

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Brazilian Ambassador to Myanmar

PAGE 3



Block A-6-Well Shwe Yee Htun-1 Gas Discovery to bring new prosperity to Myanmar

PAGE 3



ANALYSIS

Let's be Blessed

PAGE 8

NEXT ORDER OF BUSINESS

Government suggests one topic per subject at planned political dialogue



Union Minister U Aung Min speaks at a preparatory meeting for the first session of the country's Union Peace Conference at Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: YE MYINT

Ye Myint

UNION Minister U Aung Min suggested the planned Union Peace Conference discuss only one topic for each of the subjects set to be covered at the meeting in

order to make topics of discussion effective within the given time.

His suggestion for the discussions was outlined at a preparatory meeting to facilitate the first session of the country's political dialogue at Myanmar Peace Centre in

Yangon yesterday.

The topics of discussions at the first political dialogue will be documented, said U Aung Min who is also one of vice-chairmen of the Union Political Dialogue Joint Committee, adding that the

current government will hand over these discussions to the new government.

In his address, the UPDJC's vice-chairman representing the stakeholder group of the present government described the first

round of the UPC as laying sound foundations for the future of the country's political dialogue.

Subjects set for discussions at the first session of the peace conference are set to run for five days from 12 to 16 January in Nay Pyi Taw. They include politics, economics, social issues, security, land and natural resources and general discussion.

Discussions on the main topics are likely to be held for three days or more as Day 1 will include the opening ceremony with the closing to take place on Day 5, Sai Kyaw Nyunt, secretary of the UPDJC representing political parties, said.

The topics set for each subjects are expected to be presented by stakeholder groups rather than having comprehensive discussions during the five day period of the conference, he added.

The UPDJC's secretary, who is also a central executive committee member of Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, stated that no decisions will be made on the topics discussed at the UPC.

According to the pre-meeting, stakeholder groups representing the current government, Parliament, Tatamdaw, ethnic ceasefire signatory groups and political parties are set to discuss preparatory works for the first session of the UPC including seeking approval for the list of

See page 3 >>

Yangon to see electric commuter tramcar line on Strand Road

WITH the launching of a tram rail over a four-mile distance on the Strand Road, Myanmar Railways has taken a step to connect the tram rail line with the current circular rail service.

Myanmar Railways announced yesterday that it will launch tram rail on the Strand Road route from War Dan to Linsadaung on 10 January.

With a seating capacity of 150, the tram rail will run 10 times a day from 7 a.m to 4p.m with a 100 kyat fare for each commuter.

The tram rail line will be 7 miles long in total with three phases but only 4 miles will be launched initially.

The move is aimed at easing traffic congestion and to provide commuters with convenient public transportation, said U Kyaw Soe Lin, Manager of Myanmar Railways.

Myanmar Railways and the Japanese West Corporation signed a 3 million USD deal for this tram rail project in July last year.

MR had the train on trial runs

on 7 and 8 January.

The tram rail services will be the first in Myanmar since the same kind of transportation was launched in 1904.

The current railroad along the Strand Road serves mainly as a transit route for cargo to move goods from Yangon's ports.

Myanmar Railways began operating a commuter train along the rail in an attempt to curb congestion. However, the line is unlikely to dramatically reduce traffic.—
Soe Win SP



A tramcar which would be run on the Strand Road is receiving check-up. PHOTO: TIN HLA MAUNG

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses Union Budget Bill for next FY

THE Public Accounts Committee and the joint bill committee of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discussed the Union Budget Bill for the next fiscal year.

In his discussion, U Maung Toe, Secretary of the Public Accounts Committee, made his suggestion to submit plans for the fulfilling of the budget deficiency when the Union budget is submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

He also suggested not including state-owned enterprises in the State's budget and to submit their plans for running their business on a commercial base.

The joint bill committee suggested that permission for borrowing money be assigned to the Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw where the budget is insufficient in implementing national projects.

Regarding the banking and financial institutions bill which was sent back after disagreement of both parliaments on some parts of the bill, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved 12 points suggested by the Pyithu Hluttaw and four points by the Amyotha Hluttaw.



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

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also approved the Bill Amending the Penal Code which was sent back by the president with remarks. Over 530 MPs attended the Tuesday meeting.

Amyotha Hluttaw approves two bills

THE Amyotha Hluttaw convened its meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, approving the third amended bill for the Amyotha

HLuttaw Election Law and the third amended bill for the Region or State Hluttaw Election Law for the third time. Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint asked MPs to enlist their names

to discuss the Bill Amending the 1951 Factories Act, the 2015 shops and worksites Bill and the payment of wages bill sent with amendments by the Pyithu Hluttaw.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MEP steps up construction to complete Shweli-3 hydropower project in 2020



Union Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe inspects Shweli-3 Hydropower project. PHOTO: MNA

WHILE generating power from Shweli-1 hydropower Plant which was completed in May 2009, the Ministry of Electric Power is stepping up its efforts to finish Shweli-3 hydropower project in 2020.

Union Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe

oversaw the construction of the plant on the Shweli River in northern Shan State on 2 January.

The 520-MW-Shweli-2 hydropower project and the 1050-MW-Shweli-3 hydropower project are also under construction.

Upon completion, Shweli-3 Hydropower Project which will be installed with four 262.5 MW generators is expected to generate 3,400 KW hours.

The power produced by the Shweli-3 will be transported to the national grid.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MNDAA insurgents denounced in Laukkai

MNDAA insurgents were denounced at a ceremony held at 9 am yesterday in Laukkai, a Kokang Self-Administrative Zone in northern Shan State.

The ceremony was attended by indigenous people numbering

about 8,000 from Laukkai and nearby villages.

The denunciation ceremony was organised by towns elders and the Kokang Youths Association.

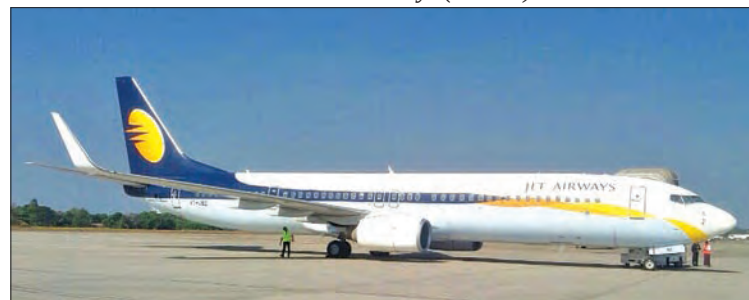
An indigenous person tabled

a motion to denounce the atrocities of MNDAA insurgents and two local people seconded the motion. The ceremony came to a close with the shouting of anti-MNDAA insurgent slogans. —*MinLwin*

Aircraft from India makes emergency Landing

AN aircraft from Jet Airways flying from Mumbai, India, to Bangkok, Thailand, had to make an emergency landing at 13:50 hours yesterday at Yangon International Airport as the oxygen system failed while flying over Myanmar territory. The flight had over 180 passengers on board.

“The aircraft made an emergency landing as it feared suffocation on the part of the passengers as the plane lacked oxygen,” said an official from the Department of Civil Aviation at Yangon Airport. The airline has not yet made contact with Yangon Airport, it has been learnt.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*



Aircraft from Jet Airways landed at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: AVIATION POLICE



The 3rd Family Gathering of the Church of the Province of Myanmar (Anglican), group photo taken at The Holy Trinity Cathedral, Bo Gyoke Aung San Road, Yangon on 3rd January 2016. PHOTO: GNLM

Indian Coast Guard Ship Varad to visit Yangon

INDIAN Coast Guard Ship VARAD is on a goodwill visit to Yangon, from 7 to 11 Jan 2016.

INS Varad (CG 40) is a 75 mts Offshore Patrol Vessel

(OPV) designed and constructed by Goa Shipyard Limited. The ship is visiting Yangon on a mission to enhance maritime cooperation between India and

Myanmar.

The name "Varad" has been derived from Sanskrit phrase "Sahyadri Varad Hast" which means "Granting of Wishes". The ship carries 11 officer and 95 sailors, all of whom remain keen to visit Myanmar.

The ship has an endurance of over 5000 nautical miles and is regularly undertaking anti-smuggling, anti-poaching patrols in addition to tasks related to preservation and protection of marine environment and Search and Rescue (SAR) at sea.

The ship is designed to carry a Chetak helicopter that enhances the surveillance, interdiction and SAR capabilities of the ship.—GNLM



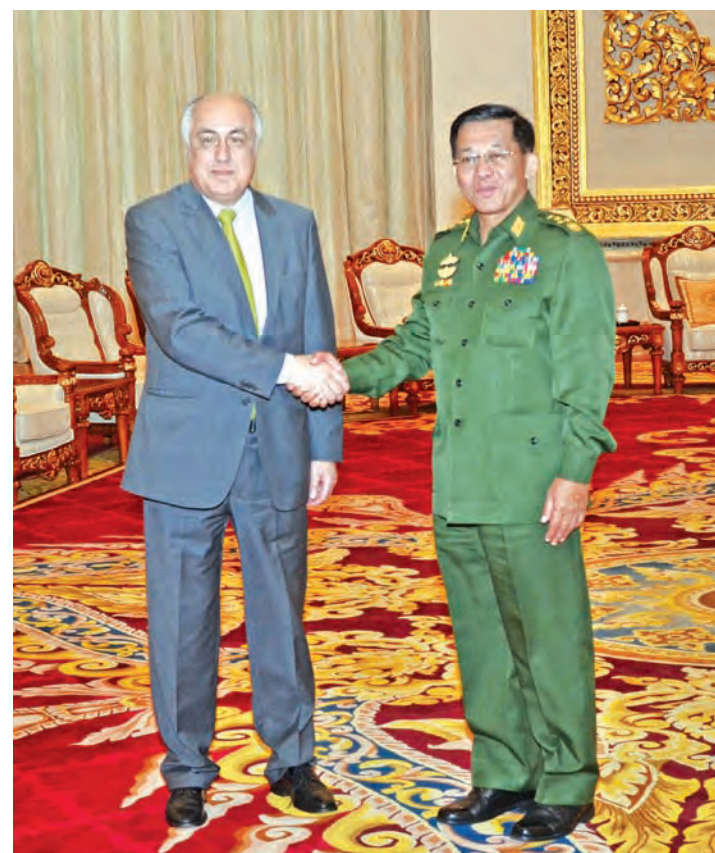
An Indian Coast Guard Ship Varad. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY INDIA EMBASSY

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Brazilian Ambassador to Myanmar

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing received H.E. Mr. Alcides G.R. Prates, Brazilian Ambassador to Myanmar, at Zayyarthiri Beikman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting the two representatives discussed the pos-

sible cooperation between the two nations in moving forward to democracy, the promotion of bilateral relationships, lending momentum to industries such as investment and tourism in Myanmar, medicine, sport, agriculture and other sectors. —Myawady



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with H.E. Mr. Alcides G.R. Prates, Brazilian Ambassador to Myanmar. PHOTO: MYAWADY

Government suggests one topic per subject at . . .

>> From page 1

attendees to the conference, drawing up plans for submission to the Union Political Dialogue Joint Committee meeting, rules to be followed by representatives and observers, and topics to be discussed.

"This meeting is very impor-

tant not only for the upcoming first round of political dialogue but also for the country's peace process to continue," said P'doh Saw Kwe Htoo Win, another vice-chairman of the UPDJC representing ethnic armed organizations.

Expecting possible challenges or changes to the coun-

try's political configuration, the UPDJC vice-chairman, who is also the general secretary of the Karen National Union, an NCA signatory, expressed his belief that these challenges would be addressed through collaborative efforts based on goodwill of all stakeholders.

