced at local farms for export at less than 25 per cent of the local price, according to the ministry.

There are about 50 million agarwood trees growing on 50,000 acres of private agarwood plantations in Myanmar, according to MAEA.—*Aye Min Soe/Ko Moe*

Yangon's new trams bring hope of more commuters

DESPITE attracting great public attention, the newly-opened electric line that started running along Strand road as of 11 January received an average of 180 passengers a day only until its third day of service, according to a train crew. After this period passenger numbers decreased.

Ko Win Hlaing, an assistant supervisor of Myanmar Railways, said that most passengers took the three-carriage tram for pleasure, rather than real passengers using the service for transport.

The electric train is currently running on a journey of around 3.5 miles that starts at Wardan Street and runs to Linsadaung in Botahtaung Township. The tram ride costs K100 per head and the tram service operates six times each day from 8 am to 1 pm.

According to the train crew, this figure was slightly higher than the number of passengers who took the RBE train that ran previously on the same route as RBE train service received 120 passengers on average per day, he said.

"I have never ridden the tram", said U Tun Myint. "So, I have taken the tram for pleasure."

The 61-year-old Yangonite expressed his view that the reason the tram gets few passengers is that the tram line is short and a longer line will be of benefit to passengers who want to use the train for long journeys to avoid heavy traffic.

Myanmar Railways under the Ministry of Rail Transportation introduced the tram line with the aim of helping Yangonites to relieve some of the pressure on the city's jam-packed downtown area. Other tram passengers also gave voice to their worries about a few of concrete blocks placed along the line, calling for more blocks to be placed all.

U Aye Lwin who lives on 26 street, Pabedan Township also expressed his view that there would be more passengers on the tram if the tram line was longer than the current one and the train service operated in accord with its timetable.

He also called for strict action to be taken against undisciplined passengers and proposed that tram service should be extended to evening.

The team of the three-carriage electric train vehicle comprises six train crews including a driver and two police officers.

Passengers on board a tramcar. PHOTO: MOE MAKHA

According to figures for those two days, the tram provided its service to 195 passengers on 11 January and 166 on the second day.—*Maung Sein Lwin*

Myanmar fishermen are seen on arrival at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: ZAW GYI (PANITA)

14 Myanmar Fishermen return from Indonesia's Ambon Island

FOURTEEN Myanmar fishermen rescued from Indonesia's Ambon Island arrived back Yangon on Friday evening.

"They experienced many obstacles in Indonesia. Some of them did not receive payment. We will investigate whether they were trafficked to Indonesia. If so, we will expose the human traffickers responsible, and will try to get compensation for their grievances," said Police Col Ye Win Aung of the Yangon Region Anti-trafficking Police Force, one of the officials who welcomed the fishermen at the Yangon International Airport. The fourteen were welcomed by authorities from the Central Committee for prevention against Human Trafficking, the Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by officials from IOM.

The fishermen were certified as Myanmar citizens by Myanmar officials during their stay in Indonesia and returned home with the help of the Myanmar Embassy in Indonesia and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

It has been learned that the fishermen are from Yangon, Magway, Tanintharyi, Bago and Ayeyawady regions as well as Kachin. Their citizenship was confirmed by the Immigration and National Registration Department and Population Department.

The authorities have arranged to issue citizenship cards to the fishermen and to help them find jobs. They are currently staying at a training school of the Social Welfare Department, Kyaik Wine Pagoda Road, Mayangone Township, Yangon Division before they are returned home.

In 2015 there were in total 24 batches of repatriated fishermen equaling 1,010 persons from Indonesia. There have been 3 batches equaling a total of 42 persons repatriated so far in 2016.—*GNLM*

Interview: Chinese investment in Myanmar's SEZ pure business: company official

BEIJING — The interests of Myanmar and its people will be the top consideration of the developers of two projects in Myanmar's special economic zone (SEZ) in the town of Kyaukphyu, a company official told Xinhua recently.

The China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC) Construction company, together with four other Chinese companies and one Thai firm, formed a consortium and won the tender for building an industrial park and a deep sea port in the SEZ on Dec. 30, 2015.

"The investment of CITIC and our partners in Kyaukphyu was driven purely by business value," Yuan Shaobin, vice chairman of CITIC Construction, told Xinhua.

A small-scale model of Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone. PHOTO: KYAUKPHYU SEZ

Located in Myanmar's western Rakhine state, Kyaukphyu is known for its tropical sceneries and backward infrastructure.

"We need to find a way to preserve the environment while fundamentally improving the infrastructure, and share the dividends released by the projects with Myanmar and the local people," said Yuan, adding that the implementation of the projects will be based on three concepts, namely, social development, green development and common prosperity.

For social development, the consortium will analyze the projects' social impact, provide training opportunities to local people as well as anti-disaster and emergency rescue service, and set up 50 clinics and 50 schools in Rakhine State.

It also plans to launch a development fund to support the various needs of the local government and residents, such as transportation, water supply, power supply, children's education, healthcare and dispensary services, agriculture, poultry farming, aquaculture, fisheries and so on.

"By all these means, we want Myanmar and the whole world to know that CITIC is a reliable and responsible partner," Yuan added.

He also said the consortium led by CITIC will take care of ecological needs and improve the natural environment.

Documents from the company indicate that the projects will be guided by green design concepts and clean energy technology.

Before launching the projects, he said, CITIC will hire globally well-known companies to conduct environmental impact assessment.

"We want the local people to live in a more orderly, beautiful, convenient and comfortable Kyaukphyu," said the vice president.

Yuan also said the consortium will involve locals in the construction and management of the projects.

"We will increase local supply and local subcontracting, launch Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development programs, promote Made in Myanmar products ... and create no less than 2,000 job opportunities for local people each year," said Yuan.

The six-member consortium will form joint ventures with local enterprises to build and operate the projects under the framework of the Myanmar Special Economic Zone law.

Hailing Myanmar as the last untapped virgin land in Asia, Yuan said he is optimistic about the projects and Myanmar's future. "I hope the incumbent and incoming Myanmar governments can adhere to the path of democracy, reform and opening-up, and inject more impetus into its economic development," said Yuan. —*Xinhua*

Carlsberg Group to be sued for using phrase coined by Myoma Nyein

A GRANDSON of the well-known Myanmar composer Myoma Nyein announced that he will sue the Carlsberg Group for using the Myanmar phrase 'too poh' in the branding material for Tuborg beer in Myanmar.

The family of the late composer held a press conference in Mandalay this week to make the announcement. Myoma Nyein coined the phrase 'too poh' to represent Myanmar's traditional Thingyan Festival. The composer's grandson U Myo Zaw Oo said his family will settle the issue in court.

The family refused to allow the company to use the phrase 'too poh' throughout four rounds negotiations between the two sides before the company distributed the product to the market, he added.

Denmark-based Carlsberg Group operates in Myanmar through a joint venture with its local partner Myanmar Golden Star. It officially opened its factory in Bago last year, where it brew Tuborg beer and its flagship brand Carlsberg beer.—*Aung Ye Thwin*

5 million foreign tourists...

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Moreover, the foreign tourists are signing up for Chindwin river cruises, which offer views of Myanmar's natural landscape and encounters with ethnic minority communities and their cultures.

The number of tourism companies in the country rose from 1,670 in 2014 to 1,922 today. Of them, 1,822 are locally owned.

New hotels are also sprouting up across the country to accommodate the increasing number of tourists, according to the Myanmar Hoteliers Association. A total of 340 hotels were operating in Myanmar in 2015, compared to 290 in 2014, according to U Tin Win, chairman of the Myanmar Hoteliers Association.

Meanwhile, the government has established 17 hotel zones in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay and Bago regions.

Tourist arrivals through Yangon International Airport numbered 759,181 in the first nine months of 2015, up 82,174 from 677,007 tourists in the same period last year. More than 800,000 tourists entered Myanmar by air and ship last year, while more than 2.2 million tourists visited the country through border entrances.

Tourist arrivals are highest in the Yangon, Mandalay, Inle and Bagan hotel zones. The number of tourist arrivals in Mandalay, the second-largest city in Myanmar, reached 306,432 in 2015, up 26 per cent from 242,566 in 2014. Mandalay, which was the last royal capital of Myanmar, has a population of just over 1.2 million, according to the latest census.

The majority of foreign tourists come from China, Thailand, France, Germany and the US.

At present, eight domestic airlines and five international airlines are operating services in Mandalay, and plans are underway to expand international flights and airline access to Mandalay.

Under the new system, 12 types of entry visa and three types of re-entry visa are available for foreign travelers to facilitate their visits to Myanmar. Visas-on-arrival are also available at three Myanmar international airports.—*Xinhua*

4th Housing and Living 2016 concludes

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe visits 4th Housing and Living 2016 Expo at the opening ceremony of the expo. PHOTO: KYEMON

"THE 4th Housing and Living 2016" expo ended yesterday at the Tatmadaw Hall on U Wisara Road, Dagon Township.

The expo was opened on 15 January, staging booths for selling condominium at home and abroad, construction and decoration materials, furniture, banking services and insurances for the real estate sector.

At the expo, Dr Maung Aung, U Khin Maung Nyo (Bawga), U Myo Myat Thu gave talks on challenges for the real estate sector in post-2015 on 15 January. U Sai Khun Naung, U Win Zaw (CHD Bank), Dr Khin Maung Soe (Eco), U Myo Myint (MKT Construction) and U Kyaw Si Thu (Success Property Consultant) also gave talks on demand for housings and loans yesterday.—*Soe Soe Naing*

Jakarta attack highlights jostle to lead Islamic State in SE Asia

JAKARTA — Last week's attack on Jakarta showed for the first time that Islamic State violence has arrived in Indonesia, but security experts believe the radical group's footprint is still light here because militants are jostling to be its regional leader.

Police have identified Bahrun Naim, an Indonesian based in Syria, as the mastermind of the blitz of bombings and gunfire that left all five attackers and two civilians dead on Thursday.

But perhaps the region's most influential jihadi is a jailed cleric, Aman Abdurrahman, who with just a few couriers and cell phones is able to command around 200 followers from behind bars.

He sits at the head of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, an umbrella organisation formed last year through an alliance of splinter groups that security experts believe could become the unifying force for Islamic State supporters.

"They want to internalise the conflicts in Indonesia so they can bring more people from the outside," said Rakyan Adibrata, a Jakarta-based terrorism expert who advises parliament, referring to the militants who have joined forces under one banner.

Indonesian police guard during a "car free" period at the site of this week's militant attack in central Jakarta, Indonesia, on 17 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"Just like Syria, you need to create a conflict zone very big that can be a magnet for all jihadi to come across the world to Indonesia to wage war. That's their main objective."

