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THE SMELL OF INDUSTRY

13 offshore natural gas exploration plots yet to be put for tender

THERE are still 13 plots for tender to be submitted of Myanmar's 51 offshore oil and natural gas exploration plots, according to the Ministry of Energy.

"At the moment we have 13 exploration plots left but we don't have a plan get to invite the tender for these plots" explained U Than Htun, adviser of the aforementioned Ministry.

Permission was granted during the current government's term of office for the 38 of the offshore oil and natural gas drilling plots to invite tender. It is known there is also 53 plots located onshore.

"Gas from 16 of the 38 offshore plots, which have been permitted [for tender] by the government, will be used domestically. There is a study currently being carried out for exploration with the EITI." said continued U Thein Htun.

Of those plots which haven't yet been called to invite tender, 3 are offshore plots while 10 are shallow water plots. Of the total 38 plots of land which oil and gas exploration activities have been permitted, 18 are deep offshore plots which oil and gas are currently being extracted from, while oil and gas is yet to be found in the remaining 20.

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Shwe Yee Htun-1 Well about 30 miles off Ngwesaung Beach, Patheingyi. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY MINISTRY OF ENERGY

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Three Bridges in Myanmar of world fame Part II

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Bilugyun region connects to national grid for 24-hour power supply

CHAUNGZON Township, Bilugyun region situated on the mouth of Thanlwin River gained access to 24-hour electricity provided by the national power grid as of yesterday, Myanmar News Agency reported.

Following the completion of the power line installation connecting Mawlamyine to Chaungzon across the river Thanlwin to connect the national grid, more than a thousand households in the township

now enjoy 24 hours of electricity supply, extended from four hours of service a day the region had with the help of two diesel generators.

According to the MNA, the Ministry of Electric Power began its plan to electrify the township since the 2013-2014 fiscal year, and completed the establishment of a sub-power station last June and the installation of all power lines this January.—GNLM



Workers install cables to connect with the national grid in Bilugyun. PHOTO: MNA

Parliament gives nod to National Planning bill and four others



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE 13th regular session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw passed five bills including the National Planning Bill for the fiscal year 2016-2017 on its 33rd day meeting yesterday.

During a session for the seeking of final approval on the National Planning Bill 2016-2017, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw replied that there should be an original version for targeted GDP growths of each sector as targets can be met while replacing state-owned investments with private sector ones.

Next the Parliament gave a nod to the National Planning Bill and four other bills that include the Union Budget Bill for 2016, the Pesticide Bill, the New Plan Species Protection Bill, and the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Banks and financial institutions draft law discussed

THE Joint Bill Committee of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw met at a hall in the Hluttaw complex in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to discuss the draft Banks and Financial Institutions Law.

The joint bill committee, led by U Nanda Kyaw Swa, chairman of the joint bill committee, held discussions on the draft law sent back by the President with

his remarks.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Khin Saw Oo, the committee's vice-chairman and members from Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) and officials from the Hluttaw Office.— *Myanmar News Agency*

13 offshore natural gas exploration ...

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Seventeen companies are currently performing oil and natural gas drilling and offshore exploration activities, while 19 companies have been permitted to carry out similar activity on onshore sites, according to the Ministry of Energy.

Oil and natural gas exploration

enterprises are being carried out along the coastlines of Rakhine State and Tanintharyi Region, as well as the offshore region of Muktama, while it is known that approximately 2,000 million cubic feet of natural gas is extracted every day.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

KBZ listed in world finance 100-2015 at World Economic Forum

KANBAWZA Bank (KBZ) has been announced as one of the 100 best companies for 2015 of the world at the World Economic forum.

At the forum yesterday, which is being held from 18 to 23 January in Davos, Switzerland, London-based World Finance released its "World Finance 100 (2015)".

World Finance announced that KBZ is listed in the "World Finance 100-2015" list, for its achievements in opening many branches nationwide in 2015 within a short time, improving modern banking services, transparency, assisting in local private businesses to develop the country's economy and private sector, being ranked as the country's top tax payer for four consecutive years,



running business linking with local and international financial institutions, following rules and regulations laid down by international institutions and active

participation in and contribution to religion, education, health and social sectors in the country.

Chairman of KBZ U Aung Ko Win was also awarded with the Special Honourary State Excellence Award by the president for the bank's highest contribution to tax and has won many international banking prizes including the Bank of the Year in Asia 2015.

Along with KBZ, Apple IT (USA), Barclays Bank (England), BMW Company (Germany), BNP Paribas Bank (France), Emirates Airline (UAE) and Qatar National Bank (QNB), ANZ Bank (Australia), Toyota Company (Japan), HSBC Bank (Hong Kong), Sinopec (China) and SingTel (Singapore) are also listed in the "World Finance 100 (2015)".— *GNLM*

Rumour over land plots for pensioners dismissed

A MINISTER from the Yangon Region government officially denied a rumour that pensioners will be allocated land plots in the region, affirming that this information is incorrect.

"No announcement was made and no forms were invited", said Yangon Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock U Soe Min.

U Kyaw Soe, Yangon Region Minister for Forestry and Energy, and U Zaw Aye Maung, Yangon Region Minister for Rakhine Ethnic Affairs, also said that they were not aware of any such plans.

Due to the rumour spreading,

pensioners in Yangon have been mailing the Yangon Region government their applications since last week.

Daw Ngu Thida, deputy general manager of Myanmar Post, said that post offices are just providing services to customers, and application forms are not sold there.

"No one know the details", said U Nyein, a pensioner from Shwepyitha Township who submitted his application by mail following the information shared by one of his friends.

Pensioners are still submitting their applications by express

mail at the Yangon Post Office where forms are being sold at K100 a copy by brokers.

"I mailed my application form, so did others," said Daw Kyi Hla, a pensioner from Dala Township, adding that a copy of form is being sold for K 100 to K500 at copy shops in Dala.

Though authorities refuted the rumour, people gathered at post offices in regions and states in office hours to apply for land plots. Land prices in Myanmar have hiked with booming of the country's real estate sector since the country's opening up.—*Khin Maung Htwe*



A post office in outskirts of Yangon is crowded with people. PHOTO: MIN THIT

President meets officials from Chinese power generation group



President U Thein Sein and union ministers pose for documentary photo with delegation of Chinese power generation group. PHOTO: MNA

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein received a Chinese delegation led by Mr. Wang Binghua, chairman of the State Power Investment Corporation-SPIC of the People's Republic of China and party at a hall of the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call, matters related to ensuring cooperation in the development of the electric power sector and conducting a feasibility study that will help prevent flooding from the Ayeyawady river in cooperation with international experts were discussed.

Also present at the call were Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Khin Maung Soe and U Zeya Aung, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Sagaing Region coal mine collapses, one Chinese miner died, one Myanmar miner injured

A LAYER of rock which collapsed whilst digging was being carried out in a coal mine, located in Mawlite township of Sagaing Region, has killed one Chinese national and wounded a Myanmar national, according to the local police station.

The incident took place at 10:30am on Saturday in the coal mine being dug by the Ngway Yee Pulay company.

The Chinese national, who went by the name of Mr. Luo Changjun, didn't make it to the hospital, passing away on route.

The identity of the Myanmar national who was injured is Ko Pyay Sone Nyein from Sakan Gyi

village of Lay township, an employee working in the coal mine.

"[The incident] was not because of negligence. It also wasn't because the support structures in the mine weren't good. In fact, support pillars are only put up in areas which have collapsed in the past. The collapse took people by surprise as it happened in an area accessed as not being possible to cave-in.." explained Pyay Sone Nyein.

He is currently being treated at the Kalay People's Hospital and the mining company has taken responsibility for providing his required healthcare treatment.

"It is said the Gun machines

are used within the coal mines. It is known the cave-in of rock happened whilst they were cutting the rock with this said machinery. We have opened a case of litigation on the incident and are currently carrying out investigations." said supervisor Win Myint of the Mawlite town police station.

The deceased Chinese national Mr. Luo Changjun is 47 years of age and has been living in Myanmar since 16 October 2015, while his identity documents revealed that he was permitted to reside in the northern Shan State until March, 2016.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Germany provides 10 m Euros for fast-track Grant

THE German Government announced that it will commit 10 million Euros in additional grants for flood-affected areas in Northern Myanmar.

In the announcement from the German Embassy in Yangon yesterday, German Ambassador to Myanmar HE Christian-Ludwig Weber-Lortsch said, "Poverty alleviation in rural areas is a priority of our cooperation. We don't push paper, we make good on our promises, on the ground, with the Government and for the people. That is why we are building bridges and roads to reconnect 32 flood-affected villages in Kalay District

for 50,000 people. The project started already, thanks to the unbureaucratic assistance of the Department of Rural Development."

The Ambassador added that "The Myanmar Government organised free and fair elections and is now enabling a peaceful and democratic transition. That deserves respect and support."

The Myanmar Government appointed the Ministry of Live Stock, Fisheries and Rural Development as project partner and executing agency.

From the German side, KfW Development Bank will implement the project.—*GNLM*

Real estate income tax to rise five-fold from April 1

IMPOSITION of income taxes on real estate is set to rise five-fold starting from April 2016, according to the Tachileik Internal Revenue Department.

"The Imposition of land tax on

real estate and buildings is going to increase about five times over. It has already been discussed in parliament. As such, whether it's the buying or selling of property, building construction or the changing of

names related to housing, we want people to come and inquire with us before April 1 so that they can be informed on tax issues." explained U Toe Hlaing, assistant director of the Tachileik Internal Revenue Department.

Levies on taxes in regard to paragraph 24 of the tax legislation bill were discussed during the thirteenth session of union parliament held on January 15. Any income from real estate under 30 million kyats will have to pay a tax of 15 per cent; that of between 30 – 100 million kyats will incur a tax charge of 20 per cent, while any income received over 100 million kyats will need to pay a 30 percent tax fee.

The income tax of real estate will come into effect from 1 April 2016 and will be roughly five times higher than currently imposed tax levies.—*Myitmakha News Media*



Workers at a construction site in Yangon. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE



A bridge destroyed by flood in Kalay. PHOTO: SUPPLIED



Baby elephants falling down into water rescued in Kawthoung

TWO baby elephants that fell into a pond near an oil-palm plantation in Kawthoung District, Taninthayi Region have been saved by the employees of the farm on Saturday.

The accident occurred near a plantation owned by Yuzana Co. in Chaungmon village, Pyigyiman-daing Township in the district on Friday. A three-year-old boy elephant and a five-year-old girl elephant fell into a pond while their herd of wild elephants visited the pond for water.

Workers said those elephants tried to save the babies the whole night.

Officials and employees of the farm were able to save the victims with the use of heavy machineries in the evening. Those people then returned the two babies to their herd after they had been rescued, one of employee said.—*Kyaw Soe*



Volunteers are trying to evacuate two baby elephants.
PHOTO: KYAW SOE

Govt plans to establish new airport in MraukU

DEPARTMENTAL officials from aviation department and related ministries recently discussed the implementation of the construction of a new airport in MraukU, a little known archaeological site of Rakhine State.