Ward and Village-Tract Administration 2nd Amended Bill signed into law

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein signed the second amended bill for the Ward and Village-Tract Administration into law.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced the enactment of the law yesterday.—MNA

Block A-6-Well Shwe Yee Htun-1 Gas Discovery to bring new prosperity to Myanmar

MPRL E&P Pte Ltd (MPRL E&P), the only independent E&P company led by Myanmar nationals operating both onshore and offshore around Myanmar, and the operator of Block A-6 with government liaison, announced the discovery of gas in well Shwe Yee Htun-1 on Monday.

The well reaches a total depth of 17,408 feet (5,306 metres) below rotary table in some 6,670 ft (2,030 m) of water. The well has intersected a gross gas column of approximately 129 m and about 15 m of net gas play within the primary target interval, as confirmed through pressure measurements and gas sampling. Evaluation of the data is still ongoing.

This exploration well was spudded on 27 November 2015 and will now be abandoned as planned. Shwe Yee Htun-1 targeted one of many identified channel complexes that run over the large Saung anticlinal feature.

This discovery comes after MPRL E&P with its own funds has pioneered exploration in Block A-6 since 2007, when MPRL E&P signed a PSC for Block A-6 in January of that



Union Minister for Energy U Zeyar Aung visits Shwe Yee Htun-1 Well. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY ENERGY MINISTRY

same year. Having carried out extensive field studies in 2007-2009 with state-owned enterprise MOGE, MPRL E&P acquired 1,955 km² of 2D seismic in 2009, followed by a 554 km² 3D seismic cube in 2010.

MPRL E&P drilled in March 2012 Pyi Thar-1 wildcat, in 691 ft (211m) water depth. The well was intentionally sidetracked as Pyi Thar-1ST, where 20ft (6m true vertical thickness) of net gas was logged in good quality sand-

stones. MPRL E&P thus proved the presence of a biogenic gas play including charge and sealed reservoirs in a mixed structural sedimentary trap in the frontier offshore southern Rakhine Basin.

The success of Pyi Thar-1

is bringing benefits to Myanmar. Permission for Work Program Time Extension by Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise of the Ministry of Energy has contributed dramatically to achieving success at the Block A-6.

The Pyi Thar-1ST discovery attracted considerable interest from international oil companies whereby Woodside farmed into the block in 2013 and acquired a 1,700km² 3D seismic cube was mapped by MPRL E&P for its 2009 2D seismic survey.

MPRL E&P acts as the government liaison of the block with a 20% interest with Woodside Energy (Myanmar) Ptd Ltd as joint operator with respect to other operations including drilling and Total E&P Myanmar each holding 40% interests.

The success of Shwe Yee Htun-1 can be beneficial that of not only for the partners of Block A-6 but also for the State and its people.

The discovery at Shwe Yee Htun-1 has become the first exploration well in ultra deepwater offshore of Myanmar and a historic discovery of gas in sands in the deepwater of Myanmar.—U Sein Hlaing (Geology)

Indian policeman: Militants abducted me before base attack

NEW DELHI — The day before a deadly assault on an air base in Pathankot, a police officer returning from a temple was abducted by a group of heavily armed men speaking Urdu, he said yesterday.

“The minute I saw them I realised that they were terrorists,” Police Superintendent Salwinder Singh told media.

“One of the gunmen snatched my phone and made calls to Pakistan,” Singh said. Urdu, widely spoken in Pakistan, can be mostly understood by Hindi speakers.

The colleague Singh called after he was freed treated it as an armed robbery, one in a string of security lapses preceding the 2 January assault on the Pathankot air base that killed 7 Indian security personnel and injured 22.

Mobile phone tower records indicate the perpetrators made calls from Singh’s phone from inside the air base by mid-afternoon on 1 January, according to the Indian Express, some 12 hours before the government said it had detected them through aerial surveillance.

Operations to secure the vast air base in Punjab stretched into a fourth day on Tuesday, as forces cleared the grounds and hundreds of police combed a forested area surrounding the base for possible collaborators. Indian forces had killed five militants involved in the attack, but it was unclear whether more remained at large in the sprawling facility 25 km (16 miles) from the Pakistani border. “We cannot inform whether there are more militants or not,” said Manish Mehta, an Indian army spokesman.—Reuters

12 Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan Navy in local waters

COLOMBO — The Sri Lankan Navy assisted the Sri Lankan Coast Guard to arrest 12 Indian fishermen for poaching in local waters yesterday, the navy media unit said here.

The fishermen were arrested in waters northwest of Thalai-mannar and north of Delft Island, in the island nation’s north. Three fishing trawlers were also taken into custody.

The arrested fishermen along with the trawlers were handed over

to the officials of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Thalai-mannar and Kankasanthurai in the north for onward action, the navy said.

This is the second arrest in a week as 29 Indian fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for poaching in the island’s eastern waters on 31 December.

The arrested fishermen had been handed over to authorities for onward action.

Sri Lanka and India have been trying to resolve the long-standing fishermen issue with both sides having to face arrest and boats being detained when they stray into each other’s waters illegally.

Recently, India’s Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa wrote to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, voicing concerns at recurring instances of such arrests.—Xinhua

Singapore, Malaysia considering two ways of service on cross-border high-speed rail

SINGAPORE — Singapore and Malaysia are considering providing two ways of service on the cross-border high-speed rail (HSR) network between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, local media reported Monday.

The HSR, which connects Singapore and Malaysia’s capital city of Kuala Lumpur, have been postponed due to insufficient preparation and further consensus on details of its procurement and operation.

In response to media queries, Singapore’s Ministry of Transport (MOT) said that both sides are still in discussion on the HSR project’s commercial and operating models, which possibly could include an express non-stop service between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and a transit service which calls at several stations in between.

“Singapore has proposed that the transit service, which will stop at several stations in Malaysia and hence primarily serve commuters travelling within Malaysia, be operated

separately from the express non-stop HSR service...This will give Malaysia autonomy over the transit service to serve Malaysia’s domestic needs, while both countries work together on the cross-border HSR services,” according to Channel NewsAsia, which cited an MOT spokesperson.

MOT also said that the route of the railway is still under discussion as it would be finalized only after detailed engineering studies are completed.

Earlier in October, Malaysia’s Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) and Singapore’s Land Transport Authority (LTA) have jointly launched a joint request for information exercise on KL-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR) project.

A total of 98 submissions were received in one month and both sides are studying feedback to improve its commercial and operating models and procurement approach, said MOT.—Reuters

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China says to allow transit stops in Taiwan for onward flights



A TransAsia Airways ATR airplane is seen parked at Taipei Songshan Airport in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — China will allow transit stops in Taiwan for onward flights from three Chinese cities, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office said yesterday.

Passengers flying from Nanchang, Kunming and Chongqing will be allowed to transit through Taiwan’s main international airport before flying on to a third destination, ac-

cording to a statement on the Chinese government agency’s website.

The two sides had been discussing the issue, which proponents have said would be a boon for Taiwanese airlines, as it could give them more business from mainland passengers travelling onwards from the island.

China and Taiwan have

been ruled separately since defeated Nationalist forces fled to the island in 1949 after losing a civil war to the Communists.

Beijing has never renounced the use of force to bring the island of 23 million people back under its control, particularly if it were to make moves toward formal independence.—Reuters

South Korean gov’t to go ahead with ‘comfort women’ white paper

SEOUL — A South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said yesterday that a “Comfort Women White Paper” being prepared by the country’s Gender Equality and Family Ministry since last year to shed light on the issue of women forced into wartime Japanese military brothels will be published on schedule.

The spokesman said the issuance of the white paper is “unrelated” to the 28 December agreement between South Korea and Japan to end the decades-long issue “finally and irreversibly.” The move is likely to draw criticism from Japan as a violation of the deal, which includes a promise that the two sides not criticize each other at the international stage over the issue.

The Gender Equality and Family Ministry earlier said it plans to translate the paper into various languages including English, Japanese and Chinese.

On the issue of a statue symbolizing the so-called “comfort women” located in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul that Japan wants removed, the spokesman stressed that the matter is not covered by the agreement.—Kyodo News

Supreme Court upholds ban on sale of large diesel vehicles in Delhi

MUMBAI — The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a temporary ban on the sale of large diesel cars in New Delhi to combat toxic smog in India's capital, but postponed hearing an industry appeal on an environmental tax that carmakers say will hit investment.

Delhi's block on new diesel cars has unsettled the industry, its salesmen and investors, who warn the ban and uncertainty surrounding it could derail a tentative recovery in auto sales.

Green groups want to extend the ban to smaller diesel cars and

other smog-choked cities in India.

The presiding Supreme Court judge said yesterday that the court was considering expanding the ban to diesel cars with engine capacity of less than 2,000 cc — currently not covered — but would first seek industry input on the matter.

The Supreme Court had also been expected to rule yesterday on a separate green tax on all diesel cars in the city, but has yet to announce its decision on that levy.

The decision on the tax,

critical for automakers such as Mahindra & Mahindra (MAHM.NS), Tata Motors (TAMO.NS) and Toyota Motor Corp that have invested heavily in making cars for diesel-loving Indian consumers, may now be heard next week.

Delhi is one of the world's most polluted cities, with its residents often struggling to breathe in air quality that is worse than in the Chinese capital of Beijing.

India's automakers say they want a comprehensive plan — rather than court-led initiatives — to determine the regulatory structure.—Reuters



A worker switches on a fuel pump before filling a car with diesel at a fuel station in New Delhi in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

Death toll rises to 17 in NW China bus fire

YINCHUAN — Police have arrested a suspected arsonist as the death toll from a bus fire in northwest China rose to 17 with three more bodies found at the scene, said an official yesterday.

The dead included eight males and nine females. All the 32 injured, aged between 20 and 65, are being treated at Ningxia Medical University General Hospital in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, said Ma Kai, vice mayor of Yinchuan, at a press conference.

Police arrested suspect Ma Yongping in an incomplete building in Helan County at 4:30pm. His trousers were burnt.

Six of the injured are in a

serious condition, including one critical, said Jia Shaobing, deputy president of the hospital. The others are stable.

The incident happened at around 7am yesterday in Helan County, Yinchuan, where a bus caught fire in front of a furniture store.

"I was sitting at the front of the bus when suddenly people started screaming 'Fire! Bus on Fire!'," Hu Yuexiang, 26, recalled. "When I turned around, the flames were racing toward me and quickly my shoes were on fire."

"I thought the bus was about to explode, and I was going to die," Hu said. "Then the door

opened and we all rushed out."

Hu said he wanted to film the fire, but the bus quickly "turned into a skeleton."

The bus driver sustained minor burns in the incident and is assisting police with the investigation.

The 84-seater bus had about 40 people on board when it caught fire.

The bus, which was bound for Yinchuan Railway Station, belongs to state-owned Yinchuan Public Transport Co Ltd. The company has begun a safety check of all its vehicles following the incident.

Public buses are operating normally in Yinchuan.—Xinhua



Firefighters work at the accident site of bus fire in Helan County, northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on 5 January. PHOTO: XINHUA

Missing HK bookseller enters China by 'his own method'

HONG KONG — The case of the alleged abduction of Hong Kong bookseller Lee Bo by Chinese agents saw a fresh development yesterday as Lee's wife asked police to stop looking for her husband after she received a letter bearing Lee's signature, claiming that he is voluntarily assisting an investigation by mainland authorities.

A letter apparently written and signed by Lee was faxed Monday to Causeway Bay Books, which sells a significant number of books, banned in mainland China, about scandals and unofficial accounts of Communist Party officials, in which Lee claimed he "used his own method" to enter mainland China to assist with an investigation on "relevant matters," and that he is "good and everything is fine."