Police believe that Naim, himself an Abdurrahman supporter, was trying to prove his leadership skills to Islamic State's leaders in Syria by plotting the Jakarta attack. "In order to get the credit from ISIS, he needs to prove his leadership capabilities," Jakarta police chief Tito Karnavian said, using a common acronym for the Syria-based group.

He said Naim's vision was to unite the now-splintered groups across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, that support Islamic State.

Islamic State, which controls tracts of Syria and Iraq, has accepted allegiances from jihadists in Nigeria, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, but has yet to formally recognise any radical groups in Southeast Asia.

Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was the last transnational group to successfully launch major attacks in the region, including the 2002 bombings on the resort island of Bali that killed 202 people. JI, founded by Indonesian and Malaysian militants who returned from battling the Soviet Union in the Afghan jihad of the 1980s and early 1990s, has largely become defunct due to internal rivalries and a sustained crackdown by security forces.

Governments in the region fear that Malay-speaking militants returning from fighting for Islamic State in Syria and Iraq could form a JI-like regional organisation. But security experts doubt there is much chance of a pan-regional group emerging that would bring militants from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines under one banner because there is too much that divides them.

"At this point, it's hard to imagine any Southeast Asia affiliate would be formed," said a senior Philippines army counter-terrorism official, noting that militants in his country are mostly interested in raising money from kidnappings.

"And one big obstacle to clear now is finding an amir that all of them can agree on," added the official, who declined to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

In Malaysia, former university lecturer Mahmud Ahmad is believed to be behind recent attempts to unite militant groups from three Southeast Asian countries, including the Abu Sayyaf group based in southern islands of the Philippines.

Abdurrahman remains perhaps the weightiest contender for leadership of Islamic State in the region.

While serving a 9-year prison term for aiding a militant training camp in Indonesia, he has managed to encourage hundreds of Indonesians to join the fight in Syria and Iraq.

"They can run the organisation from the inside," said terrorism expert Adibrata. "Couriers bring cell phones and they record every word Abdurrahman says."

Prison authorities have tried repeatedly to silence Abdurrahman.

According to the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 10 phones were confiscated from his cell in September 2014, but just a month later he got hold of a new phone and his sermons to followers inside and outside the prison resumed.—*Reuters*

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Sheep being raised on asparagus to revitalise Hokkaido town

Takanori Nishikawa, who raises sheep on asparagus in Bibai, Hokkaido, on 5 December 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

SAPPORO — Takanori Nishikawa, who owns a construction company in Bibai, Hokkaido, is hoping to revitalise the local economy by raising sheep on asparagus.

Nishikawa, 46, had no experience of animal husbandry. But eight years ago, a nearby farmer brought asparagus roots, cut off before shipment, as feed for his father's three pet sheep.

A thought suddenly came into Nishikawa's head that sheep raised on asparagus would provide tastier meat than those raised on compound feed and hay, and he began to raise sheep on asparagus.

The thought proved correct as the mutton tasted sweeter than imported meat, apparently due to the sugar in asparagus.

Less than 1 per cent of the sheep meat consumed in Japan is domestically produced and even in Hokkaido, where mutton dishes are popular, imports account for most of the meat consumed.

Bibai, a city in the central part of Japan's northernmost main island, once flourished as a coal mining town, but it now has a population of around 23,000, or a quarter of its peak.

While managing the construction company founded by his father Iwao, 71, Nishikawa established a sheep farm seven years ago in a bid to "contribute to the city using local resources."

Eager to improve feeding methods and meat quality, Nishikawa does not hesitate to visit restaurant owners and other people concerned whenever necessary.

He has also actively developed processed mutton products and organised promotion events.

Nishikawa now has 180 sheep as the popularity of meat produced at the farm grows.

During the period when fresh asparagus is unavailable, the farm uses feed made from the fermentation of dried asparagus mixed with rice and wheat bran.

The sheep droppings are used to fertilize the asparagus farmers' fields.

"We are circulating local resources without expending much energy and labour," Nishikawa said.

"I just want to eat tasty meat," Nishikawa continued. "I want to expand the business with other people and create jobs in the town."—*Kyodo News*

PICTURE OF THE DAY

People hold statues of the Santo Nino during the Feast of the Santo Nino in Manila, the Philippines, on 17 January 2016. The Philippines held weekend celebrations to mark the feast day of the Santo Nino, honoring what devotees believe is the miraculous statue of the Holy Child Jesus. PHOTO: XINHUA

After historic election, China says Taiwan an internal affair

TAIPEI — Taiwan is an internal matter for China, there is only one China in the world and the island's election neither changes this reality nor international acceptance of it, China's government said after the pro-independence opposition won a landslide.

Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won a convincing victory in both presidential and parliamentary elections on Saturday.

President-elect Tsai pledged to maintain peace with giant neighbour China, which claims Taiwan as its sacred territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under its control.

Shortly after her victory, China's Taiwan Affairs Office warned it would oppose any move towards independence and that Beijing was determined to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In a short statement released just before midnight on Saturday, China's Foreign Ministry said no matter what changes there may be on the island, China would never change its policy of opposing Taiwan's formal independence.

"The Taiwan issue is an internal matter for China," it said.

"There is only one China in the world, the mainland and Taiwan both belong to one China and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity will not brook being broken up," the ministry added.

"The results of the Taiwan region election does not change this basic fact and the consensus of the international community."

China hopes the world will continue to uphold a "one China" principle, oppose any form of Taiwan independence and takes "real steps" to support the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait, it added.

Tsai has been thrust into one of Asia's toughest and most dangerous jobs, with China pointing hundreds of missiles at the island it claims, decades after the losing Nationalists fled from Mao Zedong's Communists to Taiwan in the Chinese civil war in 1949.

Tsai will have to balance the superpower interests of China, which is also Taiwan's largest trading partner, and the United States with those of her freewheeling, democratic home. —*Reuters*

12 died, scores suffer from cold, fever in mid-western Nepal: local media

KATHMANDU — Twelve people have been killed and scores have fallen ill due to common cold and viral fever amid harsh winter weather over past two weeks at Mugu District in mid-western Nepal, local media said yesterday.

Common cold and viral fever claimed six lives, five of them being elderly, in Dhainakot Village Development Committee of Mugu District, the *Annapurna Post* newspaper reported.

The other victims died in Karkibada, Shreenagar and Gamtha Village Development Committees also due to the common cold and viral fever amid intense cold, government officials said.

Scores of others have been affected by viral fever and common cold in the district, government officials added.

The disease was mostly seen in people at the age of 38 to 65 in those far-flung villages of mid-western Nepal.

"We have deployed medical teams to those village development committees after getting reports of deaths due to viral fever and common cold," Shambhu Regmi, chief district officer of Mugu District, told Xinhua over phone.—*Xinhua*

Woman gets 6 years for pyramid scheme

NANNING — A court in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has sentenced a woman to six years in jail for involvement in a pyramid scheme.

The woman, only identified by her surname Sun, was also fined 3 million yuan (455,700 US dollars) for recruiting more than 120 participants in the scheme and receiving more than 500,000 yuan in profits, the Yinhai District People's Court in Beihai City said in a statement yesterday.

It said Sun received more than 2.5 million yuan in "registration fees" by demanding a fixed amount of money from new participants for "a high-returning national project" in Beihai City. Four other "senior scheme leaders" also received unspecified prison terms and fines.—*Xinhua*

Campaign begins for Ginowan election, US base relocation key issue

NAHA — Official campaigning started yesterday for a mayoral election in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture, in what is widely seen as a battle between Tokyo and Okinawa over the contentious relocation of a key US military base within the island prefecture.

Mayor Atsushi Sakima, who is seeking a second four-year term in next Sunday's election, has the backing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner, the Komeito party.

Sakima, 51, is being challenged by Keiichiro Shimura, a 63-year-old former senior official of the prefectural government with no party affiliation.

The Marine Corps Air Station Futenma sits in a crowded part of Ginowan. Due partly to noise pollution and concerns over the risk of accidents involving aircraft that use the base, Japan and the United States are seeking to relocate it to a less densely populated area within the same island.

Land used for the base is supposed to be returned to Japanese control once the relocation is completed as agreed on by the two countries.

But construction of the replacement facility in the Henoko coastal area of Nago has run into stiff local resistance.

Gov Takeshi Onaga, who has bristled at the concentration of US military bases in the island prefecture, is engaged in a legal battle with the central government, seeking to stop the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from building a new base in the coastal area.

Sakima has focused on realising the swift shutdown of the Futenma base and its return to Japanese control, without mentioning the contentious relocation to Henoko in a concrete manner.

He has pledged to bring a Disney resort to the area now used for the Futenma base.

Shimura, meanwhile, has put his opposition to the Henoko relocation at the center of his campaign, saying he will seek unconditional closure of the Futenma base and the return of its land in coordination with the governor, assembly members and civic groups opposed to the current relocation project.—*Kyodo News*

Britain's opposition Labour gears up for new battle : on nuclear arms

LONDON — The leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party says a reshuffle of his top team has brought the unity needed to "win elections and change our country for the better" — but he faces a struggle to convince his own lawmakers.

Some Labour MPs say this month's changes by Jeremy Corbyn have merely deepened divisions and herald the start of a battle over national security that could tear the party apart and leave it out of power for more than a decade.

After days of what some aides said were difficult talks, Corbyn sacked two top-ranking officials for disloyalty and moved his defence spokeswoman to another role, bringing in a lawmaker who shares his opposition to nuclear weapons.

With security now taking centre stage, the reshuffle was seen as the first move in a fight over whether to renew the Trident submarine programme — Britain's sole nuclear weapons system — which a Labour government won parliamentary support for in 2007.

Pat McFadden, who was sacked as Labour's Europe spokesman in the reshuffle, urged Labour members not to focus on his dismissal, which was condemned by several lawmakers, in both Labour and the ruling Conservative Party.

"The longer-term importance from the reshuffle is not whether I'm there ... it is probably the question of Trident and what happens now," McFadden told Reuters in an interview. "There will certainly be different views about it."

A battle for the soul of Britain's Labour Party seems to have entered a new phase.

Corbyn believes the cost of renewing and maintaining Trident, which Reuters puts at more than 167 billion pounds ($234 billion) over 32 years, is too much and the money could be better spent. But many in his party think Britain cannot unilaterally disarm in an increasingly hostile world.

The veteran left-wing and anti-war activist was elected on a groundswell of desire for change among Labour's grass-root members in September following a heavy election defeat. Since then, his followers in the party, often holding more radical views than their elected representatives in parliament, have clashed with some Labour lawmakers.

After weeks of slurs and accusations in the largely anonymous realm of Twitter, some of the divisive language is now being used in parliament, with lawmakers who resigned their senior party positions in protest at the reshuffle dubbed a "right-wing clique" by one of Corbyn's closest allies.

