

Sacred bone relic arrives Mandalay

A SACRED bone relic of the Buddha arrived Mandalay by plane yesterday.

The bone relic was conveyed by Mr Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche and Buddhist monks from northern India.

The sacred bone relic was taken to the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing by officials from the Ministry of Re-

ligious Affairs and Sitagu Buddhist missionaries.

"The relic is a piece of the Buddha's spine. We've maintained it with reverence since the days of our forefathers. Upon the invitation by the Sitagu Sayadaw, the sacred bone relic has arrived in Myanmar for the first time. We are proud to bring the sacred relic here," said the Venerable Sonam Wangd, a

member of the relic's entourage.

The bone relic will leave Sagaing today for a tour through Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Meiktila, Okpo, Taungoo and Yangon, where the Buddhist devotees will be able to pay homage to it.

Yangon residents will be able to pay homage to the bone relic at Shwedagon Pagoda.—*Khin Yadana*



Sacred bone relic of the Buddha. PHOTO: KHIN YADANA



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PAY ANYWHERE

MPU, UnionPay to introduce international debit card



Central Bank of Myanmar in Yangon. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

A DUAL-FUNCTION debit card to be released by the Myanmar Payment Union (MPU) and China-based UnionPay will be introduced in Myanmar to assist travellers with domestic and international payments, an official of the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) said yesterday.

Introduced by Asian Green Development (AGD) Bank, the AGD MPU-UnionPay debit card can be used as an MPU card at

home and as a UnionPay card outside Myanmar, CBM deputy director-general U Win Taw told reporters.

The debit card can be used at ATMs, and points of sale and online both in Myanmar and abroad.

There are 800 ATMs and 3,000 electronic points of sale across Myanmar.

Myanmar introduced MasterCard as the first international electronic payment card in the

country in November 2012, followed by Visa in December of the same year, UnionPay in February 2013 and the Japan Credit Bureau (JCB) card in September 2013, all in cooperation with private Myanmar banks

International bank cards came to Myanmar after the US has eased some of its financial sanctions on Myanmar, before which foreign visitors have been unable to use international credit cards since 2003.

MPU was established in September 2011 by 17 domestic banks in Myanmar, including three state-owned and 14 private banks. The MPU card was first offered to Myanmar citizens for domestic use in September 2012. Meanwhile, international banking card companies are being invited to join the MPU member bank network and sign agreements with Myanmar to enable international e-payment services.—*Xinhua*

Original price of Malaysian work visas restored

THE Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has agreed to grant work visa to over 8,000 Myanmar workers at the previous price of US\$6 after it was raised to \$57 on 18 January.

The decision was made after a trilateral discussion on 19 January on the increase in the price of Malaysian visas for Myanmar workers between the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Myanmar Foreign Employment Entrepreneurs Federation (MFEEF) and the One Stop Centre (OSC) – a joint operation of companies from Malaysia and Myanmar that provide visa services to Myanmar workers seeking employment in Malaysia.

"We held a consultation after we heard from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security that those 8,000 workers who were permitted to travel and work in Malaysia experienced difficulty as a result of the rise in the price of the visa. Ultimately, we asked [the workers] to pay a visa fee of \$6. We must submit the list of workers to Nay Pyi Taw by 22 January. Starting on Monday next week, we will accept all of the 8,000 workers with visa fees of \$6," said U Saing Si from the information department of the MFEEF.

The negotiations were the result of objections by engineers and workers in December 2015 and January 2016 to plans to raise visa fees.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Parliament records second 5-year development plan



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

THE 13th regular session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw entered its 35th day yesterday, with the sessions documenting plans to establish new towns and villages and the government's second five-year, short-term development plan. One MP also read out a report before the parliament.

The parliament outlined the formation and boundaries of five new villages in Mon State and extended two towns in Maungdaw Township, Rakhine State.

Next, an MP read out a report on the findings of Joint Public Accounts Committee regarding the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Development Fund for 2014-2015.

Then, parliamentarians dis-

cussed the draft of the second five-year, short-term development plan, which will span from the 2016-2017 fiscal year to 2020-2021.

Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw explained the policies of the people-centred plan and called for popular participation in the projects.

The five-year plan is aimed at creating sound foundations for investments and economic development, thereby contributing to Myanmar's industrialisation, the Union minister said.

Finally, the five-year plan was documented by the parliament.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Over 170 foreigners enrol to study Myanmar at UFL during 2015 – 2016

A TOTAL of 173 foreigners from 12 countries were given permission to study Myanmar language at the University of Foreign Languages (UFL) in Yangon during the academic year of 2015 – 2016, it is known from the academic institution.

According to the records of the UFL, between the years of 1974 – 2015, the university handed out 41 bachelor of the arts degrees and 84 diplomas in Myanmar language, while a total of 1,239 students successfully completed language classes.

“A diploma in Myanmar language for foreigners lasts two years, while a BA is four years in length. Myanmar language classes on the other hand ranged between basic, intermediate and advanced level and run for less than a year. Those who completed the language classes were given a course

completion certificate. There are some difficulties though in teaching foreigners. In terms of how we overcome [those difficulties], we practice a visual form of teaching through prompt cards,” explained Dr. Kyi Kyi Moe, professor and head of the Myanmar language department of UFL.

As well as 173 new students enrolled in Myanmar language at the university during the year of 2015 – 2016, the total number attending the university that year, including those second and third year students, was 227. “I've come from Korea to study Myanmar language. I'm now in my third year of study. My father is also in Myanmar, doing business. That's why I want to be fluent in the language. I've also come here because I'm interested in the country,” said a third year Myanmar major student from Korea, Ma Kyay Sin May.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

MFFG to contribute building for MWCF



THE Myanmar First Financial Group Co Ltd will assist the Myanmar Women and Child Development Foundation in the construction of a building for the foundation.

The agreement between MWCF and MFFG Co Ltd was signed yesterday by a vice chair-

person of MWCF and Mr Duan Zengli, Chairman of the MFFG Co Ltd.

Also present at the signing ceremony, held at the office of MWCF were responsible personnel of the MWCF, the wife of the chairman of the MFFG Co Ltd and dignitaries.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Meeting on accommodation for new MPs held

A COORDINATION meeting on accommodation for parliamentarians to the second Parliamentary session was held at guest house-2 of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, attended by Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann. After hearing reports on preparatory works, the Speaker thanked officials concerned who are preparing accommodation, transportation, health and security for the new members of Parliament. Next, those present submitted reports on general matters, and the meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by the Speaker.

Also present at the meeting were Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson of Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law and Tranquility, parliamentarians and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Authorities and MPs are discussing accommodation for new MPs. PHOTO: MNA

Durability of scorched Mingalar Zay to be tested

THE Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) and the Myanmar Engineers Association (MEA) will form a committee to test the durability quality of the recently blazed Mingalar Zay.

It is known, in accordance with the invitation of the YCDC, that the special cases inspection committee under the MEA will carry out the inspections on the fire damage of the Mingalar Zay market which is located in Mingalar Taung Nyunt township of Yangon. “The MEA will carry out the inspections. We will wait for [their] results and then request their advice on how to go about properly carrying out restorations. We will plan to carry out restorations as quickly as possible,” explained U San Shwe Htun, Head

of the Markets Department of the YCDC.

A committee will be formed which will include the MEA and members of the YCDC's High-story Buildings Supervision and Markets Departments, while activities will be continued to be carried out to test the strength of endurance of the fire damaged market, it is known from the MEA.

U Nyunt Maung San, chairperson of the special matters inspection committee under the MEA, said the aforementioned inspections will start from January 25 and last approximately one week, after which further discussions will be held to find an answer as to the best way to carry out restoration activities.

“We will start inspections after

January 25. The colours show the extent of the fire damage which can be seen with one's own eyes. We will also carry out x-rays of the concrete. We will check the data collected from the x-ray scans, whether the endurance of the concrete has weakened, and then make a record on the level of endurance,” he explained.

The aforementioned market caught fire in the small hours of 1:30am on 9 January, incurring damages of over 36 million kyat, according to estimates revealed by the Fire Department. But it wasn't the first time the four story building was seen ablaze, it has happened once before on 25 March, 2010 but was reopened after restorations were made.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Ground-breaking ceremony for World Buddhist Library held

A Ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the World Buddhist Library was held in conjunction with a cash donation ceremony in Pobbathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday.

First, the congregation led by Daw Nann Shwe Hmon, wife of Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Acting Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) and Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Khin Aung Myint, the Union Ministers U Soe Win, U Ohn Myint, U Win Tun, U Khin Maung Soe, U Zeyar Aung and U Win Myint offered provisions to the members of the Sangha.

Next, they received cash donation for the construction of World Buddhist Library by wellwishers.

The Acting Chief of the General Staff and Union

ministers drove stakes at the ground-breaking ceremony and sprinkled scented water on them.

According to sources the Myanmar Highland Company will build the two-storey World Buddhist Library in which the main library hall, a hall to house relics and offices will be included.

An estimated construction cost is K2.5 million. Cash donations have reached K2.1 billion.

The purpose of establishing the library is to make it a major centre for the study of Buddhism for international scholars who are taking Buddhist studies and conducting researches on Buddhism, said Dr Bhaddanta Dhammasami who is leading the establishment of the library.

At present, international Buddhist experts have to go to



General Khin Aung Myint drives a stake into the ground to start work for construction of World Buddhist Library. PHOTO: MNA

the library of Oxford University that holds a considerable collection of Buddhist materials.

It is also planned that the library will keep Buddhist texts written in both Myanmar and several other languages at the library.

Following the completion of construction a park with more than 1,200 trees will be set up near the library with the aim of enabling park goers to have a brief understanding of three pitika texts while there, said the Sayadaw.— Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar hosts four-country commercial navigation meeting

MYANMAR hosted the 14th Joint Committee on Coordination of Commercial Navigation on Lancang-Mekong River (JCCCN) China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand yesterday. The meeting is set to run for two days in Nay Pyi Taw.

In his address, Deputy Minister for Transport U Han Sein said

that the four countries involved in the meeting can derive from their participation in improving water transportation.

Delegations from China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand are set to discuss an international waterway development plan that can develop commercial navigation of the four upstream countries, the deputy

minister added. According to the meeting, matters related to cooperation in rescue and relief works, an emergency plan drawn up by the member countries, transportation of oil and oil-related products and exchange of information among the ports of the four countries will also be discussed.—Myanmar News Agency



Deputy Minister for Transport U Han Sein delivers address at the 14th Joint Committee on Coordination of Commercial Navigation on Lancang-Mekong River (JCCCN) China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand. PHOTO: MNA

Yangon-Manaungkyun flights operating as normal despite loss: airliner says

DESPITE operating at a loss, flights to Manaungkyun are operating as normal, said a director from the Manaung Public Company yesterday.