There is no official record of Lee, who went missing since last Wednesday, having crossed the border from Hong Kong to mainland China.

His disappearance stoked fear among the Hong Kong public that Chinese authorities have ignored Hong Kong laws and operated in the territory.

In the fax, published by local media, Lee did not explain the reasons behind his move, how he managed to smuggle himself into China, or whether mainland law enforcement agents were involved. His wife Sophie Choi said a friend has contacted Lee, but she declined to comment further after police confirmed late Monday she had rescinded a missing person case report for Lee.

Police said they will continue to investigate the bookseller and three of his associates who disappeared earlier as a consolidated missing person case.

Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying said yesterday, before attending the weekly Cab-

inet meeting, that investigations on Lee's case are ongoing, but declined to say if he has followed them up with mainland authorities.

"We appeal to any individual, especially Mr Lee Bo himself, to provide us with relevant information," Leung said.

He has said any Chinese law enforcement operations in the territory would be illegal and unacceptable, because they would compromise the "one country, two systems" principle on which Hong Kong's semi-autonomous status is based.

The Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution in effect since the former British colony was returned to China in 1997, stipulates that Chinese government officials may not interfere in local affairs, unless they have the consent of both the regional and central governments.

"It is illogical and irresponsible for Leung to ask Lee Bo to provide information about his own disappearance," pro-democracy legislator Lee Cheuk-yan said. "If Lee Bo was assisting with mainland authorities' investigations as he said in the fax, he would not be able to provide information."

Lee Bo was last seen Wednesday when he visited the publishing house Mighty Current Media, which owns the bookstore where he works, and whose owner Gui Minhai also went missing while on holiday in Thailand in October.

Three others — bookstore manager Lam Wing-kei, general manager of the publishing house Lui Bo and business manager Cheung Jiping, were all reportedly apprehended in mainland China.

Acting Secretary for Security John Lee said Monday police need more time to conduct investigations.—Kyodo News

El Niño declining, to return to neutral by second quarter: Australia



A man sits near houses partially submerged in flood waters in Asuncion, in December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — The 2015-16 El Niño weather event, one of the three strongest in the past 50 years, has peaked in recent weeks and will likely return to “ENSO Neutral” by the second quarter of this year, Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) said yesterday.

The El Niño phenomenon is driven by warm surface water in the eastern Pacific Ocean and is associated with extreme droughts, storms and floods. “ENSO Neutral” periods are marked by ocean temperatures, tropical rainfall patterns and atmospheric winds near the long-term average.

“A number of El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in-

dicators suggest that the 2015–16 El Niño has peaked in recent weeks,” the BOM said in a statement.

“Climate models suggest the 2015–16 El Niño will decline during the coming months, with a return to ENSO neutral likely during the second quarter of 2016.” The agency said that based on data since 1900, some 50 per cent of El Niños have been followed by a neutral year, while 40 per cent have been followed by a La Nina, marked by extensive cooling of the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. During the last major El Niño in 1997-98, heavy rains and flooding led to thousands of deaths, loss of crops and exten-

sive damage to infrastructure in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. In Indonesia and Malaysia, drought linked to the weather event had hit palm oil production and pushed prices higher.

In November, the World Meteorological Organisation said it expected the current El Niño to become one of the strongest on record, warning that the intensity of the event could be exacerbated by climate change. While the UN weather agency did not predict when the El Niño would start to subside, it said the weather event normally reaches maximum strength between October and January, then persists through much of the first quarter.—Reuters

Britain urged to take 3,000 refugee children at risk of trafficking

LONDON — Britain should take in 3,000 refugee children who are travelling through Europe alone and are at risk of falling prey to human traffickers, a parliamentary committee said yesterday.

Resettling unaccompanied children should be on top of the current commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees, said the International Development Committee, which monitors the performance of Britain’s development aid ministry (DFID).

“Children are clearly some of the most vulnerable refugees this crisis has created,” Stephen Twigg, chair of the committee, said in a statement.

“Having survived the treacherous journey, there is a grave possibility that unaccompanied children become the victims of people traffickers who force them into prostitution, child labour and the drugs trade.

This is an issue of utmost urgency.”

More than 1 million refugees and migrants, half of them Syrians fleeing the war, came to the European Union this year, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

In September, British Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to take in up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years, responding to public clamour for his government to help those fleeing civil war in the country.

“...We are looking again at the issue of bringing Syrian children to the UK, both from the region and from within the EU,” a government spokesperson said in a statement.

“In any consideration we must ensure that our proposals are in the best interests of those children affected and do not in-

advertently put children at additional risk.”

The committee said the government should come to a “quick decision” on the proposal initially made by charity Save the Children, which launched an on-line petition in September.

The committee also called on the British government to ensure that refugees from vulnerable groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), Christians and the disabled have access to the resettlement process. It said the government should look into how to better use offers of support for Syrian refugees from local communities within Britain, among other recommendations. Since 2011, millions of Syrians have been displaced by civil war, with more than 4 million ending up in refugee camps in surrounding countries like Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan urges Middle East states to defuse tensions through dialogue

TOKYO — Japan urged Middle East nations yesterday to de-escalate tensions in the region through dialogue in the wake of the severing of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Referring to Japan’s high dependence on the region for oil supply, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said, “Our country is concerned about deterioration in relations between some Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, and Iran.”

“For the sake of stability in the Middle East region, we would like to call on all parties involved to exercise restraint, de-escalate the situation through dialogue and resolve the issue peacefully,” Suga said at a news conference. Japan will file such a call with the parties through “various diplomatic channels,” the top government spokesman said.—Kyodo News

Blast near consulate buildings in eastern Afghan city

JALALABAD, (Afghanistan) — An explosion was reported yesterday in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad close to foreign consulate buildings including those of India, Pakistan and Iran, a spokesman for the provincial governor said.

Attallah Khugyani said there were no reports of casualties from the blast, which followed an attack on the Indian consulate in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif on Sunday.

The target of the attack was not immediately clear and there was no claim of responsibility.—Reuters

Cameron to allow ministers to campaign for EU exit

LONDON — British Prime Minister David Cameron will allow government ministers to campaign to leave the European Union in an upcoming referendum, the BBC reported yesterday without citing sources.

Cameron is seeking to renegotiate the terms of Britain’s EU membership and says he wants to stay in a reformed EU. However, he says he rules nothing out if he can’t get key changes to Britain’s relationship with the bloc.

Several of Cameron’s cabinet are critical of the EU and there had been speculation they would need to resign as ministers if they wanted to campaign for a British exit. The BBC said that Cameron will allow ministers to campaign for either side once a deal is reached on Britain’s relationship with the EU.—Reuters

Colombian navy confirms 87 tons of drugs seized in 2015

BOGOTA — The Colombian Navy has seized 87 tons of drugs during 2015 and warned about a new method of trafficking, Navy commander Leonardo Santamaria said in an interview Monday.

The interview by the country’s *El Tiempo* daily showed that the authorities had been aware of the new trafficking method by using illegal migrants as part of the immigration deal.

“Now they are carrying small quantities in boats, from 20 up to 50 kilos, and then they fill buoys with the drug and throw them to the open sea. It is already hard to catch speed boats on the open sea, so a more complex dynamic has to be conducted to spot the buoys,” Santamaria told local media.

The two traditional trafficking routes remain. One is through the Pacific Ocean using speedboats from the western port city Buenaventura to Ecuador or Central America, and then to black markets in the United States.—Xinhua

Bodies of 21 migrants found on Aegean coast

ISTANBUL — Turkey’s gendarmerie said it found the bodies of 21 migrants, three of them children, at two separate locations on the Aegean coast yesterday after their boat apparently capsized as they tried to reach the Greek island of Lesbos.

Eleven of the bodies were discovered on the shoreline in the district of Ayvalik, while ten others were found in the district of Dikili, a gendarmerie official in the local headquarters told Reuters.

A coast guard official said three boats and a helicopter were searching for any survivors.—Reuters

Hezbollah targets Israeli forces with bomb, Israel shells south Lebanon



Police members of UN peacekeepers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) patrol along a road in Marjayoun plain near the Lebanese-Israeli border, southern Lebanon, on 4 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIRUT — Hezbollah set off a bomb targeting Israeli forces at the Lebanese border on Monday in an apparent response to the killing in Syria last month of a prominent commander, triggering Israeli shelling of southern Lebanon.

Israel has struck its Iran-backed Shi'ite enemy Hezbollah in Syria several times, killing a number of fighters and destroying weapons it believes were destined for the group, whose support for President Bashar al-Assad has been crucial in the country's civil war.

Israel's army said Monday's blast, targeting military vehicles in the Shebaa farms area, prompted Israeli forces to respond with artillery fire. It made no mention of casualties.

Hezbollah said in a statement

that the explosive device had been detonated in the Shebaa farms area and carried out by a group whom it named after Samir Qantar, a commander killed in December. The group has accused Israel of killing Qantar in an air strike in Syria, and vowed to retaliate.

The UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, urged both sides to avoid an escalation, saying it had stepped up patrols on the ground after the incident.

In a statement, head of mission Major-General Luciano Portolano urged both sides "to exercise utmost restraint against any provocation." Lebanese media said Israeli shelling had hit the nearby town of Al Wazzani and other areas, with reports of material damage but no serious injuries.

Witnesses said at least 10

Israeli shells had hit Al Wazzani shortly after the blast.

A Reuters witness said the shelling had stopped later in the day. Al Manar TV reported that calm had returned to the Shebaa area. An Israeli air strike killed Qantar on 20 December in Damascus, Hezbollah said. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said a week later that retaliation would be inevitable.

Israel stopped short of confirming responsibility for the strike that killed Qantar, but welcomed the death of the militant leader, who had been jailed in Israel in 1979 and repatriated to Lebanon in a 2008 prisoner swap.

Hezbollah did not say which role Qantar played in the Syrian conflict, but Syrian state media said he was involved in a major offensive earlier this year in Quneitra, near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Hezbollah is fighting on the side of Assad in Syria's civil war. The conflict has exacted a heavy toll on Hezbollah, with many hundreds of its fighters killed.

In January last year, an Israeli helicopter attack killed six Hezbollah members including a commander and the son of the group's late military commander Imad Moughniyah. An Iranian general was also killed in that attack.

Two Israeli soldiers and a Spanish peacekeeper were killed later that month in one of the most violent clashes between the two sides since a 2006 war.—Reuters

UN pushes Syria, Yemen peace amid 'worrying' Saudi break with Iran

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations worked quickly on Monday to salvage fragile international bids to broker peace in Syria and Yemen from a spillover of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran after Riyadh's decision to cut off ties with Tehran.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday told Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir he was extremely troubled by the break in ties, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. Ban spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday.

"The Secretary-General reiterated that the attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran was deplorable, but added that the announcement of a break in Saudi diplomatic relations with Tehran was deeply worrying," Dujarric told reporters.

"The Secretary-General urged both foreign ministers to avoid any actions that could further exacerbate the situation between the two countries and in the region as a whole," Dujarric said.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran on Sunday, two days after Iranian demonstrators stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran in protest over Riyadh's execution of a senior Shi'ite cleric.

Ban wanted to ensure that both Iran and Saudi Arabia, regional rivals with a long history of tense relations, continue their commitment to ending the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, where the two countries

back opposing sides, Dujarric said.

"(The UN) will be pushing forward and very much hoping that the current tensions will not impact negatively on the two peace processes," Dujarric said.

The United Nations has said that it wants peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition to begin in Geneva on 25 January. It is also pushing for a ceasefire to take place when those UN-brokered negotiations begin as part of an international push to end the five-year Syrian civil war.