The two sides seem further apart than ever, and despite Corbyn's attempts to tighten his control over the party, the Trident debate looks set to add fuel to what is becoming an increasingly public, and damaging, battle.

Britain's opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn reacts after delivering the keynote speech at the Fabian Society new year conference in London, Britain on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Corbyn's election as leader represented a sharp break from the legacy of former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who shifted Labour from its left-wing roots to the political centre. He took a party that had been out of office for almost two decades to three straight election victories after becoming leader in 1994.

Blair quit in 2007 and Labour — dogged by criticism and internal soul-searching over its participation in the US-led invasion of Iraq and its handling of the economy during the Blair years — lost the next two elections.

Now Corbyn's push to turn Labour more to the left is exposing its faultlines.

The reshuffle, in which Corbyn sacked McFadden and Michael Dugher, former spokesman for culture, media and sport — both more centrist politicians - triggered several resignations among junior members of his team. But explaining the reshuffle in a commentary piece in the Guardian newspaper, Corbyn wrote: "For all the media sound and fury ... (the) shadow cabinet reshuffle has made us a stronger, more diverse and more coherent leadership team."

"It will help make Labour a more effective champion of the people who need us to give them a voice, to win elections and change our country for the better," he wrote on 9 January.

He says he has the mandate of thousands of new party members to push through change, but after he promised a new, consensual politics where differences of opinion could be aired, some Labour voters feel let down by the sackings in his team.

Carl Gardner, 51, a former government lawyer, said he had been wondering about leaving the party since it became clear in August that Corbyn would win the leadership election.

After joining Labour in 1994, when he said Labour had "finally become a sensible, electable centre-left party which could do good things in this country", London-based Gardner feared the party was turning back to its 1980s hard-left stances such as unilateral disarmament.

"The question is why didn't I leave before?" he said.

Instead Gardner, who now teaches law, said he stopped paying his Labour subscription on 7 January, his birthday.

"I waited four months for it and if there was a last straw, it was the reshuffle ... I don't really hear principled voices of the best of the Labour Party speaking up against the wholly wrong-headed direction that Labour is going in."

Others disagree. Party membership has grown to 380,000 people, up from about 270,000 in August, and a majority of members — more than 200,000 people — signed up since the former Labour leader Ed Miliband left in May last year, after suffering the overwhelming defeat by the Conservatives.

But it is largely Corbyn supporters — dubbed Corbynistas — who make up the new entrants, who are increasingly dominating local councils and associations.

"This new membership is overwhelmingly pro-Corbyn, which should give us a decent idea of just how strong a position he is in," said LabourList, a Labour website, in a commentary.

"If he is able to mobilise and organise them effectively, doing things like changing Trident policy should be a doddle."—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Stefanovic expects clear European position on migrants

BELGRADE — Serbian Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said on Saturday that he expects to see clear EU positions on which migrants and which citizens it wants to receive in its territory so that this does not become Serbia's problem.

Serbia is ready to cooperate with all states and international institutions towards solving this problem, an Interior Ministry statement quoted Stefanovic as saying.

Visiting 20 Serbian police officers who have been guarding the Macedonian-Greek border for more than two weeks, Stefanovic said that the Serbian and Macedonian police want to establish normal transit and registration.

Touring the Vinojug reception centre in Gevgelija, Macedonia, with Macedonian counterpart Oliver Spasovski, Stefanovic said that Serbia will also work with other countries towards an improved registration of migrants.—*Tanjug*

Islamic State militants kidnap 400 civilians from Syria's Deir al-Zor city

BEIRUT — Islamic State militants kidnapped at least 400 civilians when they attacked government-held areas in the Syrian city of Deir al-Zor on Saturday, a monitoring group said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Sunday families of pro-government fighters were among those abducted.

Syria's state news agency SANA said earlier that at least 300 people had been killed in the attacks in Deir al-Zor.—*Reuters*

Detained Washington Post journalist and his wife have left Iran

ANKARA — Iran's Tasnim news agency reported yesterday that detained Iranian-American citizen Jason Rezaian and his wife had left Iran as part of a prisoner swap deal with the United States.

"Jason Rezaian and his wife Yeganeh Salehi have left Iran," Tasnim reported, without elaborating.

Tasnim did not say whether three other American citizens due to leave Iran under the deal had departed yet.—*Reuters*

Suicide bomber kills 13 people in eastern Afghanistan: officials

JALALABAD — A suicide bomber killed 13 people in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday at the home of a tribal elder when people had gathered to celebrate his son's release from Taliban captivity, local officials said.

The son was killed and at least 14 people, including his father, were wounded in the attack, according to Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the provincial governor.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on his Twitter page denied responsibility for the attack.

There have been several bomb blasts in Afghanistan over recent weeks at a time when efforts are underway to restart a peace process with the Taliban.

Islamic State in the same city last week claimed their first attack on a major urban centre in Afghanistan with an assault on the Pakistani consulate that killed seven people.—*Reuters*

Hunan turning mine pit into ice resort

CHANGSHA — A deserted mine pit in central China's Hunan Province is being turned into an "ice theme park" featuring skiing, ice skating and water rides.

More than five decades of mining by a local cement producer left a pit 100 metres deep and measuring 180,000 square metres at the surface in the provincial capital Changsha.

Turning the bowl-shaped industrial wasteland into a tourist destination is challenging. Given the depth of the pit, construction workers have to use a tunnel to get concrete to the bottom.

The theme park is expected to open in 2018, according to the local government.—*Xinhua*

Nuclear sanctions lifted as Iran, US agree on prisoner swap

VIENNA/WASHINGTON — Iran emerged from years of economic isolation on Saturday when world powers lifted crippling sanctions against the Islamic Republic in return for Tehran complying with a deal to curb its nuclear ambitions.

In a dramatic move scheduled to coincide with the scrapping of the sanctions, Tehran also announced the release of five Americans including *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian as part of a prisoner swap with the United States.

Together, the lifting of sanctions and the prisoner deal considerably reduce the hostility between Tehran and Washington that has shaped the Middle East since Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Tens of billions of dollars worth of Iranian assets will now be unfrozen and global companies that have been barred from doing business there will be able to exploit a market hungry for everything from automobiles to airplane parts.

The UN nuclear watchdog ruled on Saturday that Iran had abided by an agreement last year with six world powers to curtail its nuclear programme, triggering the end of sanctions.

"Iran has carried out all measures required under the (July deal) to enable Implementation Day (of the deal) to occur," the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini address a news conference at the United Nations building in Vienna, Austria, on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Within minutes, the United States formally lifted banking, steel, shipping and other sanctions on Iran, a major oil producer which has been virtually shut out of international markets for the past five years.

The European Union also began the process of lifting sanctions and Iran's transport minister said Tehran plans to buy 114 civil aircraft from European aircraft maker Airbus.

The end of sanctions means more money and prestige for Shi'ite Muslim Iran as it becomes deeply embroiled in the sectarian conflicts of the Middle East, notably in the Syrian civil war where its allies are facing Sunni Muslim rebels.

America's thaw with Iran is viewed with deep suspicion by US Republicans as well as American allies in the Middle East, including Israel and Saudi Arabia. US-Iranian suspicion still remains deeply entrenched.

Washington maintains separate, less comprehensive sanctions on Iran over its missile programme. For its part, Iran detained 10 US Navy sailors on two boats in the Gulf a week ago, although they were released the next day.

In an unusual move, President Barack Obama pardoned three Iranian-Americans charged for violating sanctions against Iran, a lawyer for one of the men said, while prosecutors moved to drop charges against four Iranians outside the United States.

Iran agreed to free five Americans including Rezaian and Saeed Abedini, an Iranian-American Christian pastor sentenced to eight years in prison in 2013 on charges of undermining Iran's national security.

But a US official said four of the Americans had not yet left Iran due to ongoing logistical issues. The fifth prisoner, Matthew Trevithick, has left the country after 40 days in prison. Trevithick, a student and journalist, had travelled and worked in conflict-torn nations including Syria, Mali and Afghanistan.

The prisoner deal was the culmination of months of diplomatic contacts, secret talks and legal manoeuvring which came close to falling apart because of a threat by Washington in December to impose fresh sanctions on Iran for recent ballistic missile tests.

The detente with Iran is opposed by all of the Republican candidates vying to succeed Obama as president in an election in November.

Republican front-runner Donald Trump said at a campaign event that he was happy Americans were being freed, "but I will tell you it's a disgrace that they were there for so long."

Ted Cruz, a conservative senator from Texas and one of the leading Republicans, tweeted in support of Abedini's release: "Praise God! Surely bad parts of Obama's latest deal, but prayers of thanksgiving that Pastor Saeed is coming home."

Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton took credit for helping to start the sanctions pressure on Iran during her 2009-2013 tenure as Obama's secretary of state.

"These are important steps that make the United States, our allies, and the entire world safer.

I congratulate President Obama and his team, and I'm proud of the role I played to get this process started," she said in a statement.

Clinton also urged new sanctions on Tehran over its ballistic missile testing programme.

Iran's return to an already glutted oil market is one of the factors contributing to a global rout in oil prices, which fell below $30 a barrel this week for the first time in 12 years.

Tehran says it could boost exports by 500,000 barrels per day within weeks. The end of sanctions marks a crowning achievement for Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatic cleric elected in 2013 in a landslide on a promise to reduce Iran's international isolation.

The economic measures, mostly imposed in the last five years, had cut off the country of 80 million people from the global financial system, slashed Iran's exports and imposed severe economic hardship on ordinary Iranians.

Rouhani was granted the authority to negotiate the deal by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, an arch-conservative in power since 1989.

Iran denies its nuclear programme was aimed at obtaining an atomic bomb.

Rouhani congratulated the Iranian nation on Saturday after the news that sanctions were to be lifted.

"Thank God for this blessing and bow to the greatness of the patient nation of Iran. Congrats on this glorious victory," Rouhani tweeted in English.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has argued, including in a *New York Times* op-ed column last week, that Iran wants to help the global fight against Sunni Muslim militants like Islamic State and al Qaeda. "It's now time for all — especially Muslim nations — to join hands and rid the world of violent extremism. Iran is ready," Zarif tweeted on Saturday.—*Reuters*

Australians kidnapped in Burkina Faso dedicated lives to medical aid

PERTH — An Australian couple reportedly kidnapped and held by militants in Burkina Faso have dedicated their lives to providing medical services to people in the remote north of the country, a family spokesperson said yesterday.

Dr. Ken Elliott and his wife Jocelyn, were kidnapped overnight in northern Burkina Faso near the border with Mali, President Roch Marc Christian Kabore said in a televised address to the nation on Saturday after al Qaeda fighters staged an attack on the capital Ouagadougou.