Our business focuses on regional development, aiming to attract local and foreign investments to the region, said Director U Khin Maung Kywe.

According to the company, flights between Yangon and Manaungkyun are in operation using two aircrafts with a seating capacity of 10 passengers each. Yangon-Manaung-Kyaukp-yu-Sittwe flight services are being operated twice a week.

The airliner is running the flights by leasing the two aircraft

from Myanmar National Ailine.

An airfare ticket for the one and a half hour Yangon-Manaung flight is K77,000 per head. The flight service resumed last month after a long pause.

The company plans to use passenger jets following the extension to Manaung airport. —Ko Moe

Head of Departments appointed

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of the following persons as heads of service organisations shown against each on expiry of the one-year probationary period.
- | Name | Appointment |
|--------------------------|--|
| (A) Dr Daw Khin Naing Oo | Rector
Yangon University of Economics
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (B) Dr Kyaw Kyaw Khaung | Rector
University of East Yangon
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (C) Dr Daw Si Si Hla Bu | Rector
Myeik University
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (D) Dr Saw Pyone Naing | Rector
Sagaing Institute of Education
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (E) Dr Than Win | Rector
Kalay University
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (F) Dr Aung Win Kyi | Rector
Loikaw University
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (G) Dr Kyi Shwin | Rector
Bhamo University
Higher Education Department
Ministry of Education |
| (H) Dr Zaw Myint | Director General
Department of Myanmar Language
Commission
Ministry of Education |
| (I) U Tun Than | Director General
Social Security Board
Ministry of Labour, Employment
and Social Security |
| (J) Daw Aye Aye Kyi Thet | Director General
Office of Judicial Supervision of
the Union
Supreme Court of the Union |
2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed General Manager Dr Soe Naing of the No.3 Heavy Industries under the Ministry of Industry as Managing Director of the same enterprise on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.—Myanmar News Agency

Betel leaf growers get record price



Betel farm in NyaungU. PHOTO: KYAW HTAY

GROWERS from NyaungU Township in Mandalay Region get a record price for betel leaves that are linked to the lower production this season, a grower says.

Snow was falling heavily during the past three months, which is a major cause of low yields of betel leaf in the region.

"I have never seen before

that the leaves are worth over K15,000 per viss this year," Daw Ohn Kyaing, a betel leaf supplier from Oatnyint Village.

"We normally purchase up to 80 viss in NyaungU, Pakoku and Myingyan townships and nearby regions. We have difficulty collecting only 30 or 40 visses during these days in those areas," she added.

All villages along the Ayeyawady River in NyaungU Township traditionally cultivated betel plants on a commercial scale.

Although the growers get better price for their plants than the previous year, they cannot make a healthy profit on the deals because of lower production, locals said.—*Kyaw Htay*

Local investors eye overseas property market for investment

LOCAL businesspersons express increased interest in outbound real estate market to expand their investment, according to local property agents.

Currently, local real estate market is cool. There are a few clients who bought property to live in.

Prices of condominium apartments in neighbouring countries including Malaysia are cheaper than local condominiums.

Among the projects, Malaysia's Paradiso Nuova Condo in commercial hub Iskandar City, which has been established by Chinese and Malaysian governments since 2006, get the attention from global investors including Myanmar.

The Malaysia's condominium project now sells for

approximately K300,000 per square feet.

Every investor from different countries to receive ownership of the property and an opportunity to apply 10-year residency visa, according to the Malaysia law, which is a main reason why the local investors wish to invest in the outskirts of the country.

"I want to purchase a condo flat within the country but the price is very high and it is difficult to possess a high quality condo apartment which was constructed in line with the international norms as there are no condominium law in the country," said a local entrepreneur.

Singapore includes in top investor lists in Malaysia, followed by Japan, Korea, China and Indonesia.—*001(Kyemon)*

Crime News

Police incinerate energy drinks

LOCAL police have destroyed a cache of energy drinks called 'Ranger' that was declared unfit for human consumption at a ceremony held at an OSS public service office, Kawthaung on Tuesday.

At the ceremony, over 60 packages of Ranger energy drink were destroyed using a

compactor by officials from the Region and Township Food and Drugs Administration.

Four days earlier a number of students were poisoned by the energy drink. The energy drinks were later incinerated by the Township Food and Drugs Administration.—*Kyaw Soe (Kawthaung)*

Police seize five unlicensed vehicles in Waw

POLICE confiscated five unlicensed vehicles on the Mawlamyine – Yangon road, Waw township, Bago region on Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, police

made a surprise check and found five unlicensed vehicles. The local police have filed charges against the owners.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Police seize yabba pills

POLICE seized yabba pills (a synthetic-amphetamine based narcotic), car number plates and mobile phones from a car which was parked in front of a house in Magyidan ward, Kyimyindine, on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the

car and found 1600 pills, two car number plates and three mobile phones. The police also seized a motorbike from Shar Htut Naing, Phay Kyi, Min Min Oo, Ma Su Nandar and Myo Thant. Charges have been filed against the men under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Tin Maung Oo (Ahlon)*

Two people injured by gas device

TWO people were injured during a balloon inflation on Zay-yarthukha road, Dagon Myothit South, Yangon on Tuesday.

U San Lwin, 48, and Daw

Mya Yin, 48, were injured when they filled gas into balloons. The local police station has filed charges against U San Lwin.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Police seized heroin and Stimulants

AUTHORITIES seized heroin at a house in Khat Cho village, Wine Maw township, on 18 January. Acting on a tip-off, members of the police searched the house owned by Hein Zaw Htet and found the host and his friend Aung Ko Win with 0.008kilos of heroin.

The investigations have led to the arrest of another criminal called Nyein Maung, the next door neighbor of Hein Zaw Htet.

Similarly, police further seized 616 pills of stimulants, 0.0319 kilos of heroin and a mobile phone on a vehicle driven by

Nyo Min with Ma Daung Naw on board. Also, police seized 520 pills of stimulants and a mobile phone from Yarzar Tun at ward 40, Dagon Myothit South township. The police station filed charges against them under the Anti-Narcotic Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*



(From L to R) Hein Zaw Htet, Aung Ko Win, Nyein Maung, Nyo Min, Ma Daung Naw. PHOTO: MPF

Police arrested gamblers in Nay Pyi Taw

POLICE arrested two men who were allegedly doing the football gambling in Zawana ward, Popathiri township, Nay Pyi Taw on 17 January. The police searched a house owned by Kyaw Linn Phyto (a) Ko Phyto. The police found the host and his friend Min Thant Zin with a stake of K 321,000 and the documents of international football gambling. Local police filed charges against them.—*Ko Ko Yupa (Nay Pyi Taw)*



(From L to R) Kyaw Linn Phyto, Min Thant Zin. PHOTO: KO KO YUPA

Indonesia's porous border triggers alarm bells in fight against militants

JAKARTA — The ease with which three separate groups of ethnic Uighur militants sneaked into Indonesia is ringing alarm bells for security forces, who are on high alert for a far deadlier attack than last week's assault on Jakarta.

At least 10 Uighurs, who hail from China, arrived in the world's most populous Muslim nation over the last 18 months to join Islamist radicals, exposing an extensive support network ready to welcome wannabe jihadis.

Police fear the same network could assist in the return of battle-hardened Indonesian Islamic State fighters from Syria, who could then launch more calculated attacks, similar to that which hit Paris last November.

Indonesia's sprawling archipelago of 18,000 islands is too vast to control the movements of militants, drug smugglers, human traffickers and refugees, police say.

"There is enough security at

the main entry points," the country's police chief, Badrodin Haiti, told Reuters. "But there are more traditional points for entering illegally, where usually fishermen bring people in."

With around 500 Indonesians taking one-way trips to join Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, authorities had not considered the Southeast Asian nation's porous border to be a pressing security issue until recently.

But last month's arrest of an Uighur individual, Ali Mehmet, after police found bomb-making equipment in a house in a Jakarta suburb, spotlighted how easy it is for people to be smuggled into Indonesia. Uighurs come from Xinjiang in far western China, a region Beijing says is home to Islamist militants and separatists.

Jakarta says it is working with China to stem the flow of Uighur militants, who police say are responding to a call by Santoso, Indonesia's most high-profile backer of Islamic State, to join his band of fighters.—Reuters



Indonesian police stand guard at the site of this week's militant attack in central Jakarta, Indonesia on 16 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

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North Korea sought to attend ministerial meeting on nuclear test ban

VIENNA — The executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation has expressed his intention to invite North Korea to the ministerial-level meeting to commemorate 20 years since states began signing the treaty.

In the wake of North Korea's nuclear test on 6 January, Lassina Zerbo, speaking in a recent interview with Kyodo News, said he is hoping that bringing North Korea to the negotiating table would lead to a ban on nuclear tests and ratification of the CTBT.

Plans are under way for the ministerial meeting to be held sometime between April and June in Vienna. If the invitation is indeed extended to North Korea, this would be the first time the commission has asked Pyongyang to attend.

Zerbo called for the necessity of holding high-level discussions with North Korea and seven other countries that have yet to ratify the CTBT.

Proposing a different approach to North Korea and its nuclear issue, Zerbo said, "By isolating them and not finding a solution, they will still try and do more and more tests."

Adopted by the General



Lassina Zerbo, executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation, gives an interview to Kyodo News in Vienna on 18 January.

PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Assembly in 1996, the CTBT aims to establish a verifiable global ban on all types of nuclear explosive tests. The pact has been signed by 183 countries and ratified by 164.

To enter into force, the CTBT must be signed and ratified by the 44 countries that had nuclear reactors for research or power generation while the treaty was under negotiation. Eight

of those states — the United States, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, North Korea, India and Pakistan — have yet to ratify it.

Zerbo also underlined the need to draw up an action plan toward putting the CTBT into force, and asked support from Japan, which co-chaired a conference with Kazakhstan last year pressing the eight countries to ratify the CTBT.—Kyodo News

Police arrest four men for planning to attack Indian capital

NEW DELHI — Indian police yesterday claimed to have arrested four men, with alleged links to Islamic State, for planning to attack strategic locations in the national capital.

"The four young men were nabbed from the northern state of Uttarakhand by a team of Delhi Police Wednesday. They have been brought to the Indian capital," a senior police official said.

"At the time of their arrest, all the four suspects were all reading propaganda materials about the Islamic State and bomb making," he added.