UN Syria mediator Staffan de Mistura is visiting Saudi Arabia and Tehran this week on a preplanned visit, while UN Yemen mediator, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, is to return to the region on Thursday, Dujarric said.

"Mr de Mistura believes that the crisis in Saudi-Iranian relations is a very worrisome development and he stresses the need to ensure that it does not cause a chain of adverse consequences in the region," he said.

A Saudi-led coalition that has been bombing the Iranian-allied Houthi movement in Yemen for nine months announced on Saturday the end of a ceasefire that began on 15 December, in a setback to UN-brokered attempts to end that conflict.

Dujarric said Ban told Jubeir that Saudi Arabia should "renew its commitment to a ceasefire" in Yemen.—Reuters

New Saudi-Iran crisis threatens wider escalation

RIYADH — The last time Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran, after its embassy in Tehran was stormed by protesters in 1988, it took a swing in the regional power balance in the form of Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait to heal the rift.

It is hard to see how any lesser development could resolve the region's most bitter rivalry, which has underpinned wars and political tussles across the Middle East as Riyadh and Tehran backed opposing sides.

Riyadh's expulsion of Iran's envoy after another storming of its Tehran embassy, this time in response to the Saudi execution of Shi'ite Muslim cleric Nimr al-Nimr, raised the heat again, making the region's underlying conflict even harder to resolve.

At the heart of the new crisis is Saudi Arabia's growing willingness to confront Iran and its allies militarily since King Salman took power a year ago, say diplomats, choosing with his son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to abandon years of back-room politics.

Last year, Riyadh began a war in Yemen to stop an Iran-allied militia seizing power in its southern neighbour and boosted support to Syrian rebels against Tehran's ally President Bashar al-Assad. Its execution of Nimr, while mainly driven by domestic politics, was also part of that open confrontation with Iran, according to political analysts.

The interventions followed years of Riyadh complaining about what it regarded as unchecked Iranian aggression in the region. It has pointed to Iran's support for Shi'ite militias and accused the country of smuggling arms to groups in Gulf countries — which Iran denies.

"We will not allow Iran to destabilize our region. We will not allow Iran to do harm to our citizens or those of our allies and so we will react," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told Reuters on Monday, signaling Riyadh would not back down. The Saudi decisions in Syria and Yemen were also partly a response to Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, which lifted sanctions on Tehran, theoretically giving it more money

and political room to pursue its regional activities.

The new crisis has had the effect of hardening a wider confrontation between the loose-knit coalitions of allies each can call upon in

the region; some of Riyadh's allies also cut diplomatic ties with Tehran after the embassy attack, while Iran's warned of repercussions.

That chain reaction may now complicate complex political talks

over the formation of a government in Lebanon, efforts to bring Syria's warring parties to talks, stalled negotiations to end Yemen's civil war and Riyadh's rapprochement with Baghdad.—Reuters



Supporters of Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr protest against the execution of Shi'ite Muslim cleric Nimr al-Nimr in Saudi Arabia, during a demonstration in Najaf, Iraq, on 4 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

OPINION

Let's be Blessed

Khin Maung Aye

THE two famous pali words among elderly people are *garavoca* and *nivatoca* from *Mangala Sutta*. The former has its origin in *garavo*. It is worth noting that there are six *garavas*: respect for the Buddha; respect for *Dhamma* (the teachings of Buddha or the law); respect for *Samgha* (the monk or the priesthood); respect for *Sikkha* (higher morality); respect for *appamado* (vigilance); and respect for *patisantharo* (friendliness). *Garavoca* means paying respect to those who are worthy of respect. Who deserves respect then? Monks, teachers, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts and all those who are of higher social standing as well as those who are senior in age. When the word *garava* is concerned, peo-

ple come to think of only their relatives and their superiors at work. They tend to forget the non-relative senior citizens who are out of work, finding it difficult to earn a living, who have stable relatives but are not receiving their financial support.

Another important word for the aged poor who are treated with contempt is *nivatoca*. This pali word suggests lowliness or humility. In fact, those professing Buddhism should be humble enough to pay due respect to the aged poor. According to Lord Buddha, if a person is devoid of *garavoca* and *nivatoca*, he is not blessed by the God. He cannot be said to be in possession of *mangala* (auspiciousness). This being so, we ought not to be proud, arrogant and conceited in dealing with senior citizens be they rich or poor, of high social standing or of low social status, educated or uneducated. Instead, we must behave well and in a humble manner in all our three volitional activities—physical, verbal and mental.

In our country, those who are above 60 are regarded as senior citizens whereas in the United States of America, only above 64 are considered to be senior citizens. Nowadays, 11 out of a hundred people in Myanmar are above 60. Among them, thousands of people

are retired civil service personnel who have to get through their last days in poverty. Still, there are very few institutions that care for these people. There are only 16,919 persons who have registered with these non-profit institutions to receive provisions. Such being the case, the Global New Light of Myanmar would like to urge all regardless of whatever religious faiths they profess to be kind enough to pay due respect to the aged poor and provide them with cash and kind in order that they can get through their last days peacefully.

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Trials and Tribulations for Myanmar in 2015

Sonu Trivedi

AS Myanmar has been witnessing rapid transformation and reforms, the year 2015 has been a critical juncture characterized by trials and tribulations for the country. This article highlights some of the major developments attracting international headlines and shaping the future roadmap of democracy in Myanmar.

Myanmar in 2015 has been marred by catastrophes and natural disasters. Monsoon floods caused by torrential rains, worsened under the impact of cyclone Komen, led to havoc and devastation resulting in the displacement of tens of thousands across 12 states and regions in Myanmar. This led to declaration of a 'State of Emergency' in the disaster affected regions. International community and civil society organizations have been engaged in relief and rehabilitation work since then in some of the worst affected areas of Magwe and Sagaing region in Chin and Western Rakhine state.

The country was also in headlines on account of some of the devastating landslides in jade mining regions in the mountainous areas of Northern Kachin State occurring in the first and the last quarter of 2015. These massive landslides have taken a toll on the miners exposing lack of security and safety measures fuelled by rampant corruption and labour law violations. In general, there has been a growing concern and public outcry about dangers of jade mining in Myanmar.

The onset of fresh violence in the Kokang region in early 2015 has been a challenge for building up the trust deficit and a major source of China's anxiety so far as its strategic and commercial interest in Myanmar is concerned.

The incident has marred the most serious spillover of the conflict in the border region of the northern Myanmar. Even in the recent months, the skirmishes have continued in Kachin and Shan state challenging the peace process and ceasefire negotiations in northern Myanmar.

Meanwhile in the month of May, Myanmar released some of the preliminary results of its first nation-wide census held after a gap of 30 years according to which its population stood at 51.5 million. The Central Census Commission is expected to publish its full result when the new civilian government is all set to take over the responsibilities of the state officially in early 2016. Hard figures about child labour, migrant workers, unorganized sector, rural-urban divide, birth and mortality rates and the highly sensitive ethnicity and religion data and an accurate count of the population is a critical part of the national development process and political reforms.

The year 2015 has witnessed a positive note for the labour and social security issues. Passing of the Minimum Wages Act in the month of August has been a welcome move and the first-ever national minimum wage of 3,600 kyat a day has been adopted since September. Nevertheless, some of the legislations have attracted public criticism and widespread opposition. Approval of the National Education law by the Parliament led to a nationwide protest by student activists. In addition, four nationalist laws viz—the Population Control Law, the Religious Conversion Law, the Inter-faith marriage law and the Monogamy law passed in the second half of the year have been alleged as some what discriminatory and controversial infringing upon the personal liberties of the individuals.

Normalisation of relations between China and Aung San Suu Kyi culminating into her historic visit to Beijing in June has heralded a new era for China-Myanmar relations. According to Yun Sun, a Chinese analyst, "this normalization of relations signifies not only the maturing of China's policy towards Myanmar, but also demonstrates Suu Kyi's pragmatism as a politician". This readjustment of the policy has also been guided by Myanmar's growing rapprochement with the West which has significantly challenged China's interest by changing the bilateral balance of power in the region. It must, however, be recalled that China was the key player in Myanmar after the economic sanctions were imposed by the United States and the European Union since 1988, but easing of Western sanctions has increased competition and challenged the monopoly and dominance of Chinese presence. Furthermore, Obama's foreign policy of 'pivot' to Asia-Pacific has been a cause of concern for the growing Chinese presence in the region. It has prompted Chinese anxiety and heightened regional worries, where in countries are now faced with a tough dilemma to choose between the United States and China.

Another event, not visible apparently in the national media in Myanmar, has been the surgical operation carried out by the Indian security forces in the month of June. This hot pursuit by the Special Forces on militant camps in Myanmar have been subjected to critical questioning about the role of military and justification of hot pursuit on foreign land. In its bid to outmaneuver the rebel camps on the border, Indian security establishment in its counter offensive operation seems to have been taken resort to unilateralism. Covert armed operation,

public rhetoric and the drama which followed thereafter and has been adverse to India's international image and diplomacy running into the risk of antagonising a friendly neighbour and compromising on bilateral ties.

The month of August witnessed the biggest political shake-up since the end of military rule when, in a dramatic move U Thura Shwe Mann was removed as Chairman of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). This was allegedly the result of Shwe Mann's growing closeness with the democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi which had antagonised the hardliners in the military and led to further deterioration of his relationship with the power centre in Myanmar. Nevertheless, he continued to be the Speaker of the lower house. It is, however, noteworthy that Shwe Mann, had been considered as a leading contender for the upcoming Presidency. The August purge in Myanmar was a reflection of its fragile experiment with democracy which rests upon the relics of the previous regime. It echoes upon the widening gap between the conservative and reformist forces in the recent past.

Hailed as a 'historic' document and a 'new page' in history, the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signed in October has been a key reformist agenda of the incumbent regime and an effort to end the longest running civil war in the world. Though only eight out of the fifteen armed groups invited to sign the agreement were a party to NCA, nevertheless, it has paved the road to future peace in Myanmar. A Joint Monitoring Committee has also been formed to implement ceasefires and political negotiations. Though critics are apprehensive about the peace deal because of the ongoing skirmishes with some of the major armed groups and the

deep seated mistrust that some of these ethnic groups share towards the military.

November observed the festival of democracy in Myanmar which voted for the first time after a gap of six decades in a free and fair democratic election. It witnessed some 91 odd political parties participating in the democratic process where NLD received overwhelming majority and the ruling party gracefully accepted defeat. The political majority in both houses favours NLD which paves way for a peaceful transfer of the duties of the state undoing the wrong of 1990 people's verdict. Recently, Aung San Suu Kyi has also held talks with the incumbent President Thein Sein and the Chief of armed forces Min Aung Hlaing to discuss this transfer, since the support of military is going to be crucial for the smooth functioning of the Parliament in Myanmar.

Given the internal political dynamics in Myanmar, however, one of the challenges which remains is to find an acceptable leader within NLD to take up Presidency on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi. Furthermore, dealing with the autocratic authority structure and dismantling the remnants of the previous regime is a significant challenge. Last but not the least, ending of the six decade long ethnic conflict and the new Government's responsiveness is going to be a litmus test for the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi. It is in this post-election scenario, which would shape the future road-map of democracy in Myanmar.

About the author

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WWII-era rifle found in river in Indaw

A gun that is believed to have been used in WWII was discovered during the construction of a new bridge in Indaw, Sagaing Region.

Construction workers found the point-303 rifle while they were removing stones under the water at the bridge construction site near the Maezar-Wuntho Road on 2 January.

They gave the gun to a local military battalion in Katha on 3 January.—*Maung Chin Lin*



Sheep breeders seek financial assistance

SHEEP breeders in Kantbalu Township are seeking loans to expand their livestock breeding farms.