It is not known if the Elliott's abduction was related to the attack. The doctor and his wife are in their 80s. Hamadou Ag Khallini, a spokesperson for Malian militant group Ansar Dine, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that jihadists from the al Qaeda-linked "Emirate of the Sahara" group, which operates in northern Mali, are holding the couple. More details would be released soon, Khallini said in a brief phone message.

"Recent news from the country indicates an alleged abduction of Ken and Jocelyn on Friday night, however no reason is yet given for this and their whereabouts is still unknown," a family spokesperson said, in a statement released by Australia's foreign ministry. The couple have operated a 120-bed clinic in the town of Dijbo, where Ken is the only surgeon, for more than 40 years.

"They are held in high esteem by the local people," the spokesperson said, requesting that their family be granted privacy.

Until Friday's attack, Burkina Faso, an ally of Western governments against jihadist groups in the arid reaches of the southern Sahara, had largely been spared the violence that has plagued its neighbours.

An Australian foreign ministry spokesman said its office in Ghana is working with authorities and declined to comment further.—*Reuters*

Palestinians arrest negotiations aide suspected of spying for Israel

RAMALLAH — Palestinian officials said yesterday they had arrested a member of their peace negotiating department for spying for Israel, a development likely to deepen distrust between the sides at a time of deadlocked diplomacy and simmering street violence.

The man, whose name was not released, is part of the management staff in the umbrella Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO) negotiations department and is accused of "collaborating with Israel", a security official told Reuters.

Another official said the suspect had been arrested two weeks ago.

Al Ayyam newspaper, published in the West Bank city of Ramallah where Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's US-backed administration is based, described the suspect as a 20-year veteran of the PLO team and said he had confessed to the charge.

How long he had spied for Israel and what damage he might have done remained unclear, *Al Ayyam* said, citing an unnamed senior Palestinian official.

Israeli officials did not immediately respond.

The PLO and Israel signed interim accords in 1993 that won limited self-rule for the Palestinians, but after several rounds of talks their goal of statehood in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip remains out of reach.

The stalemate, as well as Muslim anger over perceived Jewish encroachment on a contested Jerusalem shrine, has contributed to Palestinian street attacks and protests that erupted in October and have drawn a tough response from Israeli security forces.

At least 147 Palestinians have been killed, 93 of whom Israel described as assailants. Most of the others died during violent demonstrations.

In the same period, Palestinian stabbings, car-rammings and gun attacks have killed 24 Israelis and a US citizen.—*Reuters*

OPINION

Democracy requires participation

Khin Maung Aye

ELECTIONS for wards and village-tract administrators are now taking place. However, Myanmar law does not allow residents to vote directly for their chieftains or village heads.Instead, every 10 households nominates a candidate, who is called 'the head of the ten households'. The head of the ward or village tract is e elected from among the ten-household heads. Thus, the election of these administrators is indirect.

This is not the forum to debate the virtues of direct and indirect elections. It is more important to address the fact that Myanmar people-pay very little attention to the elections at the ward/village tract level, though they certainly complain about administrators who behave badly. For decades, Myanmar citizens have showed little interest in nominating candidates and have neglected to go to the pollsfor local elections; we often say local politics do not concern us. We say we have to work for livelihoods regardless of who is elected. This mind-setoriginates in the period between 1962 and 1988, when the socialist regime reigned the country.

In fact, the socialist regime had its own version of democracy. Both party members and the non-party members had their say in nominating executive candidates and party leadership candidates. The root cause of non-participation is the crisis of confidence. But the party leaders failed to win the love and trust of the people; they failed to ask for the people's cooperation, without which the government was unable to execute its plans, programmes and projects. The socialist government was unable to convince the people that politics is everybody's concern. As a matter of fact, the socialist regime and its successors have all failed to promote the awareness of the importance of political conscientiousness on the part of the people.

This being the case, The Global New Light of Myanmar would like to remind the people of the importance of the people's participation and cooperation and urge the authorities to promote awareness of the significance of the participatory approach in carrying out democratic practices.

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 khinmaungaye.hotmail@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.

"Indonesia's reform inspiration"

Sondang Grace Sirait

IN one of his last speeches after concluding10 years as the first ever directly elected leader of the world's fourth most populous nation, former Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono likened running a democracy without political development to walking on a treadmill.

"Eventually, you come to the realization that the world around you has fundamentally altered, but you are not politically able to adapt to it. Thus, in the absence of political development, we will end up with political decay," he remarked.

Yet today, 12 years after Yudhoyono first launched those reforms, and 18 years after Indonesia's radicaltransformation from repressive authoritarian rule to democracy, homework remains. While milestones include peaceful leadership transitions, free press, vibrant civil society and influential presence of the social media, there remains an uphill battle against corruption. Factional political infighting has also continued to hinder implementation of critical reforms. Yudhoyono'svision of an ideal concoction of political development, socio-economic progress and public participation is still an elusive goal.

It's a reality common not only in Indonesia, but across many developing countrieschartingtheir own coursestoward democratic governance. In fact, many have suggested that the ground where Myanmar stands on today is where Indonesia was in 1998, savethe similarities in history and political landscape, which includes an active military presence and challenges of ethnicconflicts, turn to each other for inspiration. Take for example, its progress toward implementing the rule of law and battling corruption to matters concerning insurgency, ethnic and religious violence, as well as decentralization.

But first things first, University of Indonesia Southeast Asian political analyst Evida Kartini tells me, there's the issue of civil military relations and how it has affected, if not altered, the leadership of both countries.

"NLD's victory proved that there has been a strengthening of the political culture in Myanmar that longs for democracy, aptly aided by the civil society. What makes Myanmar different from Indonesia is the course it will take with regard to military presence in the government, and how far the military is willing to relinquish its role in politics," she says.

However the political constellation ends up, no one will argue that past the jolt, like Indonesia, Myanmar too will be facing the issue of institutional reform. The model of institutional change provided by Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinnings (Andrews 2013, pp. 98-99) passes through a series of stages: deinstitutionalization, preinstitutionalization, theorization, diffusion, and reinstitutionalization. Where a country is on that lineup depends on the effectiveness of its institutional entrepreneurs.

But more that, as Andrews warns, institutional reform requires more than mere engagement of a few champions. It also calls for the involvement of 'distributed agents who ultimately have to implement reforms', in culture, conscience and ethics.

Reform might start later in Myanmar than it did in Indonesia,but given the right push by the right people, it could well be on a faster trajectory, and certainly not stuck on a treadmill.

About the author

The writer is a journalist currently based in Yangon. She served in the second administration of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as Assistant to the President's Spokesman.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The View From The Bottom.

Desirability, Feasibility and reality.

There have been many proposals and comments concerning how things could be improved, be it education, law enforcement, city planning, etc., etc. Most of them are put forward by persons who are well-informed on the subjects they comment on. As such, we, who have just superficial knowledge about these subjects, feel hesitant to put pen to paper.

However, although we may lack formal knowledge on many subjects, we have some practical experience gained from having to live through many of them. Therefore, I took courage to venture my thoughts on some of the issues that impact our lives in some ways.

For instance town planning. From time to time, we hear very important persons saying we should make Yangon look like, for instance, Singapore. These personages must have seen how things were there and wondered why we couldn't do the same here. The desirability was there, and there was nothing wrong with it. So, we started with Mingaladon Airport. Nothing grandiose, just giving it a facelift.

"Why don't we plant flowers and other decorative plants as they have done around Singapore airport?".

Accordingly, instructions trickled down to the lowest level, those who work at Yangon Airport. Flowering and decorative plants must be grown along the runways. It was a tall order, but, why not?. It could, of course, be implemented if the required resources were there. The main thing needed was water. The average temperatures at Mingaladon Airport during the late afternoon must be over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. It would be much higher during the summer. I have never tried it, but the heat must be enough to fry an egg! So, for the plants to thrive, water was needed – lots of it. And, I suppose no one had put up to the authority concerned about this requirement. Anyway, orders were orders, and giving excuses wouldn't get one anywhere, not where one would want to be, anyway. So the plants were duly planted.

Where did the water come from? Well, from the limited water supply system for the Airport buildings. As a result, the taps in the airport toilets went dry. It was reeking if one ventured near the toilets, and should one go further and step inside them, there would be an involuntary "ugh" on seeing the floating faeces in the commodes. Even then

there was not enough water for the plants.

The plan did not work at the airport, so it was expanded, requiring an area thirty miles around the airport to be turned into a green zone. But, as far as I know, nothing came of it either.

So, perhaps the conclusion to be drawn from this is that Desirability needs Feasibility to become Reality.

U Aung Tin,
Retired Airline employee.

Chinlon tournament aims to preserve traditional sports

A team compete in Chinlon competition at Wayrasana Jade Pagoda in Mandalay.
PHOTO: MAUNG MAUNG SOE (MYITNGE)

THE Myanmar Chinlon Federation organised a Chinlon competition at the Wayrasana Jade Pagoda in Amarapura Township, Mandalay on 16 January.

The event offered more than 10 categories, including under-15 men's and women's Chinlon games and amateur competitions.

Over 20 teams from Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyawady, Sagaing and Magway regions and Mon, Shan and Kayin states took part in the event.

"The main reason why our team took part in the sports event is because it is our hobby," said U Win Maung, the coach for Pyi Kyaw (Young people from Pyi) Team. "The further An additional objective of participation is to promote awareness about the country's traditional game and gain experience for future competitions."

During the event, famous Myanmar celebrities, including R Zar Ni and Ni Ni Khin Zaw, entertained the audience with popular songs.

Chinlon is like golf in that there are no two opponent or rival teams playing at the same time.

As the golfers have to play with as least strokes as possible, the chinlon players have to minimize the times of falling of the caneball onto the ground at the same time to hit the caneball as many times as possible as per prescribed rules.

Chinlon is the traditional sport of Myanmar, dating back to at least the 7th century, during the Pyu era. Normally, the game was played at pagoda festivals.

The game was introduced at the 27th Southeast Asian Games, hosted by Myanmar in 2013. It is played by people in Myanmar not only as part of entertainment programmes but also as a leisurely companion. The competition will be held annually at the pagoda in Mandalay, inviting Chinlon teams from clubs in regions and states. —*Maung Maung Soe (Myitnge)*

Crime News

Illegal cows seized in Mandalay

POLICE seized illegal cows at the Myotha Toll Gate in Ngazun Township in Mandalay Region on 15 January, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, members of the Ngazun Police Force searched a vehicle heading from Kyaukse to Myingyan at the toll gate.

They found 23 cows in a vehicle driven by Zaw Lin Tun, 37, with three passengers on board. Police arrested them after they were unable to procure documents proving their ownership of the animals. Action is being taken against the suspects, who will be charged under the law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Traffic accident damages cars, not people

A TRAFFIC accident happened on the Yangon-Mandalay highway in Yedashe, Bago Region, on 14 January, leaving no people injured yesterday.

