

President calls for exertion of effort to achieve NCA and enduring peace

The following is the translation of the message sent by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Agga Maha Tharé Sithu, Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Sein on the occasion of the 68th Anniversary Independence Day.—Ed

Esteemed national brethren of the Union,

On the auspicious occasion of the 68th Anniversary the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to extend affectionate and respectful greetings to all the national brethren and wish them fulfillment and contentment.

The people of Myanmar lived in successive kingdoms of magnificence and grandeur for millenia, occupying a proud position in the world on the strength of the nation's rich natural resources and unique culture, but in 1885 lost its sovereignty and independence to British colonialism.

Under colonial rule, the nation's culture and religion together with national unity came under the oppressive administrative apparatus.

Consequently, the national people took to arms, giving rise to nationwide anti-colonialist and anti-fascist movements motivated by genuine patriotism and true Union Spirit, which eventually led to the nation's independence on 4 January 1948 when national sovereignty was re-gained.

Today is the 68th anniversary of the regaining of independence for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar through the relentless struggle of the national brethren motivated by a strong genuine Union Spirit and an intrepid national spirit.

In order to claim a proud position in the world as a Federal State, all the national brethren need to hand in hand for the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of sovereignty, achievement of lasting peace, and achievement and perpetuation of a peaceful modern developed nation.

At present, the country is transitioning to a democratic State in a three-tier approach. The first tier consists of drafting and adopting the Constitution as preparatory groundwork for democracy, conducting the 2010 general elections and making preparations for the

formation of the first Hluttaw (Parliament) and the Government and conducting the second general elections in 2015 putting the country on the path to democracy. The second tier consists of a gentle transition to democracy that has won international recognition and led to a significant improvement in the international relations of Myanmar. The third tier involves political dialogue to resolve issues such as internal and external conflicts and problems of national groups to achieve a more mature and established democracy. As a benefit of the new political culture of dialogue, a ceasefire agreement has successfully been signed with the participation of eight armed national groups, with dialogue continuing to enable the remaining groups to sign up. This is an accomplishment that has enhanced the nation's credibility in the international community.

The concerted efforts of the national groups, the people and the armed forces will be necessary to continue on the correct path to democratization. The nation's independence, security and development can only be ensured through the combined efforts of the Government, all the political

forces such as the Hluttaw (Parliament) and the political parties, the Armed Forces and the entire people. I would like to urge everyone across the political spectrum to work together in unity to overcome the challenges facing the country.

In order to build a genuine Federal State, diversity among the national needs to become the nation's a source of unity. Favourable conditions have been achieved for enduring peace and development and with unity among the national brethren, they will be realized.

In order to realize the two aspirations shared by the people of Myanmar, peace and tranquillity on the one hand and socio-economic development on the other, everyone need to contribute their efforts toward rural areas development and poverty reduction, and the all-



round development of education, health, culture, women's affairs and various other sectors.

Thus, I would like to urge all the national people to work in unity for the realization of the following four goals of the 68th anniversary celebrations of the Independence Day with commitment, a sense of responsibility and allegiance to the nation:

- To have all the nationals living in the Union together in ever-lasting harmony;
- To safeguard the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity and perpetuation of sovereignty through the efforts of all the national people;
- To make an endeavour to achieve a nation-wide ceasefire agreement and enduring peace;
- To realize a discipline-flourishing new modern developed democratic nation through the people's strength.

HONOURING THE
68th
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Record-breaking off-shore gas reserve discovered by local company

A LARGE off-shore natural gas reserve was discovered in Block A-6 by MPRL E&P Pte Ltd.

The company announced that it discovered the gas reserve in a well known as Shwe Yee Htun-1 when the well reached a total depth of 5,306 metres below rotary table, 2,030 metres below the surface of the water.

Union Minister for Energy U Zeyar Aung, along with Chief Minister for Ayeyawady Region U Thein Aung and Managing Director of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, visited the well yesterday and presented fruit baskets to experts there.

Experts discovered the reserve during a Wireline Log on 26 December 2015 at the well,



See page 3 >> Shwe Yee Htun-1 Well. PHOTO: MNA

Two arrested for poaching elephant in Chaungtha Forest Reserve

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Continue to Strive in Unity

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Two arrested for poaching elephant in Chaungtha Forest Reserve



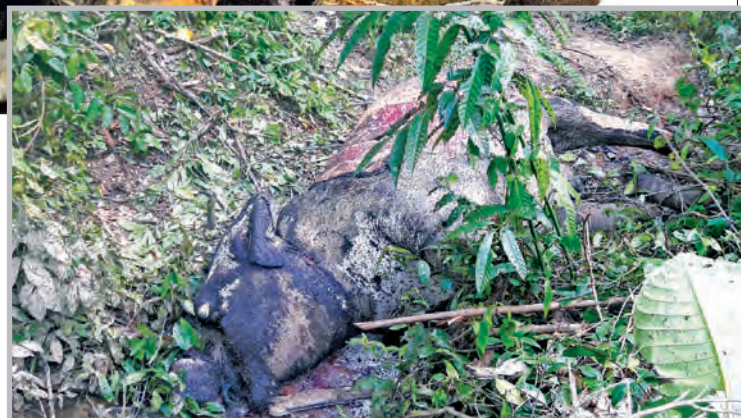
Police evaluates parts of an elephant seized from poachers in Chaungtha Forest Reserve in Patheingyi on 1st January, 2016.

PHOTO: MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

POLICE arrested two people on suspicion of poaching an elephant in the Chaungtha Forest Reserve in Patheingyi on 1 January.

Police officers stopped and searched a motorcycle driven by Maung Pho in the forest reserve on 1 January and discovered 66 pieces of elephant trunk meat, dried elephants hide and a machete hidden inside a bag.

After interrogating him, police also found a motorcycle parked one mile away from the



site where the suspect was arrested and discovered a bag filled with dried elephants hide and slices of trunk meat.

During an ensuing raid of the jungle, police found one dead elephant. The male elephant was 8.5 feet tall, 14 feet in circumference and 12 feet long. The elephant was around 32 years old when it was killed.

Police also arrested a 45 year-

old man near the site on suspicion of poaching, seizing chemicals used for making poison to shoot elephants and some parts of the tail of an elephant.

Action is being taken against Maung Pho from Nga Phyu Village of Ngaphe Township and Maung Chauk 45, from Min Lwin Village in Nga Phe Township, for poaching.—Myanmar News Agency

Religious-related titles conferred

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein has conferred in President Office Notification 1/2016 dated 4th January titles on Buddhist monks, nuns and lay disciples for their outstanding pariyatti and patipatti performance including conducting of mission within and without the country as well as for their donations.

Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title was conferred on five mahatheras; tipitakadhara dhamma Bhandagarika, one maha thera; aggamahapandita, 15 senior monks; dhamma kathika bahujana hitaddhara, one senior monk; agga maha gantha vacaka pandita, 14 monks, and one Buddhist nun; maha gantha vacaka pandita, 14 monks and two nuns; gantha vacaka pandita, 22 monks

and one nun; abhidhaja agga maha saddhamma jotika, 6 monks; agga maha saddhamma jotika dhaja, 25 monks; maha saddhamma jotika dhaja, 16 monks, two nuns, and two laymen; saddhamma jotika dhaja, 23 monks, one nun and two laymen; agga maha kammathanacariya, three monks; kammathanacariya, 5 monks; agga maha siri sudhamma manijotadhara, one layman; agga maha siri sudhamma manijotadhara, two laymen; Siri Sudhama Singi, three lay women; Siha Sudhamma manijotadhara, one lay man; Siha Sudhama Singi, 14 lay women; Sudhamma manijotadhara, 20 lay men and Sudhamma Singi, 19 lay women.—Myanmar News Agency

New tube well benefit local people in Chauk Township



Officials test the water supply facility connected with a tube well at Magyibin village, Chauk Township. PHOTO: EAI MON

TO mark the 68th anniversary Independent Day which falls on 4th January, a tube well commissioned into service at Magyibin village, Chauk Township, Magway Region on 2 January.

At the ceremony, Magway Region Hluttaw Representative U Win Naing Oo made an opening speech, and the Head of Township Administration Department explained about digging tube well, and one of the villagers spoke words of thanks.

The tube well was constructed at the cost of K20 million from the 100-kyat-million funds under the 1,000-kyat-fund for alleviation poverty in the rural areas.

The tube well is 650 ft deep and can pump 200 gallons per hour, with the use of 28 Hp+15 KVA engine and 5.5 pump and 12ftx6ftx5ft water tank. More than 450 people have got access to sufficient drinking water due to the newly constructed tube well. —Eai Mon. (IPRD, Chauk Township)

Two new roads opened in Monywa

A NEW asphalt road was opened in Myothit Ward in Monywa, Saging Region, on 1 January to commemorate Myanmar's 68th Independence Day.

The road is 2,750 feet long and 14 feet wide. It was upgraded at a cost of more than K20 million (US\$15,300), which was raised by local residents.

Another upgraded asphalt road was opened on the same day in Monywa proper, also in honour of Independence Day.

The road is more than 2 miles long and 12 feet wide. It was upgraded at a cost of more than K127 million (\$98,200), which was also provided by local residents. The Sagaing Region

Government and the Monywa Township Development Affairs Department also contributed tar and construction materials to the road upgrade projects. The two roads were opened in the presence of the Sagaing Region Chief Minister and members of the regional government and regional parliament.—Pho Chan



Dignitaries pose for photo session at a ceremony to open an asphalt road in Monywa. PHOTO: PHO CHAN

68th Independence Day ceremonies to be broadcast live

A CEREMONY to hoist the State Flag to mark the 68th anniversary Independence Day for 2016 will be held at 4.20 am and a ceremony to salute the State Flag will be held at 7 am 4th January in the City

Hall in Nay Pyi Taw. The ceremony to salute the State Flag will be broadcast live from MRTV News Channel and the Myanmar Radio from 6:30 A.M.—Myanmar News Agency

Shwe Set Taw pagoda festival to boost tourism in Magway Region

THE annual festival of Shwe Set Taw Pagoda is scheduled to begin on 13 February and to run until 13 April 2016, according to the pagoda's board of trustees.

The popular festival in central Myanmar attracts thousands of pilgrims from across the country.

The pagoda is also known as Mann Shwe Set Taw, named for a pair of footprints fabled to have been left by the Buddha. The pagoda is located in Minbu (Saku) Township in Magway Region.

After visiting Mann Shwe Set Taw Pagoda festival, visitors often take a tour of the Yoke-sone Monastery in Saku, which is famous for its wood carvings depicting scenes of moral lessons, as well as another Yoke-sone Monastery near Le-kaing Myo Haung in Pwint-phyu Township.

Pilgrims also often visit



Make-shift tents are seen besides the Mann Creek during Shwe Set Taw Pagoda festival.

PHOTO: AUNG HTAY (MAHLAING)

Kyaungtauya, an ancient Pyu city-state, during the festival season.

Other popular attractions in Magway Region are the Ava-era cave paintings, Set Ka Te Pagoda and mud volcanoes in Minbu. River travellers can visit the Magway Mya Tha Lun Pagoda on the bank of the Ayeyawady River in Magway.