Currently, the average farmer breeds between 40 and 50 sheep. Many are in need of financial assistance to sustain their breeding activities, according to local farmers. An adult sheep is worth around K100,000 and are primarily sold to be butchered and sold as food, said Kyaw Aung, a sheep farmer from Chin Myint Village, Kantbalu Township.

Local farmers prefer to breed sheep rather than goats as the former are easier to graze. The Global Treasure Bank previously disbursed K59 million (US\$45,300) in loans to local breeders in Kantbalu in April 2015.

Local farmers in the arid zone are relying on farming of cattle for their livelihood.

Meanwhile, some farmers grow peas and pulses in winter.—*Aung Win Nyein*



A man drive his cattle to a graze in Kantbalu. PHOTO: NGWE OH

Construction of Maezar Bridge in Sagaing progresses in line with regional development

A NEW bridge, the Maezar Bridge over the Maezar River, is currently under construction in Indaw Township, Katha District, Sagaing Region, with use of the government's development fund.

The main aim of the project is to provide better transportation services to residents in the region and to aid socio-economic development.

The concrete bridge will be 480 feet long and 27 feet wide.

The bridge is essential for the smooth flow of goods from manufactures to customers living along the river, a spokesperson of the region said.

After completion of the project, residents will be able to

create business links with merchants from Wuntho, Kawlin, Pinlebu, Tamu and Hommalin of Sagaing Region, Mandalay as well as Kachin State located in the upper part of the country.—*Ngwe Oh (Katha)*

Crime News

Amphetamines seized in Kon Gyan

A LOCAL anti-drug squad in Kon Gyan Township discovered 6,480 yabba (synthetic amphetamine) tablets and 130 Japanese yen in the possession of Haw Eh, 37, on Man Hsar Village Road on Tuesday. Police have charged the man under the Anti-Narcotics Law.—*Myanmar Police Force*

Cargo vessel sinks in Homalin

A CARGO vessel sank in Homalin Township on Friday.

According to the investigation, the vessel was heading from Monywa to Homalin and was driven by U Tin Maung and crew members U Wai Phyto and U Min Hlaing when it collided with a rock known as Nat Kyi Swe and capsized near Laung Min Village.

Local residents helped rescue the crew.—*IPRD*

Stimulants, heroin and ice seized in Tachilek



Heroin, yabba pills and ice (industrial crystal methamphetamines) seized from three houses in Tachilek. PHOTO: POLICE

AUTHORITIES seized a cache of heroin, yabba pills and ice (industrial crystal methamphetamines) in three houses in Yan Aung Myay Ward, Tachilek, on Friday.

Acting on a tip-off, police searched a house owned by Ah Htee, 52, and found 420 grams of heroin, worth K1,500 per gram, in a cabinet.

Police also discovered 191 yabba pills and 10 grams of ice and 1,650 Thai bahts in bags be-

longing to Pyi Soe, 33.

They also found 1,198 yabba pills, 70 grams of ice and 0.4 grams of heroin in the man's house.

Local police also seized 3,600 yabba pills, 21 grams of heroin powder and 9 grams of ice at the house of Sai Khan Li, 34, and Aik Kyaing Nwet, 19.

The police station is filing charges against them under the Anti-Narcotics Law.—*Myint Moe*

Mahout killed in elephant attack

A MAN was killed by an elephant on Saturday in Indaw Township, Sagaing Region.

According to the investigation, Aung Zaw Oo, 29, was attacked by an elephant he was attempting to transport. The elephant was reportedly in musth, a periodic hormonal condition among male elephants that is characterised by aggressive behaviour.

Aung Zaw Oo later succumbed to his wounds.—*U Ye*

Man charged with two counts of mobile phone theft

POLICE have filed charges against a man on suspicion of theft of property, including mobile phones and money.

Aung Tun (aka Arkhar), 32, was stopped and interrogated near the university dormitory in Thawma Village, Sintgaing Township, Mandalay on 1 January.

Further investigation led to the discovery of another mobile phone and more money he had stolen over the last two months.—*Htway*

Ownerless illegal logs seized in Sagaing

AUTHORITIES seized 18.8 tonnes of illegal logs in Sagaing region on Friday.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined investigation team comprising officers from the Department of Forestry found 13.4 tonnes of ownerless logs near the graveyard in Ywar Naung Village.

Another combined investigation team also discovered 5.4 tonnes of ownerless logs near Hnaw Pin Pyant Village the same day.—*Min Khant Soe (Zayar Myay)*

FTSE outperforms Europe, Royal Mail and Tesco rise



People walk through the lobby of the London Stock Exchange in London, Britain in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — British shares edged higher yesterday after beginning the year in negative territory, with Royal Mail and grocer Tesco both benefiting from upgrades on their stock.

Royal Mail was the top riser on the blue-chip FTSE 100 index, up 2.5 per cent after Cantor Fitzgerald upgraded its rating on the stock, citing in-line earnings in November and good progress on cost savings.

The FTSE 100 was up 0.3 per cent at 6,111.09 points by 0939 GMT, having fallen more than 2 per cent in the previous session, its worst first trading day of the year since 2000.

The index outperformed the broader European market on Tuesday.

Tesco was up 1.2 per cent on the back of an upgrade to “buy” from “hold” from Deutsche Bank.

Shares in rival supermarket operator Morrison, which advanced 0.2 per cent, were likewise supported by an upgrade from Deutsche Bank, which increased its rating on the stock to “hold” from “sell”.

After a sell-off in the previous session following weak Chinese manufacturing data, the UK FTSE 350 Mining index recovered some of its losses to trade up 0.3 per cent. Metals prices rebounded after Chinese shares stabilised following a highly volatile session on Monday.

Miners Glencore, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto all rose between 0.2 and 2.2 per cent. Mid-cap natural resources company Vedanta Resources gained 3.2 per cent.

“The general feeling is that they might be approaching the bottom of their current trend, but it’s a brave investor who tries to call (it

at) this particular moment in time,” Richard Hunter, head of equities at Hargreaves Lansdown, said.

Among the retailers, however, Next dropped 5.2 per cent after the company reported disappointing sales in the run-up to Christmas, blaming poor stock availability, increased online competition and unusually warm weather in November and December for a slowdown that could hit the wider sector.

“Holders will be happy to receive another 60p special dividend ... thanks to good cashflow, but sceptics might not like a worse net debt position and what amounts to a challenging environment in which to be a retailer,” Mike van Dulken, head of research at Accendo Markets, said in a note.

Fellow grocer Marks and Spencer, which is due to report on Thursday, also declined, by 1.3 per cent.—Reuters

Ford will expand self-driving test car fleet to 30

LAS VEGAS — Ford Motor Co said yesterday it plans to triple to 30 the size of its fleet of self-driving test cars as part of an effort to accelerate autonomous vehicle development.

In an announcement coinciding with the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Ford said it will begin using a new, lower cost LiDAR sensor made by California-based Velodyne. The high cost of such sensors, which act as the eyes of a self-driving car, is one of the main technical obstacles to widespread commercialization of self-driving vehicles, industry executives say.

Ford said it will be the first automaker to use Velodyne’s new solid state “hybrid Ultra PUCK Auto” sensor. The compact device replaces the spinning scanners mounted on the rooftops of some autonomous test vehicles. Ford said two of these sensors could replace four current LiDAR sensors. The Ultra PUCKs are small enough to mount on a side-view mirror, Ford said.

Ford said it will add 20 hy-

brid Ford Fusion sedans to its existing 10-vehicle self-driving car fleet, and test them on roads in California, Arizona and Michigan. Rival automakers are also testing fleets of self-driving cars on and off public roads. Alphabet Inc’s Google has been testing self-driving cars of various kinds, including some of its own design, since 2009.

Separately, Ford said it is exploring ways to link in-home automation devices such as Amazon.com Inc’s Echo to the Sync communications systems in its cars to allow consumers to control lights or thermostats inside the home from the car, or start up cars and check fuel levels from inside the house.

In a third technology-related move, Ford said it will collaborate with drone maker DJI to sponsor a contest to develop drone-to-vehicle communications systems using the connectivity systems on a Ford F-150. Contestants would design a system that United Nations workers can use to survey disaster areas, Ford said. The winner would get \$100,000.—Reuters



The corporate logo of Ford is seen on the uniform of a mechanic at a Ford branch in Caracas. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan’s new auto sales in 2015 log 1st fall in 4 years

TOKYO — Sales of new automobiles in Japan fell 9.3 per cent in 2015 from the previous year to 5,046,511 vehicles, the first decline in four years, dragged down by weak sales of minivehicles, data released by industry bodies showed yesterday.

Sales of minivehicles with engines no larger than 660 cc dropped 16.6 per cent to 1,896,201, down for the first time in four years, according to the Japan Light Motor Vehicle and Motorcycle Association. Sales of other vehicles slipped 4.2 per cent to 3,150,310 for the first decrease in two years, according to the Japan Automobile Dealers Association.—Kyodo News

Microsoft’s latest operating system running on 200 million devices

SAN FRANCISCO — Microsoft Corp’s latest operating system, Windows 10, is running on 200 million devices in what the company said was the fastest adoption rate of any of its operating systems.

Windows 10, which the

company released as a free download in July, powers both personal computers and devices like phones. It replaced Windows 8, the heavily criticized system dating from 2012.

Just over two months ago, Chief Executive Officer Satya Nadella said 110 million devices were running Windows 10, meaning the system is now on almost double the number of phones and PCs compared to before the holiday season.

“I would characterize this as white hot adoption out of the gate,” said Daniel Ives, an analyst at FBR Capital Markets, who has an “outperform” rating on the stock.



A display for the Windows 10 operating system is seen in a store window at the Microsoft store at Roosevelt Field in Garden City, New York in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Honda sells over 1m cars in China in 2015

BEIJING — Honda Motor Co announced Monday that it sold over 1 million vehicles in China in 2015, exceeding its sales target of 950,000 units and hitting seven digits for the first time.

Honda said detailed sales figures will be released on Friday. Its previous record high was 759,000 units sold in 2014.

The Japanese automaker said its Vezel SUV model sold particularly well in China last year.

Last October, Honda said it had secured annual production capacity for 1.13 million vehicles in China.—Kyodo News

Much of the growth comes from retail consumers, with devices such as Microsoft’s Xbox gaming console helping drive adoption of Windows 10, the company said. Xbox’s busiest day ever was 28 December, it added.

But the ultimate success of Windows 10 will be judged by the take-up rate among businesses. About three-quarters of Microsoft’s enterprise customers are testing Windows 10, the company said.

Microsoft also needs more mobile developers to build apps for Windows 10 to help catch up with players like Apple and its popular iPhone and iPad devices. It reported some progress in that area Monday, citing more visits to its Windows Store for apps such as video service Netflix and music service Pandora.—Reuters

Dead college football player leaves clues of concussions' toll on brain



A football helmet's health warning sticker is pictured between a US flag and the number 55, in memory of former student and NFL player Junior Seau, as the Oceanside Pirates high school football team prepares for their Friday night game in Oceanside, California in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — A 25-year-old former college football player who sustained repeated hits to the head showed signs of brain damage after his death that may offer fresh clues about how concussions impact athletes, US researchers report.

The young man had what's known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a traumatic brain disorder that can only be diagnosed during an autopsy. He died of cardiac arrest related to an

infection in his heart, but the autopsy showed signs of brain damage consistent with CTE, researchers report in JAMA Neurology.

"There is a common perception that CTE affects only professional athletes; this case as well as many others shows us that contact sports athletes at the amateur level are also at risk for the disease," lead study author Dr Ann McKee of Boston University said by email.