The national capital has been put on high alert, with French President Francois Hollande slated to visit India as the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on 26 January.

Intelligence agencies have already indicated that the Islamic State could target the Republic Day celebrations as the French President will be there.—Xinhua

Tokyo goes for broke in Okinawa poll at US airbase city

TOKYO — Japan's government is pulling out all the stops to ensure a candidate backed by the ruling party wins an mayoral election in the Okinawan city hosting a US airbase whose planned move elsewhere on the island has set Tokyo and Okinawa at odds.

To help the incumbent's chances at Sunday's poll, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has dangled prospects of a bigger budget for Okinawa, backing for a Disney resort and aid for impoverished children in Japan's second-poorest prefecture.

Defeat would galvanise resistance to moving the Futenma base to the less populated Henoko area as agreed with the United States two decades ago.

The opposition candidate in Ginowan, like Okinawa's governor and many island voters, resents hosting the majority of US troops in Japan and wants the base off Okinawa altogether.

The controversy poses headaches for Abe, six months ahead of elections for Japan's upper

house, as close US-Japan ties are regarded as crucial given China's increasing assertiveness in the region and North Korea's unpredictability.

"The central government always just talks about security and the US-Japan alliance, giving the sense they aren't thinking seriously about Okinawa's benefit," said Tomoaki Iwai, a law professor at Nihon University in Tokyo.

"There is a sense of money being used as a sweetener."

Tokyo said in December it would boost Okinawa's budget by 1 billion yen (\$8.5 million) to 335 billion for the fiscal year starting in April, having cut it last year in reaction to the election of anti-base governor Takeshi Onaga.

Ginowan's mayor, Atsushi Sakima, has played up his ties to Abe's government, and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has sent Shinjiro Koizumi, a tellegenic lawmaker who is popular with unaffiliated voters, to campaign for him, along with the cabinet minister for Okinawa.

"The incumbent appears in the lead, but his opponent is catching up ... There is some doubt about whether the government-offered 'services' are helping," said Katsuhiko Nakamura, executive director at Asia Forum Japan, a think tank.

If the LDP's favoured candidate does hold onto the mayoralship in Ginowan, it won't remove all the hurdles to relocating the base.

"I don't think if the incumbent wins that it is a vote of support for the Henoko relocation, it

is just a vote in favour of getting rid of the base and getting a Disneyland in its place," said Gerry Curtis, Burgess Professor Emeritus at Columbia University.

"But if the opposition wins it is a huge defeat for Abe." —Reuters



Coral reefs are seen along the coast near the US Marine base Camp Schwab, off the tiny hamlet of Henoko in Nago on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa, in October 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thai authorities arrest four activists over attempted protest



Sirawith Seritiwat, a student leader, gestures as he arrives at the Thai military court in Bangkok, Thailand, on 21 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

BANGKOK — Thai authorities arrested a group of activists wanted for attempting to demonstrate against the military last month, police said yesterday, the latest arrest of dissidents in the junta-ruled country.

Soldiers detained one student activist from the New Democracy opposition group late on Wednesday and police arrested a further three members of the group yesterday.

They were the latest arrests by the army, which took power in a May 2014 coup and has since curbed basic freedoms and cracked down on critics.

The junta, known as the National Council for Peace and Or-

der, has defended the need to curb criticism at a politically sensitive time for the country.

Sirawith Seritiwat, a student leader, said he was whisked away from a university campus north of Bangkok on Wednesday.

He and the three other activists detained yesterday are wanted by police for attempting to protest against alleged corruption in an army-built park.

In a video taken at a police station, Sirawith said he was blindfolded and dragged through grass by authorities before being kicked and hit.

"When I was taken in the car my face was covered and they used a rope to cover my eyes so

I couldn't see anything," Sirawith said.

"They dragged me into a grassy area."

Colonel Winthai Suvaree, a spokesman for the junta, denied authorities mistreated Sirawith.

"What he said was all a soap opera. No such thing happened," Winthai told Reuters.

The other three activists were arrested at a police station where they were protesting against Sirawith's abduction. Chonthicha Jangrew, one of the three activists, said in a clip posted on Facebook that the junta was trying to silence those who disagree with it.

A lawyer for the students said they will be detained for about seven days before formal charges are filed.

Police and soldiers last month temporarily detained dozens of students trying to protest against alleged army corruption involving the multi-million-dollar Rajabhakti Park, built in the seaside resort town of Hua Hin south of Bangkok.

A defence ministry team looking into allegations of corruption at the park said last month it had found financial irregularities in the project but had no authority to investigate wrongdoing.

The park, a sprawling concrete plaza showcasing seven giant bronze statues of former Thai kings, has been at the centre of graft allegations by some Thai media and opposition groups, including irregularities in fundraising events and lack of fiscal transparency.—Reuters

Cambodia to interview Montagnards for refugee status

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia's Ministry of Interior is set to interview 171 Montagnards, who have sought refugee status in the country, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Kheng said Wednesday.

Speaking during a meeting with James Lynch, regional coordinator for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to South-East Asia, Sar Kheng said the government granted refugee status to 13 Montagnards in March last year and will interview the remaining 171 others for refu-

gee status, according to a report posted on the National Polices website. Those Montagnards fled Viet Nam into Cambodia early last year.

James Lynch said the 13 Montagnards, who have already received the refugee status, would be sent to a temporary camp in the Philippines before dispatching them to the third country. Montagnards are mostly Christian ethnic minority groups that live in Viet Nam's mountainous Central Highlands region. —Xinhua

Sri Lanka suspends kidney transplants for foreigners

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's Health Ministry yesterday temporarily suspended kidney transplants for foreigners at government and private hospitals after a racket in India was linked to six local doctors.

Health Minister Dr Rajitha Senarathne ordered a full investigation into claims by the Indian police that the doctors attached to some private hospitals had conducted kidney transplants for Indians who were involved in a major kidney racket.

The Indian police have filed cases against six Sri Lankan doctors in relation to the

kidney racket on the charge of conducting paid kidney transplants in violation of ethics.

The Indian media reported that the police have identified the Sri Lankan doctors who have allegedly performed 60 transplants.

Police in Nalgonda, India arrested the kingpin in the kidney racket, Suresh Prajapathi, and two of his cronies, who facilitated the transplants.

The police also arrested Prajapathi's accomplice Dilip Umedamal Chouhan who used to help conduct health tests on donors at various diagnostic centres in Ahmedabad, India.—Xinhua

Red tape, political risks could stall investment in Iran

DUBAI — A multitude of business regulations — 182,000 by one minister's count — stands in the way of a rapid flow of foreign investment into Iran after the lifting of nuclear sanctions ended its long isolation from global commerce.

Other factors that could stall investment include residual sanctions, a shortage of project finance, and political risks ranging from protectionism to the potential collapse of the nuclear deal, lawyers and consultants say.

Some foreign firms have already signed letters of intent with Iran since the international sanctions imposed over its nuclear programme were lifted on Saturday and many more want to trade with its market of about 80 mil-

lion people.

But major foreign investment will take at least six months to arrive, experts say, as companies navigate the web of bureaucracy, opaque ownership structures and powerful Iranian lobbies that bristle at foreign competition.

"Iran has been under sanctions so a lot of international business practices are not as common there as they are in other emerging markets," said Farhad Alavi, managing partner at Washington-based Akrivis Law Group.

President Hassan Rouhani, who championed the nuclear deal, has ordered his government to facilitate foreign investment but also warned of the "long road" to Iran's economic integra-

tion with the world.

Rouhani said on Sunday his oil-producing country needs \$30-\$50 billion a year in foreign investment to meet its economic growth target of eight per cent.

It attracted an average of only \$1.1 billion of foreign direct investment annually between 1996 and 2004, before major economic sanctions were imposed on it, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Economy Minister Ali Teyyeb-Nia said on Monday the government was trying to "remove laws that obstruct business". This will not be a small task, he said, adding that there are about 182,000 items of business regulation.—*Reuters*

France acts to secure road above Calais refugee 'jungle'



French police officers secure the area as a crane is used to clear dismantled shelters of the camp known as the 'Jungle', a squalid sprawling camp in Calais, northern France, on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

CALAIS, (France) — French bulldozers have begun to clear a 100-metre (110-yard) strip next to a road that passes above a migrant camp in Calais, as local authorities attempt to secure a busy traffic route between France and Britain.

Thousands of refugee fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East have gathered in or near the northern coastal town over the past year, using it as a stopover point before trying to enter Britain in the hope of a better life.

Many have tried repeatedly to cross the English Channel by jumping onto lorries, hiding on trains before they enter the Channel Tunnel or walking through the tunnel, where security was

ramped up in October.

Since then, incidents on the road between Calais and its port have become more frequent, especially near a slum known as "the jungle" where around 4,000 refugees camp and where the strip is now being cleared, the authorities said.

Police said migrants were often disrupting traffic at night, hoping to get onto lorries.

A spokesman for the Pas-de-Calais region said clearance of the site, which started on Monday, would take two weeks to clear, adding there had been no forced evacuations so far. "We estimate that 500 to 700 people have agreed to move their tents", he said.

"We respect the law, we

can't deal with the police anyway. Some communities said they would not leave but after discussions they agreed," said one of those displaced, 38-year-old Muhammed from Sudan.

With the migrants facing squalid conditions, freezing temperatures and reduced access to free food, those displaced were being reminded of their rights to apply for asylum or move to a shelter made of shipping containers, the Pas-de-Calais spokesman said.

The shelter, designed to accommodate up to 1,500 people, was opened last week.

Many refugees told Reuters they were reluctant to move there because access is controlled by handprint technology.—*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cambodia cancels two concessions for offshore oil

PHNOM PENH — The Cambodian government has cancelled two concessions for offshore oil — Block B and Block F — held by a foreign company last year because it failed to comply with the terms of agreements, a local newspaper reported yesterday, citing a senior official. Meng Saktheara, secretary of state of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, said the two offshore licenses were held by Malaysia's operator Resourceful Petroleum.

"The company did not perform according to, and failed to fulfill, the obligations stated in their Petroleum Agreements (PA)," he was quoted as saying by the *Khmer Times*.

Block B with an area of 6,300 sq km was given on concession to Resourceful Petroleum and Thailand's PPTEP in 2005, while offshore Block F with an area of 7,000 sq km was given to Resourceful Petroleum and China's CNOOC in 2007.—*Xinhua*

Tour bus crashes in Tokyo, hurting 24

TOKYO — A tour bus with 30 people aboard crashed into a centre divider and a traffic light pole on a road in central Tokyo on Wednesday, injuring 24 passengers, police said.