Visitors are also welcome at the site of Beikthano, another ancient Pyu city-state, located in Taungdwingyi Township, 40 miles from Magway.—*Kay Khaing*



Pilgrims put gold foils on the Buddha's foot print. PHOTO: AUNG HTAY (MAHLAING)

Fire-fighting equipment provided to fire brigade in Dawei

FIRE-FIGHTING equipment was handed over to the fire brigade of Maungmakan village in Dawei district, Tanintharyi Region, on 1 January, in honour of the 68th anniversary Independence Day, according to the local fire brigade.

The fire-fighting equipment included a fire engine, fire extinguishers and a lifeboat, which were bought from the region's funds. The handover event drew local governmental ministers, departmental officials, fire brigade members and residents, totalling 250. Fire season starts following the end of rainy season in mid October in Myanmar. Myanmar has seen several fire outbreaks in December in several parts of the country.

Fire bridges across the country are on full alert ahead of the summer season which starts in March. According to records, the country see heavy fire outbreaks in the summer season.—*U Sein Win (Dawei)*



Officials formally launch power supply facility at Sudaw Village in Chauk Township. PHOTO: MNA

CSR in Chauk-Lanywa Oilfield brings light to Sudaw Village

AS a gesture of hailing the 68th Independence Day which falls on 4th January, Ministry of Energy launched supplying power to Sudaw Village in Myaypadon village-tract in Chauk Township via the national grid yesterday.

As part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the ministry completed the power supply facility in cooperation with the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, Chauk-Lanywa Oil Field, Myaypadon Village-tract Self-Reliance Power Supply Committee and KST Company at the cost of K800

million.

Plans are also being made to supply power to nearby 15 villages through the 11-mile long cable which links the national power grid to Myaypadon Village-tract. During the 2015-2016 FY, a 50,000-gallon-concrete tank, repairing of school buildings and toilets for 40 schools, installing of water purification machine at Chauk Township Hospital and medical apparatuses for kidney disorders and donation of water supply facilities including 31 transformers to 31 villages and lamp posts. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Record-breaking off-shore gas reserve ...

>> from Page 1

which is located about 30 miles off Ngwesaung Beach, Patheingyi.

The well intersects a gross gas column of approximately 129 metres, and about 15 metres of net gas pay within the primary target interval, as confirmed through pressure measurements and gas samplings.

Experts calculated that natural gas reserve stems from the Shwe natural gas reserve located further up Myanmar's coast.

Evaluation of the data is still ongoing.

The discovery comes as the

largest discovery of an off-shore gas reserve in the history of off-shore exploration in Myanmar.

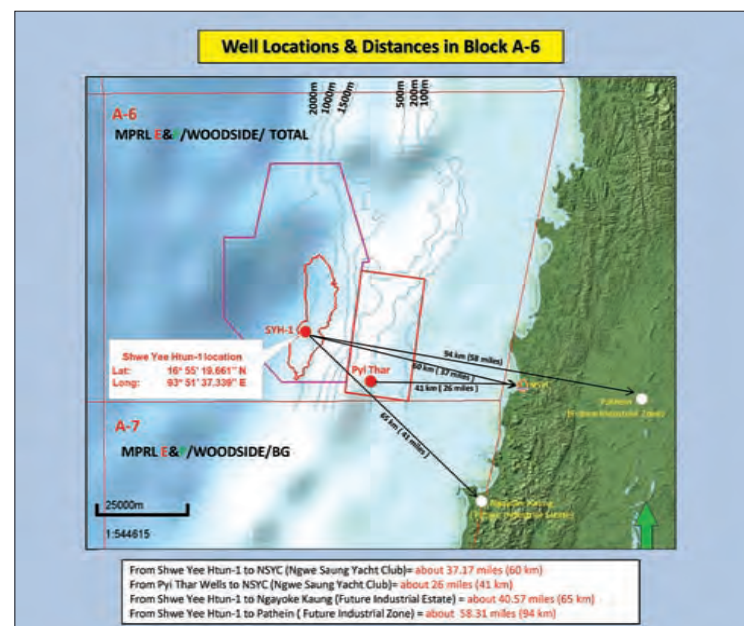
MPRL E&P Pte Ltd, the only independent energy company led by Myanmar nationals operating both on-shore and off-shore in Myanmar, began drilling Shwe Yee Htun-1 in November 2015.

The company signed a PSC to become the operator of Block A-6 in 2007.

During his visit to the site, the energy minister called on the personnel of MPRL to strive, in cooperation with the energy min-

istry, for commercialization energy production. U Moe Myint, CEO of MPRL E&P, expressed his delight at the discovery on behalf of the company, adding that MPRL E&P will continue to work with Woodside Total E&P to upgrade the discovery.

"The success of the exploration will benefit not only the partners involved in drilling in the block but also the entire country and the people, who are the main owners of underground resources," U Moe Myint said.— *Myanmar News Agency*



Death toll from militant assault on Indian air base grows to at least 10



Indian army soldiers stand guard near the Indian Air Force (IAF) base at Pathankot in Punjab, India, on 3 January 2016. A gold medal-winning Indian shooter was among 10 people killed in an audacious pre-dawn assault on the air force base, officials said on Sunday as troops worked to clear the compound near India's border with Pakistan after a 15-hour gunbattle. PHOTO: REUTERS

PATHANKOT, (India) — A gold medal-winning Indian shooter was among 10 people killed in an audacious pre-dawn assault on an air force base, officials said yesterday as troops

worked to clear the compound near India's border with Pakistan after a 15-hour gunbattle.

Six Indian security personnel were killed and the bodies of four militants had been recovered

after the assault on the heavily fortified Pathankot air base in the northwestern state of Punjab.

The attack by gunmen disguised as soldiers came a week after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unscheduled visit to Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in an effort to revive talks between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

One of the Indian security members killed in the attack was Subedar Fateh Singh, who won gold and silver medals in the first Commonwealth Shooting Championships held in 1995, the National Rifle Association of India said.

Officials said the attack on the military base, just 25 km (15 miles) from the border with Pakistan, bore the hallmarks of previous suspected assaults by Pakistan-based militant groups, underscoring the fragility of recent efforts to revive bilateral talks between the often uneasy neighbours.

There was no immediate

claim of responsibility.

Pakistan condemned the attack and said it wanted to continue to build on the goodwill created by the impromptu meeting between Modi and Sharif last month.

Two security personnel were wounded in a blast on Sunday, a police official in Pathankot said, as troops scoured the base.

Dozens of armed forces stood guard outside the base.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh had said on Saturday five militants had been "neutralised", but there were no reports yet of the body of the fifth attacker being found.

In New Delhi, two trains were delayed early yesterday after officials received information about a possible bomb threat on a train running between the capital and Lucknow to the southeast, railways spokesman Neeraj Sharma said. Trains were deemed safe and were running on schedule by mid-morning, Sharma said.—*Reuters*

China's test flight to Yongshu Jiao 'within sovereignty'

BEIJING — A test flight to a newly-built airfield on a South China Sea reef was a matter "completely within China's sovereignty," a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said late Saturday evening. Spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China has finished building an airfield on Yongshu Jiao of China's Nansha Islands.

The Chinese government used a civil aircraft to conduct the flight in order to test whether the airfield facilities meet civil aviation standards, she said, in response to reported objections of Vietnam's foreign ministry. "China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their adjacent waters."

China will not accept the unfounded accusation from the Vietnamese side," Hua said. At present, the relations between China and Vietnam maintain a momentum of development. China hopes Vietnam can work accordingly to achieve "sustainable, healthy and stable" development of bilateral ties, Hua said.—*Xinhua*

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Viet Nam protests after China lands plane on disputed Spratlys

HANOI — Viet Nam formally accused China of violating its sovereignty and a recent confidence-building pact on Saturday by landing a plane on an airstrip Beijing has built on an artificial island in a contested part of the South China Sea.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said the airfield, had been "built illegally" on Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly archipelago, in territory that was "part of Vietnam's Spratlys". China's Foreign Ministry rejected the complaint, saying that what was a test flight to the newly built airfield on the reef, which China calls Yongshu Jiao, was a matter "completely within China's sovereignty," the Chinese state news agency Xinhua

reported. The United States said it was concerned that the flight had exacerbated tensions.

Washington has criticised China's construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea and worries that Beijing plans to use them for military purposes, even though China says it has no hostile intent. Pooja Jhunjunwala, a spokeswoman for the US State Department, said there was "a pressing need for claimants to publicly commit to a reciprocal halt to further land reclamation, construction of new facilities, and militarization of disputed features."

"We encourage all claimants to actively reduce tensions by refraining from unilateral actions that undermine regional stability,

and taking steps to create space for meaningful diplomatic solutions to emerge," she said. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China used a civil aircraft to conduct the flight to test whether the airfield facilities meet civil-aviation standards.

"China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their adjacent waters. China will not accept the unfounded accusation from the Vietnamese side," she said, referring to the Spratly's by their Chinese name.

Hua added that China hoped Vietnam could work to achieve "sustainable, healthy and stable" development of bilateral ties.

Hanoi's Foreign Ministry said Vietnam handed a protest note to

China's embassy and asked China not to repeat the action.

It called the flight "a serious infringement of the sovereignty of Vietnam on the Spratly archipelago".

China claims almost all the South China Sea, which is believed to have huge deposits of oil and gas, and through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year, and has been building up facilities on the islands it controls. It completed an airfield on Fiery Cross Reef that security experts say could accommodate most Chinese military aircraft late last year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan also have rival claims in the South China Sea. —*Reuters*

S Korea, Japan to reopen 'comfort women' talks possibly in January

SEOUL — South Korea and Japan will hold follow-up talks as early as this month on a landmark deal reached in late December to settle the issue of the so-called "comfort women" who were forced to work in Japan's wartime military brothels, diplomatic sources familiar with bilateral relations said yesterday.

The two countries have agreed to continue their director-general talks to discuss the process of implementing the deal, but negotiations could face rough going as Japan and South Korea have put different interpretations on conditions to carry out the accord.

Japan has indicated its 1 billion yen (\$8.3 million) contribution to a fund to help former comfort

women will be contingent on removal of a statue of a girl, symbolising the victims, that sits outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, according to a Japanese government source.

However, a South Korean government official has said Seoul has not promised the removal of the statue, which is not included in the agreement. Meanwhile, an official of South Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has said the ministry has started talks with Japanese Foreign Ministry officials on a foundation that will be established and run with funds contributed by the Japanese government.

At a joint news conference in South Korea last Monday after the

two countries' foreign ministers reached the accord, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se said Seoul "acknowledges" Tokyo's concern about the statue and that it will "strive to solve this issue in an appropriate manner."

His Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida said he thinks it "will be relocated appropriately."

The statue of a girl was erected in 2011 by the Korean Council of Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan, a civic group helping former comfort women, on a sidewalk near the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

The South Korean civic group has strongly objected to the agreement and insists it will not remove the statue.

Many people in South Korea are not happy about removal of the statue as the administration of President Park Geun-hye struck the deal with Japan without asking the former comfort women's opinions beforehand.

Two vice foreign ministers of South Korea met with former comfort women last Tuesday in an attempt to persuade them to accept the removal of the statue, but they were rejected. A South Korean government source said the Park administration is now considering appointing a minister in charge of holding talks with the former comfort women. Some conservatives have proposed that the president should try to persuade them by herself.—*Kyodo News*

Beijing to work with neighbours to improve water quality

BEIJING — Beijing, Tianjin municipality and Hebei Province will work together to address water pollution through the construction of a unified water monitoring network by the end of 2017.