While this isn't the first former football player to be diagnosed with CTE after years playing contact sports, this particular athlete had a series of psychological and cognitive tests before his death that offer some insight into how symptoms of CTE might develop, McKee and colleagues note in their report.

The athlete started playing American football at age six and continued for 16 years; he played Division I college football as a defensive linebacker and special teams player.

He suffered more than 10 concussions, all while playing football, the first occurring at age eight. None resulted in hospitalization.

During his freshman year of college, he had a concussion with momentary loss of consciousness followed by ongoing headaches, neck pain, blurry vision, tinnitus, insomnia, anxiety, and difficulty with concentration. Symptoms persisted, and he stopped playing football at the beginning of his junior year. His grades plummeted and he left school, as he continued to experience symptoms ranging from loss of appetite to thoughts of suicide, the researchers report. —Reuters

Study finds West Africa at highest risk of bat-to-human virus spread

LONDON — Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia are most at risk from bat viruses jumping to humans and causing new diseases that could lead to deadly outbreaks, scientists warned yesterday.

Approximately 60 to 75 per cent of emerging infectious diseases are so-called "zoonotic events" — where animal diseases jump into people — and bats in particular are known to carry many zoonotic viruses.

The tiny animals are the suspected origin of rabies, Ebola, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and possibly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and could cause other as yet unknown epidemics in future.

Scientists at University College London (UCL), the Zoological Society of London and Edinburgh University aimed to map out the highest-risk areas, using a variety of factors including large numbers of bat viruses found locally, increasing population pressure, and hunting bats for bushmeat. Kate Jones, UCL's chair of ecology and biodiversity, said her team first created risk maps for each variable and found, for example, that in map-

ping for potential human-bat contact, sub-Saharan Africa was a hotspot, while for diversity of bat viruses, South America was at most risk.

"By combining the separate maps, we've created the first global picture of the overall risks of bat viruses infecting humans in different regions," she said.

The work was published in journal *The American Naturalist*.

The research, using data published between 1900 and 2013, found that overall West Africa — the epicenter of the recent Ebola outbreak — is at highest risk for zoonotic bat viruses. The wider sub-Saharan Africa region, as well as South East Asia, were also found to be hotspots.

Liam Brierley, a PhD student at Edinburgh University who worked with Jones, said the risk of bat to human virus transmission is being driven higher by large and increasing populations of people and livestock expanding into wild areas such as forests. "People in these areas may also hunt bats for bushmeat, unaware of the risks of transmissible diseases which can occur through touching body fluids and raw meat of bats," he said. —Reuters

2nd human H5N6 avian flu reported in South China

GUANGZHOU — A second human H5N6 avian flu case has been reported in south China's Guangdong Province within a week, health authorities said on Monday.

The new patient is a 40-year-old woman from Zhaoqing City. She is in a serious condition and receiving treatment in a designated hospital, said an official of the Zhaoqing Municipal Health

and Family Planning Bureau.

Last Tuesday, a 26-year-old woman from Shenzhen City was confirmed with the same virus. She is also being treated in a hospital.

Health authorities in Zhaoqing have 64 people who had close contact with the patient under observation and are monitoring five poultry market workers. —Xinhua

Drug approvals at 19-year high belie industry challenges

LONDON — 2015 was a good year for innovation in medicine with the US Food and Drug Administration approving 45 novel drugs, four more than in 2014 and the most since the all-time record of 53 set in 1996.

Across the Atlantic, the European Medicines Agency recommended 93 new products, including generics, up from 82 in 2014.

But despite the rosy statistics and the prospect for further progress in 2016, the pharmaceuticals industry faces challenges, with increased political focus on drug pricing having punctured both biotech and specialty pharmaceutical valuations in recent months.

The prospect of Hillary Clinton becoming US president could further undermine confidence in the sector's profitability in 2016, given her pledge to rein in drug costs. But any changes in the US pricing model are likely to be gradual, according to Bernstein analyst Tim Anderson.

Big pharmaceutical companies, meanwhile, are still struggling to get a decent return on the billions of dollars spent annually on research and development, since many new medicines are forecast to yield relatively modest sales.

Moreover, securing a strong launch for new drugs, which must compete with a growing roster of cheap generics, is often an uphill

battle as healthcare providers push back against the high prices being charged.

Modern cancer drugs can cost more than \$10,000 a month, placing a heavy financial burden on governments, insurers and patients.

The rapid pace of new approvals reflects accelerated review times by regulators, who want to get life-saving treatments to patients, especially in cancer, as well as an improved scientific understanding of diseases.

That will continue in 2016, analysts believe, with further advances in cancer treatments that work by boosting the immune system, and significant progress in drugs for autoimmune diseases.

es.

Switzerland's Roche, the world's largest cancer drug company, could be a notable winner on both counts, with its cancer immunotherapy atezolizumab on track for potential fast approval in 2016.

Roche may also be the first company with a drug to treat the progressive form of multiple sclerosis and some analysts already forecast annual sales for ocrelizumab of \$5 billion. Plenty of other companies also have promising new products waiting in the wings for a variety of cancers, as well as disorders including psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, hepatitis C and chronic lung disease. —Reuters



A person holds pharmaceutical tablets and capsules in this picture illustration taken in Ljubljana. PHOTO: REUTERS

Scientists identify 'fear switch' neurons in mice

HANGZHOU — Chinese scientists have discovered two types of neurons that can arouse or suppress innate fear induced by odor.

Innate fear, which include things like fear of height and insects, is a basic animal instinct to avoid danger, but in excess it can lead to anxiety and even mental disease. Understanding its neuron mechanism can benefit therapy for fear-related disorders, said Duan Shumin with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

By exposing mice to the odor of their predator's feces and recording fear-related responses such as frozen movement, shaking and accelerated heart rate, Duan's team studied how such fears were related to

their somatostatin-positive neurons and parvalbumin-positive (PV) neurons.

When their PV neurons were inhibited, the mice remained bold and continued to act normally despite the threat of a predator, while activation of the somatostatin neurons produced the same effect, said Wang Hao from Zhejiang University, who also participated in the research.

"These neurons are like fear switches. Even without the odor, the neurons can generate a fear response in mice, such as fleeing, increased heart rate and incontinence," Wang said.

The study was published in the latest issue of *Nature Neuroscience*. —Xinhua

Sudanese who braved Channel Tunnel granted asylum in Britain

CANTERBURY — A Sudanese man who made global headlines in August when he walked 50 km (30 miles) through the Channel Tunnel from France to England, highlighting the plight of migrants, has been granted asylum in Britain.

The case of Abdul Haroun, who has been in prison since he was arrested at the English end of the tunnel on 4 August, is one of the most dramatic examples of a country struggling to tackle an influx of refugees largely from war zones such as Syria.

After walking for 12 hours in near total darkness as trains rushed past at speeds of up to 160 km per hour, Haroun was charged with the obscure 19th Century offense of obstructing a railway, which attracts a penalty of up to two years in jail.

Refugee rights campaigners accused authorities of treating Haroun harshly to deter others from following in his footsteps, while tunnel operator Eurotunnel called for “the full force of the law” to be used against him.

Haroun had been due to stand trial this month, but at a brief hearing on Monday at Canterbury Crown Court, in the southeastern county of Kent, prosecutor Philip Bennetts said Haroun had been granted asylum on 24 December.

The case was adjourned to 18 January to give the prosecution time to decide whether to continue with the case.

Eurotunnel said the granting of asylum to Haroun would encourage others to seek clandestine ways to enter Britain.



Sudanese migrant Abdul Haroun is greeted by his lawyer and support workers from a non-government refugee rights group as he leaves Elmley prison in southern England, Britain, on 4 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

“He not only caused significant disruption to Eurotunnel and to the many freight and passenger customers traveling at the time, he also put his own life and that of others at risk,” the company said in a statement.

Judge Adele Williams granted Haroun immediate bail, ending five months of pre-trial detention that had left his lawyers concerned about his psychological state.

“We’re delighted that it’s reached this point and we’re hoping the case will be thrown out,” said Kate Adams of the non-governmental group Kent Refu-

gee Help, which has supported Haroun in prison and is providing him with a place to live.

“We want him to be happily settled in the UK,” she said.

A spokesman for the Home Office, the government department which oversees the asylum system, declined immediate comment.

Haroun’s high-profile case comes at an awkward time for the government, which is preparing for a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union in which the migration crisis is a major issue for voters.

The crisis has divided Brit-

ain, as it has other European countries such as Germany and France, between those who want tougher measures to keep migrants out and those who call for greater solidarity with people fleeing war or oppression.

Little is known about Haroun, who was 40 at the time of his arrest according to police. The court heard at an earlier hearing that his mother tongue is Zaghawa, suggesting that he may be from Darfur, a region of Sudan ravaged by more than a decade of conflict between government and rebel forces.—*Reuters*

Candidates call for halt in Central African Republic vote count

BANGUI -- Two thirds of the 30 candidates standing for president of Central African Republic on Monday demanded the authorities halt the vote count because of what they said were irregularities in the ballot.

Many voters hope the 30 December poll will restore peace after three years of conflict between Muslim rebels and Christian militias in which thousands of people have died and around 1 million have fled their homes.

The protest by the candidates could mean the final result is contested, but it may be seen by some voters as a last cry by people who see their chances of winning the election slipping away.

“The election ... revealed a grave lack of organisation, multiple irregularities and intimidation in the way the vote took place that fundamentally call into question the sincerity and transparency of the election,” said candidate Theodore Kapou.

“We demand pure and simply that this set-up be stopped and we invite all relevant actors to sit round a table to figure out the best way to save the nation,” said Kapou, who spoke on behalf of the others.

Results have trickled out slowly but with 34 per cent of the vote counted, former prime minister Faustin Archange Touadera was leading with 139,498 votes, followed by another former prime minister, Anicet Georges Dologuele, with 96,728 vote.—*Reuters*

NHK to enhance collaboration with regional newspapers

TOKYO — NHK will enhance collaboration with regional newspapers across Japan, the chief of the public broadcaster told its staff in a New Year message on Monday.

By teaming up with the newspapers, the broadcaster can “pick up stories that we wouldn’t be able to pick up on our own, thus widening our coverage range, while the collaboration is also likely to bring a major benefit to our sales activities (of collecting viewing fees from households),” NHK President Katsuto Momii said.

In a speech before employees who gathered at NHK Hall in Tokyo, Momii indicated the collaboration will also be beneficial to Japanese localities. If NHK “sends out information about a certain region, it will lead to sending out such information to the world.”



Katsuto Momii, president of Japanese public broadcaster NHK. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

The president of NHK, whose official English name is Japan Broadcasting Corp., said he will call for the envisioned partnership during meetings to be attended by executives of media organizations that are members of Kyodo News, including NHK.—*Kyodo News*

Venezuela’s Maduro limits congressional oversight of central bank

CARACAS — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday eliminated the National Assembly’s control over nomination and removal of central bank directors through a legal reform that the opposition slammed as aimed at curtailing its power a day before it takes leadership of the legislature.

Venezuela’s opposition trounced the ruling Socialist Party and its allies in legislative elections in December, winning two-thirds of the Congress, in large part due to voter fury over a brutal economic crisis.

In a televised speech Monday night, Maduro said he may ask the National Assembly to approve an “economic emergency.”

One of the opposition’s key economic aims was to try to overhaul the central bank amid triple-digit inflation, recession

and widespread shortages. Opposition lawmakers-elect had vowed to pressure the bank into revealing data on inflation and gross domestic product, neither of which has been published for more than a year.