A car driven by Than Soe, 55, collided with a 22-wheel vehicle, damaging the left side of a six-wheel vehicle loaded with sugarcane between milepost Nos. 190/1 and 2.

The accident damaged the head of the 22-wheel vehicle and the body of the six-wheel vehicle.

The reckless driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by the local police.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Woman arrested for gambling

AUTHORITIES seized a woman who is believed to have participated in an illegal two-digit lottery for money on 15 December at the bazaar in Daik-U Township, Bago Region.

Police found Daw Aye Aye Maw, 42, of Merchant Ward in the township. She was sitting in the market when she threw away her plastic bag at the back of a shop.

They searched the bag and discovered gambling-related documents, plus K19,500 (US$15).

The suspect has been charged under the law by the police at Daik-U Myoma Police Station.—*Myanmar Police Force*

4.5 kilos of marijuana seized in Mandalay

Vishnu Kumar is seen together with marijuana seized from him.
PHOTO: POLICE

LOCAL police in Mandalay seized 4.5 kilos of marijuana from a man on 14 January.

Acting on a tip-off, a team comprising the staff of the local anti-drug squad, the local police station and train police searched Vishnu Kumar in a tea shop at the Mandalay Railway Station and discovered three packages of marijuana weighing 1.5 kilos each.

During the interrogation, the suspect said that he bought the marijuana from Maung Gyi from Phyu, Bago Region.

Action is being taken against Vishnu Kumar for possession of marijuana.

Police are currently pursuing Maung Gyi, who allegedly sold the drugs.—*Maung Pyithu*

Myinmu receives tourist attraction

UNDER an arrangement made by the Road To Mandalay Tour Co, international tourists toured Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region, by trishaw and donated a day's meal to monks in the township near Myinmu Jetty on 14 January.

The group includes 42 tourists from Germany, the US, Spain and England. They visited traditional handmade craft shops and other small-scale businesses, including a gold embroidery shop, to observe the wages of the workers, the management of business owners and quality of their products, flow of commodities, employer-employee relations and social dealings.

A company official said: "Our cruise arrived at Myinmu Jetty on 31 December, planning to visit Bagan – one of the country's greatest tourist attractions."

Normally, only a handful of visitors come, so the company decided to postpone its Mandalay trip on 22 February, as the cruise needs to be repaired in Yangon.—*624*

China to debut new carrier rockets

BEIJING — China will send two new models of carrier rocket in the Long March series on their maiden space trips in 2016, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASC) said on Saturday.

The country's strongest carrier rocket, Long March-5 has a payload capacity of 25 tonnes to low Earth orbit, or 14 tonnes to geostationary transfer orbit. It is scheduled to carry the Chang'e-5 lunar probe around 2017 to finish the last chapter in China's three-step (orbiting, landing and return) moon exploration programme.

According to a CASC statement, which did not specify either of the rockets' missions this year, Long March-5 is currently being tested at a launch site in south China's Hainan Province. A medium-sized rocket using liquid propellants, Long March-7 will carry up to 13.5 tonnes to low Earth orbit or 5.5 tonnes to sun-synchronous orbit at a height of 700 km. It will carry cargo craft for the planned space station.

"The two carrier rockets' maiden flights will significantly boost our country's ability to enter space and help realise leapfrog development in our space transportation system," said the CASC. Both rockets were developed by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology under the CASC. According to the statement, the academy will be responsible for the launch of 15 space missions this year, covering manned space projects, China's satellite navigation system and satellites for civilian and commercial uses.—*Xinhua*

Toshiba to expand NAND chip plant in central Japan

TOKYO — Toshiba Corp will expand a plant in central Japan where NAND-type flash memories are produced as part of a greater focus on its advanced chip business as it works to recover from a recent accounting scandal, sources close to the matter said Saturday. Toshiba and US-based SanDisk Corp, which jointly operate the plant in Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture, will spend several hundred billion yen to expand its capacity, with output increasing possibly beginning in fiscal 2017, the sources said.

Toshiba, already the second-largest maker of NAND memory chips behind South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co, will keep investing in the technology due to strong demand for the chips used in smartphones and other devices. In the wake of an accounting scandal that exposed years of losses by some divisions, Toshiba is revamping its operations to cut costs while increasing its focus on its chip and nuclear power businesses.

To raise investment funds, Toshiba is considering spinning off and listing part of its chip division, the sources said.—*Kyodo News*

China launches new AIIB development bank as power balance shifts

Chinese President Xi Jinping applauds after unveiling a sculpture during the opening ceremony of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Beijing, China, on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping launched a new international development bank seen as a rival to the US-led World Bank at a lavish ceremony on Saturday, as Beijing seeks to change the unwritten rules of global development finance.

Despite opposition from Washington, US allies including Australia, Britain, German, Italy, the Philippines and South Korea have agreed to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in recognition of China's growing economic clout.

"Asia's financing needs for basic infrastructure are absolutely enormous," Xi said in a speech at the launch, adding the bank would aim to invest in projects that were "high-quality, low-cost".

In order for Asia to continue to be the most dynamic region for global growth, it needs to invest in infrastructure and connectivity, Premier Li Keqiang said, during the afternoon session of the opening ceremony.

The AIIB is expected to lend $10 billion-$15 billion a year for the first five or six years and will start operations in the second quarter of 2016.

"We already have a very good pipeline of co-financing projects (with other international development banks) and stand alone projects," Jin Liqun, AIIB president, told journalists on Sunday, adding that while loans would be made in US dollars, the bank may raise capital in other currencies including the euro and yuan.—*Reuters*

Jeremy Corbyn warns big business over low pay, wage gap

Britain's opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn reacts after delivering the keynote speech at the Fabian Society new year conference in London, Britain on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — British opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn said on Saturday he would stop big companies from distributing dividends unless they paid their workers the living wage as part of his proposals to promote fairer working conditions.

Corbyn, a socialist who won control of the Labour Party in September, said too much of the proceeds of growing company profits benefit the wealthiest and called for "pay ratios" to be introduced to help tackle income inequality.

"Only profitable employers will be paying dividends. If they depend on cheap labour for those profits then I think there's a question over whether that's a business model to which we should be turning a blind eye," Corbyn told a socialist conference in London, his first major speech of the year.

Britain has already announced a compulsory 'national living wage' of at least 7.20 pounds ($10.26) an hour for people aged over 25 in April, rising to around 9.35 pounds an hour by 2020.

Corbyn's proposals were criticised by a leading employers' group, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), which said it did not support his idea of intervening in company wages.

"The idea of politicians stepping into the relationship between a private company and its shareholders would be a significant intervention, and not one that we would support," Matthew Fell, CBI chief of staff, added in a statement.

Corbyn, whose election was seen as a major shift back to the political left for the Labour Party, also proposed maximum "pay ratios" between the highest and lowest salaries within companies.

He said Britain's pay inequality was only second to the United States among the Group of Seven (G7) economic powers.

"Not only is this unfair, it actually holds back growth. A more equal society is not only fairer, it does better in terms of economic stability and wealth creation," he added.

Corbyn's leadership has split Labour lawmakers between his left-wing allies and moderates, some of whom have questioned his ability to lead the party to victory in a 2020 election.—*Reuters*

Iran to buy 114 civil aircrafts from Airbus

DUBAI/PARIS — Iran plans to buy 114 civil aircrafts from European aircraft maker Airbus (AIR.PA), the transport minister was quoted as saying on Saturday, ahead of the anticipated lifting of international sanctions on Iran.

"We have taken the first step in agreeing with Airbus to buy 114 planes," Abbas Akhoondi was quoted as saying by the Tasnim news agency.

Airbus said it was not engaging in commercial talks with Iran until sanctions had been lifted.

Sanctions were expected to be lifted in the wake of a recent agreement on Iran's nuclear activities later on Saturday, as diplomats gathered in Vienna and Iran said it had freed four US citizens from jail.

"Although Iran clearly has a need for new aircraft, we must conform strictly to the law and, until all measures concerning the embargo are lifted, no commercial discussions can take place," an Airbus spokesman said.

A deal for 114 airplanes would be worth more than $10 billion at catalogue prices, depending on the type of aircraft.

Such a purchase would be in line with the predictions of Iranair, whose chairman told Reuters in an interview 18 months ago that, as soon as sanctions were eased, Iran would seek to obtain at least 100 wide-body and short-haul jets.

Iranian and Western industry officials estimate that Iran, a country of 80 million people, will need a total of 400 or more aircraft in the next decade to renew an ageing fleet that has suffered several fatal crashes in recent years.

For France-based Airbus, its main US rival Boeing (BA.N) and other manufacturers, that could mean an early windfall of $20 billion in deals, while leasing companies may also benefit due to long waiting times.

Some Iranian officials have said the country is ready to place orders for at least 100 jets with both Airbus and Boeing.

While the historic nuclear deal was still being negotiated, with Paris taking a tough stand, French firms were initially pessimistic about reaping the first wave of eventual contracts.

But many firms say contacts have intensified since the 14 July accord and hope for a boost in discussions when Iranian President Hassan Rouhani visits Italy and France later this month.—*Reuters*

SpaceX success launches space startups to new heights

Two of Spire's Lemur 2-2.0 satellites is seen during a tour of Spire's nano-satellite facility in San Francisco, California on 6 January 2016. — PHOTO: REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO — SpaceX's successful landing of a reusable rocket booster last month opens a new frontier for commercial space startups by offering tremendous cost savings and attracting venture capitalists who once shied away from spatial ventures.

Space startups include nano-satellite makers, earth-imaging and weather-tracking technology developers, and ventures with ambitious plans to mine asteroids.

If this fledgling industry can reuse rockets, that will save money and accelerate the pace of launches, enabling startups to more quickly test and update their technology, and replace old satellites more frequently — all critical for growing revenue.

"Driving down the cost of the launch, which is the single greatest barrier to entry for the startups and the investors ... makes (space startups) much more viable," said Jeff Matthews, director of venture strategy and research at the Space Frontier Foundation, a space advocacy nonprofit.

To be sure, space remains a high-risk endeavor. SpaceX, founded by high-tech entrepreneur Elon Musk, had one successful rocket landing after multiple failures, and more work to do. Rocket companies including Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic have also had catastrophic failures. While another disaster could take momentum away from the nascent sector, venture capitalists say investor confidence has been buoyed by the historic landing of SpaceX's Falcon 9, upright and intact, on 21 December. It was the first ever successful recovery of a reusable rocket.

Peter Hebert, cofounder and managing partner at Lux Capital, has long been enthusiastic about space ventures, but said his colleagues are now joining in.