The police arrested the bus driver, 58-year-old Tadashi Sugawara, at the scene. Sugawara told the police that he was "absent-minded."

The tour bus, operated by a company in Saitama Prefecture, was on the way back to JR Kamata Station in Tokyo's Ota Ward after a one-day tour to Lake Kawaguchi in Yamanashi Prefecture and other destinations. It was carrying 28 passengers, the driver and a tour attendant.

The accident took place around 400 metres southeast of the station.—*Kyodo News*

No casualties from northwest China 6.4-magnitude earthquake

MENYUAN — No casualties were caused by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake that struck a county in northwest China's Qinghai Province early yesterday morning, local authorities said.

The tremor jolted Hui Autonomous County of Menyuan at 1:13am. It damaged 54 houses, including 20 with cracks in the walls, said county head Huang Jicheng.

The epicenter, 33 kilometres away from the county seat, is unpopulated, Huang said. Telecom services and traffic in the country remain normal. Local civil affairs authorities have sent more than 700 tents to the quake-affected region. Witnesses say many scared local residents have run outdoors and some stay in cars, despite a freezing temperature of minus 20 degrees Celsius.

Dong Jinming, chief of the county committee of the Communist Party of China, said 90 per cent of the county's rural houses have been renovated, which helped avoid casualties from the disaster.—*Xinhua*

German vice chancellor warns of economic disaster in Europe if borders closed

DAVOS, (Switzerland) — German Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on Wednesday that Austria's decision to cap the number of people allowed to claim asylum and step up border controls was a "cry for help" from Europe.

Gabriel, who is also deputy to Chancellor Angel Merkel in Germany's coalition government, added that there was only a European solution to the refugee crisis and that closing borders across the continent would lead to an "economic catastrophe."—*Reuters*

State of emergency likely to be extended in France

PARIS — The state of emergency in France is likely to be extended beyond the end of February, the head of French parliament said on Wednesday, citing French President Francois Hollande.

"He said it (the extension) it looked quite likely," Claude Bartolone told journalists after meeting Hollande.

A state of emergency in France was declared after the terrorists' attacks that killed 130 people in Paris in November.

Emergency measures that give authorities extra powers to assign house arrests and conduct raids without a judicial warrant were set to expire on 26 February.—*Reuters*

— OPINION —

Let children wonder and wander

Kyaw Thura

IT is undeniable that the appropriate education system for the 21st century calls for visionary teachers armed with a pedagogy that arouses children's quests for information and understanding and awakens their natural curiosity.

Unfortunately, our schools still operate under a deteriorating educational system based on the assumption that all knowledge is available

in books and that students must store information in their brains just to pass exams.

In addition, assessments are no more than a system that rewards students for their ability to memorise rather than exercise imagination and creativity. Educators must learn that school curricula and syllabi, no matter how excellent, are not set in stone.

One threat to education in Myanmar right now is the trend of businesspeople running schools for profit; private schools run by people with no experience in education are popping up across the country. The children who attend them are dealt with punishing workloads as a direct consequence of having to attend ineffective schools in the morning and remedial lessons in the evening. Simply put, they are robbed of their free time.

Education reform must, therefore, centre on

approaches that enable children to unlock their vitality and potential. The onus is on all stakeholders in the education system to ensure that education reform is not carried out merely in name—another lie in new clothing. In other words, the movement should make a critical difference this time.

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.

ALL ABOUT EARTHQUAKES

Win Sein

EARTHQUAKE is a frightful thing that everybody is afraid. Think of a situation under which a big earthquake has struck your town suddenly, the casualties involved, the damages to the houses, roads, the disruption of communication system and other things like the total breakdown of water supply and important infrastructure. The intensity of suffering by the victims is getting worse and worse day by day because of the slow relief and rescue efforts.

Most of the largest known earthquakes have been centered around the Pacific's Ring of Fire. It is estimated that 90% of the world's earthquakes take place within this Pacific's Ring of Fire. Among the world's 25% of the largest earthquakes, 3 of which are from this area of the Ring of Fire in the last 11,799 years. The Ring of Fire is the direct result of tectonic plates, which are the distortion of earth's crust due to forces within it and the movement and collision of the lithospheric plates which are the outer layer of the earth's crust. These plates which constitute the outer layer of the planet Earth, are constantly in motion atop the mantle [the part of earth between the crust and the core]. Sometimes they collide, pull apart or slide alongside each other, resulting in creating convergent boundaries, divergent boundaries and transformed boundaries, hereby resulting in an outbreak of earthquake of small or great magnitude.

It is common knowledge

that earthquakes are usually caused when rocks underground suddenly break along a fault. This sudden release of energy causes the seismic waves that make the ground shake. When two blocks of rocks or two plates are rubbing against each other or when two blocks of the earth suddenly slip past one another, the surface where they slip is called the fault, which resulted in an earthquake.

Countries lying within the Pacific's Ring of Fire are shown as below:-

- 1, Chile
- 2, Mexico
- 3, United States
- 4, Antarctica
- 5, Russia
- 6, Japan
- 7, Philippines
- 8, Japan
- 9, New Zealand
- 10, Papua New Guinea
- 11, Indonesia
- 12, Canada
- 13, Peru
- 14, Taiwan
- 15, Guatemala

The loss of lives and properties from big earthquakes has given a hard hit to the Governments that were encountered by the disasters. Therefore, the governments are searching for clues to be able to predict early signs of earthquakes in order that they can issue early warning of the potential outbreak of damaging earthquakes to take timely response to the disasters, enabling people to minimize loss of lives and properties. The U.S has conducted field, laboratory and theoretical investigations of earthquake mechanism and fault zones. Ultimately, scientists would like to be able to specify a high

probability for a specific earthquake on a particular fault within a particular year. Scientists estimate earthquake probability in two ways by studying the history of large earthquakes in a specific area and by finding out the rate at which strains accumulate in the rocks.

If a region has expressed four magnitude 7 or larger earthquakes during 200 years of recorded history, and if these shocks occurred randomly in time, then scientists would assign a 50 per cent probability [that is just as likely to happen and as not to happen] to the occurrence of another magnitude 7 or larger quake in the region during the next 50 years. But in many places, the assumption of random occurrence with time may not be true because the strains are released along one part of the fault system. It may actually increase another part. Four magnitude 6.8 or larger earthquakes and many magnitude 6—6.5 shocks occurred in the San Francisco Bay region during the 75 years between 1836 and 1911. For the next 68 years [until 1979] no earthquakes of magnitude 6 or larger occurred in the region between 1979 and 1989. There have occurred four magnitude 6 or greater earthquakes including Loma Prieta earthquake. This clusters of earthquakes have led scientists to estimate that there is a probability of a magnitude 6.8 or larger earthquake occurring during the 30 years in the San Francisco Bay [twice as likely as not]

As population increases, expansion of urban development and construction works has encroached upon areas sus-

ceptible to earthquakes. With a better understanding of the cause and effect of earthquakes, we may be able to reduce damages and loss of lives from the destructive phenomenon.

Among the biggest earthquakes that resulted in heavy loss of human lives and properties are :-

- Valdivia, Chile, 22 May 1960 [9.5] on the Richter scale
Killed 1655 people, 550 million usd in damages
- Sumatra, Indonesia, 26 December 2004 [9.1] on the Richter scale
Killed 227,900 people
- Sendai, Japan 11 March 2011 [9.0] on the Richter scale
Killed several thousands people
- Ecuador Coast, 31 January 1906 [8.8] on the Richter scale
Killed between 500 and 1500 people
- Sumatra, Indonesia 28 March, 2005 [8.6] on the Richter scale
Killed 1313 people

Taking the preparatory measures to respond timely to the possible earthquakes is the best policy for mitigating the impacts of loss of lives and properties. In this regard, we may take the following measures:---

ures:---

Contact your local emergency management office, local Red Cross, State Geological Survey or Department of Natural Resources for specific information about your community's risks.

*Bearing in mind the fact that mobile home and home not attached to the foundation are at particularly at risk during the earthquake;

*Be aware of the fact that building with foundation resting on landfill and other unstable soil are at increased risk of damage;

*Know that doorways are not stronger than any other part of a structure; so don't rely on them for protection. During an earthquake, get under a strong piece of furniture and hold onto it. It will help shelter you from falling objects that could injure you during an earthquake. Tell your community, your school or your organization to update emergency plan and supplies in order to be able to prevent damages and injuries. The Union of Myanmar has already laid down a comprehensive plan in the form of a STANDING ORDER ON NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT. Ministries concerned, NGOs both local and foreign and CSOs are all encouraged to make concerted effort to combat the risks of this disaster and to mitigate the losses of lives and property.

About the author

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Police crack down on gang for gambling, drug trading



Win Naing, Aung Soe alias Aung Soe Lay, Khin Sein, Shwe Ozi alias Ye Nyunt, Sein Htay, Win Naing. PHOTO: MPF

FOLLOWING posts on social media, authorities arrested six men suspected on counts of gambling and drug trading in Hlinethaya Township on Wednesday.

To enforce the community

peace and the rule of law the Yangon Region Police Force formed special teams and arrested the four suspects named Win Naing, 44, Leik alias Khin Sein, 47, Aung Soe alias Aung Soe Lay, 41, Shwe Ozi alias Ye

Nyunt, 42, of Hlinethaya Township, Win Naing, 50, and Sein Htay, 56, of Shwepyitha Township.

The six suspects are under interrogation at the local police station.— *Yangon Police Force*

Boozers charged with possession and causing public nuisance

FOUR boozers were charged with possession of lethal weapons in Hlaingthaya township, Yangon Region, on Wednesday, according to local police.

Ye Min Tun, 37, Tun Tun Win, 19, Soe Naing Tun, 19, and Than Naing, 27, were

found drunk and belligerent before being searched by police and arrested for each possessing a lethal weapon (blades).

Charges are being filed against them for possession of lethal weapons and causing a public nuisance. —*Myanmar News Agency*



Ye Min Tun, Tun Tun Win, Soe Naing Tun, Than Naing. PHOTO: MNA

New bridge in Sagaing Region nearly complete

THE construction of a new bridge across Yaywa Creek in Sagaing Region is 80 per cent complete, it is estimated to be finished in March this year, its project manager said.

With the aim of helping people access the benefit of socio-economic development, the

1,440 foot long new bridge has been built since July last year.

The Yaywa Creek is located on Kani-Chaungma-Monywa Road in Sagaing Region.