“The reform is a legal monstrosity to protect a highly questioned president. It goes against the constitution,” Jose Guerra, a newly elected opposition lawmaker and a former director of the central bank, wrote on Twitter.

Maduro, in his televised speech, said: “I’m evaluating the strengthening of a strategic plan. ... We are going to activate an emergency plan and reconstruct our economy.” He provided no further details.

The law previously required the president to seek the approval of Congress when naming or firing central bank

directors. This power now rests in the hands of the president following the change to the law, which was signed on Wednesday.

The outgoing Congress had granted Maduro special powers to legislate by decree until 31 December.

The last-minute change also allows the bank to classify data if it is considered a threat to national security or economic stability, and allows it to allocate financing to the state and its institutions without legislative approval.

Since the 6 December vote, the ruling Socialist Party has sought to curtail the opposition’s power, with the latest move suggesting Venezuela’s economic health will remain under wraps while granting the central bank more autonomy.—*Reuters*

Low water levels on Rhine hampers Danube shipping in Germany

HAMBURG — Low water levels mean cargo vessels still cannot sail fully loaded on the Rhine and Danube rivers in Germany, traders said on Monday.

Low levels since the summer have created logistical problems for buyers

and distributors of commodities including diesel, heating oil and grains as vessels could at best sail half-loaded. An unplanned shut down of Switzerland's only oil refinery exacerbated the problem.

The Rhine is too shallow

to allow vessels to sail with full loads in its entire length south of Cologne and Duisburg, traders said.

The Danube is also too low for ships to sail with full loads along the German section of the river, they said.

Low water means vessel operators impose surcharges on freight rates, increasing costs for cargo owners. More vessels are needed to transport cargo, also increasing costs.

"Rain and snow is forecast in the Rhine catchment areas this week which could raise water levels," a trader said. "People are hoping the wetter winter weather will solve the problem of low water at last."

The Rhine is an important shipping route for commodities including grains, minerals, coal and oil products such as heating oil.

The Danube is an important route for heating oil and for east European grain exports to west Europe.—Reuters



An aerial picture shows a ferry over Europe's most frequented waterway the river Rhine in Mondorf, a suburb of the North Rhine-Westphalian city of Bonn, Germany in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain set for first mass strike by doctors in 40 years

LONDON — The British government said it was seeking to hold talks with doctors in its state-funded health service in a last-ditch bid to avert a series of mass walkouts, potentially the first such strikes for four decades.

Junior doctors, or doctors in training who represent just over half of all doctors in the National Health Service, said on Monday they would stage a 24-hour stoppage next week, followed by two further 48-hour strikes.

It will affect non-emergency care and lead to the cancellations of many operations. Doctors' strikes are rare in Britain. The last time junior doctors took industrial action was in 1975

over non-payment for work done outside the standard 40-hour working week. A new contract was agreed the next year.

Planned walkouts before Christmas were suspended to allow for further talks in the dispute which centres on pay and conditions, but on Monday the doctors' union, the British Medical Association (BMA), said these discussions had failed to make progress.

"In order for them (the strikes) to be called off, the government would have to recognise the deeply held concerns of junior doctors and be able to go rather further than it has been able to push itself over Christmas," Mark Porter, the BMA

chairman told BBC Radio.

Ninety-eight per cent of more than 37,000 junior doctors had voted to take part in industrial action, including strikes, in protest against the new employment contract proposed by Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt. The BMA and doctors have criticised the contract, which changes the way they are paid for anti-social hours, saying it does not provide proper safeguards against doctors working dangerously long hours.

The government says the new contract is part of measures to ensure patients get the "same quality of care across the week".

"Our absolute priority is patient safety and making sure that the NHS delivers

high-quality care 7 days a week — and we know that's what doctors want too, so it is extremely disappointing that the BMA have chosen to take industrial action which helps no-one," Hunt said in a statement.

He said the mediation service Acas had been asked to reconvene negotiations to try to settle the dispute.

The NHS delivers care for free to the whole population and accounts for a third of government spending on public services. The service often features as one of the most important issues during elections and recent struggles during winter have led to concerns as to whether the NHS is adequately funded to maintain high standards.—Reuters

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Adele closes out 2015 with sixth week atop US Billboard chart



British singer Adele.
PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — British singer Adele closed out 2015 with a sixth consecutive week atop the weekly US Billboard 200 album chart on Monday, as her album “25” cemented its status as the biggest-selling record of the year.

Adele’s “25” sold 363,000 units in the final week of 2015, bringing her total US sales tally to 7.4 million, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

On the Digital Songs chart, which measures online song sales, Adele’s ballad “Hello” held steady at No 1 with 327,000 copies sold in the last week of the year.

No new releases cracked into the top 10 of the Billboard 200 list for the week. Justin Bieber’s “Purpose” remained steady at No 2, while alt-hip hop band Twenty One Pilots’s “Blurryface” climbed to No 3 from No 11.—Reuters

R D Burman’s tryst with opportunism in Bollywood

NEW DELHI — The world is full of opportunistic people and Bollywood was no exception, realised Rahul Dev Burman after his father, the iconic music composer Sachin Dev Burman had to stop working following a heart attack and a let-down by Guru Dutt in 1961, says a book.

According to “R D Burman The Prince of Music” by Rupa Publications, RD’s first tryst with opportunism in the film industry occurred when his father suffered a cardiac arrest and was abandoned by the likes of legendary filmmaker Guru Dutt, for whom the Burman-senior had scored music in all time classics like “Pyaasa” (1957) and “Kaa-gaz Ke Phool” (1959).

The nearly 540-page book, launched last summer, is a detailed account of the musical maestro’s life right from his birth on June 27 1939 to his last breath on 4 January, 1994.

The book, replete with anecdotes and quotes, presents the life of R D Burman, both as a professional and a person behind the musical genius that he was.

“That the film industry is full of fair-weather friends I came to know in 1961 when my father had a heart attack. At that time he’d already composed about five songs for Guru Dutt’s ‘Baharein Phir Bhi Ayengi’. My parents told Guru Dutt that I was capable of getting the songs recorded but he declined and said he was sorry but he couldn’t wait.

“After that one by one all the producers left my father,” RD, whose tune was used by father SD in Guru Dutt’s ‘Pyaasa’ to bring out the evergreen song ‘Sar jo tera chakraye’, is quoted as saying in the book by written by his cousin Khagesh Dev Burman.—PTI

Guns N’ Roses, LCD Soundsystem, Cavin Harris to headline 2016 Coachella festival

LOS ANGELES — The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival on Monday announced its 2016 lineup, with Calvin Harris and the reunion of two previously retired bands, Guns N’ Roses and LCD Soundsystem, headlining the main stage.

Guns N’ Roses will reportedly perform with its original lineup of singer Axl Rose, guitarist Slash and bassist Duff McKagan. The band members have not performed together in two decades.

LCD Soundsystem will headline the opening night, taking the stage after retiring in 2011, organisers Goldenvoice said.

Calvin Harris will headline on closing night, and other performers at this year’s festival include Ice Cube, Rancid, Sufjan Stevens and The Kills.

Coachella, which began in 1999 as a festival of indie and alternative rock, has become one of the main attractions of the summer live music season. Headliners in recent years have included Jay Z, Snoop Dogg and Madonna.

The two-weekend festival in Indio, California is scheduled over three days and the weekends of 15-17 April and 22-24 April.—Reuters



Matt Sorum (L), Steven Adler (2nd L), Duff McKagan (3rd L) and Slash of Guns N’ Roses pose backstage after being inducted into the Rock n’ Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio in 2012. PHOTO: REUTERS

Katrina is the most hard working actress I have ever met: Tabu

MUMBAI — Tabu, who is sharing screen space with Katrina Kaif for the first time in their upcoming film “Fitoor”, says the “Phantom” star is the most hardworking actress she has ever worked with.

“Katrina is the most hard working actress I have ever met, seen and worked with. I had three days to prepare... the involvement with which she works is amazing,” Tabu told reporters here at the trailer launch of “Fitoor” last evening.

Director Abhishek Kapoor too thinks Katrina is completely into her work.

“I think Katrina has Fitoor (a kind of madness for something) of work.... the way she works is amazing. She is very dedicated

towards her work,” Abhishek said.

Katrina says she enjoyed shooting with Tabu, who plays her mother in “Fitoor”.

“The hardest film acting that I had to do is to pretend that Tabu is my mother. She doesn’t look like my mother from any angle. She is like a friend. I can’t call her mother,” the 32-year-old actress said.

“Earlier, I had not interacted much with her but while we were working on this film I discovered she is so warm and a down to earth person. When you are acting in front of a great actor you should not get lost in their performance... you have to contribute. It was gracious enough of her to come on board.”

“Fitoor” is a modern-day take on Charles Dickens’ 1861 novel “Great Expectations”.



PHOTO: PTI

The makers had originally zeroed in on Rekha to essay the role of Begum which is inspired by Miss Havisham. Now Tabu is playing this role. Earlier in “Haidar” too, Tabu had played the role of a complex mother.

“I had two days to get into the skin of the character. I don’t know what the process was like. I just went into it initially with confused head as we were shooting the last scene first... I was trusting my director as I known him since a long time,” Tabu said.—PTI

Robert Stigwood, music mogul behind Bee Gees and Clapton, died at 81

SYDNEY — Australian-born music mogul Robert Stigwood, who managed the Bee Gees at the height of their fame and guided musician Eric Clapton’s successful solo career while producing musicals for the stage, has died aged 81, friends said yesterday.

The announcement of his death was made on Facebook by Spencer Gibb, a son of Bee Gees’ band member Robin Gibb. Further details about his death were not immediately available.

“I would like to share the sad news with you all, that my godfather, and the longtime manager of my family, Robert Stigwood, has passed away,” Gibb wrote.

Stigwood, who was born in South Australia state, worked with a staggering number of groundbreaking acts, both on the Broadway stage and on the pop charts, producing counter-culture stage hits “Hair” and “Jesus Christ Superstar”.

He produced the groundbreaking film of The Who’s rock opera “Tommy” and “Saturday Night Fever”, which introduced disco music and a young John Travolta to audiences around the world, while propelling the Bee Gees to global stardom. But he was most closely associated with his work with fellow Australians the Bee Gees, whom he guided at the height of their fame in the 1970s.—Reuters

OBITUARY

MR G.S. SHARMA (a) G. SHANKER (B.A; B.L)
Ex- President of All Myanmar Hindu Centre Board, Yangon
Managing Director of Yamona International Co. LTD,
76 years

Son of late Bhogee Ram and late Savitari Devi, beloved husband of Mrs. Parvathi Devi residing at No. 17/21, 35th Street Kyauktada Township Yangon and No180(B) Dhamma Zedi Street, West Shwegondine Quarter, Bahan Township, Yangon, father of Januki Devi Shama, Dr. Vijaya Laxmi Sharma, Poonam Sharma and son-in-law of Ram (a) Bhai, passed away at 5:45am (India Standard Time) on 4th January 2016 in Mumbai.

Relatives and friends far and near are informed that cremation has been done in India in according to Hindu culture.

Bereaved Family

Tsukiji fish market holds last start-of-year auction

TOKYO — Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market held its last start-of-the-year auction yesterday ahead of its relocation scheduled for late 2016.

The aging market is set to be replaced by a new fish and greengrocery wholesale market opening in Tokyo's Toyosu area in November.

A bluefin tuna fetched 14 million yen (about \$117,000), or 70,000 yen per kilogramme, at the auction. The winning bidder for the 200-kg tuna from Oma, Aomori Prefecture, was Tokyo-based sushi restaurant chain operator Kiyomura Co, which also

made a successful bid on the same occasion last year.