"SpaceX's success has been a major driver," said Hebert, whose firm backs Planet Labs, which builds shoebox-size Earth-imaging satellites, and Orbital Insight, a satellite image processing startup.

Planet Labs Cofounder and CEO Will Marshall said he has been talking to SpaceX about lowering launch costs. The startup has scheduled more than 200 satellite launches this year, about double its total previous launches.

"It's not going to have an effect tomorrow," Marshall said. But "there is no question that this helps companies like ourselves and the growing space tech ecosystem."

Since 2012, space startups have raised $2.2 billion, according to venture capital database CB Insights.

The lion's share of that came in SpaceX's $1 billion round in January 2015, which valued it at $12 billion.

"That woke people," said Richard Rocket, CEO and co-founder of NewSpace Global, which tracks for-profit space companies. "Investors are now starting to ask the question of 'Where is the next SpaceX?'"

Bagaveev Corporation is a reusable rocket launcher startup that hopes to raise $15 million in the next couple of months, in time for its first launch. Founder Nadir Bagaveyev said the enthusiasm generated by SpaceX has proved helpful.

"Optimism is high everywhere," he said.

How much cheaper launches will become and when those savings will be passed to startups remains to be seen. SpaceX has not spoken about price changes publicly and did not respond to questions from Reuters.

Spire is a startup that builds nano-satellites weighing about 11 pounds each. It has four nano-satellites in orbit and is ultimately aiming for 100 so it can offer complete coverage of global weather and shipping patterns.

Spire replaces the satellites every two years, and each launch currently costs about $250,000, according to the company's operations chief, Chris Wake.

"Even if you cut that by a quarter or in half, that's a massive savings," he said.—*Reuters*

Baby born in Hawaii with brain damage confirmed to have Zika virus infection

HAWAII — A baby born with brain damage at a hospital in Oahu, Hawaii, was infected by the Zika virus, US health officials confirmed on Saturday, apparently the first case of the mosquito-borne virus in a birth on US soil.

The mother became ill with the Zika virus while living in Brazil in May 2015 and the baby was likely infected in the womb, Hawaiian state health officials and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said.

"There's no indication at this point that there's any Zika virus circulating in Hawaii," CDC spokesman Tom Skinner told Reuters.

"But I think its important for us to understand that there are going to be imported cases of Zika to the United States and we won't be surprised if we start to see some local transmission of the virus," Skinner said.

Zika can be transmitted by a mosquito that has bitten an infected person.

On Friday US health officials issued a travel warning for 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America where infection with Zika is a risk.

The CDC in particular cautioned pregnant women not to travel to those areas as Zika has been linked to serious birth defects.

The travel alert applies to Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela and Puerto Rico.

It also advises women who are trying to become pregnant to consult a doctor before travelling to those areas.

In the Hawaii case, a doctor recognised the possibility of a Zika infection in the newborn baby with microcephaly and alerted state officials, the Hawaii State Department of Health department said in a written statement.

The infection was confirmed by a CDC laboratory test and an advisory sent to doctors statewide.

The Hawaii State Department of Health emphasized that neither the mother nor baby were infectious and that there have been no recorded cases of Zika virus acquired in Hawaii, although six people have been identified there who were infected outside the United States.

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes species mosquitoes, which also spread dengue and chikungunya viruses and are common in Texas, Florida and elsewhere in the United States.

The virus is usually a mild illness with fever, rash and joint pain.

There is no preventive vaccine or treatment, according to the CDC. —*Reuters*

Male Aedes albopictus mosquitoes are seen in this picture. Zika virus is among the viruses spead by the species. PHOTO: REUTERS

2-day-old baby's kidneys used in transplant

CHANGSHA — The kidneys of a two-day-old baby have been successfully transplanted into a girl dying of chronic renal failure, making the infant the youngest organ donor in China.

The baby had died from anoxic encephalopathy, neonatal asphyxia and lung infection, and her parents decided to donate her kidneys to "let her stay in the world in another way."

Doctors from the Second Xiangya Hospital of Central South University were able to transplant the less than four-centimeter-long kidneys into Huang Jing (not her real name), a nine-year-old girl from Changsha County in central China's Hunan Province.

Huang had kidney disease since she was a toddler, which had affected her development.

"I am very happy and want to go to school," the nine-year-old said after the operation.

The operation was led by Peng Longkai, director of the hospital's organ transplant department. Kidney transplants for young patients are a challenge due to the complexity of the operation and the tiny blood vessels involved, according to Peng.

The kidneys will continue to grow inside Huang over the next three months, Peng said. —*Xinhua*

Samsung Bioepis' Enbrel drug copy gets EU approval

SEOUL — Samsung Bioepis Co Ltd said yesterday it had received European Commission approval for its copy of the blockbuster biotech arthritis drug Enbrel.

The drug, known scientifically as etanercept, will be sold in Europe by US biotechnology group Biogen and rolled out gradually across all 28 European Union member states as well as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, the South Korean company said in a statement. Samsung Bioepis, a unit of South Korea's largest conglomerate, the Samsung Group [SAGR.UL], is also developing copies of other biotech blockbusters such as Remicade, Humira, Herceptin and Lantus. —*Reuters*

Kobe marks 21 years since deadly earthquake

KOBE — The western Japan city of Kobe and surrounding areas marked the 21st anniversary Sunday of the magnitude 7.3 earthquake that killed 6,434 people and brought home the horror of urban disaster for many Japanese.

People who lost loved ones in the so-called Great Hanshin Earthquake were among those who observed a moment of silence at 5:46am, the exact moment when the temblor hit the major port city west of Osaka on 17 January, 1995.

At a park in downtown Kobe, family members of the quake victims and survivors lit candles in thousands of bamboo lanterns that were arranged on the ground to look like "mirai" (future) in kanji characters and "1.17" from above.

Hiromi Yamamoto, who lost her mother in the quake, told a gathering in the park that she intends to uphold the memory of "my mother, whom I love so much."

Mayor Kizo Hisamoto said the city office will work to impart lessons learned from the quake to the next generation.

The early morning quake hit when much of the city was still asleep, trapping many people inside their homes and other buildings.

In addition to those killed, it left 40,000 people wounded and damaged 640,000 buildings, including over 100,000 homes that were completely destroyed. As many as 310,000 people were forced to find emergency shelter.

The finding that roughly three-fourths of the victims either died from suffocation or were crushed to death by collapsed old wooden homes or furniture prompted countrywide efforts to make buildings more quake-resistant.—*Kyodo News*

Candles in thousands of bamboo lanterns are placed to form "1.17" and "mirai" (future) in kanji characters at a park in Kobe, western Japan, on 17 January 2016, the 21th anniversary of the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. The quake devastated the port city and its vicinity, claiming the lives of 6,434 people. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

UN says has reports of starvation in Syria's besieged Deir Al-Zor

A Russian air force cargo plane drops off humanitarian aid in the region around the eastern Syrian city of Deir al-Zor, which is besieged by Islamic State militants, according to Russia's Defence Ministry.
PHOTO: REUTERS

GENEVA — Unverified reports say 15 to 20 people died of starvation in the Syrian city of Deir al-Zor last year, the United Nations said on Saturday, warning that 200,000 residents there face a severe food shortage and sharply deteriorating conditions.

Western parts of the city have been under siege by Islamic State militants since last March, leaving inhabitants with no electricity for more than 10 months and a water supply for only three hours a week, the UN said in a report.

Deir al-Zor is the most populous of about 15 besieged areas in Syria, where about 450,000 people are trapped and cut off from aid by the government, Islamic State and other insurgent groups involved in the country's civil war.

Another besieged population, 42,000 people trapped in the town of Madaya, has received two convoys of aid supplies this month, but local aid workers have reported 32 deaths from starvation.

There have been no flights into the Deir Al-Zor airport except by helicopter since September and malnutrition is widespread, according to the United Nations.

"Severe cases of malnutrition are reported by health personnel particularly amongst children with unverified reports of 15 – 20 people dying from starvation in 2015 (of whom four were children)," it said.

"All schools are functioning in the city however absenteeism amongst children is common as children suffer from frequent fainting due to malnutrition," it added.

Islamic State militants "interrogate and harass people leaving the city and confiscate their documents", while the Syrian government "requires those wishing to leave by land or air to obtain authorisation", the report said.

A government grain reserve and a very small patch of government-controlled land can continue to provide grain for two main functioning bakeries for "many months", but a lack of fuel and yeast has boosted black market bread prices to eight times the price in the capital, Damascus.

"Families have to queue for hours to get their share of bread with the majority of inhabitants surviving on bread and water," said the report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The Syrian government airlifted "a limited amount of basic commodities" last Monday, including food to be sold at Damascus prices, the UN said. Russia said on Friday it had dropped 22 tonnes of aid to the besieged part of the city.

Of those under siege in the city, 70 per cent are women and children, and many have been displaced from their homes elsewhere and are living in temporary shelters. None of the health centres are functioning and there have been reports of cases of Leishmaniasis and Typhoid, the report said.—*Reuters*

Spaniards oppose new election, want coalition government-poll

MADRID — A majority of Spanish voters oppose holding another election to resolve the political stalemate created by an inconclusive national vote last month and want parties instead to agree on a coalition government, a survey showed yesterday.

The ruling centre-right People's Party (PP) won the most seats but fell well short of a parliamentary majority in the 20 December election.

The Socialists (PSOE) came second, losing much of their support to third-placed leftist newcomer Podemos, while centrist upstart Ciudadanos placed fourth.

The result means that at least three parties are needed to form an alliance and allow a stable government, an unprecedented situation in Spain where the traditionally dominant PP and PSOE have enjoyed strong majorities over the last 40 years.

According to the monthly opinion poll from Metroscopia published by *El Pais* newspaper, only 33 per cent of voters favour a new election while 61 per cent prefer to see an agreement between the parties.

Asked whether the lack of a majority for any party was a good or bad thing, 61 per cent said they saw it as positive.

Spain's King Felipe will meet leaders of the political parties throughout next week in an attempt to help break the political impasse.

If no solution were found and a new election did take place, its results would be only marginally different from the December vote and the deadlock would therefore persist, the survey also showed.

The PP and Podemos would be the main winners in any rerun of the election as they would see their support edge higher, respectively to 29 per cent from 28.7 per cent and to 22.5 per cent from 20.7 per cent.

The PSOE would come third as it would fall to 21.1 per cent from 22 per cent. Ciudadanos would remain fourth although it would rebound to 16.6 per cent from 13.9 per cent in December. The poll was carried out between 12 and 14 January among 1,200 people.—*Reuters*

Tightening Clinton-Sanders battle raises stakes for Democratic debate

CHARLESTON — Tightening polls and rising tensions between White House rivals Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders could fuel a fiery Democratic debate yesterday, their last face-to-face encounter until Iowa kicks off the presidential nominating race in two weeks.