High flow rate of the creek from Mahu mountain range is a major problem of residents who always face a range of transport

difficulties in every rainy season because of a large natural flow of water falling down from the mountain, a local said.

“We will fix steel decking along the bridge within two months to finish in time,” an engineer of the project said.—*Than Htay Aung (Kani)*

3rd floor of National Museum in Capital Nay Pyi Taw to be soon opened

THE third floor of the sixth-storey National Museum (Nay Pyi Taw) will be opened to the public at the beginning of this year, according to an official from the library.

The first floor of National Library has been launched on 3 May 2010, and the second floor has also been opened on 22 September 2014.

Located on Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road in Yankin Township in Yangon, the old National Library has been opened for public observation since 1952. It houses nearly 700,000 books with soft copies. The new library in the capital Nay Pyi Taw houses 300,000 books but it has no soft copies.

“Currently, we put more effort to change the traditional

library into a digital one,” Dr Kay Thi Htwe, director of Historical Research and National Library (Nay Pyi Taw). “There is no plan to move National Library from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon.”

Before starting the construction of national library in Nay Pyi Taw, mass digitization development programme has been carried out by the library technicians with the contribution of the government.

Currently, the National Library (Nay Pyi Taw) is being kept open for the public observation between 9.30 am and 4.30 p.m. However, the library officials provide extra services for researchers who wish to visit the library beyond 4.30 p.m.—001 (Kyemon)

Bago residents enjoy full access to electricity



Kyaukkyi Electric Transformer. PHOTO 045 (KYEMON)

RESIDENTS in Kyaukgyi Township of Taungoo District recently have access to electricity thanks to the establishment of a 33KV power substation in the township, locals say.

“Since 20 January this year, we have started supplying electricity across the township

through new substation, which has been installed by the Bago Region Electricity Enterprise,” its officials said.

The main aim of establishing a 33KV transformer in the region is to distribute a high voltage of electricity across the area.

As of 1991, the electricity

enterprise has supplied only a low voltage of electricity in the township through 11KV transformer. Not only seven townships but 14 villages including Natthankwin, Yanmyoang, Seikkyi, Maubin and Aungsoemoe villages in Kyaukgyi Township enjoy full access to power.—045 (Kyemon)

Original price of Malaysian work visas restored

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Workers who have been issued letters of invitation to work in Malaysia and or who have been permitted to travel for work by the Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security will be able to purchase visas at their previous price. This includes a total of 8,107 workers.

Workers who have already

received permission to work in Malaysia from the MFEEF and those who have not yet secured visas but have photocopies of the their invitation letters have until 4pm on 21 January add themselves to the list of people eligible to purchase Malaysian work visas for \$6 at the office of the Myanmar Oversea Employment Agencies Federation.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

UN envoy says Syria peace talks may be delayed, pressure needed

ZURICH/GENEVA

Internationally brokered talks between Syria's government and opposition groups due to start on 25 January may be delayed, but major powers must keep up the pressure to bring participants to the table, the United Nations envoy said on Wednesday.

A Syrian opposition council backed by Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday it will not attend the negotiations in Geneva with the government if a third group takes part, a reference to a Russian bid to widen the opposition team.

UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura spoke in an interview with broadcaster CNN, hours after US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held talks in Zurich despite no sign of agreement on who should represent the opposition.

"We have no intentions to postpone the talks from January to February. This is both the position of Russia and the United States, and we are confident that in the next days, in January, such talks must start," Lavrov said.

"...This will be just the start, because of course it will take a lot of time, a whole range of arduous tasks are to be resolved."

Various dates were being mooted, but the final decision was for the UN Secretary General on the advice of de Mistura, he said.

De Mistura, asked if he was able to send the invitations to the talks, told CNN in the Swiss resort of Davos: "I can't tell you today, I will tell you on the 24th, one



A girl carrying a baby inspects damage in a site hit by what activists said were airstrikes carried out by the Russian air force in the town of Douma, eastern Ghouta in Damascus, Syria on 10 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

day before." It was important that it be "a serious talk about peace and not talks about talks", he said. "I believe we can start the talks, perhaps not on the 25th, but we need to maintain the pressure, we need to maintain the momentum."

Kerry's spokesman, John Kirby, said Kerry and Lavrov discussed "the importance of maintaining progress toward a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Syria."

"There's been no change in our desire to see this meeting

happen on the 25th," he said.

A delay of one or two days in the start of the talks not be the end of the world, a US State Department spokesman said later on Wednesday in Washington.

Kirby said Kerry also pressed Russia to use its influence with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, especially to Syrians in besieged areas such as Madaya where people are reported to have died from starvation.

De Mistura said he believed Russia, which has been carrying

out air strikes on rebels in Syria for months, "has a great vested interest in not getting involved for too long"

The United States was also "heavily involved politically" in seeking an end to the nearly five-year-old war, while Iran and Saudi Arabia had assured him they would work to end the Syrian conflict, despite their diplomatic row. "They too probably realise that the time has come for at least trying to find a political solution which will be a compromise," de Mistura said.—*Reuters*

Iran diplomat in Saudi Arabia for meeting on Saudi Embassy attack

TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday travelled to Saudi Arabia, the first visit by a senior government official to Iran's regional rival since the two sides severed ties earlier this month, according to an Iranian government official.

Araghchi is to attend an emergency meeting of foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, the world body representing Islamic nations yesterday.

The session was called by Saudi Arabia to discuss the response to recent attacks on Saudi diplomatic buildings in Iran. There is also the chance of the two sides exploring the possibility of restarting diplomatic ties, the official told Kyodo News.

In addition, Araghchi is slated to hold bilateral meetings with the director general of the OIC and participant countries.

It is unclear whether Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, who has taken a hardline stance toward Iran, will take part.

Araghchi left for Saudi Arabia on Tuesday just several hours after Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's trip to Tehran for mediation between Tehran and Riyadh. The previous day he held meetings with Saudi leadership in Riyadh.

Iran state news agency quoted Sharif as saying Tuesday that Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia will each appoint special envoy for the mediation.

Also Wednesday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei criticised the attacks on the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad as "very bad and very wrong."

The latest confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran emerged after Riyadh executed a prominent Shiite cleric and dozens of other people for their alleged involvement in terrorism in opposition to the kingdom's ruling family.

Following the executions, protesters in Shiite-majority Iran ransacked the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, prompting Riyadh to sever relations with Tehran.—*Kyodo News*

Western military chiefs to intensify Islamic State fight

PARIS — Defence chiefs from the United States, France, Britain and four other countries pledged on Wednesday to intensify their fight against Islamic State, looking to capitalise on recent battlefield gains against the militants.

The jihadist group lost control of the western Iraqi city of Ramadi last month, in a sorely needed victory for US-backed Iraqi forces. But critics, including some in the US Congress, say the US strategy is still far too weak and lacks sufficient military support from Sunni Arab allies.

Sunni Arab nations have largely dropped out of the air campaign against Islamic State since last year joining a Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels in Yemen.

"We agreed that we all must do more," US Defence Secretary Ash Carter told a news conference after talks in Paris among the "core" military coalition members, which also included

Germany, Italy, Australia and the Netherlands. A US defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States was looking for additional contributions of special operations forces from allies. The official also signalled a willingness among core contributors to consider providing additional police and military trainers as needed.

A joint statement by the ministers re-committed their governments to work with the US-led coalition "to accelerate and intensify the campaign."

The Paris setting for the talks itself sent a message, coming just over two months after the city was struck by deadly shooting and bombing attacks claimed by Islamic State.

French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Islamic State was in retreat. "Because we have been able to hit its resources, it's now time to increase our collective effort," he said.

British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said the goal was now to "tighten the noose around the head of the snake in Syria in Raqqa."

But US Senator John McCain, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee — along with other critics of US President Barack Obama's approach to the war effort — says Islamic State still poses a potent threat.

"ISIL has lost some territory on the margin, but has consolidated power in its core territories in both Iraq and Syria," McCain said at a Wednesday hearing on US war strategy, using another acronym for Islamic State.

"Meanwhile, ISIL continues to metastasize across the region in places like Afghanistan, Libya, Lebanon, Yemen, and Egypt. Its attacks are now global, as we saw in Paris."

Carter has sought to confront Islamic State both by wiping out

its strongholds in Iraq and Syria and addressing its spread beyond its self-declared caliphate there.

But US officials have declined to set a timeline for what could be a long-term campaign that will also require political reconciliation to succeed.

Carter announced a meeting next month of defence ministers from all 26 military members of the anti-Islamic State coalition, as well as Iraq, in what he described as the first face-to-face meeting of its kind. "Every nation must come prepared to discuss further contributions to the fight," he said. "And I will not hesitate to engage and challenge current and prospective members of the coalition as we go forward."

The US defence official acknowledged that the need for a greater Arab role was a focus of discussions and held out hope that Saudi Arabia would attend next month's talks in Brussels.—*Reuters*

Prehistoric massacre in Kenya called oldest evidence of warfare

WASHINGTON — Man's inhumanity to man, as 18th century Scottish poet Robert Burns put it, is no recent development.

Scientists said on Wednesday they had found the oldest evidence of human warfare, fossils of a band of people massacred by a troop of attackers with weapons including arrows, clubs and stone blades on the shores of a lagoon in Kenya about 10,000 years ago.

The remains of 27 people from a Stone Age hunter-gatherer culture were unearthed at a site called Nataruk roughly 20 miles (30 km) west of Lake Turkana in northern Kenya.

One man's skeleton was found with a sharp blade made of a volcanic glass called obsidian still embedded in his skull. Another man had wounds from two blows to the head apparently with a club, crushing his skull. A woman in the last stages of pregnancy appeared to have been bound by

her hands and feet.

Victims also had projectile wounds to the neck and broken skulls, hands, knees and ribs.

University of Cambridge paleoanthropologist Marta Mirazón Lahr said evidence indicates these people, who hunted animals, caught fish and gathered edible plants, were slain in a premeditated attack by raiders, perhaps from another region.

"It is a brutal, physical, lethal attack with the intention to kill those individuals who could put up a defence or mount a counter-attack, or who perhaps were of no use to them, whether it was a man or a very pregnant woman, too young or too old," Mirazón Lahr said. Our species arose 200,000 years ago in Africa. Many scholars had thought warfare first emerged long after the time of the Nataruk people when humans formed settled communities instead of a nomadic, hunter-gather-

er existence. The Nataruk fossils "raise the question of whether warfare has been part of the human experience for much longer than previously thought," Mirazón Lahr added. A planned attack would suggest that resources the Nataruk people possessed, perhaps water, dried meat or fish, nuts or even women and children, were considered valuable, she said. There were remains of 21 adults and six children, most under age 6. There were no older teenagers. "Whether they managed to escape, or were taken, we will never know," she said.