The price of the tuna the preceding two years had settled at 4.51 million yen and 7.36 million yen, against an all-time high of 155.4 million yen in 2013, which was also paid by Kiyomura.

The Tsukiji market, one of the biggest fish markets in the world, was built in 1935. Its tuna auctions have become a major tourist attraction in recent years. Kiyoshi Kimura, president of Kiyomura, said he was "full of emotion" at the last start-of-the-year auction at the market.—*Kyodo News*

Nero's golden palace, Siena's crumbling walls win much-needed restoration cash

ROME — Emperor Nero's golden palace, the walls of medieval Siena and the foundations of Venice will all receive sorely needed restoration funds after Italy approved a plan on Monday to spend 300 million euros (\$325 million) to protect its cultural heritage.

Caring for thousands of years' worth of art and architecture is a perennial problem in Italy, and many sites have been left in a fragile state by public spending cuts and mismanagement.

The walls protecting Siena are among the monuments set to be restored, at a cost of 2.2 million euros over the next three years, the culture ministry said.

The investment plan was unveiled shortly after Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's government passed a 2016 budget which increases spending on culture, including a handout



Part of the Domus Aurea (House of Gold) complex is seen in Rome, in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

to 18 year-olds to spend on activities like cinema trips.

Under the plan, 13 million euros will go toward restoring the golden palace Emperor Nero had built in Rome as a monument to

himself but which the later emperor Trajan buried.

More than 6 million euros will go to various projects aimed at helping to prop up the northern canal city of Venice.

Cultural sites will also be kitted out with security alarms and video surveillance, the ministry said, adding that this spending would come to 50 million euros.—*Reuters*

Swoop, pivot and soar — starlings embrace the southern Israel sky

NEOT HUVAVA — Breathtaking "murmurations" — dark, shifting shapes that look like vast dancing clouds - fill the skies of southern Israel and surrounding areas in winter.

Starlings from Russia and east Europe winter in the Holy Land, swooping, pivoting and soaring, putting on a display to shame any aerobatics team anywhere.

A Reuters photo montage shows a remarkable display of shapes. Now they are a falling leaf, now a rising dove, now a giant whale swimming across the sky.

They embark on their spectacular aerobatics in the evening. They do it, according to ornithologist Yossi Leshem of Tel Aviv University, both to help each other find food and to fend off predators.

A falcon or hawk will try to focus on a single bird, Leshem said. By grouping together, the starlings not only find safety in numbers but their changing movements and shifting collective shape confuses their would-be attackers.

They can even create a sudden breeze with their synchronized movements,

he said, causing a hawk or falcon to fall flat on its back, not unlike an aircraft hitting windshear.

Until 20 years ago, starlings came to Israel in their millions, usually descending on the northern part of the Negev desert, which remains warm in winter. But for unknown reasons their numbers have dropped. In the past few years they have come in flocks of no more than a few hundred thousand.

Avid bird watchers and families gather over the weekends to spot the dazzling displays, with the

birds twisting and turning at high speed, creating dramatic, sweeping patterns in the sky, contracting and expanding like a spiraling tornado.

They can be seen in Israel above a rubbish dump near the southern Israeli city of Beersheba, where they feed during the day and circulate on warm air rising from the detritus.

At dusk they begin to group together for the night. Some make off to streams near the Israeli town of Netivot, near Bedouin villages and an industrial park.—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International

(6-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 7-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Taung Byone Nat Festival (Ep-1)
07:52	Am	Art Students: Their Dream
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Fantastic Orchid Garden From The Flower City
08:36	Am	19 Hours
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	The Firefighter
09:36	Am	Climate Context "Adaptation to Climate Change" (Part- I)
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Traditional Instruments Htan Taw Drums (Part-I) "Osi"
10:39	Am	Paper Products... Plain but Pretty

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Dawei- Tavoy, Travel To The Southern Part Of Myanmar
07:44	Pm	Kyeikhteeyoe: Welcome All
07:51	Pm	Ngapali Beach: Fishing Villages
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Tapestry- A Unique Combination Of Painting and Craftsmanship
08:45	Pm	Paper Flower
08:50	Pm	Crocodile Keeper

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm)- Today Repeat(09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
 (11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)-Tuesday Repeat(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
 (03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am)-Today Repeat(07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
 (For Detailed Schedule - www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(6-1-2016, Wednesday)

6:00 am	Boxing
• Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw	4:35 pm
7:35 am	• Money Talk Myanmar
• Money Talk Myanmar	5:35 pm
8:35 am	• World Cultural Heritage Sites in Japan (Himeji Castle & Itsukushima Shrine)
• People's Talks	6:35 pm
12:50 pm	• Real Story Real Movie
• Teleplay (Part-1)	7:15 pm
1:10 pm	• TV Drama Series
• TV Drama Series	8:00 pm
2:00 pm	• News / International News / Weather Report
• TV Drama Series	• TV Drama Series
2:20 pm	• Gitmahar
• Gitmahar	• Documentary
2:35 pm	• Myanmar Traditional
• Myanmar Traditional	• Storeis

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(6-1-2016, Wednesday)

6:00 am	8:45 am
• Songs of Yester Years	• Catch Asia News (Part-24)
6:15 am	9:00 am
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti	• Musical Programme
6:35 am	9:15 am
• Musical Programme	• Pyi Thu Ni Ti
6:45 am	9:35 am
• Fashion Show	• Myanmar-Japan Symphony Orchestra
7:00 am	10:00 am
• TV Drama Series	• Myanmar Movie (Black & White)
7:50 am	
• TV Drama Series	
8:35 am	
• Musical Programme	

From 6.1.2016 (Wednesday) 06:00 hrs
To 7.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 hrs

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.

Yamaguchi unveiled with new Bundesliga club



Japan midfielder Hotaru Yamaguchi attends a press conference in Hannover, Germany on 4 January, 2016, after joining German Bundesliga club Hannover. Yamaguchi said he wants to further grow as a soccer player. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

HANOVER — On a freezing, snowy day, former Cerezo Osaka midfielder Hotaru Yamaguchi was introduced to the German media yesterday by his new Bundesliga club, Hannover.

"I felt at the (2014) World Cup that as an individual, I was lacking strength and from that point I began thinking about moving," the 25-year-old told a press conference at the team's stadium, HDI-Arena. "As a player, I want to improve in every aspect."

With Hannover, the 24-time-capped Yamaguchi will join up with compatriots Hiroshi Kiyotake and Hiroki Sakai.

"We believe that Hotaru Yamaguchi has the qualities to make it in the Bundesliga," explained Hannover chief executive Martin Bader. "Hotaru is a

Japan international, who's been on our radar for a while. We're delighted we've been able to sign him. Having two of his Japan teammates...here will definitely help him integrate in the first few weeks."

With Hannover holding their first practice after the winter break, Yamaguchi took part, playing in a mini game as a defensive midfielder.

"It doesn't snow in Osaka, so I was surprised," he said.

New Hannover coach Thomas Schaaf praised his club's new signing.

"Yamaguchi is a very hard working player. He's intelligent and reads the game well," said Schaaf. "With this practice on the first day, it struck me how far they are willing to push."—Kyodo News

Real Madrid sack coach Benitez and appoint Zidane

MADRID — Real Madrid have sacked coach Rafa Benitez after less than half a season in charge and promoted their former France great Zinedine Zidane from the B team to replace him, president Florentino Perez said on Monday.

Perez announced the dismissal of the experienced Benitez, who had a contract until June 2018, following a board meeting and Zidane was present at the president's news conference at the Bernabeu stadium.

"Firstly I would like to thank the club and the president for giving me the chance to coach this team," Zidane, known as "Zizou" and a hero to Real's fans, told reporters.

"What we need to do now, and what I will try to do, is try to do my best so that this team is a winner at the end of the season," added the 43-year-old, one of the club's youngest-ever coaches.

"The important thing is to be with the team tomorrow and start work," he said.

"I will put all the heart I have into the job for this club and try to make sure things work out well."

Real did not immediately specify the length of Zidane's contract.

He is the 11th coach Perez has installed during two terms in charge and it will be the former France captain's first top-flight management job.

He played for Real for five seasons after joining from Juventus in August 2001 and helped them win their ninth European crown with a stunning volley



Real Madrid's new coach Zinedine Zidane and Real Madrid's President Florentino Perez pose for the media at Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, on 4 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

against Bayer Leverkusen in the 2002 Champions League final.

Perez, who has publicly backed Benitez in recent weeks, said it had been a difficult decision to sack him.

He said Zidane had always tackled the biggest challenges in soccer with "talent and dedication" and noted that the Frenchman knew many of the players well from his role as assistant coach under Benitez's predecessor Carlo Ancelotti.

"You have all our confidence and support so our fans can be excited and entertained in every match," Perez told Zidane, who won the World Cup and European Championship as a player.

He retired from international football after the 2006 World Cup, having been sent off in the final for headbutting Italy defend-

er Marco Materazzi. France lost on penalties.

Benitez, a former Valencia, Liverpool, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Napoli manager who began his coaching career in Real's youth ranks, replaced Ancelotti after the Italian was sacked in June.

Real have failed to find the level of consistency Perez demands, however, and there have been widespread reports Benitez does not get on with some of Real's key players like Cristiano Ronaldo and James Rodriguez.

Disgruntled fans have been whistling Benitez at the Bernabeu in recent months and he also appears to have been blamed for Real's expulsion from the King's Cup last month for fielding an ineligible player.—Reuters

Injured Sharapova, Halep out of Brisbane event

BRISBANE — Australian Open contenders Maria Sharapova and Simona Halep withdrew from the Brisbane International yesterday after suffering injuries less than two weeks before the first grand slam of the year.

Romanian top seed Halep was felled by inflammation in her left Achilles, an injury that hampered her 2015 campaign, but was hopeful of being fit in time for next week's event in Sydney.

Russian Sharapova, the defending champion, was nursing an arm injury which meant a premature exit and no matches at her only tournament before the Melbourne slam which begins on 18 January.

"I hurt my forearm in practice a couple days ago and need to precautionary withdraw with the #AusOpen starting," Sharapova was quoted as saying by Brisbane tournament organisers.



Russia's Maria Sharapova. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sharapova has long been dogged by injuries and missed last year's US Open with a leg muscle injury and then suffered an arm injury on her return in China in October.

The world number four had been due to face compatriot Ekaterina Makarova in first round ac-

tion later on Tuesday but was replaced by another Russian, lucky loser Margarita Gasparyan.

That match, on Pat Rafter Arena, was one of several to be delayed on Tuesday by rain on the east coast of Australia, causing further headaches for tournament organisers shorn of two of

their biggest draw cards.

The injuries to Halep and 28-year-old Sharapova, five-times a grand slam singles champion, follow fitness concerns over Australian Open defending champion Serena Williams, who pulled out of her first match of the year at the Hopman Cup in Perth on Monday because of a knee complaint.

Halep, the world number two, was scheduled to face twice Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in second round action after receiving a bye and she downplayed concerns about the injury being anything serious.

"I did an MRI and it's nothing dangerous, but it's still an inflammation," said Halep who was replaced in the draw by lucky loser Ysaline Bonaventure of Belgium.

"I have just to take a few days' rest."—Reuters

Djokovic sweeps past Brown in 2016 season opener



PHOTO: TANJUG

DOHA — World number one Novak Djokovic sailed safely and easily through his first match in 2016, defeating Germany's Dustin Brown 6-2, 6-2 in the first round at the Qatar ExxonMobil Open in Doha on Monday.

It took the Serb 51 minutes to beat the world number 118.

He will next face either Fernando Verdasco of Spain or Malek Jaziri of Tunisia.

The total prize money for the tournament in Doha is USD 1.9 million.—Tanjung