The three jurisdictions in northern China will improve their water monitoring systems, warning mechanism, information sharing and emergency response to prevent water pollution, according to a plan the Beijing municipal government released this week.

Beijing, the coastal city of Tianjin and the surrounding province of Hebei are working toward integrating their industries, transportation networks and measures to curb pollution so that they can achieve balanced, coordinated development in the region. To ensure water quality, Beijing will work with Zhangjiakou and Chengde, two cities in Hebei, to protect water sources and restore the natural environment along the major river courses and clean up pollution in rivers and reservoirs.—*Xinhua*

Veteran Indian Communist leader passes away at 92

NEW DELHI — Veteran Communist Party of India leader Ardhendu Bhushan Bardhan passed away at a hospital in the national capital late Saturday night, at the age of 92.

The Communist leader was admitted to the hospital, following a paralytic stroke last month. Doctors treating him said he was not keeping well and his condition worsened over the past few days.

“Bardhan died at 8:20pm (local time). He had a brain stroke due to blockage in the middle cerebral artery. He was in coma,” Dr Vinod Puri, director of the hospital, told media.

Bardhan, who was a leading figure in the country's trade union movement, is credited for steering the party through the turbulent period of coalition politics in India in the 1990s.

His hard work and dedication made him rise to the position of the general secretary of the Communist Party and president of the All India Trade Union Congress, the oldest such body in India. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has condoled the Communist leader's death.—*Xinhua*

Hong Kong bookseller's disappearance sparks protests at Beijing office

HONG KONG — Hong Kong opposition lawmakers protested yesterday outside Beijing's representative office in the Chinese-ruled city over the disappearance of a bookseller who specializes in publications critical of the Communist Party government.

Lee Bo, 65, a major shareholder of Causeway Bay Books, “vanished” on Wednesday after he went to fetch books from his warehouse in the city, Lee's wife told Hong Kong media.

She said her husband had called her from a mainland Chinese number to tell her he was safe but would not reveal his location, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported yesterday. She said Lee spoke to her in Mandarin even though the pair usually communicated in Cantonese.

Lee is the fifth person linked to the bookstore to have gone missing in the past two months. Others include Gui Minhai, owner of Mighty Current, the publishing house that owns the bookstore, the SCMP reported. Missing person reports were filed for three others, it said.

The disappearances have stoked fears of mainland Chinese authorities using shadowy tactics that erode the one country, two systems formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to Chinese rule from Britain in 1997. The city's constitution guarantees wide-ranging personal freedoms and independent law enforcement.

Beijing's Liaison Office and the Hong Kong Immigration Department could not be reached for



Pro-democracy demonstrators hold up portraits of Causeway Bay Books shareholder Lee Bo (R) during a protest to call for an investigation behind the disappearance of five staff members of a Hong Kong publishing house and bookstore, outside the Chinese liaison office in Hong Kong. PHOTO: REUTERS

comment. The Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, an agency of China's State Council, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. About 60 people marched to the Liaison Office in the financial hub, while pro-democracy lawmakers held a media conference to express concern over the disappearance.

“We have strong reason to believe Mr Lee was kidnapped and smuggled back to the mainland for political investigation,” said Democratic Party lawmaker Albert Ho.

He did not elaborate on the reason, but the group called on the Hong Kong government to say whether there was an official immigration departure record for Lee. Secretary for Security, John Lee, said the police would be expanding the scope of its investigation into Lee's disappearance, although it was not possible to give details about every line of inquiry, broadcaster RTHK reported yesterday. The Causeway Bay Bookstore sells paperbacks highly critical of the Chinese leadership in Beijing and often containing

details of the private lives of senior leaders and their families.

While the books are banned in mainland China, local media said they are popular with Chinese tourists in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's second highest-ranking official, Chief Secretary Carrie Lam, expressed concern about the case on Saturday.

“The Hong Kong government is highly concerned about the wellbeing of Hong Kong people in the city and abroad. I know the police are already working on the case,” Lam said.—*Reuters*

‘Happiness,’ ‘Love’ train stations talk cultural tie-up

KUSHIRO — Negotiations are under way for the establishment of a partnership between two train stations, one in Japan and the other in Taiwan, hoping to promote bilateral tourism.

The two stations attract tourists because of their names. One is in Obihiro, Hokkaido, and is named Kofuku which means “happiness” in Japanese, while the other is in Hexing and is popularly known as “Love” station, in the northern Taiwan county of Hsinchu.

Kofuku Station, a stop on the now defunct Japanese National Railways' Hiroo Line between Obihiro and Hiroo on Japan's northernmost main island, was opened in 1956. Combined with the line's nearby station named “Aikoku,” Kofuku Station began

to attract large numbers of tourists in the 1970s because of a promotional catchphrase “From Country of Love to Happiness” — “ai” and “koku” mean “love” and “country” in Japanese, respectively.

The Hiroo Line was shut down in 1987 and Kofuku Station is now under the management of the Obihiro city government. The station building and platform were renovated as a tourist attraction in November 2013.

The number of tourists who visited the station in the April-September first half of fiscal 2015 soared 90.7 per cent from a year earlier to 129,100, including many foreign tourists, especially from Taiwan.

The station is widely known in China and Taiwan, an official

at the Hokkaido prefectural government said.

Hexing Station of the Taiwan Railways Administration's Neiwun Line got the name Love Station from a story of a high school boy running after a girl he loved who was on a departing train at the unmanned station in around 1960, said a member of a group set up in Obihiro by citizens to promote exchanges between Japan and Taiwan.

Asian tourists visiting the Tokachi region in Hokkaido, with Obihiro at its centre, have been steadily increasing in recent years. In the first half of fiscal 2015, 54,727 foreign tourists stayed at hotels or inns in Tokachi, up 41.5 per cent year-on-year, and those from Taiwan accounted for 46.1 per cent of the total.

Negotiations for a partnership between Kofuku and Hexing stations began following a proposal from the Taiwan side in the spring of 2014, with the group, the Tokachi Japan-Taiwan Friendship Association, exchanging information on many occasions.

The Obihiro city government has tapped the central government's subsidies for local economic stimulation and set aside 1 million yen (\$8,300) in its supplementary budget for fiscal 2015 to facilitate the negotiations. “We expect a further increase in the exchange of people and goods” between Japan and Taiwan through the two stations' partnership, said Mikado Kato, head of the city government's tourism department.—*Kyodo News*

White House: more time needed for new Iran missile sanctions



Deputy US National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes participates in the Washington Ideas Forum in Washington, on 30 September 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

HONOLULU — The White House expects Iran to finish work needed to trigger implementation of an international nuclear deal in the coming weeks, but Washington needs more time to prepare sanctions over its ballistic missile programme, a US official said on Saturday.

The administration had ad-

ditional diplomatic and technical work to complete before announcing any new sanctions related to the missile programme, but the delay was not a result of pressure from Tehran, said deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes.

"We have additional work that needs to be done before we

would announce additional designations, but this is not something that we would negotiate with the Iranian government," Rhodes told reporters in Hawaii, where President Barack Obama is on vacation.

President Hassan Rouhani ordered his defence minister on Thursday to expand Iran's missile programme, in defiance of the US threat to impose sanctions over a ballistic missile test Iran carried out in October.

Meanwhile, implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers was on track after Iran shipped its stockpile of low enriched uranium out of the country, though it still had many other important things to complete, Rhodes said.

"I would expect the Iranians to complete the work necessary to move forward with implementation in the coming weeks," Rhodes said.

"We are on track to see the implementation of the Iran deal move forward."—Reuters

Putin names United States among threats in new Russian security strategy

MOSCOW — A new appraisal names the United States as one of the threats to Russia's national security for the first time, a sign of how relations with the west have deteriorated in recent years.

The document, "About the Strategy of National Security of Russian Federation", was signed by President Vladimir Putin on New Year's Eve. It replaces a 2009 version, endorsed by then-President Dmitry Medvedev, the current prime minister, which mentioned neither the United States nor NATO.

It says Russia has managed to heighten its role in solving global problems and international conflicts. That heightened role has caused a reaction by the West, it says.

"The strengthening of Russia happens against the background of new threats to the national security, which has complex and interrelated nature," the document says.

Conducting an independent policy, "both international and domestic" has caused "counteraction from the USA and its allies, which are striving to retain their dominance in global affairs."

That in turn is likely to lead to "political, economical, military and informational pressure" on Russia, the document says.

Relations between Russia and the West reached a low after Russian forces annexed the



US President Barack Obama chats with Russia's President Vladimir Putin prior to a working session at the Group of 20 (G20) leaders summit in the Mediterranean resort city of Antalya, Turkey, on 16 November 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in March 2014, after protests in Ukraine forced its pro-Moscow president to flee to Russia.

Since then, the West has accused Russia of aiding insurgents in eastern Ukraine. Moscow denies actively assisting the rebels.

The United States and the European Union have since imposed wide-ranging sanctions against Russian individuals and companies. Moscow has reacted by restricting food and other goods from the EU.

The document says that the United States and the EU have supported an "anti-constitutional coup d'etat in Ukraine",

which led to a deep divide in Ukrainian society and a military conflict.

It also names the expansion of NATO as a threat to Russia's national security and said that the United States has expanded its network of military-biological laboratories in neighbouring to Russia countries.

The document, which serves as a basis for planning strategy related to national security by different state bodies, does not mention Syria. On 30 September, Russia began air strikes against anti-government rebels opposed to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a Russian ally.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

French do not want Hollande-Sarkozy re-match in 2017

PARIS — Almost three quarters of French people want neither French President Francois Hollande nor his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy to run for the presidency in 2017 and are eager to see new faces, according to a poll published on Saturday.

Some 74 per cent of those surveyed do not want a re-match of the last presidential election in 2012 when the Socialist leader beat the former conservative president, the Odoxa poll for *Le Parisien* newspaper showed.

The duel is still one of the most likely scenarios, however, with none of the potential rivals in their respective parties mustering enough support so far to lead their camp in next year's general elections.

Some 88 per cent of respondents said the French political scene needed rejuvenation, the poll showed. Among the politicians who best embodied "renewal", Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron garnered the most positive opinions (55 per cent), followed by far-right politician Marion Marechal-Le Pen at 43 per cent and former conservative minister Bruno Le Maire with 36 per cent.—Reuters

Israel charges two Jews over lethal arson of Palestinian home — radio

LOD — Israeli prosecutors filed murder charges yesterday against two Jewish citizens for a 31 July arson attack in the occupied West Bank that killed three members of a Palestinian family, Israel Radio said.

It said one adult defendant was indicted for murder and the second, a minor, as an accessory to murder. A court spokesman did not immediately confirm the report, saying the charges had yet to be formally made public.—Reuters

Iran leader sees 'divine vengeance' for Saudi cleric execution

DUBAI — Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, attacking Saudi Arabia for the second straight day over its execution of a Shi'ite cleric, said yesterday politicians in the Sunni kingdom would face divine retribution for his death.