The leading Democratic contenders stepped up their attacks on each other during the past week, battling over guns, healthcare and Wall Street with growing intensity as polls showed Sanders gaining ground on Clinton in key states.

Clinton, Sanders and former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, who lags badly in polls, will participate in the 9 pm EST (0200 GMT on Monday) debate, the fourth between the Democratic contenders.

Foreign policy also could play a role in the debate, which follows Saturday's prisoner deal announced by the United States and Iran. Tehran will free five Americans including a Washington Post reporter and a Christian minister.

Republican candidates expressed relief at the prisoner release but renewed their criticism of President Barack Obama's willingness to make deals with Tehran, particularly his earlier agreement with Iran to curtail its nuclear ambitions. Sanders and Clinton have both supported the Iran nuclear deal.

Sanders, a US senator from Vermont, has pulled into a statistical tie with Clinton in recent polls in Iowa, which holds the first contest on 1 February in the race to pick a nominee for the November election. He also leads Clinton in the next state to vote, New Hampshire on 9 February, according to polls.

As the race has tightened, Clinton has been on the attack. The former secretary of state and US senator from New York has hammered Sanders for past votes to support immunity from lawsuits for gun manufacturers and criticise his call for a national single-payer healthcare system. She demanded details on how he would pay for it.

Sanders fired back with an ad criticising Democrats who take money from Wall Street, an obvious dig at Clinton, and touting his plan to break up the big banks.

"Will they like me? No," Sanders said in words that recalled Clinton's recent debate comment that everyone should like her.

An angry Clinton campaign quickly accused Sanders of breaking his pledge not to air negative ads against her.

"Clearly they are ready to sharpen their contrasts on issues with each other," said Brad Anderson, an Iowa-based Democratic strategist who was state director for President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign.

"The debate is going to be enormously important given all the undecideds we are seeing in polls," said Anderson, who supports Clinton. "People are still really, really weighing their decision here."

Clinton is expected to step up her attacks on Sanders as too soft on gun restrictions, particularly given the site of the debate in Charleston, South Carolina. It is one block from the historic church where nine black worshipers were killed by a white gunman in June.

"My guess is Clinton will lean heavily on the gun issue, and Sanders is not going to take that lying down," said Dane Strother, an unaligned Democratic strategist. "There are going to be distinctions drawn."

Wins by Sanders in both Iowa and New Hampshire would be a huge blow to Clinton, long seen as a prohibitive favourite. After those two states, the race moves on to Nevada and South Carolina, where Clinton leads in polls, and a 1 March round of 11 state contests.

"Things could change radically here if Bernie wins in Iowa and New Hampshire," said Phil Noble, a veteran South Carolina party strategist and head of the state's New Democrats, who has endorsed O'Malley.

The sharp exchanges after months of relatively quiet campaigning, particularly in comparison to the raucous Republican nominating battle, served as a wake-up call for Democrats, Anderson said. But he warned against it becoming too nasty.

"This is good. People are now clearly paying attention and fired up," he said.

"But my unsolicited advice would be for them to watch their tone. If you want your supporters to turn out on a cold winter night, a really aggressive negative message is not something that drives them."—*Reuters*

Somali Islamist rebels say they captured Kenyan troops on Friday

MOGADISHU — Somalia's al Shabaab Islamist group said yesterday it had captured some Kenyan soldiers during an attack last week on a military base in the west of Somalia near the Kenyan border.

The group, which did not say how many soldiers were held after Friday's assault, also said in a statement that more than 100 Kenyan soldiers were killed, revising up the number from the more than the 63 dead it had previously claimed.

There was no immediate comment from the Kenyan military or AMISOM, the African Union force in which the Kenyans serve. Both have offered limited information about the attack. A Kenyan official said yesterday the army would issue a statement without saying when.

Al Shabaab often cites vastly higher figures than those given by officials. There was no independent death toll.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Friday that "some of our patriots in uniform" were killed. Interior Minister Joseph Nkaissery said on Saturday the wounded were being evacuated to Nairobi for treatment and bodies of those killed would be brought home. Neither gave figures.

"Mujahideen fighters ... stormed the Kenyan base in the early hours of Friday morning, killing more than 100 Kenyan invaders, seizing their weapons and military vehicles and even capturing Kenyan soldiers alive," al Shabaab said.

AMISOM and Kenyan forces had said al Shabaab attacked a Somali National Army base and AMISOM forces counter-attacked. AMISOM and the Somali army launched a joint offensive last year that has driven al Shabaab from its major strongholds. Al Shabaab said the attack was in retaliation for the Kenyan "invasion of Muslim lands" and what it said was the army's "persecution of innocent Muslims" inside Kenya, a reference to the government's pursuit of suspected militants in the country.—*Reuters*

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Dated: January 18, 2016.

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(1 / 2016)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-062(15-16)	Data Processing Center and Data Acquisition Sercel (5) Items	US$
(2)	IFB-063(15-16)	Data Processing Software & Hardware Accessories (1) Lot	US$
(3)	IFB-064(15-16)	2900 Series Well Head Equipment & Accessories (3) Sets	US$
(4)	IFB-065(15-16)	Explosimeter (2) Nos	US$
(5)	IFB-066(15-16)	Telecommunication Equipments (2) Items	US$
(6)	IFB-067(15-16)	Portable Welding Machine with Complete Accessories (2) Sets	US$
(7)	IFB-068(15-16)	High Pressure Pump with Complete Accessories (2) Sets	US$
(8)	IFB-069(15-16)	Pipe Line Pigs (2) Items	US$
(9)	IFB-070(15-16)	Drill Track Guidance Tool (1) Set	US$
(10)	IFB-071(15-16)	4" ERW Steel Line Pipe, API 5L Grade A (10,000)Meter	US$
(11)	IFB-072(15-16)	NDT Services for 20" Domestic Gas Pipe Lines (1) Lot	US$
(12)	IFB-073(15-16)	Steel Ball Valves (2) Items	US$
(13)	DMP/L-012(15-16)	Landing Leg (Landing Gear) for CNG Tube Trailer (10) Sets	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 10-2-2016, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 13th January, 2016 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph . +95 67 - 411097 / 411206

Email: **adv.gnlm@gmail.com,** Phone: **09 250107962, 09 251022355**

Vin Diesel releases first picture of 'Fast and Furious 8'

LOS ANGELES — Action star Vin Diesel teased fans with the first picture of the upcoming "Fast and Furious 8".

The 48-year-old actor took to Instagram to share the image showing the the bird-eye view of New York City, reported Aceshowbiz.

The photo also features New York's skyscrapers including the famous Empire State Building.

"New Roads Ahead," the image read. In "Furious 8", Diesel will return in the lead role. He will be joined by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Ludacris and Tyrese Gibson, with Jason Statham and Kurt Russell expected to return. F Gary Gray will helm the movie scheduled to hit theaters on 14 April, 2017.—*PTI*

Vin Diesel. PHOTO: REUTERS

I wasn't Looking for Hollywood success: Helen Mirren

Helen Mirren. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Veteran actress Helen Mirren has revealed she never wanted to be a Hollywood star.

The 70-year-old actress said she never imagined she would be able to follow her career dreams but initially set her sights on theatre work, reported Femalefirst.

"It was never my ambition to be a Hollywood star. I never even imagined that being an actress would be possible. I came from a family background where that world just seemed like a fortress, something you couldn't get into.

"I wasn't thinking about Hollywood because I wanted to be a theatre actress. I didn't even go to the cinema very often," she said. Mirren initially followed the advice of her parents to train as a teacher instead.

"They wanted me to become a teacher not an actress! So I did train as a teacher.—*PTI*

K-pop girl group KARA to disband as contracts with 3 members end

SEOUL — South Korean girl group KARA is set to disband as its agency DSP Media said Friday that its exclusive contracts with three members of the quartet ended the same day.

KARA, which was formed in South Korea in 2007, has also been popular in Japan where it debuted in 2010 as a five-member group that included the three members whose contracts were terminated. The three are Park Gyu Ri, Han Seung Yeon and Goo Ha Ra. Their contracts were due to expire on 2 February but the end date was moved up apparently after they showed signs of seeking to switch agencies.

DSP Media said it will continue its contract with the fourth and newest member Heo Young Ji, who joined KARA in 2014. Two other members had left the group earlier that year. KARA helped raise the popularity of Korean pop music in Japan, conducting extensive activities in the country including appearing in Japanese public broadcaster NHK's prestigious "Kohaku" song festival on New Year's Eve of 2011.—*Kyodo News*

Liam Payne teases 'Little Song'

LOS ANGELES — One Direction may be going through an hiatus with boys enjoying their free time, but Liam Payne is still working and has just teased his fans with a new song.

The 22-year-old British singer gave fans a sneak peek into a brand-new track through an Instagram, reported E! online.

"Little Song I wrote for fun yesterday," he captioned the post with a black and white video.

Liam has not yet confirmed anything about his solo project, but the new track has left fans waiting for more.

He is not the only one who appears to be working on his own projects. Last month, Harry Styles registered four new songs with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. —*PTI*

Ranveer Singh 'ecstatic' about Bajirao Mastani's big win

MUMBAI — Ranveer Singh is on cloud nine after his latest release "Bajirao Mastani" took home nine awards including the best actor gong at the 61st Filmfare Awards here.

The 30-year-old actor, who portrayed the titular role of Bajirao in the Sanjay Leela Bhansli film, received the award from veteran actress Rekha.

"The #FilmfareAward for Best Actor in a Leading Role! Thank you all for your love! I feel on top of the world! Kissing my beautiful black lady! Honoured to have received this award from the legendary Rekhaji! What a glorious moment!," he posted on Twitter.

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who was also present at the ceremony, blessed the actor for his win.

"To have won in th presence & with the blessings of my idol @SrBachchan ..Could not have been sweeter! #dreamcometrue," Ranveer wrote.

Apart from winning the best actor honour, the romantic saga also took home the best film and best director honours.

The period drama, which released on 18 December, also won best production, best costume, best action, best choreography, best singer female, best film, and best supporting actress trophies.

"Ecstatic about THIS! Immensely proud of my team #BajiraoMastani Abolsutely smashing it with nine awards! Tightest hug from my maker #SanjayLeelaBhansali who won Best Director & Best Film for #BajiraoMastani ! SO proud."

Ranveer's leading lady Deepika Padukone won the best actress award but for her role in "Piku".—*PTI*

Justin Bieber debuts new purple hair

Justin Bieber. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Justin Bieber debuted his version of the "mermaid hair" trend with purple ombre style.

The 21-year-old "What Do You Mean" hitmaker revealed his new look on Instagram.

He shared a picture of himself leaning against a red Ferrari with his hair dyed darker violet in the back and a grayish lavender in the front.