At a meeting on 15 January in Rakhine State, participants mainly discussed the designated location to construct a runway, settlement of land compensation to locals within the project area and the collection of local-made products to fulfil the project needs.

Under the project, a 6,000 foot long and 100 foot wide runway to take ATR 72 aircrafts will be constructed for the first



A map shows the site for the new airport in MraukU.

phase, a 8,500 foot long and 100 foot wide runway for Boeing 737-400 aircrafts to take off for the second phase and a runway for aircraft weighing 800,000 pounds to take off.

The target area for the

project is located beside the Sittway-Yangon highway, 6 miles from the eastern part of MraukU Township.

An old airport is already situated in the southern part of the township.—*Myat Wai*

Survey aims to improve life of visually impaired

ORGANISED by the Myanmar National Association for the Blind (Monywa), a data collection from blind people has been conducted across Minkin Township in Kalay District, Sagaing Region.

The main aim of the survey is to help provide a better life for the visually impaired by fulfilling their requirements including educational support and cre-

ating employment opportunities. The data collection activity will be carried out by well-trained members of the association in 10 villages from 64 wards and villages of the township.

As part of its effort, the association firstly conducted a public awareness seminar about the survey which also aims to promote public involvement in the data collection movement.

During the seminar, U Tun Aung Kyaw, chairman of the association, elaborated on the purposes of the survey and relevant information about blindness.

According to the country's latest census, Myanmar has a population of more than 2.3 million people with disabilities, half of which are visually impaired persons.—*Chindwin Thar*

Crime News

Uncensored movies seller arrested

POLICE seized uncensored movies at a house owned by Aung Moe Kyaw, 32, in ward 4, Pakokku town, Magway region, on 16 January. Acting on a tip-off, member of the police searched a house selling and producing the uncensored movies and found uncensored videos totaling 1482 CDs/VCDs, plain CD 211 CDs/VCDs and duplicator. Local police station has filed charges against the man under Television

and Video Law Section 32(B).

Similarly, member of the police searched a house owned by Thin Yu Moe, 48, and found two duplicating machines, uncensored video of 8666 CDs/VCDs, Plain CD 1200 CDs/VCDs and 95 CDs/VCDs under duplication. The police searched Kyaw Kyar ship owned by Kyaw Ko (a) Kyaw Ko Ko Aung, 33, and seized a duplicating machine, unreleased videos 2000 CDs/VCDs

and plain CD 40 CDs/VCDs. And, police searched Tun Yadanar shop owned by Ye Mon Htut, 38, and discovered a duplicating machine, unreleased Myanmar and English videos 2524 CDs/VCDs, censored Myanmar video of 10 CDs/VCDs and K 113,000 earned through the sale of the uncensored movies. Local police station has filed charges against the man under Television and Video Law.—*MPF*

Car accident kills two, injures two

A trailer collided head on with a motorbike between 15th and 16th sheet, on Stand Road, Aung Myay Thar San township, Mandalay, on Saturday, leaving two people dead.

The trailer was being driven by Kyaw Thet Oo, 23, while motorbike by Ko Paw Gyi with Nyein Htet and Pyay Phyo Aung on board.

The collision killed Kyaw Thet Oo and Ko Paw Gyi and seriously injured two others. The injured people are being given medical treatment at Mandalay general hospital. The vehicle drivers were deemed guilty of careless driving by the police station.—*Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)*

Man charged with motorbike theft

THE police have brought charges against a man on suspicion of motorbike theft as he failed to prove that the motorbike belonged to him.

According to investigation, Ma Nwe, 32, lost her motorbike which was kept in front of her house at Htundon ward, Chan

Mya Tharzi township, Mandalay, on 5 December. As soon as she knew that her bike was stolen, she informed to Tun Tun San shop from which she bought the motorbike and asked the shopkeeper not to give the documents proving the ownership of the motorbike if someone came

to ask for them.

On 16 January, she got the information from the shop, which has led to the arrest of Maung Nobar Kyaw, 19, at Pyigyitagun township, Mandalay. The local police has filed charges against him with theft.—*MPF*

SAMSUNG Note-5 thief arrested

POLICE arrested a young man trying to sell a SAMSUNG GLAXY Note-5 at the corner of 82 and 35 road, Mahar Aung Myay township, on 16 January. When interrogated,

Khine Maung Win (a) Mask, 23, failed to prove that the mobile phone belonged to him. The local police station has filed a lawsuit against him.—*Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)*

Indian PM kicks off assembly poll campaign in NE India

NEW DELHI — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday kicked off campaign for the assembly polls in the northeastern state of Assam by slamming the Congress party which has been in power in the state for the past 15 years.

“Those who could not do anything in the last 15 years expect me

to do everything in 15 months. None of the promises made to people of Assam for 12 to 13 years have been fulfilled. It has become a fashion not to give account of your own work but blame others,” Modi said.

The prime minister, who was addressing a political rally in the state’s Kokrajhar District, prom-

ised fast-track development in the state. “My three-point programme for Assam is — development, development, development,” he said.

The country’s main opposition party Congress has been ruling Assam for the past 15 years. However, India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has seen an increase in its support base in the past two

years and has won half of Assam’s 14 parliament seats in 2014.

Experts say it’s a 50-50 chance for the BJP in Assam, and unless it ties with some regional parties, the party will not be in a position to muster majority in the assembly polls. But the party has not yet spelt out any pre-poll alliance.—*Xinhua*

Japan should see China as partner, not threat: ambassador

TOKYO — Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua expressed concern yesterday about the portrayal of China as a threat to Japan and called on Tokyo to see Beijing as a partner in achieving peace and stability in the region.

“If Japan deliberately takes up a sensitive issue between China and Japan and uses it to create tensions and opposition...not only would (such an act) hurt bilateral ties but it would influence peace and stability in the region,” Cheng said in Japanese in a speech at a Tokyo hotel. “In the end, those who hurt others only hurt themselves.”

Ties between the two Asian neighbours have often been beset by disputes over territory and history, although there have been signs of a thaw in recent months.

The ambassador said there had been “negative remarks” about China when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s ruling party and its coalition ally were seeking to enact security legislation last year as well as over territorial issues in the East and South China seas.

Japan, along with other countries, has criticised Beijing’s massive and fast-paced land reclamation in the South China Sea, saying such “unilateral” moves escalate tensions in the area. China, Taiwan, Viet Nam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines have conflicting territorial claims in the sea.

In the East China Sea, Japan is engaged in a row with China and Taiwan over a group of islets it administers. China stepped up its claim to the islets after Japan purchased a major part of them from a

Japanese individual and put them under state control in 2012.

The security legislation, aimed at expanding the activities of Japan’s Self-Defence Forces overseas, was enacted last September in a major shift in Japan’s exclusively defence-oriented post-war security policy.

In arguing for the legislation, Abe cited “an increasingly severe security environment facing Japan,” alluding to China’s growing military assertiveness and North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats.

On North Korea’s fourth nuclear test conducted on 6 January, the ambassador said China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will “support” the council in taking “appropriate” action in response to Pyongyang’s

violation of previous UN Security Council resolutions banning nuclear tests. Countries such as the United States, South Korea and Japan are hoping that China, which borders North Korea and is a long-time benefactor of the reclusive country, will be on the same page in seeking a strong and effective UN Security Council resolution against Pyongyang.

Cheng also called for dialogue with North Korea, saying six-party talks aimed at denuclearising the Korean Peninsula should be held to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to protect peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

The six-party talks involving the two Koreas plus China, Japan, the United States and Russia have been deadlocked since late 2008.—*Kyodo News*

EU team visits Thailand to assess fishing industry cleanup

BANGKOK — A European Union delegation that is visiting Thailand to weigh its progress in battling illegal and unregulated fishing will not make a decision this week on whether to ban Thai seafood products, the government said yesterday.

Thailand, the world’s third-largest exporter of seafood, faces the risk of the ban after the European Union gave it a “yellow card” in April for failing to clamp down on problems in its fishing industry.

An EU dialogue mission to assess progress is set for Thursday and Friday but a technical team has already arrived, the government said.

The team is monitoring Thailand’s progress after it set up a centre last year to combat illegal fishing, said Vice Admiral Jumpol Lum-piganon, a spokesman for the Royal Thai Navy.

“Once they are satisfied they will go back and make a decision,” he said, adding that there was no timeframe for the decision.

The technical team would conduct random checks until the rest of the EU officials arrived on Wednesday, he said.

Last week the government said Thailand had completed “70 per cent of the task” set out by the EU, after having registered most of its fishing vessels and caught groups suspected of human trafficking in the fishing sector.

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan said Thailand had introduced new laws to avert an EU ban.

“There has been huge progress, because we have solved many problems in terms of the law, and its application,” he told reporters. “Whether they are satisfied or not we will have to see, we’ve done our utmost.”

The EU declined comment, citing the confidential nature of meetings between its officials and Thai authorities.—*Reuters*

Indonesia looks to stop militants overseas from returning home



Indonesian President Joko Widodo. PHOTO: REUTERS

JAKARTA — Indonesian President Joko Widodo is considering a regulation that would prohibit Indonesians from joining radical groups overseas, in an effort to prevent a deadlier attack than last week’s militant assault on Jakarta.

At a meeting yesterday at the palace, top political and security officials agreed to review anti-terrorism laws, which currently allow Indonesians to freely return home after fighting with Islamic State in Syria.

Security forces fear that returning jihadists could launch a much more calculated attack than the amateurish assault militants launched on Thursday using two pistols and eleven low-yield homemade bombs. Eight people were killed in the attack, including the

four attackers. “We’ve agreed to review the terrorism law to focus on prevention,” parliamentary speaker Zulkifli Hasan told Reuters.

“Currently there is nothing in the law covering training. There is also nothing currently covering people going overseas (to join radical groups) and returning. This needs to be broadened.”

Proposed revisions would also tighten prison sentences for terrorism offences, he said.

Widodo said discussions on the new regulation, which would be a stop-gap measure until parliament can revise its anti-terrorism law, were still at “an early stage”.

“This is very pressing. Many people have left for Syria or returned,” he said, but did not say

when a decision would be made.

Roughly 500 Indonesians are believed by authorities to have travelled to the Middle East to join Islamic State. About 100 are believed to have returned, most of whom did not see frontline combat.

Indonesian Police Chief Badrodin Haiti told Reuters in an interview Monday that the country was bracing for the return of these more experienced fighters, who may be capable of carrying out far more sophisticated operations than last week’s attack, which was hampered by poor training and weapons. Thursday’s bombings and shootings in the heart of Jakarta were the first attack in Indonesia attributed to Islamic State. The last major militant attacks in the country were in 2009, when suicide bombers struck two luxury hotels in the city.