"The unjustly spilled blood of this oppressed martyr will no doubt soon show its effect and divine vengeance will befall Saudi politicians," state TV reported Khamenei as saying. It said he described the execution as a "political error". Saudi Arabia executed Nimr al-Nimr and three other Shi'ites alongside dozens of al Qaeda members on Saturday, signalling it would not tolerate attacks by either Sunni jihadists or members of the Shi'ite minority seeking equality.—Reuters

White House: Iran work for nuclear deal likely finished in coming weeks

HONOLULU — The White House expects that Iran will finish the work it needs to trigger implementation of a landmark nuclear deal with world powers in the next couple weeks, White House deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes said on Saturday.

Rhodes, speaking to reporters in Hawaii, said the United States needed more time to prepare sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile programme and said that delay was not a result of pressure from Tehran. President Barack Obama is on vacation in Hawaii.—Reuters

Newly installed mayor of Mexican city killed

MEXICO CITY — The newly installed mayor of the Mexican city of Temixco was killed on Saturday, according to a tweet from Morelos state Governor Graco Ramirez.

Gisela Mota formally took office with the new year on Friday. Mexico City newspaper *EL Universal* said she was attacked at her home by four armed gunmen.

Local police later arrested two alleged attackers, while killing two others, according to a statement issued by the Morelos attorney general's office.

The statement did not provide further details of the attack.

Several mayors were killed last year in Mexico, where armed gangs financed by the drugs trade control many local communities.

Temixco, located some 60 miles (100 km) south of Mexico City, has a population of about 100,000.

Mota, a former federal member of Congress, belonged to the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution.—Reuters

Iran reacts with fury after Saudis execute Shi'ite cleric

DUBAI/RIYADH — Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi Embassy in Tehran yesterday as Shi'ite Muslim Iran reacted with fury to Saudi Arabia's execution of a prominent Shi'ite cleric.

Demonstrators who had massed at the embassy gates to protest against cleric Nimr al-Nimr's execution broke into the embassy and started fires before being cleared away by the police, Iran's ISNA news agency reported.

Pictures posted on Twitter showed parts of the interior on fire and smashed furniture inside one office. Shortly afterwards, Iran's foreign ministry issued a statement calling for calm and urging protesters to respect the diplomatic premises, the Entekhab news website reported.

Tehran's police chief, Hossein Sajedinia, told ISNA that an unspecified number of "unruly elements" had been arrested for attacking the embassy with petrol bombs and rocks.

Iran's hardline Revolutionary Guards had promised "harsh revenge" against the Saudi Sunni royal dynasty for Saturday's execution of Nimr, considered a terrorist by Riyadh but hailed in Iran as a champion of the rights of Saudi Arabia's marginalised Shi'ite minority.

Nimr, the most vocal critic of the dynasty among the Shi'ite minority, had come to be seen as a leader of the sect's younger activists, who had tired of the failure of older, more measured leaders to

achieve equality with Sunnis.

Although most of the 47 men killed in the kingdom's biggest mass execution for decades were Sunnis convicted of al Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia a decade ago, it was Nimr and three other Shi'ites, all accused of involvement in shooting police, who attracted most attention in the region and beyond.

The move appeared to end any hopes that the appearance of a common enemy in the form of the Islamic State militant force would produce some rapprochement between the region's leading Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim powers, who back opposing sides in wars currently raging in Syria and Yemen.

The website of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, carried a picture of a Saudi executioner next to notorious Islamic State executioner 'Jihadi John', with the caption "Any differences?". The Revolutionary Guards said "harsh revenge" would topple "this pro-terrorist, anti-Islamic regime".

Saudi Arabia summoned the Iranian ambassador, only to see its embassy stormed soon afterwards.

In Iraq, whose Shi'ite-led government is close to Iran, prominent religious and political figures demanded that ties with Riyadh be severed, calling into question Saudi attempts to forge a regional alliance against Islamic State, which controls swathes of Iraq and Syria.

Despite the regional focus on Nimr, the executions seemed most-



Flames rise from Saudi Arabia's embassy during a demonstration in Tehran on 2 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

ly aimed at discouraging jihadism in Saudi Arabia, where dozens have died in the past year in attacks by Sunni militants.

The ruling Al Saud family has grown increasingly worried in recent years as Middle East turmoil, especially in Syria and Iraq, has boosted Sunni jihadists seeking to bring it down and given room to Iran to spread its influence. A nuclear deal with Iran backed by Saudi Arabia's biggest ally and protector, the United States, has done little to calm nerves in Riyadh.

But Saudi Arabia's Western allies, many of whom supply it with arms, are growing concerned about its new assertiveness in the region and at home.

The US State Department said Nimr's execution "risks exacerbating sectarian tensions at a time when they urgently need to be reduced". The sentiment was echoed almost verbatim by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and an official at the German Foreign Ministry. The State Department also urged the Saudi government to

"respect and protect human rights, and to ensure fair and transparent judicial proceedings in all cases", as well as to permit peaceful expression of dissent and work with all community leaders to defuse tensions.

The simultaneous execution of 47 people — 45 Saudis, one Egyptian and a man from Chad — was the biggest mass execution for security offences in Saudi Arabia since the 1980 killing of 63 jihadist rebels who seized Mecca's Grand Mosque in 1979.—Reuters

Attack on Iraqi military base kills at least 15

BAGHDAD — Attacks by five suicide bombers on an Iraqi military base north of Baghdad yesterday killed at least 15 members of the security forces and wounded 22 others, security sources said.

Two of the bombers detonated their vehicle-borne explosives at the western gate of Camp Speicher, a former US base outside the Sunni city of Tikrit.

Three others exploded themselves after entering the section of the base where Iraqi police are being trained, police and military sources in the Salahuddin operations command said.

Islamic State, the militant group controlling swathes of Iraq's north and west, claimed responsibility for the blasts in a statement distributed by supporters online.

It said it targeted "trainers from the rejectionist army", a term used by the Sunni insurgents to describe Shi'ite Muslims.

Iraq is gripped by a sectarian conflict mostly between

Shi'ites and Sunnis that has been exacerbated by the rise of the ultra-hardline Sunni insurgents of Islamic State.

Camp Speicher became a symbol of the group's brutality and hatred for Iraq's Shi'ite majority after as many as 1,700 soldiers from the base were killed in mid-2014 during the militants' lightning advance across the Syrian border.

Iraqi forces retook the centre of the western city of Ramadi last week, a victory that could help boost Prime Minister

Haider al-Abadi, who has been rebuilding the military after stunning defeats in the face of Islamic State.

Iraq's Defence Ministry said Islamic State has stepped up suicide blasts in response to setbacks in Ramadi.

It said in a statement the group had used 22 bombers in two recent failed attacks in Anbar where Ramadi is located.

The military responded, killing at least 42 militants including the bombers, the ministry said.—Reuters



Iraqi security forces' vehicles are seen in the city of Ramadi, on 2 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Syrian rebel group says exits Islamist alliance to refocus fight

BEIRUT — A Syrian insurgent group said yesterday it was pulling out of a coalition of Islamist factions operating in the northwest of the country, in order to redeploy around Aleppo where pro-government forces have intensified assaults in recent months.

Since Russia's intervention in the Syria conflict in September with an air campaign to support President Bashar al-Assad, pro-government forces have stepped up offensives in the west and north of the country.

Government forces backed by Iranian troops and Russian air strikes have advanced in Aleppo province, edging closer to a major rebel-controlled highway.

Failaq al-Sham said in a statement that it was withdrawing from the Army of Conquest, which includes the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front and powerful Islamist group Ahrar al Sham, and which captured most of neighbouring Idlib province in 2015.

"As enemies from inside and abroad, the regime and its Shabi-

ha (militias), Shi'ites and Russians concentrate efforts on bringing down the Aleppo region, we are giving priority to supporting revolutionaries in the Aleppo area," the statement, posted online, said.

"We therefore announce our exit from the Army of Conquest operations room, which has finished its mission in the battle to conquer Idlib."

The statement did not indicate any tension with other groups within the Army of Conquest.

While pro-government forces have advanced in the southern Aleppo countryside and in the western coastal province of Latakia, rebels have managed to advance in other areas including Hama province, where anti-tank missiles supplied to insurgent groups have been used effectively.

Pro-government forces have in recent days also tried to push forward against insurgents in Hama province, Britain-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.—Reuters

OPINION

Continue to Strive in Unity

Khin Maung Aye

IN all nations which have freed themselves from alien domination, the day of re-attainment of independence i.e. the day on which sovereign power was restored is designated as a national day.

In our case, 4th January, 1948 or the 9th Waning of Pyatho, 1309, Myanmar Era has witnessed Myanmar becoming free from under the yoke of the British-Indian Empire, who had dominated the country for more than a century after dethroning the Myanmar monarch through the use of force.

As this day is a day of political significance,

all towns and cities big and small have independence monuments erected. In fact, independence was not attained easily. The eight major races - Kachins, Kayahs, Kayins, Chins, Barmars, Mons, Rakhines and Shans had to make supreme sacrifices including the loss of their lives and limbs to gain freedom.

It is, therefore, worth recalling on this day of 4th January that it is incumbent upon us all to preserve and protect our nation. This is the reason why Independence Day is celebrated annually throughout the entire union on an elaborate scale. On this auspicious occasion, people gather at the independence monument grounds, pay respect to the union flag, express words of commitment to preserve, protect and perpetuate the union, celebrate with music, dance and theatrical shows, hold sports events that chiefly involve track & field games and merry-making activities.

The government has laid down four national objectives for this 68th anniversary independence day they are as follows;

- To ensure that all the national races co-exist forever in unity;
- For all national races to ensure non-disintegration of the union; non-disintegration of

national solidarity and the perpetuation of sovereignty;

- To strive for eternal peace with the signing of national ceasefire agreement; and
- To build a modern, developed and disciplined democratic nation through the power of the people.

Such being the case, the onus is on the entire mass of national races to continue to exert concerted effort to preserve independence as well as to contribute towards the emergence of a modern, developed, disciplined democratic country.

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 thantunaungnlm@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.

The Fruits of Being Independent

Sann Ni Lar Winn

WHEN the people from two countries — Kapilavattu and Koliya were about to wage a war for the dispute over distribution of water from the Rohini River, the Lord Buddha delivered the MahasamayaSutta in which He said, "There is nothing in the world which is as sweet as being free" what does freedom mean?

Freedom is of two kinds. Being free in the sense of worldly affairs and being free from them. Having freedom in the sense of worldly affairs is that the people can live, do business, have their own administrative machinery and practice their own culture and thus they can shape their own destiny. Being free from worldly affairs is that one can live peacefully in the ecclesiastical world.

Our country became a colony of the imperialists in 1885. When the country became a colony of another country it lost its own administrative machinery under the colonial system and this was deprived of its right to shape its own destiny. The social, economic and cultural life of the people was deprived of. Even if one is fet under custody in prison for committing an offence, one can breath in and out freely. But having to live on one's hand as colony prisoner is like having to lead one's life with no hope. Seeban-ni Sayadaw AsinNarinda expressed his feeling about the life of being a colony prisoner that it is better to die than live under a colonial rule.

Even then Myanmar became a colony and the king was sent into exile. The imperialists ruled our country as a colony and oppressed the people for more than a hundred years. But the imperialism was not able to totally get the indigenous people fight a series of battles against movements sacrificing a lot of their lives, blood and sweat. The people fought a series of battles unitedly against the imperialists for the cause of national freedom and the country's independence. Eventually, we regained our independence.