He also shared two shirtless selfie flaunting his purple hair.

"Back in the gym," he wrote.—*PTI*

Carver of Buddha images takes to YouTube to explain art to the world

KANAZAWA — A young Japanese "busshi," or carver of wooden Buddha statues, has been posting videos of his work on YouTube, hoping to explain his craft to the world.

Toshiharu Sakagami, 31, has posted some 150 videos, which have been accessed more than 230,000 times in total.

Sakagami had wanted to work with his hands since becoming a teenager, and when he met a busshi in Nanto, Toyama Prefecture, at the age of 19 after graduating from a high school in Chiba Prefecture, he became his apprentice, attracted by the master's personality.

He received permission to set up on his own in 2008, and opened a studio in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, in 2013.

Production of wooden Buddha statues not only requires delicate physical work, such as very fine chisel strokes, but also efforts to infuse the works with something of the thoughts and feelings of those who have commissioned them.

Sakagami saw these elements as the strength of the tradition, but worried that appreciation for them was waning.

Toshiharu Sakagami, a Japanese "busshi," or carver of wooden Buddha statues, at work in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture on 14 December 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

He began to post videos related to statue exhibitions and his thoughts on them on YouTube around 2008 in a bid to arouse popular interest in the carving of Buddha statues. The videos received only 38 accesses in the first year. Then in 2010, he started showing how Buddha statues were made as well as how to use carving knives, aiming at beginners. The number of accesses began to increase by stages and now reaches almost 7,000 per month.

While 90 per cent of accesses are from within Japan, some viewers are from abroad such as the United States and France, and some comments are posted in English. Sakagami even began to receive orders from abroad after adding English captions to his videos.

With help from a producer in Hiroshima Prefecture who happened to see some of his videos, Sakagami displayed three of his statues at a cultural fair held in Paris in October last year to introduce the prefecture. The favourable reaction of visitors encouraged him.

"Japanese (wood carving) techniques are outstanding," Sakagami said. "First of all, I hope people take their time to appreciate it by watching my videos." —*Kyodo News*

'Bei Bei' the giant panda cub makes public debut at National Zoo

WASHINGTON — A nearly five-month-old giant panda made his public debut on Saturday at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, where he mostly slept through visits by dozens of tourists eager for a first glimpse at the pudgy cub.

Bei Bei was born on 22 August to the zoo's Mei Xiang, one of the top tourist draws in the US capital.

The panda exhibit had been closed to the public since the birth in order to give the mother and cub time to bond, zoo officials said.

Laurie Thompson, the zoo's panda biologist, carried Bei Bei from a small enclosure to the roomier Panda House, which is filled with bamboo and toys, early on Saturday for public viewing. The interaction, in which a sleepy Bei Bei curled into a ball on the ground upon being placed in the exhibit, could be seen in a video posted to social media. —*Reuters*

Giant Panda Tian Tian plays with a feeder at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington on 16 December 2015. Tian Tian is the father of panda cub Bei Bei. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thor star Chris Hemsworth to be face of Australian tourism

CANBERRA — Australian actor Chris Hemsworth who achieved his fame by starring in Hollywood blockbuster Thor, has become the face of his home country's tourism, Minister for Tourism and International Education Richard Colbeck said on Friday.

Hemsworth has been named "Global Ambassador" for Tourism Australia's upcoming aquatic and coastal marketing push, the latest instalment of the Australia's global campaign of "There's nothing like Australia."

"This is a huge win for Australian tourism and will help promote Australia internationally, particularly in the USA where the campaign will premiere in New York later this month," Colbeck said in a press release.

Australia has more than 30,000 kilometres of coastline and also is rich in pristine natural waterways, offering international visitors with many choices of aquatic and coastal experiences.

"To have a high profile Australian actor such as Chris Hemsworth help share this message with the world is great news for Australian tourism, especially in USA which is now worth more than 3.1 billion AU dollars (2.14 billion US dollars) annually to our economy," the minister said.

The United States is currently Australia's fourth largest source market for international visitors, with more than 595,000 Americans travelling to Australia in the past year ending November 2015. With new aviation capacity between Australia and the US coming online, the upward trend is expected to continue.—*Xinhua*

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(18-1-2016, Monday)

6:00 am
- Paritta By Venerable Min Gun Sayadaw

7:35 am
- People Talks

8:35 am
- Documentary (Women in Myanmar Society)

9:35 am
- Documentary (ASEAN)

10:35 am
- Weekly Entertainment

11:35 pm
- MRTV's Youth Programme

12:35 pm
- Teleplay (Part-1)

1:00 pm
- TV Drama Series

1:45 pm
- Tasty Trip

4:35 pm
- University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Second Year (Zoology)

5:35 pm
- Socio Economic Scenes

6:35 pm
- Yes or No Talk Show (Male or Female) (Part-2)

7:15 pm
- TV Drama Series

8:00 pm
- News / International News/ Weather Report

9:00 pm
- News
- TV Drama Series
- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

mitv Myanmar International

(18-1-2016 07:00 am~ 19-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Crea tions- The Making Procedure Of Goldsmith
07:43	Am	The Eel Business (Fisherman the eel cul ture)
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Sayit-Wyne Girls
08:49	Am	Sagaing: Youth Leader
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Chinlone & The Dreams of the player
09:40	Am	Lucrative Myanma Rattan Industry
10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-1)
10:44	Am	Image Of The Monks

(11:00 Am~03:00 Pm)-Sunday Repeat (07:00 Am~11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm~07:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Food Trip (Ep-8) (Part-2)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Shan Style Clay Pot)
08:45	Pm	Chef Life: Avi Bitton (Israeli Chef)

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

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(18-1-2016, Monday)

6:00 pm
- Alinka Wut Yee Music Troupe

6:45 pm
- Fashion Show

7:00 pm
- TV Drama Series

7:50 pm
- TV Drama Series

8:35 pm
- Teleplay

10:10 pm
- ASEAN Cultural Fair-2014

10:15 pm
- Myanmar Video

Midnight
- Close Down

From 18.1.2016 (Monday) 06:00 Pm
To 19.1.2016 (Tuesday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

SPORT

9th Waxing of Pyatho 1377 ME

Monday, 18 January, 2016

Aston Villa's Rudy Gestede in action with Leicester's Christian Fuchs and Wes Morgan during Barclays Premier League at Villa Park on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Leicester back on top, Chelsea's great escape

LONDON — Leicester City returned to the top of the Premier League with a 1-1 draw at bottom club Aston Villa on Saturday while misfiring champions Chelsea pulled off a great escape in a six-goal thriller with Everton.

With Manchester City thrashing Crystal Palace 4-0 to go second on goal difference on the same points as Arsenal, Leicester had a golden opportunity to pull three points clear in the late game but had to settle for one after a missed penalty.

Arsenal, the leaders before the weekend on 43 points, can go back in front after their match at Stoke City on Sunday.

Japan striker Shinji Okazaki put unsung Leicester, who have defied all the odds this season and are on 44 points, ahead in the 28th minute but Rudy Gestede grabbed a 76th-minute equaliser for rejuvenated Villa.

"It was a tough match, a local derby and it's OK," Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri told Sky Sports. "We had a chance to close the match but it was unlucky...one point is OK." In an astonishing game at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea drew 3-3 after captain John Terry atoned for an own goal with a 98th-minute equaliser that even home manager Guus Hiddink said was offside.

Everton manager Roberto Martinez described it as a "diabolical" decision by match officials and questioned the amount of time added.

"It's heartbreaking for us, a big, big error," said the Spaniard.

All the goals came in the second half, with Chelsea battling back from 2-0 down before substitute Ramiro Funes Mori put Everton back in front as the game entered stoppage time.

Hiddink, whose unbeaten record in his second stint as interim boss at Chelsea remained intact, did not try to argue about the final goal. "I like always to give a fair comment on the positive side and negative side," the Dutchman said. "I have watched it and I can agree (it was offside).—*Reuters*

Djokovic cool and calm about extreme Melbourne heat

MELBOURNE — World number one Novak Djokovic is a red hot favourite to overcome all opponents and clinch another Australian Open title this year, although extreme temperatures will be a wild card the Serb has to watch out for.

Djokovic opens the defence of his title on Rod Laver Arena on Monday against South Korea's rising talent Chung Hyeon, right about the time temperatures are expected to approach 37 Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit) at Melbourne Park.

Djokovic famously withdrew from his quarter-final against Andy Roddick in 2009 due to heat exhaustion with temperatures at about the same level.

He was the defending champion at the time.

"You got to get yourself ready for whatever is coming your way," Djokovic said on Sunday when asked about the possibility of the extreme heat.

"You spend the off-season training hard, getting your endurance level to that extent where you can actually handle these conditions.

"Of course, sometimes it's very difficult to handle them if it goes over 40 degrees.

"Whatever is coming our way tomorrow, I'll try to be ready for it."

Djokovic has been ready for it since his 2009 meltdown.

He is now considered one of the fittest players on the circuit, with his off-season workouts helping set the base for his four titles in the last five years at Melbourne Park.

Fittingly, the defending champion will start as raging favourite for a sixth title at the year's first grand slam, continuing the domination of men's tennis that saw him win 11 tournaments last year and three of the four majors.

"2015 was the best season and best year of my life undoubtedly," he added.

"I enjoyed every moment spent on the court. I'll try to obviously carry that confidence and high level of performance that I've had, especially towards the end of the year, into the new season.

"(But) I'm here to start from the very beginning, to start from the scratch, and see where it takes me."

Victory would enable Djokovic to join Australia's Roy Emerson as the only six-times winners of the tournament and his performance at the Qatar Open this month would have sent an ominous shudder through the rest of the men's field.

He demolished 14-times grand slam winner Rafa Nadal in straight sets in the final, a performance that was praised as "perfection" by the Spaniard and Djokovic admitted seeing the ball "as a watermelon".

"The opening week of the year in Doha went extremely well for me," Djokovic added.

"I've been preparing well, taking some time to really work on certain things, get a good foundation, good base for the long season."

Rising mercury, it seems, may not be enough.—*Reuters*

Haye returns with first-round knockout

David Haye and Mark de Mori in action at The O2 Arena, London on 16 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Former world heavyweight champion David Haye, returning after a three-and-a-half year retirement from the ring, knocked out Australian Mark de Mori in the first round of their non-title bout at the O2 Arena on Saturday.

"I felt so cool and calm in there. I don't believe any heavyweight out there could have taken those punches," said the 35-year-old Briton.

Haye, who lost his title to Ukraine's Wladimir Klitschko 4-1/2 years ago, plans to take on fellow Briton Anthony Joshua and then wants another shot at the world crown. "I believe that's a fight that could be made later in the year," he said of the projected bout with Joshua. —*Reuters*

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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