Even if the new revisions are imposed, Indonesia would still have weaker anti-terrorism laws than some of its neighbours.

Malaysia last April passed a law reintroducing detention without trial, three years after a similar measure was revoked. Australia has in recent years passed measures banning its citizens from returning from conflict zones in Syria and the Middle East, while making it easier to monitor domestic communications.—*Reuters*

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China says Manila exaggerating tensions with aircraft claim

BEIJING — China accused the Philippines yesterday of deliberately trying to scare people by saying China had warned a small civilian plane carrying Philippine officials it was trespassing as they inspected an island in the disputed South China Sea.

The Philippines said the incident happened on 7 January to an aircraft inspecting Thitu Island in the Spratlys, where Manila plans to set up surveillance equipment this year, as their aircraft flew near a Chinese man-made island.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei repeated that China has sovereignty over the Spratlys and that the Philippines had illegally occupied eight islands there since the 1970s, including Thitu, and had been building on them.

“The Philippines’ comments are just frightening words to scare people, deliberately exaggerating regional tensions with treacherous intent, and its plots will not succeed,” Hong said, when asked about the warning to the Philippine aircraft.

The Philippines plans to in-

stall a \$1 million satellite-based system on Thitu to track commercial flights over the South China Sea, after China landed its first test flights this month on a reef it built in the Spratly islands.

Hong said that any activities by the Philippines on the islands it occupies were illegal.

China’s increasing military presence in the Spratlys has stirred fears it could lead to an air defence zone, which would escalate tension with other claimants, and the United States, in one of the world’s most volatile areas.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, believed to have huge oil and gas deposits, but Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also have claims in the sea, through which about \$5 trillion in trade passes every year.

The Philippines and Viet Nam protested against China’s test flights on the Fieri Cross Reef this month.

“The concerns about the recent activities of China along with the reclamation activities and construction of air-



The work on the runway at Mischief Reef, located 216 km (135 miles) west of the Philippine island of Palawan, in this Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative on 8 January 2016 satellite image released to Reuters on 15 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

strips in the disputed territory is shared by other countries as it adds to the tension in the region,” said Herminio Coloma, Philippine presidential communi-

cations secretary.

It “causes concern about the freedom of freedom of navigation and overflight in the area”, Coloma added.—Reuters

South Korea union group pulls out from labour reform pact

SEOUL — South Korea’s largest labour union group withdrawing yesterday from a labour reform agreement, a setback for President Park Geun-hye’s ambitious reform drive just a few months ahead of parliamentary elections.

Park has made the reform of South Korea’s rigid labour practices one of the key goals of her government, to help revive Asia’s fourth-largest economy in the face of an extended slump in exports and slowing population growth.

“The FKTU will no longer participate in the tripartite commission as agreements made there are not abided by,” Kim Dong-man, president of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) which has a million members, told a news conference.

He criticised the government for breaching an agreement reached in September by representatives of business, labour and the government, referring to the government’s bid to revise labour laws without full negotiations with the labour unions.

The government’s proposed reforms aim to make hiring and firing easier and allow individual negotiations between employer and employee on working conditions. These changes currently require consent from the labour union.

In principle, the government could still push ahead with its attempt to enforce reform measures requiring no law revisions despite the federation’s pullout but such a move could turn public opinion against the government just ahead of the polls.

Labour Minister Lee Ki-kweon told a separate news conference later on Tuesday that the government was open to more negotiations with labour but added it could not wait forever. South Koreans will vote in April to elect all 300 members of the single-chamber National Assembly, in which 53 per cent of seats are now held by the ruling party. South Korea has scored poorly in international surveys on labour practices, especially for a lack of flexibility in hiring and firing workers and in setting wages.—Reuters

Park reiterates need for ‘strong, effective’ punishment for North Korea

SEOUL — South Korean President Park Geun-hye reiterated yesterday the need for the international community to take “strong and effective measures” against North Korea’s recent nuclear test, according to the presidential office.

“It would send a wrong signal to North Korea if strong and effective measures couldn’t be adopted this time,” Park was quoted as saying at a Cabinet

meeting.

She said that without such measures, North Korea “would believe it would go unhurt by the international community even if it carries out the fifth and the sixth nuclear tests.”

“North Korea should be made to realise this time what results their misdeed would bring about,” she was quoted as saying.

She urged the Cabinet ministers to intensify diplomatic efforts

closely with allies like the United States to have a “strong and comprehensive resolution adopted at the UN Security Council.”

Park also called for the fullest possible efforts to counter any provocations by North Korea.

On 6 January, North Korea announced it successfully conducted a hydrogen bomb test, drawing a storm of condemnation from the international community.—Kyodo News



South Korean President Park Geun-hye. PHOTO: REUTERS

India lifts ban on lentil linked to paralysis as Modi seeks self-sufficiency

NEW DELHI — India is lifting a five-decade-old ban on a type of lentil that has been linked to nerve damage and paralysis, in a desperate attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to cut legume imports and make the nation self-sufficient in the edible seeds.

Hit by back-to-back droughts for the first time in over three decades, India’s lentil output has fallen and prices have nearly doubled. Now the government has cleared three varieties of the khesari lentil, which can grow in dry or wet conditions.

But the opposition Congress party, which is trying to pressure Modi over continuing rural hard-

ship, said the government was playing with the health of unsuspecting Indians by allowing the cultivation of khesari.

The varieties developed by Indian scientists, however, contain a lesser amount of a neurotoxin that can damage nerve tissues and weaken the legs of both humans and animals than previous varieties, said Narendra Pratap Singh, director of the state-run Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR).

“The government thought if in a reasonable quantity it can be consumed then why not allow it, particularly when there’s a crisis and we’re importing pulses,” said Singh.

Despite the ban placed on the lentil in 1961, khesari is still eaten in eastern India and neighbouring Bangladesh, mainly as a cheap source of protein for millions of poor people.

“This is how the Modi government is tackling price rise — by lifting (the) ban on a pulse that’s medically proven to cause paralysis,” Congress party spokesman RPN Singh said on Twitter.

The three varieties now allowed have been ready for the last 10 years and “various experiments on animals have shown there are no adverse long-term effects if consumption is in reasonable quantity,” IIPR’s Singh

said. Every year Indians consume about 22 million tonnes of lentils used to make a thick stew called dal, commonly taken with rice or flat bread across South Asia. About a fifth of the volume is imported from countries like Canada, Australia and Myanmar, which grow the legumes mainly to sell to India.

Modi wants India to be self-sufficient in lentils and last month approved a scheme to encourage greater cultivation of the legumes. Higher incentives for water-intensive crops like wheat and rice have made India a big grains producer at the cost of other key crops like lentils and oilseeds.—Reuters

Spy agency MI5 named top employer for LGBT equality in Britain



Demonstrators fly pink Union flags outside Buckingham Palace during a protest against Britain's gay marriage ban in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Britain's domestic spy service, MI5, was named yesterday as the best employer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in a nationwide workplace equality index, followed by Lloyds Banking Group and the National Assembly for Wales.

The Top 100 Employers list by the equality charity Stonewall ranks organisations in Britain based on answers from employees about culture, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

"We're thrilled to see such a commitment to lesbian, gay, bi and trans colleagues, but we also know that there is still lots to do," Ruth Hunt, Stonewall's chief executive, said in a statement.

According to the survey, only 27 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual people felt com-

fortable disclosing their sexual orientation to colleagues and customers.

Less than half of transgender people said they saw a visible commitment to trans equality at work from senior leaders.

More than 50 per cent of respondents said there were gay role models at work, but only 11 per cent saw bisexual role models. "We know that people perform better when they can be themselves, and it's been proven that diversity among staff leads to a more productive, positive and creative workplace environment," Hunt said.

MI5 Director General Andrew Parker said diversity was vital for the organisation as it allowed the intelligence agency to use the skills of the best people. "Diversity is vital for MI5, not just because it's right that we

represent the communities we serve, but because we rely on the skills of the most talented people whoever they are, and wherever they may be," Parker said in a statement.

According to the survey, the majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents who revealed their sexuality at work experienced greater job satisfaction and a higher sense of achievement.

More than 60,000 employees from over 400 organisations took part in the 12th annual survey which serves as a tool for employers to evaluate their progress on LGBT equality. The legal and housing sectors dominated the top 10 places on the index, while Wales and the East Midlands had the most organisations outside of London featured on the list.—Reuters

Sweden opens corruption probe over foreign minister's apartment contract



Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström. PHOTO: REUTERS

STOCKHOLM — The Swedish Prosecution Authority will open a preliminary investigation over whether an apartment rental contract given to Foreign Minister Margot Wallström by a trade union constituted a bribe, the authority said in a statement yesterday.

Wallström rented an apartment in Stockholm in a building owned by trade union Kommunal from April 2015. While a popular minister among voters, she is one of Sweden's most controversial politicians due to her open criticism of Israel.

"I welcome the investigation. I have nothing to hide and it is good that this will be resolved. I continue to do my job," Wallström said in a written statement to news agency TT.

Chief prosecutor Alf Johansson told TT there were no suspects at this point.

"First, I will investigate whether a crime has been committed, and in connection with that see if someone can be regarded as a suspect," Johansson told TT.

Apartment contracts are a hard to get in Stockholm, where construction has not been fast enough to accommodate a huge number of new inhabitants over the last few decades.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Germany wants to discuss concerns about new Polish govt

BERLIN — German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said yesterday that the German government wanted to discuss its concerns about the new Polish government with Warsaw.

"There is perhaps no such sensitive a neighbourly relationship as that we have in Poland. That does not mean we are not going to speak about the things that concern us, but it can influence the way we speak about them," Steinmeier told reporters.—Reuters

About 3,500 slaves held by Islamic State in Iraq — UN report

GENEVA — An estimated 3,500 people, mainly women and children, are believed to be held as slaves in Iraq by Islamic State militants who impose a harsh rule marked by gruesome public executions, the United Nations said yesterday.

The militant group, which also controls large parts of neighbouring Syria, has committed widespread abuses that may "in some instances, amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide," the report said.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq and UN human rights office estimated that 3,500 people were "currently being held in slavery by ISIL numbers". "Those being held are predominantly women and children and come primarily from the Yazidi community, but a number are also from other ethnic and religious minority communities," said the joint report issued in Geneva.—Reuters

Iran's Khamenei welcomes sanctions lift, warns of US 'deceit'

DUBAI — Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on Monday welcomed the lifting of international sanctions against Iran, but warned that Tehran should remain wary of its old enemy the United States.

Khamenei wrote to President Hassan Rouhani to congratulate him on implementing the nuclear deal, which resulting in US, European Union and United Nations sanctions being lifted over the weekend, state television reported.

"I reiterate the need to be vigilant about the deceit and treachery of arrogant countries, especially the United States, in this (nuclear) issue and other issues," Khamenei added.—Reuters

Fighting between Syrian army, Islamic State kills scores: monitoring group

BEIRUT — The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights group said scores of Syrian government forces have been killed in three days of fighting with Islamic State in the east of the country, where the jihadist group has attacked government-held areas.