The following was the Declaration of Independence which was issued on 4 January 1948.

"Let there be victory. On this noble and auspicious Sunday the 9th Waning Day of Pyatho, 1309 BC (4th January 1948) Myanmar our land, has become an absolutely independent and sovereign state under the name of Union of Myanmar.

Myanmar to which we belong is a noble land of ours which is rich in all the thing we want. It is a good land where justice and noble laws prevail. It is a land which has such abundance of natural resources that it is like Padehabin, a tree which has an inexhaustible source of food, drinks and things so that all the creatures can go on consuming them till the world ends. We, the Kachins, the Kayahs, the Karens, the Chins, the Mons, the Rakhines, Mons, Barmars and Shans have been living together as members of a family whose ancestors were the same and as an independent enti-

ty for thousands of years since time immemorial. Our independent can be likened to the sun whose light had strengthened through the Tagaung, Thayekhittaya, Bagan, Myinsaing, Sagaing, Pinya, Inwa and Konbaung Dynasties up to the Era of Mandalay. However, just as the sun and the moon which can shed their bright light cannot shine when they are covered with fog, mist

with cloud, fog and mist, they will have to disappear in a short time as they cannot stand the brilliance of the sun and the moon, and the moon regain their original power and grace. In the same way since the imprecation which dominated us could not stand the brilliances of our spirit of independence which had got steeled and all through the years it disappeared after its domination of six-

"When the country became a colony of another country it lost its own administrative machinery under the colonial system and this was deprived of its right to shape its own destiny. The social, economic and cultural life of the people was deprived of. Even if one is fet under custody in prison for committing an offence, one can breath in and out freely."

and clouds, so also our independent Myanmar met with imperialism which originated in Europe same years ago and we lost Rakhine and Tenasserim regions after the first Anglo-Myanmar War, Hanthawaddy and Pegu after the second Anglo-Myanmar war and Mandalay (Yadanabon) after the Third Anglo-Myanmar was and thus lost the independence which we had up-held and safeguarded for hundreds of thousand of years on this noble land and became a colony. But however much the sun and the moon get covered

ty-one years, one month and one day. So, from today, like the full moon which has completely got out of the eclipse, we have won and got in our grip the independence which we have cherished so much.

Let everybody know this that from this auspicious and virtuous moment of today we have taken back complete and absolute independence which originally belonged to us. We will be loyal and true to our Independence and our state.

Let our Declaration of Inde-

pendence be known to everybody on this earth.

The country regained its independence on 4 January 1948. It made known to the world the above-mentioned Declaration of Independence.

Sixty-seven years ago Myanmar was able to shake herself free from enslavement and regain her independence. During the struggles for national independence, the national groups of the country had shown wonderful courage, patriotic spirit and cooperation and had sacrificed their self-interests and life, blood and sweat.

Without working, your will never fully enjoy the taste of independence although you may regain it. When independence comes to this country Myanmar the duty to safeguard the independence is the duty of the Myanmar people themselves. Today, I will frankly tell you this. If you want to enjoy the independence in the future, you must work, you must be disciplined, you must get rid of yourselves of all bad ways and bad habits.

Therefore, each and every citizen has a duty to strive for the prepetuction of independence and sovereignty, for prevalence of peace and tranquility and the rule of law and order in accordance with the fine traditions of national unity. The duty to safeguard independence is an inherent historic duty. Only if and when every citizen dutifully and faithfully carries out this inherent duty will we be able to enjoy the essence of independence.

GAP system makes monsoon paddy yied 100 baskets per acre

THE GAP system has enabled the monsoon paddy yields to reach 100 baskets per acre. At the harvest ceremony held in pale, Sagaing division on 30 December U Zaw Win Soe, Staff Officer from Agriculture Department said "Myanmar is the country which grows the paddy most within the region. Monsoon paddy was targeted to cultivate on 45000 acres of land in pale township in yin-marbin District.

Farmers were able to exceed the target, said the officer from township agriculture department.

Meanwhile, farmers in Ayeyawady Delta are practicing new cultivation method, pumping water from rivers while the salination level is low.

Ayeyawady is considered the country's rice bowl. —*Min Khant Soe (ZayyarMyae)*

Onion growers boost productivity with improved irrigation system



Onion growers in Taungtha work in the farmland. PHOTO: LIN LET KYAE (TAUNGTHA)

ONION growers in Taungtha Township have begun using a modernised water spraying system using pipes in order to boost productivity.

"Compared to drain irriga-

tion systems, this new system has helped us grow more onions," said U Thein Tun.

The farmers grow onions at the end of December every year as a summer crop. Onions are

a major cash crop in Taungtha Township.

The price of onions spiked last year, reaching K2,600 per kilo, up from K260 per kilo in previous years.

However, the farmers did not see high profits because the prices increased only after they sold their crops to brokers, according to local farmers. —*Lin Let Kyae*

Crime News

The sparkle of fire destroyed two ships in Myeik



Flames have engulfed two fishing ships. PHOTO: KHINE HTOO (IPRD)

A fire started from the sparkle has destroyed two ships in Myeik town, Taninthayi Division, on 31 December.

The incident happened around 4pm on board a fishing

vessel called Htet Htet Paing. The ship is 80 feet long, 23 feet wide. The gas on board had spilled sparkles onto the rubbish which is swamp with patrol. It took 21 fire engines and

several firemen and the assistance of neighbors to put out the blaze.

The Myeik police station has taken action.—*Khine Htoo (IPRD)*

A man died, two men injured following car accident in Sagaing

A man was killed on the spot and two others injured in a vehicle accident that occurred in Kalay township, Sagaing on Wednesday.

Moe Hmaung, 27, drove the vehicle eluded another ve-

hicle and lost control. A passenger called Ye Naing Lin, 16, was injured while another one called Thet Nyein Tun, 37, died on the spot. The driver is being charged for his careless driving by the police.—*Police IPRD*

Ten passengers injured in car accident

A truck heading to Sagaing from Monywa driven by Min Soe Naing, 36, lost control and turned over near milepost 25/6-7 between Ohn Daw and Ywar Thit village on Thursday.

The accident injured Daw Than Kyi, 74, and nine other passengers who were on board the vehicle.

The driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by the police.—*Police IPRD*

Passenger injured in accident

A three wheel motorbike driven by one Zaw Htoo, 30, had the back wheel got off and slipped to the roadside near milepost (33/7) on Magway reigon and the passenger Saetan

Maung, 37, was injured as he fell down from the motorbike on 31 December.

The driver was deemed guilty of careless driving by police.—*Police IPRD*

Global Stocks slip, close year mixed; oil ends ugly 2015 with slight gain



Trader Peter Tuchman wears plastic glasses to celebrate the last trading day of 2015 as he works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange shortly after the opening bell in New York on 31 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Stock and bond markets in major economies closed 2015 with a mixed performance, while oil prices and emerging markets cemented big losses during a year that provided few safe places for investors.

While equity markets in Japan and Western Europe gained

strongly amid ongoing ultra-easy monetary policy, concerns about global growth and a robust US dollar crushed petroleum prices and took down emerging markets, copper and other metals.

Fixed-income posted a middling performance, as riskier high-yield securities fell, largely

due to exposure to weakened energy credits. Short-dated US Treasury yields rose.

The MSCI All-World Index .MIWD00000PUS was down 0.7 per cent, and closed the year with a loss of 4.2 per cent.

For Wall Street's most widely followed average, the Standard & Poor's 500 Index, it was down to the last day of trading to determine whether the year would end negative or not. The benchmark index lost nearly 1 per cent for the day, giving its price a 0.7 per cent loss for 2015. Including dividends, it posted a positive total return for a seventh straight year.

The market's ups and downs this year were triggered by worries about oil, global growth and the Federal Reserve. The uncertainty surrounding the US central bank's plans dominated the last several months of trading, and some were glad to see it finally begin raising rates.

"I think that now that the Fed finally did something it will

calm the intraday jitters a bit at least for the first six months, and hopefully see investors more committed to positions rather than nervous to hold anything," said J.J. Kinahan, chief strategist at TD Ameritrade.

The Dow Jones industrial average .DJI fell 1 per cent to 17,425.03, the S&P 500 .SPX lost 0.94 per cent to 2,043.92 and the Nasdaq Composite .IXIC fell 1.15 per cent to 5,007.41.

Brent crude LCOc1 gained 3.1 per cent to \$37.60 on Thursday, after a 3.5 per cent drop in the previous session. For the year, Brent slid 34 per cent after shedding 48 per cent the previous year, and a global supply glut shows no sign of abating. US crude lost 30 per cent in 2015, after falling 47 per cent in 2014.

Some analysts like Goldman Sachs say prices as low as \$20 per barrel might be necessary to push enough production out of business and allow the market to rebalance.—Reuters

India will soon allow duty-free imports of 500,000 T corn

NEW DELHI — India will soon ask state-run traders to import half a million tonnes of duty-free corn after a second straight drought cut output, in what would be the country's first overseas purchase in 16 years, two government sources said on Thursday.

India has agreed to allow state-run traders such as PEC Ltd to import corn to curb rising prices and avoid shortages, said a government official directly involved in the decision-making process. The official requested anonymity because he is not authorised to talk to the media.

The government will import only non-genetically modified varieties, another government official said. Trade ministry spokesman Rajinder Choudhury had no immediate comment.

India is traditionally a major corn exporter to southeast Asia, but higher local prices because of the first back-to-back drought in nearly three decades and rising domestic demand have hampered exports.

The country has not struck even a single deal so far in the current fiscal year, after selling 2.8 million tonnes in 2014/15. Local corn prices have jumped 28 per cent in the past six months.

The dramatic switch in India's position in the market is likely to bring further cheer to rival suppliers like Brazil, Argentina and the United States.

The country's absence from the export market is already helping rivals grab Asian market share



A woman selling grilled corn takes shelter under an umbrella as it rains on a beach in Mumbai in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

and its imports would give a boost to global prices which have fallen nearly 13 per cent in the past six months.

"India's demand will lift corn prices in the world market since everyone counts India as an exporter, not as an importer," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm.

Trade and industry experts say India is expected to import non-GM corn from Africa or Ukraine.

Government-backed trading

companies will sell imported corn directly to poultry units and starch manufacturers.

The landed cost of imported corn would be at least 7 per cent lower than local prices, said Prasanna Pedgaonkar, deputy general manager at chicken processor Venky's.

"Due to the production shortfall traders have started hoarding, and imports would discourage hoarding," he said.

The government has forecast this year's output of the sum-

mer-sown variety at 15.51 million tonnes, but trade and industry experts estimate production at only 12 to 13 million tonnes because of the drought.

India consumes 19 million tonnes of corn a year. Indian farmers grow corn twice a year. The summer crop, which accounts for nearly 80 per cent of total output, is planted in the rainy months of June-July, with harvests from October. Winter-sown corn will start trickling in by March-April.—Reuters

Japan to boost drills to counter cyberattacks ahead of 2020 Olympics

TOKYO — The Japanese government plans to both increase the number and expand the scale of exercises to counter cyberattacks as part of preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, government sources said Saturday.