"At the end, all massacres are savage," Mirazón Lahr said. "How many examples do we have from our very recent, and current, history? But finding the remains of a massacre among the skeletons of hunter-gatherers of this period was totally surprising."

The research appeared in the journal *Nature*.—Reuters



Detail of the skull of the skeleton of a man found lying prone in the sediments of a lagoon 30km west of Lake Turkana, Kenya, at a place called Nataruk, on 20 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Eating green leafy vegetables may lower glaucoma risk



Lettuce transplants grow in a greenhouse on the Sino family farm in Rancho Santa Fe, California. PHOTO: REUTERS

BOSTON — People who eat more green leafy vegetables, a good source of nitrate, may significantly decrease their risk of developing glaucoma, according to a large study.

Based on long-term data for more than 100,000 US adults, those who consumed the most nitrate — mostly from green vegetables like kale and spinach — were 21 per cent less likely than those who ate the least nitrate to develop open-angle glaucoma by the time they were in their 60s and 70s.

Open-angle glaucoma, which affects about 1 per cent of the US population, usually starts with loss of vision at the periphery due to fluid build-up and optic nerve damage. Impaired blood flow is implicated in the condition, the study team points out in *JAMA Ophthalmology*, and nitrates can be converted in the body to nitric oxide, which improves blood flow.

"Nitric oxide signaling is important for maintaining optimal

blood flow, and some evidence suggests that it may also be important for keeping eye pressure low," said lead author Jae H. Kang of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston.

The researchers used data on more than 63,000 women followed from 1984 to 2012 in the Nurses' Health Study, and more than 41,000 men in the Health Professionals Follow-up Study from 1986 to 2012.

The participants were over age 40 at the beginning of the study period, had no open-angle glaucoma to start with, reported regular eye exams and completed dietary questionnaires including how often they ate green leafy vegetables like iceberg and romaine lettuces, kale, mustard greens, chard or spinach.

Based on these questionnaires, researchers calculated intakes of nitrate and of various groups of foods. They found that

dark leafy greens were the biggest source of the nutrient, contributing 57 per cent of the nitrate in the participants' diets. The men and women were divided into five groups by their intake of greens and of nitrate, ranging from an average of one-third serving of leafy greens (80 milligrams nitrate) per day for the lowest-level consumers to an average one and a half servings of greens (240 milligrams nitrate) per day on the high end.

By 2012, there were a total of 1,483 cases of open-angle glaucoma diagnosed. Risk differences based on nitrate consumption were very similar to those based on leafy-vegetable consumption.

People who ate the most leafy greens were 18 per cent less likely than those who consumed the least greens to develop any form of open-angle glaucoma, and 48 per cent less likely to develop the so-called paracentral form of the disease, which is particularly associated with blood flow, the authors note. In the study, people who consumed more nitrate also had higher consumption of other nutrients, exercised more, smoked less and were leaner, but the authors adjusted for these factors when calculating the risk differences linked to nitrate and greens.

"The pro of increasing one's dietary nitrate intake is that, by far, vegetables are the biggest source of dietary nitrate, and vegetables are part of a healthy diet," Kang told Reuters Health by email. "Higher dietary nitrate intake has been linked to lower blood pressure, better blood circulation and better athletic performance."—Reuters

US researchers say 9th planet may exist in solar system

WASHINGTON — Researchers at a US institute reported Wednesday they have found evidence that suggests a giant planet exists in the outer solar system beyond Neptune.

Two researchers at the California Institute of Technology made the discovery through mathematical modeling and computer simulations and nicknamed the object, which would possess a mass about 10 times that of Earth and orbit about 20 times farther away from the sun than Neptune on average, Planet Nine. Neptune orbits the sun at an average distance of 4.5 billion kilometres. Once Planet Nine is directly observed, it is expected to become the ninth planet of the solar system after the demotion of Pluto from a planet to a dwarf planet in 2006.

The researchers predict that it may be observed by telescope within five years.

Konstantin Batygin and Mike Brown describe their work in the current issue of the *Astronomical Journal* and explained

that the mystery planet is thought to be a gas giant, similar to Jupiter and Saturn, and would take 10,000 to 20,000 years to circle the sun.

In their effort to theoretically discover Planet Nine, the pair focused on the motion of six objects in the distant, icy Kuiper Belt.

They found that the orbits of the objects, including Sedna, a large minor planet Brown discovered in 2003, appear to be influenced by only one thing which is a real planet.

Unlike the case of Pluto, there will be no debate whether it is a planet because of its size once it is detected, insisted Brown, known for the significant role he played in the demotion of Pluto. "All those people who are mad that Pluto is no longer a planet can be thrilled to know that there is a real planet out there still to be found," he said. "Now we can go and find this planet and make the solar system have nine planets once again."—Kyodo News



Supplied illustration shows "Planet Nine" in the solar system. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Dubai police say New Year's hotel fire caused by short-circuit

DUBAI — The fire which engulfed one of Dubai's most prominent hotel skyscrapers ahead of New Year fireworks was caused by an electrical short-circuit, Dubai's police chief said on Wednesday.

In a presentation to media, police officials said there had been no trace of any flammable liquids such as petrol at the site of the blaze at the 63-storey hotel and residential block, close to the world's tallest building.

"The direct cause was an electrical short-circuit," police commander Khamis Mattar Al-Mazeina told reporters.

He declined to say whether the cladding — layers fixed to the outside of buildings for decoration, insulation or protection — had affected the development of the fire, and directed queries about building materials to the Dubai Civil Defence authority.

The building was quickly evacuated with only minor injuries reported, and authorities went ahead with a New Year's fireworks display at the 160-storey Burj Khalifa tower a few hundred metres away.

Flames shot skywards from one side of the luxury Address Downtown Dubai, owned by developer Emaar Properties which stands across a plaza from the Burj Khalifa tower where people had gathered for the fireworks show.

In a statement, Dubai police said the short-circuit which caused the fire occurred in an area between the 14th and 15th floors of the hotel at around 21.25 local time.—*Reuters*

Haiti in talks to delay Sunday presidential run-off after protests



Residents walk next to an electoral sign of presidential candidate Jude Celestin in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

PORT-AU-PRINCE —

Haiti could postpone a presidential runoff election if the opposition commits to taking part at a later date, Prime Minister Evans Paul said on Wednesday, adding the 24 January vote will go ahead if there is no deal to end a political stalemate.

Protesters burned vehicles and barricaded roads this week after opposition candidate Jude Celestin vowed to boycott the vote over alleged fraud in the first round.

The runoff has already been postponed twice during an in-

quiry into the allegations.

"We are in the middle of a series of negotiations," Paul told Reuters. "President (Michel) Martelly and I have been talking about the possibility of considering a postponement of Sunday's election."

The supporters of Swiss-trained engineer Celestin are demanding that the government first suspend Sunday's vote to cool tempers, before discussing a new date for the contest with ruling party candidate Jovenel Moïse, a banana exporter.

"We insist, they need to

withdraw the 24 January date to calm down the population that is protesting," said Jean Hector Anacacis, Celestin's representative in the talks, adding that the opposition would not seek to "overly delay" the date.

The country of about 10 million people has struggled to build a stable democracy since the overthrow of the 1957 to 1986 dictatorship of the Duvalier family and ensuing military coups and election fraud.

Political instability has hampered Haiti's efforts to rebuild six years after a devastating

earthquake.

International partners, including the United Nations and the United States, wanted the election held on Sunday to ensure a new president was in place by 7 February, a constitutional deadline.

However, the protests, and Celestin's refusal to accept the election as legitimate, have led business and church leaders to conclude a vote postponement would be better. The Senate also supported a non-binding motion on Wednesday to postpone.

Martelly's five-year term ends in May, leaving room for flexibility. A possible March election is under discussion, but the two sides differ on whether Martelly should stay in office until a new president is sworn in.

Opposition parties have been pushing for an interim government to be set up. They want Martelly to leave office by the constitutional deadline.

Martelly has repeatedly opposed an interim government, a move he said could plunge the country into political uncertainty.

Paul said any delay would have to be matched with a commitment from Celestin to participate in a runoff later.

"President Martelly and I are open to consider such a possibility," he added. "But it would not be responsible to postpone the election sine die, vaguely hoping that Mr. Celestin would agree one day to change position." For now, Paul said, the election was set for Sunday.—*Reuters*

Policeman killed as Tunisian protesters demonstrate over jobs

KASSERINE (Tunisia) — Police clashed with protesters demanding jobs in the Tunisian city of Kasserine on Wednesday, and one policeman was killed as other demonstrations broke out in the capital and towns across the country, residents and officials said.

Large crowds burnt tyres and chanted: "Work, freedom, dignity" during a second day of demonstrations that erupted in the central Tunisian city after an unemployed man killed himself, apparently after he was rejected for a job.

The death and protests evoked memories of Tunisia's 2011 "Arab Spring" uprising that broke out when a struggling young market vendor committed suicide, unleashing a wave of anger that forced longtime leader Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali to flee and inspired protests across the Arab world.

Police fired clouds of tear

gas after protesters tried to storm a police station in Kasserine, a Reuters witness said. Burning tyres blocked streets as police chased down groups of protesters.

"It's been seven years of no work for me. We're sick of just promises. We won't go back to our homes until we get something concrete this time. ... We just want to live with dignity," said Samir, 30.

Protesters had stayed out on the streets overnight, defying a curfew imposed on Tuesday.

Residents said young people also took to the streets in Seliana, Tahala, Feriana and Sbiba, El Fahs, Kairouan, and Sousse, as well as the capital, Tunis, where several hundred marched on the city's central Habib Bourguiba Avenue.

At least one policeman was killed in Feriana after he was attacked by protesters, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry



Riot policemen walk on a road during a protest in Kasserine, Tunisia on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

said. Seeking to calm protests, President Beji Caid Essebsi's government announced on Wednesday it would seek to hire more than 6,000 young unemployed people from Kasserine, and start construction projects

in the region.

"We don't have a magic wand to fix the situation in Kasserine straight away, but we are working on public investments that will start soon there," government spokesman Khaled

Chaouket said.

Despite a shift to democracy since the toppling of Ben Ali, many Tunisians worry more about unemployment, high living costs and the marginalisation of rural towns — all factors that helped fuel the 2011 uprising.

Unemployment in the North African country rose to 15.3 per cent by the end of 2015, compared with 12 per cent in 2010, driven by weak economic growth and a decline in investment in both the public and private sectors coupled with a rise in the number of university graduates, who now comprise one-third of jobless Tunisians.

Three major Islamist militant assaults last year — shootings at a tourist hotel and a Tunis museum as well as a suicide bombing on troops in the capital — have hurt the economy, particularly the tourism industry.—*Reuters*

Experts blast Japan's whaling programme as 'unscientific' in journal

TOKYO — A group of experts from around the world have criticised Japan's ongoing Antarctic Ocean whaling programme as having no scientific basis in a letter published in British science journal *Nature*'s latest edition dated yesterday.

The 32 signatories to the letter include 31 members of the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee and an independent expert witness who testified at an International Court of Justice hearing that resulted in a March 2014 ruling ordering Japan to suspend whaling in the Antarctic.

"In our view, the science behind Japan's whaling activity has not passed a reasonable standard of peer review," the letter states.

Japan's latest whaling plan, submitted to the IWC in December, provides for an annual catch of 333 minke whales, a reduction of about two-thirds from previous quotas, under the auspices of sampling the whale population.

The experts called for Japan to consider methods of sampling that do not require the whales to be killed. They also urged reform in the IWC "to develop a process of scientific review that results in clear decisions that can be respected by all," calling the current process "a waste of time."

According to the letter, a review of Japan's latest proposal by an independent expert panel found a lack of justification for lethal sampling.—*Kyodo News*

In global warming bets, record 2015 heat buoys mainstream science



A dry bank of the river Elbe is seen after the water level dropped due to hot temperatures in Dresden, Germany in 2015.
PHOTO: REUTERS

OSLO — For British climate expert Chris Hope, new data showing that 2015 was the hottest year ever recorded is not just confirmation he's been right all along that the planet is getting warmer.

It also won the Cambridge University researcher a 2,000 pound sterling (\$2,830) wager made five years ago against a pair of scientists who reject man-made global warming and bet Hope that the Earth would be cooling by now.

NASA, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the British Met Office said on Wednesday that 2015 was

the warmest year recorded since 1880, boosted by a long-term build-up of greenhouse gases and a natural El Niño event warming the Pacific Ocean.

That puts last year ahead of 2014, the previous warmest, as well as 2010, 2005 and 1998, when a strong El Niño marked, for a time, a peak in temperature rises.

A slowdown in temperature increases after 1998 — described by most climate experts as a hiatus in a long-term rise — has been invoked by a small band of sceptics who say mainstream science has exaggerated the risks.

Hope agreed wagers

of 1,000 pounds each with two of them: British engineer Alan Rudge and Australian geologist Ian Plimer. Hope bet average global temperatures in 2015 would be no more than 0.1 degree Celsius (0.18 Fahrenheit) cooler than 2008.

He said it was good to test theories with cash. "Of course, one side ends up happier than the other," he said. Neither Rudge nor Plimer were immediately available to comment.

"You win some, you lose some," said Benny Peiser, director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, for which Rudge is an adviser. Peiser said the pace of warming

"is not something that people ... need to be greatly concerned about".

Among other wagers, in 2005 British climate modeller James Annan bet \$10,000 against two Russian solar physicists that average global temperatures from 2013-17 would be warmer than 2003-07.

"Things are looking good for my bet," Annan said, noting the UN's weather agency has said 2016 could be as warm as 2015. If so, Annan reckons that his bet is safe unless 2017 is the coldest year since about 1929.

His Russian opponents are not conceding yet.

Galina Mashnich, an

expert at the Institute of Solar-Terrestrial Physics in Irkutsk, Russia, who made the bet with her colleague Vladimir Bashkirtsev, said the new temperature data is not definitive.

"2015 is not the warmest year, according to some sources," she wrote in an e-mail to Reuters. In recent years, she said, it was "most likely temperature increases are caused by El Niño".

The Russian solar experts predicted a decade ago that a decline in energy output from the sun, linked to the Earth's changing orbit, will depress temperatures.

Annan did lose one bet, of 100 pounds in 2011, linked to the pace of global warming.

Hope said he made his wager partly to show a potential for a financial market in temperatures, allowing investors to hedge long-term climate risks, for instance of rising sea levels or damage to crops linked to differing rates of warming.

After the spur of El Niño fades, global temperatures are likely to be slightly cooler in 2017, said Myles Allen, a climate expert at Oxford University.

He predicts any drop will revive doubters' claims of an end to warming.

"I bet you in a few years' time they will say global warming stopped in 2015 or 2016," Allen, who is not a sceptic and is senior author of UN climate reports, said.—*Reuters*

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE

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

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

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Actor Leonardo DiCaprio honoured in Davos

DAVOS — Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio received an award “for his leadership in tackling the climate crisis” at the Annual Crystal Awards held at the World Economic Forum.

At the ceremony in Davos, Switzerland, the actor, whose Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation supports conservation projects, criticised what he called “the corporate greed” of the energy industry.

“We simply cannot afford to allow the corporate greed of the coal, oil, and gas industries to determine the future of humanity. Those entities with a financial interest in preserving this destructive system have denied and even covered up the evidence of our changing climate,” he said.

“Enough is enough. You know better, the world knows better. History will place the blame for this devastation squarely at their feet.”—*Reuters*



Actor Leonardo DiCaprio receives a Crystal Award for his contribution to improve the state of the world from Hilde Schwab during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland on 19 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Disney pushes next ‘Star Wars’ movie release to December 2017

LOS ANGELES — Fans of the blockbuster “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” will have to wait two more years for the next installment as Walt Disney Co. on Wednesday pushed back the release of “Star Wars: Episode VIII” by seven months.

“Episode VIII,” written and directed by Rian Johnson, will now be released on 15 December 2017, rather than the previously scheduled 26 May 2017, date.

Hollywood blockbusters released during the summer months have drawn in the biggest audiences in recent years but Disney noted the success of

“The Force Awakens,” which was released worldwide last month.

“The Force Awakens” already has become the highest-grossing release in North America with \$861 million and the third-biggest global release in history, taking in \$1.88 billion at the box office to date.

“Episode VIII” will start filming in London in February and is expected to continue the tale of new characters Rey (Daisy Ridley), Finn (John Boyega), Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) and the villainous Kylo Ren (Adam Driver).

Franchise veterans Carrie Fisher (General Leia) and Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) also are expected to return, although Disney did not comment on casting.

“Star Wars: Rogue One,” a stand-alone story set in the world of “Star Wars” with new characters, will be released this December.

Disney said it will put the fifth installment of its popular “Pirates of the Caribbean” franchise, starring Johnny Depp, in the May 2017 slot previously occupied by “Episode VIII.” The franchise has grossed \$3.7 billion worldwide to date.—*Reuters*

Rita Wilson’s self-titled album to release in March

LOS ANGELES — Actress-singer Rita Wilson will release her self-titled album on 11 March.

The record will mark Wilson’s foray into songwriting and recording original songs, reported Entertainment Weekly.

Back in 2012, the 59-year-old “Sleepless in Seattle” star had released a cover album of some of her favourite songs from the ‘60s and ‘70s.

For the project, Wilson has collaborated with Kara DioGuardi, Dan Wilson, Nathan Chapman, and Babyface.

Post the release of the album, she will also tour across the US, with her first show in Salina Beach, California on 29 March and last in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 4 May.

Prior to the release she will give performances at the Cafe Carlyle in New York City from 23 February to 5 March.—*PTI*

Tom Hooper to receive Goteborg’s Honourary Dragon Award

LOS ANGELES — Director Tom Hooper, whose latest film “The Danish Girl” has been nominated for four Oscars, will receive the Honourary Dragon Award at Goteborg Film Festival.

“The Danish Girl” will have its Swedish premiere at the festival.

The London-born helmer,

who won an Oscar for “The King’s Speech” in 2010, will be present in Goteborg to receive the honorary prize.

As previously announced, Tobias Lindholm’s “A War”, Mads Matthiesen’s “The Model” and Runar Runarsson’s “Sparrows” are among the eight Nordic films set to compete for a Dragon Award.—*PTI*

Adele to perform at 2016 Grammys

LOS ANGELES — Adele, whose album “25” swiftly became the biggest seller of 2015, is to perform at the 2016 Grammy Awards in February, organisers said on Wednesday.

The British singer has not been nominated this year because her comeback album “25” was released in November, outside the eligibility period for Grammy con-

sideration. But she will be among performers taking the stage at the awards ceremony in Los Angeles on 15 February, the Recording Academy said in a statement.

Adele, who won six Grammys for her 2011 hit album “21,” broke opening week sales records in the United States when she returned to recording after a four-year absence with “25.” The album has

sold more than 7.4 million copies in the US alone, according to data from Nielsen Music.

US rapper Kendrick Lamar, who leads the 2016 Grammy field with 11 nominations including album of the year for “To Pimp A Butterfly,” will also perform at the February award ceremony, along with Canada’s The Weeknd.—*Reuters*



Cast member Daisy Ridley. PHOTO: REUTERS

Want to go to college in US? Show compassion not test scores: proposal

BOSTON — US educators on Wednesday endorsed a Harvard University-developed proposal to reform college admissions by relying less on high-stakes tests, and more on teens demonstrating a passion for learning and long-term volunteer projects.

The proposal aims to reduce the pressure on teenagers to pack their resumes with extracurricular activities and spend months preparing for the SAT and ACT tests, encouraging them to instead focus on academic subjects and social causes they find meaningful.

“Too often, today’s culture sends young people messages that emphasize personal success rather than concern for others and the common good,” said Richard Weissbourd, a senior lecturer at Harvard’s Grad-

uate School of Education, and a co-director of the Making Caring Common group that developed the proposal.

The proposal titled “Turning the Tide” has been endorsed by about 80 educators, including top admissions officials at major US universities ranging from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University to the University of North Carolina and Purdue University.

The initiative, which has backing from some US high schools and educational associations, is intended to make the college admissions process less daunting for low-income families.

It encourages colleges to revise their applications to ask students about two or three extracurricular activities, rather to encourage them to submit long lists of

sports and clubs they participate in and to consider make standardised tests optional or discouraging students from taking them more than twice.

Some 1.7 million students took the SAT in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, and 1.8 million took the ACT. Pressure to perform well on the tests has spawned a \$9 billion test-prep industry.

“Escalating achievement pressure is not healthy for our youth. Young people are suffering from higher rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse as they juggle the demands of their lives,” said Kedra Ishop, an associate vice president for at the University of Michigan, who endorsed the proposal.