Syrian officials could not be reached for comment.

The Britain-based Observatory said 120 members of the Syrian government forces and 70 Islamic State fighters had been killed in clashes since Saturday.

The official news agency SANA reported on Monday that government forces had recaptured some residential areas taken by Islamic State in Begayliya, near the city of Deir al Zor, and killed a number of fighters.—Reuters

9 injured in pileup involving 26 cars in South Korea

SEOUL — At least nine people were injured yesterday in a pileup involving 26 cars on an expressway in the southwestern part of South Korea, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Among the nine, two were seriously hurt in the accident, which happened at around 12:50pm in Jeongeup, North Jeolla Province.

Snow was falling in the area at the time of the incident.

An official from a fire station said that earlier reports of some 60 cars being involved in the pileup were incorrect.—Kyodo News

OPINION

Espirit de Corps should not be counterproductive

Khin Maung Aye

WORKING in teams is part of our daily life be it in business organisations, in educational institutions, in sports and so on. It is common knowledge that teams with a high spirit and strong sense of togetherness are more likely to achieve success. Nevertheless, there arises a question as to how we actually build this team spirit or esprit de corps.

There is no doubt that high team spirit is a desirable trait for any team. The benefits are straight forward. As each and every member wants the team as a whole to succeed, they are highly motivated, committed and co-operative, which has led them to exert their utmost effort. As

a consequence, they perform their best in the most effective and efficient manner. Another obvious benefit is that all members are satisfied with what they do; they have job satisfaction.

Quite evidently, the high spirited teams may spread out their energy, the esprit de corps and morale to other groups in their work environment, thereby exerting a positive influence upon the spirit and culture of the entire organisation. On the other hand, this team spirit can be counterproductive because this kind of spirit can evolve into group ethnocentrism and can cause dysfunctional competition and conflict between groups. Their pride as the conquerors and their elitist behaviour can have negative impact on the organisation as a whole.

It is, therefore, worth recalling a practice of socialist labour emulation in the days of the socialist regime led by General Ne Win. The factories, mills and work establishments were ardently vying with one another, exerting their utmost effort to increase their productivity. Since they were bent upon enhancing the quantity to win the best productivity award, they were forced to compensate the quality

for quantity. They did not bother very much in regard to quality control. This is the darker side of the labour emulation.

Such being the case, it is of utmost importance to build the team spirit in a healthy way. There should be a mechanism to avoid the extremes, being aware that competition should be encouraging co-operation and co-ordination, not harming the unity among different groups across the organisation.

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.

Three Bridges in Myanmar of world fame Part II

Maha Saddhama Jotika dhaja
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

(Continued from Part I)

To the east of the Lake, on a vast land amidst the local villages is Yadanapon University, founded about 3 decades ago. A portion of the lake was drained off and land filled to construct a motor road across the lake. The lake and natural surrounding were very badly spoiled. In High monsoon the lake's flood water spilled over to Yadanapon University making classrooms un-usable. In summer because the water is reduced, water transport in the lake faces difficulties. Recently, there is media report that fishes and other watery creatures die due to pollution.

Today with the boom of Myanmar tourism, U Pein Wooden Bridge has become a business centre, shops, esteries, cafeterias, beer bars, fermented toddy juice huts, local snacks, souvenir shops, sellers of local products cotton, silk clothings even T-shirts and jeans of foreign brand plus of course jewelries of precious and semi-precious stones at bargain prices.

It is hoped that Tourism and public awareness combined will sustain U Pein Wooden Bridge.

In Hsipaw District of Northern Shan in Myanmar, there is a Village named "Ngokhteik" in Myanmar and "Nokwat" in Shan pronunciations. The place where the Village is situated is the place where rivers and streams go under-ground and disappear. So the place came to be called by Shans "Ho-kwat" {Ngokhteik}. In course of time "Ngok" corrupted to "Gok" and the name became "Gokhteik".

Of the disappeared rivers and streams, a subterranean river called "Nam Pasei" {Chaungson River}, emerges above

ground at another place, Gokhteik earns world wide reputation not only because of the subterranean River, but also because of the world's second highest Bridge named "Gokhteik Bridge."

In the heydays of British colonialism in Asia there were pressure groups behind the British Government to pursue "forward policy" in the expansion of the British Empire to the furthest limit. These pressure groups were mercantile communities, maritime and trans-border traders and military strategists. They exerted their influence upon the policy makers of the British Government by means of their financial tentacles and security reason. When the British Home Government in London which was in favour of "thus far and no further policy" and the British Colonial Government head quartered in India which held the "Forward Policy", clashed, it was always the British Colonial Government which overruled on the ground of being "on the spot Government which know the real situation very well".

Transport and communication were the two in-dispersible necessities in the pursuit of "forward policy" of British imperialism. In the Sub-continent of India the push to the furthest limit to the north brought British Colonial Power into confrontation with the Czarist Russia and Manchu China. The so-called Himalayan States such as Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan were firstly turned into buffer, but later by alternate use of diplomacy and show of force {Localised War} the British converted these states into a sort of protectorates. Networks of com-



Gokhteik Bridge. EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

munications were set up for the promotion of trade in peace time and in the event of war, strategic and tactical operations were kept in readiness.

Myanmar became a part of the British Indian Empire after 1885 A.D. Its geographical proximity to China {only over 40 miles between Myanmar border town Bhamo in Kachin State and Yunanfu, Chinese border town in Yunan Provinces of China} had allured western merchants to the Sino-Myanmar trans-border trade since the days of the Dutch presence in the East Indies and mainland South-east Asia. At the peak of Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom, over produced textiles of Yorkshire and Lancashire badly needed export market. China with population boom provided that need. Besides, by the turn of the 20th century the British exploitation of the resources of Myanmar had already been in full swing. The Ruby mines of Mogok and the Bawd-

win {Silver mines} of Namtu were being worked by Mogok-Ruby Mines Co and Namtu Silver Mines Co of the British entrepreneurs.

In addition to the economic interest of the British mercantile community, the British Raj in the heyday of British imperialism were constantly obsessed with the security and defence of the far-flung British Empire. The French had their Empire in Indo-China in which Cambodia, Laos, Siam and Anan-Tokin [now Viet Nam] are Myanmar's eastern neighbors. Though by means of diplomacy, the British concluded an Entant-cordiale with their colonial rival French by dividing the peninsular South-east Asia into two spheres, keeping Siam as a buffer between them the two were always security conscious. Hence mobility of British Land and Sea forces to the needed places in the event of threat of war or outbreak of war demanded good communication

and transport.

Shan State is the largest in Myanmar. East North and South parts are divided naturally by high mountains, deep ravines, rapid rivers, under-ground streams and mighty falls. Their local products-minerals, precious and semi-precious stones, forest products and tea plus customs duties of border trade provided enormous revenue for the British Government.

The backdrop described above promoted the construction of the railway between Mandalay and Lashio in which Gokhteik Bridge was the most important link. The Bridge was built in 1903 at the railway mile stone No. 463/09-a distance of 7 miles past Naung Cho rail-way station on the Mandalay-Lashio rail-way line. Unlike other bridge which cross stream and rivers. Gokhteik Bridge crosses two great ravines, each over 300 feet deep.

See page 9>>

Bagan restorations to be completed in February



Some pagodas in Bagan are in urgent needs of restoration. Photo: Myitmakha News Agency

THE Archaeological Department under the Ministry of Culture has announced that the restorations to some of the pagodas in Bagan will be completed in February 2016. The project is receiving emergency funding from UNESCO.

UNESCO provided US\$30,000 for the restoration of temples that were damaged by weather in November 2015.

“The pagodas, which are in need of emergency maintenance, are being restored with \$30,000 of financial assistance from UNESCO. The Bagan Conservation Group and the Archaeological

Department are joining forces to carry out six restoration activities, including efforts to conserve ancient wall paintings featured inside the pagodas and masonry, which is coming away from the ceilings,” explained U Thein Lwin, the deputy managing director of the department. Priority has been given to the Sular Mani, Taunggu Ni and Lawka Hteitpan pagodas, as they require emergency restoration on the artistic handiwork, featured relics and wall murals.

The Ministry of Culture also announced that the Indian gov-

ernment is assisting with the restoration of the Ananda Pagoda, removing dirt and imperfections from wall paintings, as well as restoring the brick walls of the pagoda, and the grounds around it, to their original state.

According to the ministry, evening dinner ceremonies and tourist services are prohibited from being held on the grounds of Myanmar heritage buildings, and legal action will be taken against government departments and travel companies that do not comply with this regulation.— *Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar Development Institute (MDI) officially launched

MYANMAR Development Institute (MDI) was officially launched, with a workshop to announce its master plan at Nay Pyi Taw recently, according to Korea International Cooperation Agency-KOICA.

In collaboration with Korea Development Institute (KDI), KOICA is implementing the one of the flagship projects named ‘Establishment of MDI’ from 2014 to 2019 with 20 million USD.

MDI will play a role of national think-tank in Myanmar as it is a decision maker to plan national socioeconomic and country policy after its launching.

At the ceremony to unveil the signboard of the MDI to mark its official launching, Union Minister of Ministry of Science and Technology, Dr. Khin San Yi said, “With lots of

expectation, we are glad to have a chance that Korea, which was the least developed country but have developed to one of OECD member in 30 years, share its development experiences.”

Korean Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Lee Back-Soon remarks, “The active researches and its operation by both Myanmar government officials and representatives of MDI will lead success of MDI establishment, and I expect MDI supports the economic development in Myanmar.”

MDI Central Working Committee Chair, Dr. Zaw Oo, announced MDI master plan including its vision, promoting system and research subjects as a policy think-tank, and requested MDI Central Committee, composed by nine ministries, to bring sustainable support and discussion.— *GNLM*



Union Minister Dr. Khin San Yi and dignitaries pose for photo at ceremony to officially launch Myanmar Development Institute. PHOTO: MNA

Three Bridges in Myanmar of world fame Part II

>>from page 8

The great Bridge was designed by Sir A.M.Rendel and Co. of London, England and Pennsylvania and Maryland Bridge and construction Co of U.S.A constructed the Bridge. Construction materials were shipped from New York, U.S.A. Thick jungles were cleared and with many difficulties the Bridge was constructed crossing very steep and high ravines. But it took only nine months to complete construction.

A total of 4311 tons of iron and steel and one and a half million iron wedges were used. Ten 120 foot oblong iron frames, seven 60 ton oblong iron frames, sixteen 40 ton posts oblong iron frames and sixteen steel posts from the main structure. The Bridge is 2260 feet long and the height from the lowest ground level to the rail line on the bridge is 1100 feet high. It is learnt that under the post No. 12 of the bridge an under-ground stream

flows. From that stream to the bridge is 870 feet high.