The drills, now held about six times a year and involving central government ministry and agency officials, will be increased to at least 10 a year and expanded to include officials of local governments that are falling behind in cyber security measures.

The 2012 London Olympics official website is known to have been attacked about 200 million times, and Japan is bracing for even more attacks in 2020.

During the exercises, participants are divided into teams that learn how to determine which computer terminals have been attacked and how to prevent the situation from worsening, as well how to investigate the cause and report to superiors.

The central government believes local governments lack experience in dealing with cyberattacks, which could strike anywhere in Japan during the Olympics.

It plans to prioritise training officials of municipalities in remote areas, as they cannot rely on specialists in urban areas if their computer systems are attacked.

For Tokyo Olympic organising committee officials, the central government plans drills involving simulated attacks on the ticket sales system of a mock official website, the sources said.

By having local government officials in charge of computer systems and others join the drills, the number of participants is expected to increase to 2,000 from 300 now, the sources said.

The government also plans to send officials to London and to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which will host the 2016 Games, to collect information on cyber security.

The government is moving to bolster cyber security after a series of security breaches. The Japan Pension Service, operator of the country's public pension programme, was hit by cyberattacks in May, leading to the leakage of 1.25 million people's personal data.—Kyodo News

Anesthesiologists like blues, surgeons prefer top 40 hits

WASHINGTON — Music is common in operating rooms, with patients and providers generally agreeing that it's a positive addition, but they may part ways on the best type of music to promote successful surgery, a new study suggests.

US researchers surveyed doctors, nurses and patients and found differences — for instance, anesthesiologists more often prefer blues or jazz at lower volume, while surgeons like to pump up the volume of top 40 hits.

"Because music is frequently

played during operations, we believe that the implications of music in the (operating room) are clinically relevant and need to be better researched," said senior author Dr. Claudius Conrad of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Patients seemed to intuitively understand that music can improve concentration and communication in the operating team, he said.

"We were astonished by how significant the differences in musical preferences (genre, tempo, volume) by specialty (surgery vs anes-

thesiology) and professional status (attending physician vs resident vs nurse) were," Conrad told Reuters Health by email.

"As surgeons we strive to make the operating room the safest place possible for our patients," he said.

"Surgery demands cognitively and technically complex skills while also requiring broad team coordination to synchronize tasks."

The researchers gave musical preference questionnaires to 282 preoperative patients and 390 providers, including attending doc-

tors, residents and nurses in anesthesiology and surgery.

Three-quarters of patients reported a high level of music enjoyment, and most often favored rock, classical and top 40 genres. The operations they were having ranged from very minor to major surgery.

More than 40 per cent of patients thought music should be played often in the operating room, and most felt the music choice should be up to the surgeon or operating team.

Most providers also rated music enjoyment highly, the study team reports in the journal *Surgery*.

Attending doctors tended to prefer classical music over other genres like hip-hop or electronic music.

Nurses and surgeons tended to prefer music at higher volume than residents and attending doctors, while those in surgery also preferred louder music than those in anesthesiology.

Anesthesiologists must process audiovisual alarms during procedures, so softer volumes make sense, Conrad said. Faster, louder music may be more suited to the prolonged motor performance required of surgery.

"A team's ability to effectively communicate and function as an integrated unit is one of the most important determinants of success and is critical to the delivery of high-quality medical care, avoidance of medical errors, and management of unexpected surgical events or crises, particularly at the

surgeon-anesthesiologist interface," Conrad said.

"Based on our study, given music's impact on team dynamics, the use of music in the OR requires careful consideration and discussion among team members to ensure that the needs of all are being met," he said.

Surgery providers most often select the music that plays in the OR, he noted.

"While executive decision-making can contribute to efficiency in the OR and may also create a sense of control that is an important stress-relieving mechanism, surgical providers must recognise the significant differences that exist between the different providers in the operating room," Conrad said.

Collective decision making is the best way to choose music in the OR, he said.

"Healthcare providers may not be aware of the music preferences of patients and their staff colleagues," said Linda L. Chlan, associate dean for nursing research at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who was not part of the new study.

One person's music choice for concentration may be very distracting for another colleague, Chlan told Reuters Health by email.

Patients who will be awake during surgery may want to use headphones so they can listen to their preferred music to reduce anxiety, not the music chosen by the healthcare team members, Chlan said. —Reuters



Surgeons perform an operation at a hospital in France in 2008. PHOTO: REUTERS

Extra care required when dying parents have young kids

CHAPEL HILL (North Carolina) — End-of-life care for parents of young children may need to include additional support services that help the entire family cope with terminal illness, a recent study suggests.

While all families may struggle when a loved one is dying, parenting duties can create an added layer of emotional stress and complicate efforts to comfort patients at the end of life, researchers note in the journal *BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care*.

"What is unique about patients with young children is the extraordinary psychological suffering related to parenting," said lead study author Dr Eliza Park, a psychiatry researcher at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

These parents may worry about how their illness negatively impacts their children's lives, how their death will impact their kids, and how to explain their prognosis to their children in an age-appropriate way. They may also experience anticipatory grief about their

inability to raise their children into adulthood, Park added by email.

"The patient in these situations truly is the entire family unit," Park said. To understand the unique issues faced by terminally ill parents, Park and colleagues surveyed 344 widowed fathers who had lost a spouse to cancer and were raising young children. Their late wives had been about 44 years old on average.

The families typically had two kids under 18 years old, with the youngest child around 8 years old.

About 43 per cent of the women had cancer that had spread to other parts of the body at the time tumors were diagnosed.

Roughly two thirds of the women received hospice services, and 41 per cent of them died at home. Almost half of them died at the location of their choice.

According to the fathers, 38 per cent of mothers had not said goodbye to their children before death, and 26 per cent were not at peace with the prospect of dying.

Nine in 10 widowed fathers

reported that their spouse was worried about the strain on their children at the end of life, the survey found. Fathers who reported clearer communication between doctors and their spouse about the prognosis also reported fewer indications of depression or grief in their survey responses.

One shortcoming of the study, the authors note, is that it was done online and men were recruited through an open-access educational website, so researchers couldn't verify that the men were indeed widowed fathers who lost spouses to cancer.

The participants also tended to be white and married, with more income and education than a typical widow might have, which could limit how much the results apply to a broader population of parents and families.

Still, the findings suggest a need to better understand how parenting influences choices in treatment at the end of life, and what support families and children may need to cope with terminal illness, the authors conclude. —Reuters

Puerto Rico reports first case of Zika virus, spread by mosquitoes

SAN JUAN — Puerto Rico has reported its first case of Zika, a mosquito-borne virus that has been spreading across South America and the Caribbean and has been linked by Brazilian authorities to a serious birth defect, a US Congressman said on Thursday.

Pedro Pierluisi, Puerto Rico's representative in Congress, said in a statement his office had been in touch with the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, which had confirmed the single case of Zika on the island.

"There is no reason for alarm, and the public should continue to take common sense steps to avoid mosquito bites, like using repellent and wearing long pants and shirts," Pierluisi said.

Zika was first detected in Africa in the 1940s but was unknown in the Americas until last year.

The mosquito-transmitted

disease has been confirmed in countries including Brazil, Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Mexico, Suriname, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Guatemala and Paraguay, according to public health officials.

Brazilian authorities in November linked Zika to a surge in babies born with microcephaly, a birth defect that seriously limits a child's mental and physical abilities.

Brazil has reported nearly 2,000 cases of babies born with microcephaly, or unusually small brains, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said this month.

The WHO said the cause of the outbreak in Brazil had yet to be determined.

Between three and 12 days after being bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus, three out of four people come down with symptoms including mild fever, rash, conjunctivitis, headaches and joint pain. —Reuters

Missouri assesses flood damage, US South still imperiled

EUREKA — Missouri Governor Jay Nixon on Saturday toured communities ravaged by flooding that killed at least 31 people in several states and forced large-scale evacuations, as the danger of rising waters shifted to Arkansas and beyond.

Nixon visited Eureka and Cape Girardeau in eastern Missouri, where floodwaters caused widespread damage, and announced the federal government had approved his request to declare an emergency to help with the massive cleanup and recovery now under way.

The governor described the scale of the flood damage as otherworldly.

"It's almost as if you're living on some other planet," he said, standing near a growing pile of debris in a park in Eureka,

about an hour's drive west of St Louis on the banks of the Meramec River, which flows into the Mississippi.

"This is just a tiny fraction of the trail of destruction," the governor told reporters.

The National Weather Service reported Mississippi floodwaters in Illinois and Missouri began cresting and receding on Saturday after thousands of people had to be evacuated from their homes earlier in the week when the floods destroyed hundreds of structures.

Retired Eureka homeowner Tracy Wolf, 58, spent the last three days trying to keep water away from the sides of his house with sandbags and out of his basement with vacuums.

"Wednesday night it came in through the windows," Wolf said.

"We slept three hours the first night ... I don't even know what day it is."

Twelve counties have been declared disaster areas in Illinois, where Governor Bruce Rauner on Saturday toured several communities hard-hit by flooding. On Friday, he ordered Illinois National Guard troops into flooded areas to mitigate damage and help with evacuation.

The floods claimed the lives of at least 31 people in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas, most of whom drove into flooded areas after days of downpours.

Authorities continued searching on Saturday for country singer Craig Strickland of the band Backroad Anthem. He had gone duck hunting on an Oklahoma lake during stormy

conditions and his friend, Chase Morland, was found dead on Monday.

In Thebes, Illinois, about 125 miles (201 km) downriver from St Louis, the floodwater was expected to crest at 47.5 feet (14 m) on Sunday, more than 1.5 feet (0.5 metres) above the 1995 record, the NWS said.

Major flooding continued in the state of Arkansas along the Arkansas River and its tributaries.

Arkansas officials said they expected the river, which bisects the state from west to southeast before joining the Mississippi, to crest late on Saturday.

Large swaths of parkland in Little Rock along the river were covered with floodwaters, and some homes and farmland in the Arkansas Delta were flooded on Saturday.

Signs that floodwaters were headed south began to emerge as the NWS issued a major flooding designation on Saturday for Osceola, Arkansas, where the Mississippi River reached above 35 feet (10.7 m), well above the 28-foot flood stage.

The NWS also on Saturday warned communities in the Southern Mississippi Valley region of potential flooding during the next 10 days.

Officials in Louisiana are checking levees daily, and Exxon Mobil Corp has decided to shut its 340,571 barrel-per-day refined products terminal in Memphis, Tennessee, as floodwaters threatened to inundate the facility just south of the city's downtown.

Workers in southwestern Tennessee prepared sandbags in hopes of limiting damage from the Mississippi when it crests at Memphis next week, state emergency management officials said.—Reuters



Volunteers set up a wall of sandbags and series of pumps to create a barricade preventing the rising water from flooding a home after several days of heavy rain in Arnold, Missouri, on 30 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain promises more money to improve flood defences

LONDON — Britain's government has promised more than 40 million pounds (\$59 million) to rebuild and improve the country's flood defences that failed to protect thousands of homes over the Christmas holidays.

Homes and businesses across northern England, Scotland and northern Ireland were hit by storms and torrential rains in December, leaving many without electricity and some under metres of water after river levels reached all-time highs.