The proposal recommended that colleges that continue to rely on the



Graduating students enter the Paladin stadium before US President George W. Bush watches them during the commencement ceremony at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina in 2008. PHOTO: REUTERS

standardized tests make clear how much influence they have over admission decisions. It also recommends that colleges look for applicants who show long-term commitment to service projects in their

own communities.

“Too often, current forms of service are patronising to recipients and don’t spark in those providing service a deeper understanding of social structures and inequalities,” the report

said. “Rather than students ‘doing for’ students from different backgrounds, for example, we encourage students to ‘do with,’ to work in diverse groups for sustained periods of time.”—Reuters

Sakai city launches English website to boost specialty knife exports



An English-language website selling nearly 200 types of specialty steel cooking knives from seven makers in Sakai, western Japan. The site has been launched by the Osaka Prefecture city’s Industrial Promotion Centre due to increasing exports of its signature product over recent years. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

OSAKA — Sakai city’s Industrial Promotion Centre has launched an English-language website selling nearly 200 types of specialty steel cooking knives from seven makers in the Osaka prefecture city, which has seen increasing exports of its signature product over recent years.

The site includes videos of the traditional forging and grinding processes by which the blades are crafted, along with care instructions and detailed images and descriptions of products ranging from a small \$50 carving knife to a dragon-engraved sashimi knife with ebony handle that comes in at just over \$900.

In 2014, approximately 1 billion yen (\$8.53 million) in total knife exports

went through Osaka customs — a threefold increase since 2009, with knife exports to the US jumping by a factor of 15 over the same period. Sakai’s IPC sees the growth as an indication that Japanese knives, popular with chefs, are catching on among professionals overseas with the expansion of Japanese cuisine and culture abroad.

According to the centre knife production began in Sakai roughly 600 years ago and the area’s craftsmen later pioneered specialty “tobacco knives” that came to be widely used throughout the country. Sakai City is one of the five major knife-producing centres in Japan along with locations in Niigata, Fukui, Gifu and Kochi prefectures.—Kyodo News

Three songs selected for Tokyo subway’s departure melodies

TOKYO — Hit tunes by the all-girl pop group AKB48 and its rival group Nogizaka46, and a 1960s duet song still popular in karaoke, have been selected for departure melodies at three subway stations in central Tokyo.

Tokyo Metro Co, the operator of nine subway lines in the metropolis, said Wednesday that Akihabara station on Hibiya Line will feature “Koisuru Fortune Cookie” by AKB48. AKB stands for Akihabara, the capital’s electronics district and a hub of subculture, and is also the group’s birthplace.

“Kiminona-wa Kibo” (Your Name is Hope) by Nogizaka46 will be played on the platform of the group’s namesake station, Nogizaka, on Chiyoda Line.

An old hit song, “Gin-zano Koino Monogatari” (A

love story in Ginza), sung by the late actor Yujiro Ishihara and singer Junko Makimura, will naturally be played at Ginza station on Hibiya Line. The three songs will replace departure beeps currently in use at the stations in the spring.

Tokyo Metro said it received many suggestions for the three tunes when it solicited song ideas for the stations’ departure melodies on its website last year. The songs also matched the image of the stations and their nearby areas, the company said.

The subway operator is gradually replacing the beeps with melodies at its stations, totaling 179 on the nine lines. Melodies have been already introduced at 114 of the stations to inform passengers of a train’s departure.—Kyodo News

mitv Myanmar International

(22-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 23-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes “Lisu: Their Life and Customs” (Part- II)
07:47	Am	Distinguished Myanmar Ladies “Tin Moe Lwin”
08:03	Am	News
08:20	Am	The World Peace Buddhist Conference Opening Ceremony

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)-Thursday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 04:00 Pm)- Today Repeat(07:00 Am ~ 08:00 Am)

04:03	Pm	News
04:26	Pm	Travelogue: “Anyar Myay” or Upcountry (Part-II)
04:48	Pm	A Lucky Boy

05:03	Pm	News
05:26	Pm	A Happy Visitto Zoological Garden (Nay Pyi Taw)
05:37	Pm	Myanmar Traditional Toys
05:52	Pm	Coin Collectors
06:03	Pm	News
06:30	Pm	Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra Concert 2016

(09:00 Pm ~ 10:00 Pm)- Today Repeat (05:00 Pm ~ 06:00 Pm)

10:03	Pm	News
10:26	Pm	Travelogue: A Tour in Korea (Ep-5)
10:43	Pm	Karaweik Palace- A Symbol Of Glorious Myanma Culture

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Thursday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 04:00 Am)-Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 08:00 Am)
(04:00 Am ~ 06:00 Am)-Today Repeat (04:00 Pm ~ 06:00 Pm)
(06:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (10:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)

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

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(22-1-2016, Friday)

6:00 pm	7:55 pm
• Alinka Wut Yee Music Troupe	• TV Drama Series
6:40 pm	8:40 pm
• Fashion Show	• Stories
6:50 pm	9:10 pm
• Analysis For Myanmar Movies	• Musical Programme
7:05 pm	10:20 pm
• TV Drama Series	• Myanmar Video
PM	Midnight
(6:00)	• Close Down

Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra Concert 2016 (live)

From 22.1.2016 (Friday) 06:00 Pm
To 23.1.2016 (Saturday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.



Ivanovic shaken but not stirred after spectator fall

FORMER French Open champion Ana Ivanovic was shaken up when a spectator was injured falling down the stairs on Rod Laver Arena but recovered her composure to ease into the third round at the Australian Open yesterday.

The first set between the Serbian and her opponent Anastasiya Sevastova was held up for 26 minutes as the woman was treated by medical staff in the stands of the showcourt.

"I felt really bad. I was really shaking, because the sound of the lady falling was really loud. I could hear it. I stopped immediately," Ivanovic said after her 6-3, 6-3 victory.

"It just really didn't sound so good. It was actually good that we had to wait a little bit because I was really shaking, because I could imagine and it was not so nice. Then they told us she was bleeding, so I hope she's well."

Tournament organisers said the spectator had been taken by stretcher to a first aid post for observation and further treatment. It was the second time in the first four days of the tournament that play had been delayed while a spectator underwent medical treatment after Ber-

nard Tomic's match against Denis Istomin was similarly disrupted on Tuesday. Tomic was also rattled by the incident, saying he feared for the women's life.

"Potentially, someone's dying and we're not sure what's going on," the Australian said.

"At one stage, I was looking directly at the lady. It was not a good moment. "Tennis is tennis, sport is sport. But if someone passes out or on dies on a tennis court, it can be very, very bad."

Apart from her concerns for the spectator, former world number one Ivanovic was delighted with her performance in her match-up with the 25-year-old Latvian qualifier. Admitting that, at 28, she was now one of the "older statespersons" of the women's tour, Ivanovic said it was getting tougher to get through the early rounds of grand slams.

"It's completely different to when I started. I remember seeded even myself would you get to third, fourth round without dropping too many games," she added.

"And now every match it's a battle, and you just have to try and push yourself because it's all a challenge. "They are young girls and they're fearless."

Ivanovic, a finalist at Melbourne Park in 2008, will face American Madison Keys or Kazakh Yaroslava Shvedova in the third round.—Reuters

Serbia's Ana Ivanovic reacts during her second round match against Latvia's Anastasiya Sevastova at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 21 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Real top money league again as club revenues surge

LONDON — Real Madrid are the richest football club by revenue for the 11th straight year and La Liga rivals Barcelona have leapfrogged Manchester United into second, according to Deloitte's Football Money League.

Real topped the list published on Thursday, with an annual revenue of 577 million euros (443 million pounds) as the combined figure for the top 20 Money League clubs rose by eight percent to a record high of 6.6 billion euros.

Barcelona's stunning success on the pitch in 2015, when they claimed five of the six trophies on offer, including La Liga and the Champions League, helped them move above Manchester United, who fell to third.

It was the first time that the top three clubs in the Football Money League have all passed the 500 million euros revenue mark. Spanish giants Real, who clinched a record-extending 10th European Cup in 2014, were buoyed by an increase in commercial revenues which rose by 22.7 million euros from the previous season.

Although Manchester United slipped down the table, the outlook for the record Premier League winners remains positive. Tim Bridge, Senior Manager at Deloitte, said their return to Champions League football this season as well as a number of commercial partnerships would only strengthen the business in 2015-16.—Reuters

Arsenal and Cech seek symbolic Chelsea win

LONDON — Arsenal can take another step towards the Premier League title with a symbolic victory over champions Chelsea when they host their ailing London rivals at the Emirates on Sunday.

Victory would also take Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech closer to becoming the second player in English League soccer history to win the title with different clubs in successive seasons, after lifting his fourth league crown with Chelsea last year.

Cech made his Arsenal debut when they beat Chelsea 1-0 in the Community Shield and his campaign could finish on another high if he emulates Eric Cantona, who won titles with Leeds United in 1992 and Manchester United in 1993, the only player ever

to do so. One of the few bright spots of Chelsea's woeful campaign came in September when they beat Arsenal 2-0 at Stamford Bridge in a fractious match in which the Gunners had Gabriel Paulista and Santi Cazorla sent off.

Arsenal's season has blossomed since, however, and Chelsea's has wilted with manager Jose Mourinho sacked in December.

Arsenal lead the standings and Chelsea are 19 points adrift in 14th place with their interim coach Guus Hiddink saying last week they were not yet free of relegation worries.

Arsenal, who have several top players out injured, lead the table on goal difference from Leicester City, but they could

be boosted by the return of playmaker Mesut Ozil and striker Alexis Sanchez who missed the 0-0 draw at Stoke City on Sunday.

The Gunners, though, have little margin for error if they are to win their first title since 2004. Leicester have confounded everyone by remaining doggedly in the title race with manager Claudio Ranieri now aiming for 79 points by the end of the season, rather than his original target of 40 which is usually needed to avoid relegation.—Reuters

Murray negates Groth's attack to advance in Melbourne



MELBOURNE — Andy Murray executed his game-plan to negate the one booming weapon that Sam Groth possessed to beat the unseeded Australian 6-0, 6-4, 6-1 and advance to the third round of the Australian Open yesterday. Murray had

said after the first round that he knew exactly what to expect against Groth — big serve and a large frame to chip or pass at the net — and the 28-year Briton did exactly what he needed to leave his opponent scrambling from the outset.

The world number two took 29 minutes to race through the first set, which included a nine-minute fourth game, and while Groth's serve found its range in the second, Murray still managed to pull out the big points when he needed.

Murray continued his momentum into the third set, racing out to a 3-0 lead that he built on to set up a third round clash with Joao Sousa of Portugal.—Reuters