The total cost of the construction of the Bridge was Indian Rupees [1698200] or English pounds [113200]. This Bridge not only provides an important link in transport and communication between Myanmar Proper and Northern Shan State, but also a major transport rail way line to Namtu Silver Mines.

When the Second World War reached Myanmar, the Japanese army invaded Myanmar and the British retreated to India. The British bombed the bridge when they used “scorch earth” tactics during their retreat. Again, when the Japanese invaders had to retreat in the last phase of the Second World War they exploded the Bridge.

When the Second World War was over, and Myanmar regained her independence, the Department of Myanmar Railways repaired and renovated the Bridge. The repair and renovation

work began in 1948 and completed in 1950. In August of 1950 the Bridge was back into operation. The cost of repair was Myanmar kyats 32 hundred thousands.

Gokhteik Bridge crossing deep ravines with sub-terranean stream and rivers flowing right under is foundation is the marvel of the world. It was the favorite object of visual and performing artists. Gokhteik bridge appeared in travelogues, photographs and paintings of the world. The Bridge was sung, and shown in songs and in films.

The writer of this article still re-captures Myanmar stant films in which film heroes Tin Pe, Tin Ngwe, Tin Swe, Chit Swe and Shwe Ba showing their stant while riding the train crossing Gokhteik Bridge.

Among songs sung in praise of Gokhteik Bridge one particular hit was named “Kamboza” composed by Nan-daw Shey Saya Tin and sung by a national-

ly famed singer-dancer Liberty Mya Yin. The following are some excerpts and chorus:-

စမ်း စမ်း ဖြည်ဖြည်လင်
တောကြိုက၊ တောကြားက၊
စီးကျပါတဲ့ရေသွင်သွင်
သနားစရာ၊တနေဝင်၊
ရင်၊ရင်၊ရင်၊ရင်
ရှမ်းမကလေး၊ လမ်းပြပေး
စိတ်တွေးယဉ်ယာ
ပြောပြောပြော၊ ပြောပြော
မြော် မြော် မြော် မြော်
ပုဝါကလေးသိုင်းလို့
ပလိုင်းကိုတွဲလွယ်တင်ရှင်
နန်းရွှေကိုကြီးတင်က၊
နမကလေး လောဘာတီကိုဆင်

“Crystal clear Brook
Cascading from Jungle nooks
Constantly flowing down and down
Day in, day out creating nostalgia.

Petite Shan girl is a guide
So he thinks of me with delight
He is Nan Shey Ko Gyi Tin.

Dressing me with a scarf around.
And a Paline basket on shoulders down
Me, his sister Liberty Mya Yin.

Chorus

သိန်းနီနဲ့လားရှိုးက
ရွာပြီးအံ့ဆင်၊
ခါးမိုးဟုတ်မတင်
ရွာပြီးအံ့ဆင်
ကမ္ဘာလေး ဂုတ်မြတ်မတီ
ဒုတ္တဝတီရေသိတာရေယဉ်

In Theinni and Lashio towns
Clouds are gathering to rain down.
It couldn't be seasonal rain.
Gokhteik of Kamboza on tops glides
River Duthawaddy is always alive.

Gokhteik bridge today [2016] is 113 years old [1903-2016] deserving its rightful entry not only in the Guinness Book of world wonders but also in UNESCO engravings of World Cultural heritage.

(To be continued)

Suicide bomber kills at least ten in northwest Pakistan



Investigators look for evidence after a suicide bomber blew himself up close to a police checkpoint in Peshawar, Pakistan on 19 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

PESHAWAR (Pakistan) — A suicide bomber blew himself up close to a police checkpoint in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing at least ten people and wounding more than 20, officials said.

The bomber rammed his motorcycle into the roadside checkpoint in the Jamrud area of Pakistan's volatile Federally Administered Tribal Areas, local government official Munir Khan told Reuters.

"He was riding an explosives-laden motorcycle and hit the checkpoint and the vehicle of the line officer," Khan said.

Among the dead were at least five police officers including the line officer whose vehicle was targeted by the bomber, and a journalist, officials said.

The attack took place in an area where security forces have stepped up

their fight against Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups along the border with Afghanistan, following the massacre of more than 150 people, mostly children, at an army-run school in December 2014.

Attacks have fallen since the government crackdown and the Taliban squeezed into small pockets of territory, but militant groups remain able to launch hit-and-run and suicide attacks on security forces.

A spokesperson for the Hayatabad Medical Complex in Peshawar, to where the wounded were evacuated, said earlier that the hospital had received six bodies, including that of a child.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blast. Last month, a suicide bomber attacked a government office in northwestern Pakistan, killing at least 23 people.—Reuters

Australian police respond to reports of shooting at Sydney police station

SYDNEY — A police operation was underway at a police station in a suburb in the west of Sydney, Australia's largest city, emergency services said yesterday, with domestic media reporting at least one person had been shot.

A police spokeswoman said an operation was underway at the station in Quak-

ers Hill, a suburb 40 km (25 miles) west of the city's central business district. No further details were available immediately.

Australia is on heightened alert for attacks by home-grown militants. Authorities say they have thwarted a number of potential attacks, although there have been several "lone wolf"

assaults in recent months. An accountant working for the New South Wales state police was killed when a 15-year-old boy opened fire outside police headquarters in the suburb of Parramatta, also in Sydney's west, in October last year.

The teenager, Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar, was killed in a subsequent gunfight with police.—Reuters

Members of new Libyan unity government announced under UN-backed plan

TUNIS — Libya's Presidential Council announced a new government of national accord on Tuesday aimed at uniting the country's warring factions under a UN-backed plan.

The Tunis-based council had pushed back the deadline for naming the government by 48 hours, amid reports of disputes over the distribution of ministerial posts.

Only seven of the council's nine members signed the document, which named a total of 32 ministers.

Libya has become deep-

ly fractured since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Since the summer of 2014 it has had two rival governments and parliaments, operating from the capital Tripoli and from the east.

Both are backed by loose alliances of armed brigades of rebels who once fought Gaddafi.

Western powers hope the new government will be able to deliver stability and tackle a growing threat from Islamic State militants.

But many members of Libya's competing parlia-

ments did not back the agreement, with critics saying the plan does not evenly represent all the country's groups and factions.

It is also unclear how and when a new government will be able to establish itself in Libya.

Tripoli is controlled by a faction called Libya Dawn, and the head of the self-declared government that it backs said last week that preparations by the Presidential Council to secure the capital violated military law.—Reuters

Turkish operations against Kurdish militants near completion

ISTANBUL — A Turkish security force campaign against Kurdish militants in the southeast has been largely completed, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was reported as saying on Tuesday, as he outlined plans to maintain tighter control in parts of the region.

Turkish police and military launched major operations against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighters in several towns across the mainly Kurdish region last month, intensifying a conflict reignited by the collapse of a ceasefire in July.

The army says it killed more than 500 PKK rebels in the campaign, adding to a death toll of more than 40,000 people killed since the PKK took up arms in 1984. The pro-Kurdish HDP party says some 100 civilians have been killed in the fighting.

"The process is to a large extent completed," Davutoglu was reported as telling reporters on his plane travelling to London, disclosing plans for a new security structure and

reorganisation of state administration in two border provinces.

"It won't be like with old operations, withdrawing after streets are cleansed. There will be a more orderly security presence," the Yeni Safak daily quoted him as saying. "The goal is to build a public order...in which no illegal structure can take control of any streets," he said.

For much of the 31-year insurgency, conflict has focused the countryside, but the latest violence has been in urban areas.

The army says that during the campaign it has removed trenches and barricades set up by PKK youth wing members to keep security forces out. Thousands of locals have left the towns hit by conflict, many complaining of indiscriminate operations.

Davutoglu's comments were published after the governor of Sirnak province said a round-the-clock curfew in the town of Silopi, near the Iraqi border, would only be enforced between 6 pm (1600



Kurdish demonstrators shout slogans during a protest against a curfew in Sur District and security operations in the region, in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir, Turkey on 17 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

GMT) and 5 am (0300 GMT) from Tuesday.

The town of Cizre, further west near the Syrian border, and the Sur district of the region's largest city in Diyarbakir remain under 24-hour curfew.

Davutoglu said there were plans to make Cizre the administrative centre of Sirnak province, as the

mountainous town of Sirnak was in a confined area, as part of a "master plan in the fight against terror", *Milliyet* newspaper reported.

There was a similar plan to move the administrative centre of Hakkari province, on the Iraqi and Iranian borders, to Yuksekova because of better

security and service infrastructure there, he said.

The PKK, which says it is fighting for autonomy for Turkey's Kurds, is designated a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and European Union.

Ankara launched a peace process with the PKK's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan in late 2012,

but it ground to a halt early in 2015 ahead of a general election.

Turkey's leaders have said they will continue operations until the militants are defeated.

President Tayyip Erdogan said last week some 300 police officers and soldiers have died in the conflict since July.—Reuters

China fourth quarter growth weakest since 2009 as policy misstep fears grow

BEIJING — China's economic growth in the fourth quarter slowed to the weakest since the financial crisis, adding pressure on a government that is struggling to restore the confidence of investors after perceived policy missteps jolted global markets.

Concerns about China's policy making ability have shot to the top of global investors' risk lists for 2016 after a renewed plunge in its stock markets and yuan currency CNY=CFXS stoked worries that the economy may be rapidly deteriorating.

After being a major locomotive of global growth in recent years, China is locked in the midst of a protracted slowdown.

Weak exports, factory overcapacity, slowing investment, a soft property market and high debt levels are all compounding problems for the government as it tries to transition from a centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented model that will require leaders to cede a large degree of control.

Growth in fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) eased as expected to 6.8 per cent



An employee works on an assembly line producing electronic cars at a factory of Beijing Electric Vehicle, funded by BAIC Group, in Beijing, China, on 18 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

from a year earlier, down from 6.9 per cent in the third quarter and the weakest pace of expansion since the first quarter of 2009.

Full-year growth of 6.9 per cent, enviable by Western standards, was China's poorest showing in quarter of a century.

Other data yesterday suggested the world's second-largest economy lost more steam in De-

cember, dashing hopes that a year-long flurry of government stimulus would finally kick in.

That said, there were no signs of a meltdown that some traders have feared.

Zhang Yiping, an economist at China Merchants Securities, said the struggling property market — a major driver of demand for materials from cement to steel

— was mostly to blame for the difficulties China is having boosting performance.

"The policy to boost the property industry conducted in 2015 hasn't taken effect yet. I see more downward risks for China's economic growth in 2016, and they actually look fairly severe."

Property investment rose just 1 per cent, a near 7-year-low, while new construction plunged 14 per cent.

The China statistics bureau told a news conference that the 2015 growth had been "hard won", adding that the structural adjustment of the Chinese economy is at a crucial stage.

That highlights the difficulties Beijing will face in getting policy — be it monetary easing, reforms, increased fiscal spending or cutting red tape — to translate into actual growth in 2016.

Premier Li Keqiang said in December the government would "take a knife" to loss-making zombie companies as parts of efforts to reduce overcapacity in the system, but that would require tough political decisions such as allowing more bankruptcies and

potential layoffs.

Other top priorities Beijing has announced for 2016 include shrinking a glut of unsold homes, deleveraging balance sheets, reducing costs for businesses and encouraging new technology.

And analysts say policymakers will need to improve their communication with markets, after the People's Bank of China sowed confusion globally this month by allowing the yuan to weaken sharply then intervening to stop the fall. Its intent is still not clear.

Even if Beijing hikes spending and cuts interest rates again as widely expected, analysts expect growth will cool further this year to 6.5 per cent. Some China watchers believe real growth levels are already much lower.

Some analysts argue that Beijing has been too cautious in lowering rates and freeing up cash in the banking system, keeping real interest rates too high given low returns on investment.

After six rate cuts since November 2014, China's main policy rate is still fairly high at 4.35 per cent.—Reuters

Investors eye growing number of online UK estate agents

LONDON — Britain's resilient property market is fuelling increasing numbers of online estate agents, and investors are warming to a new business model whose fees often undercut those of traditional estate agents.

Further property sector growth is likely as a global slowdown increases the likelihood of British interest rates remaining at record lows. The sector's reputation as a "safe haven" grew after the 2008 credit crisis when investors poured money into bricks-and-mortar.

Research firm Hardman says that online estate agent Purplebricks has become the fourth-biggest UK estate agent by number of property transactions since launching in mid-2014.

It charges much cheaper fees than traditional estate agents like Foxtons and Savills, and capitalises on the growing trend for online searches.

Already, around 90 per cent of property is sold when customers contact a traditional estate agency after a search on websites like Rightmove and Zoopla, Hardman analyst Mike Foster said.

Some analysts compared the 'disruptive' technology-driven new businesses with the success of taxi-hailing service Uber, which is challenging old-fashioned taxi services.

Other unlisted online real estate companies, estimated by market research analysts to generate about \$6 billion in annual agency fees, include EstatesDirect.com, set up by Poundland founder Ste-

ven Smith, HouseSimple.com and eMoov.co.uk.

Purplebricks listed on the London market in December. The stock has lost ground since then, partly hurt by a broader sell-off on world equity markets, but some analysts expect the shares to gradually recover.

"It's not unusual to see some negative reaction in shares of a fairly new and innovative company at a time when the broader market sentiment is pretty bearish," said David Battersby, investment manager at Redmayne-Bentley.

"But I believe that the experiment is going to have a huge traction. Star investor Neil Woodford's involvement with Purplebricks gives the company more credibility."

Woodford Investment Management, which manages 14 billion pounds, took up a 29 per cent stake in Purplebricks because of the company's potential to grow.

FinnCap analyst Duncan Hall played down the threat from new online players, saying many customers still prefer face-to-face meetings with traditional estate agents.

But other analysts, such as Gavin Jago at Peel Hunt, point out that some of the new online firms have formed partnerships with local experts, combining the ease of online searching with traditional customer service.

Jago said the lower, fixed prices of online players will increase pressure on commission rates charged by traditional agencies.—Reuters

Taxi drivers in Hungary demand Uber to be shut down

BUDAPEST — Taxi drivers in Hungary's capital demonstrated on Monday against ride-hailing service Uber, whose growing popularity they find unpalatable amid new regulations setting a fixed tariff for traditional taxi firms that is higher than Uber's.

Taxis blocked a major road crossing in central Budapest and drove around in city streets blocking much of the road traffic in the capital's center. They said they would stay put until Uber was no longer downloadable to smartphones in Hungary.

Uber Technologies Inc's [UBER.UL] service has triggered protests by taxi drivers from London to New Delhi as it upend traditional business models that require professional drivers to pay steep licensing fees to drive cabs.

Late in the afternoon the protest appeared to be weakening with some drivers leaving and those remaining divided about the resolve to continue in the face of police requests to open up the blockade, according to Reuters photographers at the scene.

About 140 vehicles took part in the demonstration, organisers said. Drone pictures by Drone Media Studio, published on the news web site 444.hu, showed a few dozen



Taxis block a main road in Budapest's city centre, Hungary, on 18 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

taxis blocking the thoroughfare.

In a statement posted on Facebook, the organisers demanded that Uber be banned in Hungary and Uber drivers be penalised for what they saw as breaches of the regulations for taxis.

"We stand up for our rights and demand an end to this lawlessness," the protest organisers said in the statement. "We demand that the Uber application be switched off. Just get it done, period."

The government will put the issue on the agenda of its

meeting on Wednesday and consider all proposals, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff told state news agency MTI.

MTI also reported an Uber statement that said the protest by the taxi drivers underscored the need for new regulation that respects the presence and positive effects of new technologies.

Uber has attracted 80,000 users and 1,200 drivers in Budapest since its 2014 launch in the city, MTI quoted the company as saying last week.—Reuters

Australia says El Niño likely to end in Q2, La Niña may follow

SYDNEY — A strong El Niño weather pattern will likely end in the second quarter of 2016, with climate indicators either returning to normal or making way for La Niña conditions after that, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) said yesterday.

La Niña is the opposite of the better-known El Niño weather event characterised by warmer waters in the tropical Pacific with knock-on effects that can cause billions of dollars of damage to food and water supplies around the globe.

La Niñas happen unpredictably every two to seven years, with the last extreme event, judged by a sharp cooling of Pacific surface

waters, in 1998-99.

While climate indicators remain in the El Niño threshold as of now, they have cooled in recent months, the BOM said.

The BOM said ocean temperatures in the Pacific Ocean have cooled by 3 degrees Celsius since late November and that sea surface temperatures had also dropped.

But recent tropical cyclone activity in the central tropical Pacific has produced strong westerly winds along the equator that may temporarily slow the decline of El Niño, the BOM said, adding that according to its weather models, neutral and La Niña states were equally likely for the second half of 2016.—Reuters



Fisherman Gabriel Barreto stands on the shore of the Magdalena river, the longest and most important river in Colombia, in the drought-hit city of Honda, on 14 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Antarctic restorers uncover century-old artifacts left by early explorers

SYDNEY — Conservationists in Australia's oldest Antarctic outpost have scraped away a hundred years of snow and ice to unearth items, from bullets to a bowl of peas, that reveal the harsh conditions battled by early explorer Douglas Mawson and his team.

Six restorers have painstakingly moved the equivalent of a 5-tonne truck of ice, or 30 cubic metres (39 cubic yards), out of a hut that was the base for critical geological and scientific surveys of the region done before World War I.

"You walk into the workshop now and the smells are very, very strong," Martin Passingham, leader of the two-month restoration effort, told Reuters by satellite telephone from the site, which is frequently lashed by blizzards.

"The removal of the ice has let all of that smell come out of

the floor and timbers," he added. "You get a feeling of how people moved around the building and how cramped it would have been, with so many of them."

Mawson's Huts is Australia's most isolated Antarctic outpost, perched on the edge of Commonwealth Bay, 2,696 km (1,675 miles) south of the Tasmanian capital of Hobart.

One of six complexes surviving in the world from the 'Heroic Era' of Antarctic exploration, it was used during 1912 and 1913 by Mawson's expedition, which charted the region's coastline and first described several of its bird and animal species.

"In the main hut there is stuff everywhere, a coal shovel beside the stove, jars and containers of food on the shelf, wooden spoons left on the kitchen bench," said Passingham. "All of these things

really do tell the story more thoroughly."

Two members of Mawson's team had lost their lives by the time Australia's first expedition to the Antarctic sailed back in 1913, after completing its scientific studies.

The Mawson's Huts location, which the explorer termed the "home of the blizzard" for its ferocious winds, is recognised as a historic site and monument under the Antarctic Treaty. "The reason why Australia administers claim to 42 percent of Antarctica is all because of Mawson and what he did here," Passingham said.

British-born Mawson, a geology professor who gained fame for his feats of polar endurance, had been on an expedition to the Antarctic with explorer Ernest Shackleton from 1907 to 1909, and pioneered research in radioactive minerals.—Reuters

Pro-China lawmaker says Beijing must answer on missing HK booksellers

HONG KONG — One of Hong Kong's staunchest pro-Beijing lawmakers said a bookseller's tearful confession on state television to a hit-and-run accident more than a decade ago in China is unlikely to appease public concerns that he may have been abducted.

The Sunday evening broadcast on China Central Television ended months of mystery over the fate of Gui Minhai, a naturalised Swedish citizen, after he was last seen in October outside his apartment in the Thai seaside town of Pattaya.

In the strongest statement yet by anyone in Hong Kong's pro-China camp, Legislative Council President Jasper Tsang said the taped confession by Gui was not enough.

"The China Central Television (CCTV) report did not seem to be able to calm the public. As the case drags on, there will be more speculation," Tsang said late on Monday.

He said if more details did not come to light, the Hong Kong government should seek assistance from the central government in Beijing.

CCTV could not be reached for comment.

Since late last year, four other associates of the Hong Kong-based publisher that specialises in selling and publishing gossip political books on China's Communist Party leaders have been unaccounted for.

Hong Kong police confirmed late on Monday that they had been advised by authorities in China's southern Guangdong Province that one of them, British passport holder Lee Bo, was in the mainland.

Police said Guangdong offi-

cials also sent them a letter from Lee addressed to the Hong Kong government, and that Lee's wife confirmed the writing was his.

Police said it was similar to one he purportedly sent to his wife in which he said he "voluntarily" went to the mainland.

The disappearances have prompted fears that mainland Chinese authorities may be using shadowy tactics that erode the "one country, two systems" formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to China from British rule in 1997.

"We should not speculate and criticisms should be based on fact," Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying said yesterday. "I and SAR government are also very concerned about the case."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said yesterday that he had nothing more to add about Gui's case as Chinese media had already given a "rather detailed" report on his case.

On Lee's case, he said he "did not understand" it.

Hong Kong was returned to China with a guarantee that it would have greater freedoms and separate laws from the mainland for 50 years.

The publishers' books are banned on the mainland, although they are popular with Chinese tourists in Hong Kong.

"We will continue to raise this case at the highest levels," a British Foreign and Commonwealth Office's spokesperson said in an email response to Reuters, referring to Lee.

Sweden and the United States have also expressed concern at the disappearances.—Reuters

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Participants march in the parade marking Martin Luther King Jr Day in Los Angeles, the United States, on 18 January 2016. The theme of this year's parade is "Our Work is Not Yet Done". Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which falls on the third Monday of January each year, was established as a US federal holiday in 1986. PHOTO: XINHUA

World's oldest man Yasutaro Koide of Japan dies at 112



Yasutaro Koide in the central Japan city of Nagoya receiving a certificate from Guinness World Records as the world's oldest living man in August 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

NAGOYA — Yasutaro Koide, a former tailor recognised by *Guinness World Records* as the oldest living man on earth, died at the age of 112 of chronic heart failure at a hospital in Nagoya,

central Japan, in the early hours of yesterday, his relatives said.

Koide was recognised as the oldest man following the death last July of then-record holder Sakari Momoi

of Saitama Prefecture near Tokyo, who was also 112 years old. Born in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan coast in March 1903, a young Koide trained as a menswear tailor in Osaka before returning to his hometown to earn his living making formal wear such as tuxedos and tailcoats.

Granddaughter Aya Kikuchi, 49, said she would always find Koide standing in front of a sewing machine. Koide sewed everything himself, from underwear to jackets, and greeted the press after being declared Japan's oldest man last year in a pair of trousers he had made when he was 80 years old.

At that time, he said the secret to longevity is "not pushing oneself and being happy about everything."

Koide's death makes 111-year-old Tokyo resident Masamitsu Yoshida the oldest man in Japan, according to the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry.—*Kyodo News*

Fire hits renovated Paris Ritz weeks before reopening

PARIS — Flames ripped through the top floor of the luxury Ritz Paris hotel yesterday, as around 60 firefighters battled to put out a fire which threatened the work of a 3-1/2 year restoration programme just weeks ahead of a planned re-opening.

Some 150 workers were evacuated from the site in the chic Place Vendôme square in central Paris at around 0500 GMT, where about 15 fire trucks were on the scene, Paris fire service spokesman Captain Yvon Bot said on French television.

The cause of the fire, which struck on the seventh floor of the building and spread through the attic to the roof, was so far

unknown, the official said.

By mid-morning, the fire had been brought under control, he told Reuters.

"There is no longer any risk of it spreading, but the operation will still take a very long time," he said. The firemen had had great difficulty accessing the part of the building affected, he said.

The Ritz had no comment as the incident was ongoing. The hotel's website still indicated yesterday it was accepting reservations again from March 2016.

The former home of fashion designer Coco Chanel and author Marcel Proust, and a favourite drinking hole of American writer Ernest Hemingway,

the hotel was last renovated over a decade beginning in 1979 after its purchase by tycoon Mohamed Al-Fayed.

The latest work to restore the Ritz, which opened in 1898 and was the first Paris hotel to boast electricity on all floors and bathrooms that were inside rooms, began in August 2012 and is being overseen by interior architect Thierry W. Despont.

It includes the building of a "discreet tunnel" that will enable the rich and famous to come and go in privacy. It was at the Ritz that Diana, Princess of Wales, spent her last night in 1997 before the car crash that killed her.—*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY NO (125N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MERATUS GORONTALO VOY NO (125N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV LINDAUNIS VOY NO (0021S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV LINDAUNIS VOY NO (0021S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CHINA SHIPPING LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PACAO VOY NO (003N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PACAO VOY NO (003N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S YANG MING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ABLE VOY NO (431N)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ABLE VOY NO (431N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ANNA DOROTHEA VOY NO (CH0230)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANNA DOROTHEA VOY NO (CH0230) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P.L where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CHUN AN CHARTERING CO LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186



Yangon Sailing Club Annual General Meeting

All members of Yangon Sailing Club are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting to be held as follows:

Date : 31 January 2016
Place : Yangon Sailing Club
Time : 09:30 hrs

**Hon. Secretary
Yangon Sailing Club**

ADVERTISE WITH US!

Email: adv.gnlm@gmail.com,

Phone: 09 250107962, 09 251022355

Michael Jackson collection of 100 drawings to be sold

NEW YORK — A collection of King of Pop Michael Jackson's drawings is to go up for sale.

Joseph McBratney claims to have privately amassed over 100 drawings by the late "Thriller" hitmaker — who died in June 2009 aged 50 — including sketches of The Beatles, the late Princess Diana, Abraham Lincoln, Charlie Chaplin among others, reported the *New York Post*.

"It's a big responsibility, I put this collection together. (I want to create) a non-profit endowment to help kids. It would be a shame for this beautiful property to be anything else but a healing property for suffer-

ing kids and adults who would never have the chance to be in recovery or treatment," he said.

McBratney, who has also been known as Joe Brat, first began collecting the drawings after buying some of the "Billie Jean" star's memorabilia on eBay, and was when directed to a Mexican woman by a dealer, who didn't speak English but said she'd acquired a number of the sketches while working for Sony.

All the pictures are signed by the star and the collector said he has had them authenticated by an autograph authentication service.

McBratney also wants to stage an exhibition of the drawings.—PTI



PHOTO: REUTERS

Winslet on DiCaprio Oscar nod: 'It's going to be Leo's year'

LONDON — Leonardo DiCaprio has been nominated five times for an acting Oscar and Kate Winslet, his co-star in the 1997 blockbuster "Titanic", says he may finally win the golden statuette next month.

DiCaprio got a nod for his lead role in survival drama "The Revenant", facing competition from Bryan Cranston for "Trumbo", Matt Damon for "The Martian", Eddie Redmayne for "The Danish Girl" and Winslet's "Steve Jobs" co-star Michael Fassbender.

DiCaprio, 41, won a Golden Globe for "The Revenant" and is seen by many pundits as the one who will win the best actor Oscar at the Academy Awards ceremony on 28 February.

"I do think it probably will be, I think you can sort of feel it. And I think that everyone wants it for him and it would be amazing," Winslet told Reuters at the Critics' Circle Film Awards in London on Sunday night.

"But it's also slightly difficult for me too because Michael Fassbender has been nominated ... and I think his performance is so extraordinary. But ... I think you can sort of feel the temperature, it's probably going to be Leo's year."



Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet pose at the European premiere of *Revolutionary Road* in Leicester Square in London in 2009. PHOTO: REUTERS

Winslet, 40, who also starred with DiCaprio in "Revolutionary Road" in 2008, is herself Oscar-nominated for "Steve Jobs" in the best supporting actress category.

"They were like the golden tickets this year, they were really very coveted spots I think, particularly in this category and so I am absolutely thrilled," she said.

On Sunday, Winslet picked up the supporting actress of the year award for her portrayal in

"Steve Jobs" of the late Apple co-founder's colleague Joanna Hoffman.

Other winners at the Critics' Circle Film Awards included "45 Years" co-stars Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay who took the actress and actor of the year prizes.

Action adventure "Mad Max: Fury Road" won film of the year with the movie's George Miller taking the director of the year award.—Reuters

The Eagles guitarist Glenn Frey died at 67

LOS ANGELES — Glenn Frey, the prolific guitarist, singer, songwriter and founding member of the Eagles, died on Monday at age 67, the American rock band known for "Hotel California" and dozens of other hits said on its website.

Frey died in New York City of complications from rheumatoid arthritis, acute ulcerative colitis and pneumonia, the band said.

The Eagles, whose album, "Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975," is the second-best-selling record of all time in the United States, helped create the freewheeling soundtrack of 1970s America and remain ubiquitous on rock radio nearly half a century later.

Their blend of rock with coun-

try music influences fueled their success with hit songs such as "Desperado," "Already Gone" and "Take It to the Limit."

Frey collaborated with drummer Don Henley to co-write many of the band's biggest hits. While Henley most often sang lead vocals for the band, Frey played guitar and piano, was key to the band's harmony as a back-up vocalist, and at times sang lead.

His performances on "Take It Easy" and "Peaceful Easy Feeling" on the band's debut album in 1972 helped rocket the Eagles to fame, and he later sang lead on hits "Lyn' Eyes" and "Already Gone."

Frey died a little more than a week after another rock great, Da-

vid Bowie, died at age 69 in New York, apparently of liver cancer.

Detroit-born Frey and Henley co-founded the Eagles in 1971 in Los Angeles after playing backup for rock singer Linda Ronstadt.

Henley in a statement praised Frey as the "one who started it all" for the Eagles.

"He was the spark plug, the man with the plan," Henley said. "He had an encyclopedic knowledge of popular music and a work ethic that wouldn't quit. He was funny, bullheaded, mercurial, generous, deeply talented and driven."

The band's original members also included Bernie Leadon and Randy Meisner. Several other musicians, including Joe Walsh, joined in the 1970s.

After the Eagles disbanded in 1980, Frey had a successful solo career, recording the songs "The One You Love" and "The Heat Is On." Several of his compositions were for films or TV shows, and Frey took on a side career as an actor, including a small part in 1996 film "Jerry Maguire."

In 1994, the Eagles reunited and released an album titled "Hell Freezes Over." The name jokingly referred to Henley's previous statement that the band would only get back together when "hell freezes over." Henley said he viewed Frey as a kind of brother, but acknowledged that, like in many families, "there was some dysfunction" in the relationship.—Reuters



Glenn Frey of the rock group 'The Eagles' performs at a concert in honour of Monaco's Prince Albert II and his fiancée Charlene Wittstock at the Stade Louis II stadium in Monaco in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

K-pop agency says did not force Taiwan star to apologise over flag

SEOUL — A South Korean entertainment agency behind a 16-year-old singer who triggered a fresh rift between China and Taiwan by holding a Taiwan flag said on Monday it did not force her to apologise.

Chou Tzuyu, the only Taiwanese member of South Korean K-pop girl band Twice, inadvertently shot to the top of Taiwan's election agenda at the weekend.

In a video released late on Friday by JYP Entertainment Corp that quickly went viral,

Chou said she felt proud to be Chinese and that there was only one China, fuelling suspicion that the agency may have pressured her to apologise to avoid upsetting fans in mainland China, a key market. The video shows Tzuyu apologising and bowing. She had held the flag in a TV show.

"An individual's conviction cannot or must not be forced by a company and such a thing did not happen," JYP Entertainment, one of South Korea's top talent management companies, said in a statement on Monday.

"After Tzuyu's parents came to South Korea and discussed with Tzuyu, they made a final decision and went ahead with announcing her position," JYP added. China considers self-ruled Taiwan a breakaway province of "one China", ruled in Beijing, ineligible for country status or its own flag.

Taiwan president-elect Tsai Ing-wen, from the pro-independence opposition Democratic Progressive Party, told reporters as she cast her vote that Chou's video had seriously hurt the feelings of Taiwan people.

In Beijing, China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the spat was being "used" by certain political forces in Taiwan to "stir up the feelings of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait".—Reuters



A supporter of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson and presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen holds up a poster of Taiwanese K-pop singer Chou Tzuyu at their party headquarters as they wait for the results of the general elections on 16 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

As dairy declines, New Zealand milks tourism boom

WELLINGTON — New Zealand's booming tourism industry is emerging as a cornerstone of an economy hit by declining dairy exports, but the hordes descending on silver screen locations such as Hobbiton are stretching the small island nation's resources.

While the growing numbers of visitors bring in much needed revenue, there is increasing public criticism as campers litter parts of the pristine countryside and locals blame foreign drivers for causing carnage on the roads.