Prime Minister David Cameron has been criticised by opposition lawmakers for not doing enough to protect the country from

severe weather and the *Observer* newspaper yesterday said many of Britain's flood defences were being abandoned or maintained to minimal levels because of government cuts. In a statement, Cameron announced a package of more than 40 million pounds to improve flood defences after Storm Eva brought gales and torrential downpours to Northern Ireland, Wales, England and parts of Scotland in late December. "I have seen at first-hand the devastation caused by flooding. And that's why this work to repair and improve flood defences is so vital," Cameron said in the statement.

He said 10 million pounds would be used to improve the

Foss barrier protecting the northern English city of York, which was overwhelmed at the height of Storm Eva. The other 30 million would be spent on defences on other rivers in northern England.

The government would also support charities helping those caught up in the deluge by matching every pound of the first two million pounds raised, he said.

The opposition Labour Party accused the government of complacency and said the funding would not go far enough.

"The government has been woefully complacent about the flood risk, ignoring warnings from its own experts," Kerry McCarthy, Labour's Environment, Food

and Rural Affairs spokeswoman, said in a statement. "Today's announcement of 40 million pounds won't go very far at all ... a lump sum of 40 million pounds is a short-term, sticking-plaster approach."

The *Observer* quoted a document submitted to ministers late last year that said investment in Britain's flood defences had fallen despite the country seeing "the five wettest years since 2000".

On Saturday, Britain's Meteorological Office issued an "amber warning" for potentially heavy rain in eastern Scotland at the weekend and on Monday which could lead to some flooding.—Reuters

Four escape death as private plane crash lands in Kenya

NAIROBI — Three passengers and a pilot on Saturday escaped narrowly after a private light aircraft crash landed in Nairobi near Wilson Airport, one of the busiest airports in east and central Africa.

CID commander in charge of airports Joseph Ngisa said the pilot, Captain Simon Herd, was flying with his family from Kijipwa in Kilifi County in the coastal region when the plane crash-landed.

"No injury was reported as all the occupants of the plane disembarked from the plane after landing in the field," Ngisa.

Witnesses said the Cessna 182, registration number 5Y-BME was preparing to land when the incident happened at about 4pm.

The plane had departed Rea Vipingo in Kilifi and was to land at the airport in Nairobi, officials said.

Police and aviation officials said the plane developed mechanical complications as the pilot prepared to land at the airport.

The incident happened as the Gardens hosted tens of revelers who are still celebrating the New Year.

They scampered for their safety as it came down. The scene was later secured as experts moved in to investigate the incident.

Fire engines from the Kenya Airports Authority and County Government rushed to the scene when news of the crash went out.

Investigators from Air Accident Investigation Department at the ministry of transport have launched investigations into the cause of the crash.

The officials said they will share their findings with the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority, air operators and the general public.

The airport's surroundings are common with such incidents. A number of accidents involving trainee pilots usually occur in the area mostly as they take off. Some of the incidents have in the past been fatal.—Xinhua

Refugee crisis could shake up German political landscape in 2016

BERLIN — For the past decade, German politics has been a relatively dull affair, with Angela Merkel dominating at the national level and the major parties in agreement on all the big issues, from euro zone bailouts and refugees to the phase-out of nuclear energy.

But that may change in 2016, when five of Germany's 16 states hold elections in the build-up to the next federal vote a year later.

Not only is Chancellor Merkel looking more vulnerable than ever before because of her welcoming stance towards the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing war in the Middle East, but the rise of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has injected a new element of surprise into the political landscape.

Add to that an unprecedented splintering of the electorate, which means that six parties have a legitimate shot of entering most state parliaments, and Germany's normally cozy, consensual politics begins to look a bit less predictable, and potentially more divisive, than it has in a long time.

The wild card is the threat of an attack by Islamist extremists on German soil, a risk highlighted on New Year's Eve when authorities received a tip that Iraqi and Syrian nationals were planning suicide bombings at train stations in Munich.

It could be fatal for Merkel, officials in Berlin acknowledge in private, if



A car of riot police drives over Augustus Bridge ahead of expected demonstration by the supporters of the anti-immigration right-wing movement PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) in Dresden, Germany, on 21 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

such an attack were carried out successfully by people who entered Europe with the flood of migrants, as was the case with two of the men involved in the 13 November attacks in Paris.

Even if Germany is spared such a horror, the refugee crisis will continue to dominate the political debate this year, polarising voters and emboldening Merkel's opponents on the right and left.

So far the most damaging attacks have come from her conservative sister party, the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU).

"If we don't see success in limiting the tide of

refugees, we could have a grassroots political tremor in Germany," said one senior government official, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

"If Merkel doesn't deliver you could see the AfD approaching 20 per cent in the polls," the official predicted.

Currently the AfD is polling between 8-10 per cent, roughly double the 4.7 per cent the party won in the last federal election in 2013, when it narrowly failed to clear the 5 per cent mark needed to enter the Bundestag.

That seems relatively harmless if you compare it

to other like-minded parties across Europe, like the National Front in France, the Freedom Party in Austria or the Danish People's Party, which enjoy more than twice as much support.

But the AfD's rise looks more significant when one considers that it has occurred against a backdrop of infighting and financial trouble within the party that might have crushed it.

In the past half year, the party has weathered the departure of its founder, embarrassing slurs about African reproductive habits from one of its leading politicians, and a party financing law from the government that

threatened to strip bare its coffers.

In response to the new law, the AfD asked its supporters for donations and raised roughly 2 million euros in just three weeks, a testament to its drawing power.

In three state elections that are due to be held in March, the AfD's newfound strength will be on stark display.

It is on track to win 7 percent in the western states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate and roughly twice that in Saxony-Anhalt in the east.

"In every one of these elections, the performance of the AfD will be key in

determining what constellations are possible," Torsten Krauel wrote in a front-page editorial in German daily *Die Welt* last week.

The rise of the AfD and a nascent comeback by the Free Democrats (FDP), a business-friendly, socially liberal party that was the kingmaker of German politics for decades before imploding in the last federal vote, means that there are now three legitimate right-of-centre parties in Germany, including Merkel's conservative bloc.

Add to that the three leading parties of the left, the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and hard-left "Linke", and German politics looks more fragmented than at any time since reunification in 1990.

Merkel could yet emerge as the big loser from the new German political landscape if she is unable to stem the tide of refugees in the months ahead.

If she is successful, it may be her coalition partner in Berlin, the SPD, who suffer most.

The rise of the AfD and return of the FDP would make it more difficult for the SPD to form left-leaning majorities at the state or federal level, condemning it to second-tier status for the foreseeable future. And that weakness could turn the SPD into a more confrontational and unpredictable partner for Merkel as the next federal vote in 2017 approaches.—Reuters

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CORRIGENDUM 1 (Date Extension) IFB NO. [MOAI/INDIALOAN/MYN-ILC/BID/2015/001] dated 17th November, 2015

Refer Agricultural Mechanization Department (AMD), Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MOAI), the Republic of the Union of Myanmar open tender for procurement of farm machinery and implements for Development of Irrigation and Land Consolidation Schemes in Myanmar.

1. The last date and time of submission of bid has been postponed till further notice.
2. All Corrigendum/Amendments/Changes, if any will be issued and made available on website www.moai.gov.mm and made available to bidders who already purchased bid document through email. Prospective Bidders/tenderer are advised to keep visiting the website www.moai.gov.mm on regular basis.

Director General,
Agricultural Mechanization Department,
Building No. 50, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Movie stars awarded at Palm Springs film festival



PHOTO: REUTERS

Desert Palm Achievement Award recipient actress Cate Blanchett.

International Star Award recipient actress Saoirse Ronan.

Breakthrough Performance Award recipient actress Brie Larson.

PALM SPRINGS — The 27th Palm Springs International Film Festival (PSIFF) rolled out the red carpet on Saturday for movie stars and filmmakers with great fanfare at the Convention Center here in California.

The red carpet fanfare, usually the most glamorous part of the annual film event, lasted over an hour, with hundreds of movie fans lining up to cheer for the arrival of their favourite stars before the black-tie gala that saw a dozen of actors and actresses get awarded.

The awards gala is “the first stop on the campaign trail for the major Academy Award contenders,” said Harold Matzner, chairman of the PSIFF.

At the starry ceremony, Cate Blanchett and Johnny Depp received the Desert Palm Achievement Award for actress and actor respectively for their respective performance in *Carol*, a romantic drama film, and crime drama *Black Mass*.

Matt Damon

was awarded the Chairman’s Award for his role in science fiction blockbuster *The Martian*.

As to the other awards, the Rising Star Award went to Alicia Vikander (*The Danish Girl*), the Sonny Bono Visionary Award went to Tom McCarthy (*Spotlight*), and the Breakthrough Performance Award went to Brie Larson (*Room*).

The Spotlight Award for actress went to Rooney Mara (*Carol*), and for actor, Bryan Cranston (*Trumbo*), while the International Star Award for actor went to Michael Fassbender (*Steve Jobs*), and for actress, Saoirse Roman (Brooklyn). The presenter lineup included Helen Mirren, Michael Keaton, Kate Winslet, Paul Dano, Scott Cooper, and Ridley Scott.

The PSIFF has been known for its selection of international films and this year, said Helen du Toit, artistic director of the film gathering.

Mountains May Depart by Jia Zhangke from China, *Utopians* by Hong Kong director S c u d ,



Rising Star Award recipient Alicia Vikander poses at the 27th Annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards Gala in Palm Springs, California, on 2 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

and *The Assassin* by Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien were among them. The 10-day festival is expected to screen more than 170 films from over 60 countries. As the one the largest film festivals in North American, it draws more than 130,000 people each year. —Xinhua

Chris Brown under investigation for battery in Las Vegas

LOS ANGELES — Singer Chris Brown was under investigation by Las Vegas police on Saturday for possible battery on a woman, authorities said, in a case that comes nearly seven years after his notorious arrest for beating then-girlfriend Rihanna.

A spokeswoman for the singer strongly denied the accusation.

Las Vegas police in a statement said a woman was at a party inside a hotel room at the Palms Casino Resort on Saturday morning when she tried to take a photo of the “Run It!”

singer.

“The victim was alleged to have been battered by Brown, who at the same time took her cell phone,” the statement said.

The incident followed the popular R&B singer’s performance on Friday night at a club in the city.

The website TMZ posted a photo it said showed the woman’s eye, which appeared to have some darkness around it.

Officers who went to the hotel to investigate the reported attack found the woman appeared to have

minor injuries, but Brown had already left the hotel and they could not speak to him, the police statement said. Police did not say how exactly the woman might have been injured.

Police said investigators have still not heard from Brown. They listed him as a suspect in misdemeanor crimes of battery and theft, which are less serious in the US judicial system than a felony. —Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt staying in USD 18K a night villa

NEW YORK — Star couple Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are reportedly staying in an USD 18,000-per-night villa in Thailand with their six children.

The family is staying in a palatial 10-bedroom pad at the Amanpuri beach resort in Phuket, reported the *New York Post*.

“The whole family is staying in a two-floor, mammoth spread” that comes with a staff of eight servants, private gym and a pool

surrounded by mini pagodas,” a source said.

The family has seen “swimming in the sea off a luxury yacht, as well as playing minigolf, shopping at a mall and visiting a local Hindu temple where their mom prayed”. —PTI



Cara Delevingne. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cara Delevingne wants to grow as a person

LONDON — Supermodel Cara Delevingne has set a number of New Year’s resolution to help herself improve.