"The biggest problem is the mess they leave behind," said Chris Choat, spokesman for Tasman District Council in the South Island, where "freedom campers", who park overnight in areas that have no formal facilities, have riled residents as they use bushes for toilets.

Until recently, dairy was the backbone of the island nation's economy, representing around 25 per cent of exports. But dairy prices have dropped sharply since scaling record highs in 2013, due to China's economic slowdown and global oversupply.

International tourists, meanwhile, hit a record-breaking 3.09 million in the year to the end of November.

The private-sector Tourism Industry Association (TIA) estimates the value of international tourism reached NZ\$13.5 billion (\$8.85 billion) in the year to September, overtaking the \$NZ13 billion the

dairy sector earned in the same period.

The trend is not expected to slow down, given the weak New Zealand dollar and increasing airline capacity.

"We are having a boom period at the moment and we expect to maintain strong levels of growth," said TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts.

At the Hobbiton Movie Set Tours in Matamata on the North Island, a key filming location in the Lord of the Rings and Hobbit movies, business is on track to be up 40 per cent in the current year to March, with around 2,500 people currently visiting daily.

The Green Dragon Inn is serving around 1,000 liters of specially brewed beer a day, said General Manager Russell Alexander, and drive-in visitors often cannot get a spot as tours are booked out in advance online.

In Queenstown, an adventure hotspot on the South Island, hotel accommodation is in short supply, in particular over peak times such as the Christmas and the upcoming Chinese New Year holiday.

Venues such as the Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront have no vacancies over the Chinese holiday, which kicks off in earnest on 7 February.

Meanwhile, accusations of dangerous driving by tourists are causing friction.

A video showing British YouTuber Louis

Cole being pulled over for speeding has drawn wide coverage, and criticism, in New Zealand.

In the video a police officer can be heard telling Cole, who has 1.6 million subscribers, that his license could be suspended for traveling at 141 km/h, well above the 100 km/h limit.

"To be fair, I don't know what the speed limit is in New Zealand," says Cole later in the footage.

"This is why so many New Zealanders get killed by tourists and our road toll is so high," said one commenter on the video, which has been viewed more than 152,000 times.

In parts of New Zealand's South Island popular with tourists crashes involving an overseas driver make up a quarter or more of all road accidents, according to statistics from the Department of Transport. The government's response has been to invest millions in safety materials, including apps, web sites and videos for incoming tourists.

Road safety campaigner Clive Matthew-Wilson believes it should go further, calling for drivers arriving on long-haul flights to be prevented from renting vehicles for 24 hours and made to take a simple computerised competency test.

"Many of these high profile tourist deaths are being widely reported overseas," he said. "Ultimately, they are likely to damage New Zealand's reputation internationally." —Reuters

Foreign visitors to Japan reached 19.74 million

TOKYO — The number of foreign visitors to Japan in 2015 reached 19.74 million and these travellers spent an estimated 3.48 trillion yen (\$29.6 billion), both hitting new record highs, the Japan Tourism Agency said yesterday.

The number of visitors, increasing partly due to a weaker yen which encourages tourists to visit and spend when in the country, comes close to the Japanese government's target of 20 million visitors from overseas by 2020 when the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held.

The agency also attributed the rise in the number of foreign travellers and their spending to relaxed visa requirements for tourists from other Asian countries and the expansion of types of items available to be bought via duty-free.

Agency data showed that the number of visitors and their spending topped the previous annual record in 2014 of 13.41 million and 2.03 trillion yen, respectively.

Chinese travellers more



Keiichi Ishii, Japan's minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

than doubled to 5 million from 2.41 million in 2014, with those from South Korea growing 20.3 per cent to 4 million and Taiwanese tourists up 18.6 per cent at 3.68 million, the agency said.

Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Keiichi Ishii, speaking at a press conference, expressed his hope that the number of visitors from overseas to Japan will top 20 million this year while expressing a cautious view about the Chinese economy.

"Due to factors such as uncertainty in China's economy, Japan is unlikely to see

a sharp increase (in foreign visitors)," Ishii said.

The government will draw up new numerical targets and map out measures to accommodate the growing number of tourists by the end of March.

Chinese travellers spent an estimated 1.42 trillion yen, constituting 40.8 per cent of the total, followed by travellers from Taiwan at 520.7 billion yen and those from South Korea at 300.8 billion yen, the agency said.

Average spending per visitor rose 16.5 per cent from a year earlier to 176,168 yen. —Kyodo News

Tourist arrivals in Cyprus reaches all-time high in 2015

NICOSIA — The number of tourist arrivals in Cyprus saw a marked increase of 8.9 per cent in 2015, indicating an all-time record for the country, the Cypriot Statistical Service said on Monday.

Based on the passengers survey carried from the beginning of January to the end of December last year, the Statistical Service said a total of 2.7 million tourists came to Cyprus, relative to 2.4 million in 2014.

A sizeable increase was recorded in December 2015,

with 78,348 visitors compared to just 56,863 in December 2014, an increase of 37.8 per cent.

The spike is partly attributed to the cancellation of trips by tourists to Egypt following the downing of a Russian jet over Sinai Peninsula on 31 October and the tourist embargo imposed by Russia on Turkey following the shooting down of a Russian Su-24 military jet over Syria on 24 November by Turkish jets. Cypriot minister of tourism Yiorgos Lakkotrypys said

the increase of tourist arrivals in the last year improves the prospects of 2016, noting "we can proceed to the sustainable development of the sector."

The increase of tourist arrivals for the whole year helped the Cypriot economy mark an expansion of over 2 per cent against the 1.5 originally forecast. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism contributes to a quarter of Cyprus's economy, both directly and indirectly. —Xinhua

mitv Myanmar International

(20-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 21-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Taung Byone Nat Festival (Ep-3)
07:44	Am	A bike ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Episode-2)
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	"Myanmar's Traditions and Culture"
		Myanmar's Secret Beautifier
08:49	Am	Beach Food Delivery
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Bollywood Actress "Laila Khan"
		(Born & Raised in Myanmar) (Part-I)
09:46	Am	Parents' Day
09:51	Am	A Nun's Creation in Fruit Carving
10:03	Am	News

10:26	Am	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-3)
10:37	Am	"Insight Myanmar" Role of MNHRC
		(Episode- 1)

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Tuesday 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	A Visit to Kyauk Kyi
07:43	Pm	Five-Star Ocean Liners in Myanmar Water
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
08:42	Pm	Colonial Buildings and a New Yangon
08:49	Pm	Serene and Happy Rural Life in Myanmar

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

(20-1-2016, Wednesday)

6:00 pm	8:55 pm
• Songs of Yester Years	• Musical Programme
6:20 pm	9:10 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• Pyi Thu Ni Ti
6:40 pm	9:30 pm
• Fashion Show	• Joint Performance by State Orchestra and Traditional Orchestra
7:00 pm	10:00 pm
• TV Drama Series	• Myanmar Movie (Black & White)
7:50 pm	
• TV Drama Series	
8:45 pm	
• Catch Asia News (Part-26)	

From 20.1.2016 (Wednesday) 06:00 Pm
To 21.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Education key to preventing match-fixing: Murray

MELBOURNE — Young tennis players need to be educated about the implications of match-fixing and the sport needs to be more proactive in talking about the issue, world number two Andy Murray said yesterday.

The start of the Australian Open has been overshadowed by a report accusing tennis authorities of failing to take action against players repeatedly flagged up to the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) over suspicions of matches being thrown.

Speaking after he eased into the second round at Melbourne Park, Murray said Novak Djokovic's revelation that he had been offered \$200,000 to throw a match in the early years of his career highlighted the temptation facing young players.

"I think when people come with those sums of money when you're that age I think sometimes people can make mistakes," the Briton told reporters. "I do think

it's important that from a younger age players are better educated and are made more aware of what they should do in those situations and how a decision like that can affect your career, can affect the whole sport.

"I think across all sports, I don't think that that's done particularly well. You know, I think you

should be learning about those things from 15, 16, 17 years old and being warned about it."

Australian teenager Thanasi Kokkinakis told local radio in Melbourne on Tuesday that he had been approached on social media about throwing matches.

"You read some stuff on your Facebook page, just these randoms from nowhere saying, 'I'll pay you this much to tank the game'," the 19-year-old

told 3AW Radio. "You don't really take it seriously." Tennis authorities on Monday rejected suggestions they had suppressed match-fixing cases and backing the TIU's ability to fight corruption in the sport. The profile given to match-fixing by the report's release on the opening morning of the year's first grand slam is nevertheless likely to see corruption tackled with more vigour, perhaps with a funding boost to allow the TIU to expand beyond its current six staff. Murray, who said he had never been approached, was of the view it would have been better if the first the players had heard of the matter had not been through the media. "You have to go and speak to the players rather than them reading about it in the newspapers or listening to it on the TV or the radio," he said. "I think the more proactive you are with educating young players the better..."—Reuters



Britain's Andy Murray serves during his first round match against Germany's Alexander Zverev at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 19 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Arsenal mentally stronger than ever, says Walcott



Arsenal's Theo Walcott goes down under the challenge from Stoke's Philipp Wollscheid during Barclays Premier League at Britannia Stadium on 17 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Pundits have been lining up to question Arsenal's mental toughness and their willingness to dig deep in big games, but Theo Walcott says leadership figures in the dressing room have given the Premier League leaders a sense of self-belief.

While Arsene Wenger's side have built a reputation for flair and attacking football over the years, they have also found it

difficult to maintain a title challenge, with critics pointing to fragile defending and a lack of grit.

Arsenal, who last lifted the title in 2003/04 when they went through the league season unbeaten, lead the standings on goal difference from Leicester City but failed to pad their advantage on Sunday when they were held 0-0 at Stoke.

"The mental strength in this dressing room's the strongest it's ever been," Walcott told the club's website, adding that the arrival of goalkeeper Petr Cech from Chelsea last June had added some steel to the side.

"When you have the likes of Petr Cech come into the dressing room as well, he just enhances that. He's a leader in that dressing room as well.

"We've just got to look at him because he's obviously been at the top level and won many things. We all have the belief he's got that we can push on."

With just seven points separating the leaders from fifth-placed Manchester United after 22 games, Walcott said the title race was wide open.

"You can't tell what's going to happen this year, it's just so

De Gea's brilliance not lost on United team mates

LONDON — Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea has often been the rock holding his side's defence together during a difficult season, and the Spaniard's string of saves in the 1-0 win at Liverpool on Sunday once again proved his value to the club.

The impressive 25-year-old Spanish international was targeted by Real Madrid all through the close season and when a proposed move fell through at the last minute, his team mates were naturally delighted to see the world class keeper stay.

"David is a very important player in our squad. We are very happy to have him and happy that he didn't go last summer. He is fully committed to this football club," midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin told the club's website (www.manutd.com).

"When you have a player like this in goal, it's good for us, because we know we are not going to concede many goals and he is going to make some saves."—Reuters