The 23-year-old model-and-actress said she will try new things, reported *Femalefirst*.

“My New Year’s resolutions are to grow as a person, challenge myself and be inspired.”

Cara, who is dating singer St Vincent aka Annie Clarke, recently spoke of how “loyalty” is very important to her.

“Loyalty is one of the most important things to me in the world. Once I care about someone, I’ll jump in front of a car for them. I’m a real ‘ride or die’ kind of gal. It’s all about trust and loyalty.” —PTI



Canadian museum sets up programme to encourage handwritten letters

VANCOUVER — A museum in the Canadian province of British Columbia has set up letter writing stations in an attempt to encourage people to write letters by hand.

In doing so, the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, the provincial capital, reminds

people of the archival material they will leave behind in an age of emailing and texting.

Lamenting the fact that few people write letters anymore nowadays, Angel Williams, the museum's chief operating officer, said in a statement on Saturday that

unless people "start writing letters again, we won't have that sort of material in the archives." Williams said letters make up history, "whether it's soldiers writing home during World War I, or public figures expressing their views." "So it's one of those things that we're

trying to encourage people to sit down, slow down a bit and handwrite a letter to somebody," she added.

To that end, the museum has set up letter writing stations as part of its Community Days event running from 2 January to 9 January.—Xinhua

Gov't eyes regular ferry service between Haneda airport, Akihabara

TOKYO — The government is aiming to launch a ferry service in 2017 between Tokyo's Haneda airport and the Akihabara electronics district for tourists from abroad and other areas of Japan, a government official said Saturday. The Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Ministry is planning to start a regular service on a 20-kilometre route linking a pier near Haneda's international terminal with a dock in the Kanda River close to

central Akihabara via Tokyo Bay and the Sumida River.

During the trip passengers would be able to see the Rainbow Bridge, Tokyo Skytree, the world's tallest broadcasting tower, and high-rise buildings in downtown Tokyo. A guided cruise, on a vessel expected to accommodate about 40 passengers, would take about 150 minutes and cost around 3,000 yen (\$25).

When the ministry offered the ferry service on a trial basis for seven days in

September, it attracted about 1,500 people, of whom 85 per cent said they would like to board the ferry again.

The ministry is scheduled to provide a service again between April and June this year and is now soliciting operators.

The official said the regular ferry service to and from Haneda airport is expected to "benefit passengers arriving from abroad and other parts of Japan because it will increase their transportation choices.—Kyodo News



A ferry service between Tokyo's Haneda airport and the Akihabara electronics district for tourists from abroad and other areas of Japan, conducted by the land ministry on a trial basis in September 2015. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Foreign tourists flocking to Nada breweries to buy sake



Foreign tourists tasting Japanese sake at the Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum, operated by Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co. in Kobe. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

KOBE — With demand for sake leveling off in Japan, brewers in the Nada area of Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, are pinning their hopes on Asian tourists flocking to the major sake production district.

The number of foreign visitors to sake museums run by brewers in Naga Gogo, the generic name of five areas between Kobe and Nishinomiya where there are many breweries, has been increasing sharply in recent

years due to the ample availability of low-cost flights and the depreciation of the yen. Chinese, Malaysians and other Asians account for a large portion of the visitors.

Four buses carrying a total of some 40 Malaysians and 20 Taiwanese arrived in quick succession at the Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum, operated by Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., in mid-December. After hastily walking through

the museum, they tasted a cup of sake, rushed to a shop inside and began loading their shopping baskets with bottles of sake such as 720-milliliter bottles of Hakutsuru Nishiki, carrying a pretax price of 3,000 yen.

Shoppers often form long waiting lines before cashiers, said Akira Sato, head of the museum.

"There are visitors buying as many as six bottles at a time," Sato said.

A man in his 30s from Malaysia said, "Restaurants serving sake are increasing (in Malaysia) because of its growing popularity."

The museum was visited by some 135,000 people, including 40,000 from abroad, in fiscal 2014. In the April to November period, or the first eight months of fiscal 2015, more than 45,000 foreigners visited.

Sales at the shop have been growing along with the increase of foreign visitors, prompting the museum to hire four Chinese-speaking sales clerks and introduce cash registers for automated duty-free procedures.

Foreign visitors to local museums of other brewers, such as Kobe Shu-Shin-Kan Breweries Ltd. and Kiku-Masamune Sake Brewing Co., have also been increasing.

"We would like to take advantage of the tailwind to the utmost extent and let foreigners discover sake's good taste" in order to stimulate demand for sake abroad, a Hakutsuru official said.—Kyodo News

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(4-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 5-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations-Lacquaware Making
07:50	Am	Beach Food Delivery
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	All About Orchids
08:39	Am	Moving Meditation: Aikido
08:50	Am	Egg Shell
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Aesthetic Chinlone
09:51	Am	Thin Byu Mat
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Those who never give up (Ep-6) In Pursuit of a dream

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

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Food Trip (EP-6)
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Shan - Flat -Rice- Noodle Soup)
08:41	Pm	Up Against The Tide

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

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

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

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

Aoyama Gakuin University defends Hakone Ekiden title

TOKYO — Aoyama Gakuin University successfully defended its Hakone Collegiate Ekiden road relay championship in style yesterday, becoming the first team to lead



Aoyama Gakuin University runner Toshinori Watanabe crosses the finish line in Tokyo as the school successfully defended its Hakone Collegiate Ekiden road relay championship on 3 January 2016.
PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

the two-day event from wire to wire in 39 years.

Aoyama Gakuin's team won all five stages of the 109.6-kilometre return leg from the resort town of Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture to Tokyo's Otemachi business district.

The second- and third-place teams from Saturday's outward leg, Japan collegiate champion Toyo University and Komazawa University, respectively, crossed the finish line in Tokyo in that order. A total of 21 teams took part in the race.

Yuji Onoda, the only freshman on the Aoyama Gakuin team, started the 20.8-km sixth stage with a 3-minute, 4-second lead over Toyo's first runner of the day and added 70 seconds to that margin. Senior Yusuke Ogura won the seventh stage and sophomore Yuta Shimoda won the eighth to send the defending champions into the final 33.8 kilometres with an imposing 6-1/2 minute lead.—Kyodo News

Substitute's Parthey piece sends Atletico top

BARCELONA — Substitute Thomas Parthey scored his first La Liga goal as Atletico Madrid beat bottom club Levante 1-0 to go top of the table on Saturday while Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw at Espanyol.

Hosts Atletico lacked a finishing touch in front of goal until Parthey struck nine minutes from the end with a shot that squirmed away from keeper Diego Marino.

"The team is playing well and anyone could have got the goal," the 22-year-old Parthey told reporters. "I am still learning and by working hard I am having more chances to play."

Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez both hit the woodwork as Barcelona drew with Espanyol. Barca set a Spanish record of 180 goals in all competitions in 2015 but their normally prolific attack drew a blank against their local rivals who were strong in the challenge, especially in the first half, and succeeded in disrupting their play.

Messi hit the crossbar with a

30-metre free kick in the first half while Suarez, who has 26 goals in all competitions this season, was surprisingly wasteful in front of a gaping net in the second half as his shot hit the post.

"We always work hard in games. We have plenty of respect for our rival and we knew what we were going to encounter," Barca keeper Claudio Bravo told reporters.

"The pitch wasn't in the best condition but we don't want to make excuses. We now need to rest and prepare for the next match."

Atletico have 41 points, two more than Barca who have a game in hand. Third-placed Real Madrid are on 36 points and visit Valencia on Sunday. Elsewhere, Charles and Raul Albentosa gave mid-table Malaga a 2-0 victory over fifth-placed Celta Vigo. Keeper Ruben Blanco could have done better with both goals and was then red-carded in the 64th minute after fouling Nordin Amrabat to

concede a penalty. Amrabat took the spot kick but it was saved by substitute keeper Sergio Alvarez.

In Madrid, Saul Niguez almost gave Atletico the lead inside two minutes with a near-post header from a corner that went just over the crossbar.

Jackson Martinez had an effort well saved by Marino before defender Stefan Savic nodded the ball against the top of the bar from a corner. At the other end Verza had a golden chance to put Levante in front on the half hour but fired wide. Atletico midfielder Koke then cracked a half-volley against the underside of the bar from 25 metres after 54 minutes and a cross from Luciano Vietto also thumped the woodwork.

The home side's attempts were becoming ever more desperate before Parthey, on the pitch for seven minutes, burst through the centre of the penalty area and Marino was unable to hold his shot as the ball crept over the line.—Reuters

Arsenal go clear at top, relief at last for United

LONDON — Arsenal and Manchester City showed they have the stomach for a title fight on Saturday with the Premier League leaders sinking Newcastle United 1-0 and Manuel Pellegrini's men launching a late comeback to beat Watford 2-1.

There was celebration at last for Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal as his team ended a dismal six-game league streak without a win by defeating Swansea City 2-1.

Arsenal's victory was scrappy and nervy but Laurent Koscielny's 72nd-minute winner was enough to move them two points clear at the summit after Leicester City's surprise push faltered with a goalless draw at home to 10-man Bournemouth.

Manchester City underlined their credentials as Arsenal's main challengers and although they looked forlorn for much of the game at Vicarage Road, they showed their mettle in the closing stages.

Trailing 1-0 to Aleksandar Kolarov's own goal, Yaya Toure volleyed home superbly in the 82nd minute and Sergio Aguero headed the winner moments later to wrap up a precious win that kept them three points behind the pacesetters.

Arsenal are continuing to defy predictions that they lack the consistency of genuine title challengers and while they were not on top form at home to Newcas-

tle, the Londoners did enough to scrape a victory under pressure.

"It was hard work but we prepared ourselves mentally. We were not at our best but we had to dig deep and we can do that when needed," said manager Arsene Wenger as his side chalked up 42 points from 20 games.

Koscielny volleyed home from a corner to help Arsenal forget their Boxing Day blip, when they slumped 4-0 at Southampton, as they notched a second straight victory and a fifth in six games. That sort of reliability has deserted Leicester over the festive period. Predictions that their unlikely surge to the top would be short-lived gained further substance when Claudio Ranieri's team failed to score for the third successive game against a Bournemouth side who had Simon Francis sent off after 57 minutes.

Even Riyad Mahrez, their most consistent performer alongside Jamie Vardy, fluffed his lines, failing to convert a penalty after Francis' dismissal.

Manchester City were far more ruthless despite a lacklustre start at Watford.

Toure's volley was expertly angled into the top of the net from a Kolarov corner and Aguero leapt athletically to head in a Bacary Sagna cross two minutes later. Wayne Rooney secured the points for Manchester United against Swansea with his first

league goal since October, a superb flick in the 77th minute that moved his team up to fifth.

Rooney also climbed above Andy Cole as the second highest scorer in Premier League history with 188 goals.

United had taken the lead with an Anthony Martial header but Gylfi Sigurdsson's glancing effort for Swansea sent nerves jangling at Old Trafford.

Liverpool boss Juergen Klopp was fuming after a 2-0 defeat at West Ham United.

His side's erratic form continued

with Andy Carroll delivering the final blow to his former club with a trademark bullet header after Michail Antonio had put West Ham ahead early on.—Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS