



Political solution to find to build federal Union: President U Thein Sein
PAGE 3



What is Turmeric?

PAGE 8

ANALYSIS
WINNERS or WHINERS

PAGE 8

5 FULL DAYS OF TALKS UNION PEACE CONFERENCE KICKS OFF



President U Thein Sein delivers speech at the opening of the Union Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

THE Union Peace Conference, the very first inclusive political dialogue, kicked off at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday with the attendance of representatives from the government, parliament, the Tatmadaw, armed groups and political parties.

A 45-member panel of chair-

men for the UPC was selected and approved in the afternoon session.

The first day of the conference was chaired by U Aung Min, Union Minister and a representative from the government, U Thein Zaw, a representative from the parliament, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, a representa-

tive from the Tatmadaw, Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, a representative from the ethnic armed groups, and U Aik Paung, a representative from the political parties.

Secretaries of the joint committee for Union peace talks U Hla Maung Shwe, Maj-Gen Soe Naing Oo and U Khet Htain Nan

clarified the topics and schedules of the conference and disciplines.

Representatives from seven groups discussed the main topics set for discussion at the conference - politics, security, economic and social issues as well as issues related to land and natural resources.

The group discussion will

continue tomorrow.

The conference, which is the biggest gathering of political forces in the country since its independence in 1948, will run until Saturday.

The conference is held according to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed on October 15, in 2015. —Myanmar News Agency

SECM issues warning over possible illegal trading of YSX stock

THE Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar announced on Monday that it intends to identify and take action against any persons or companies that sell stocks by illegal or non-transparent means, for example via social.

The Commission said permission has been granted to

establish the Yangon Stock Exchange and to set up the Securities Companies in line with the securities exchange law.

The YSX was officially launched on 9 December with 6 selected Myanmar companies qualified to be listed for trading.

Trading is expected to begin by March at the latest.—MNA



Journalists gather outside the Yangon Stock Exchange centre on 9 December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

President meets with Secretary-General's Special Adviser



President U Thein Sein welcomes Mr Vijay Nambiar, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General. PHOTO: MNA

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein received Mr. Vijay Nambiar, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw

yesterday.

They discussed close cooperation between the UN and Myanmar and matters related to peace.

The meeting was also attended by Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Soe Thane and U Ye Htut as well as other officials.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Manual Metal Arc Welding training course opens



Trainees of Manual Metal Arc Welding course pose for photo with officials at launch ceremony.

PHOTO: MNA

UNDER the Skills Development for Inclusive Growth program, JFPR-Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, Asia Development Bank and Ministry of Industry have jointly opened short-term Competency-Based Technical and Vocational Education and Training-TVET and short-term Manual Metal Arc Welding-MMAW, mechanic and maintenance of agricultural machinery at the minis-

try's training schools in Mandalay and Pakokku.

Under the same program, MMAW training was opened at No.2 Industry Training School in Mandalay on 11 January, with opening addresses by Deputy Director-General U Ko Ko Lwin of the Ministry of Industry and Principal Social Sector Specialist Dr Chris Spohr of the ADB.

Twelve trainees are attend-

ing the 12 week-course which will end on 9 April.

Six courses will be opened for four vocational subjects.

To be able to open the training courses, ADB has supported equipment worth K124.094 million. The same course will be opened at No 4 Industry School in Pakokku, with 12 trainees on 12 January.— *Myanmar News Agency*

U Myo Myint appointed Union Auditor General

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Deputy Auditor General U Myo Myint as the Union Auditor General under article 242, sub-article (A) and article 245, sub-article (D) of the constitution; Section 16, sub-section (B/4) and Section 78, sub-section (B/4) of Union Government Law; and the provisions under Section 5 and Section 18 of Union Auditor General Law.

Seminar on Corporate Governance to be held on 16 Jan

TO develop the stock exchange market in Myanmar, the Securities and Exchange Supervisory Commission and UK-Myanmar Financial Services Taskforce will jointly conduct a seminar on Corporate Governance at the Myanmar Accountants Training School at No. 1/19 Thakshinmya Park Road on 16 January from 2 to 4 pm.

Dr Maung Maung Theim, Deputy Minister for Finance

and Chairman of the SECM will deliver addresses and Dr Bandid Nijathaworn, Chairman and CEO of a training school for directors from Thailand will give talks on the subject.

Members of the public can attend the seminar free of charge.

More information are available at 01-370100, 01-370189 and 01-370362. — *Myanmar News Agency*

Union Budget Bill for 2016, National Planning Bill for 2016-2017 FY discussed



Union Budget Bill for 2016 and the National Planning Bill for the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year are being discussed. PHOTO: MNA

A coordination meeting on the Union Budget Bill for 2016 and the National Planning Bill for 2016-2017 Fiscal Year was held at Zabuthiri Hall in the compound of Hluttaw yesterday.

It was participated by Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann, Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swar, Union Ministers U Win Shein and Dr Kan Zaw, Deputy Minister Dr Lin Aung, vice chairmen, secretaries and joint secretaries of the joint committees of the

two parliaments, departmental heads and officials from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office.

During the meeting, vice chairmen, secretaries, joint-secretaries and chairmen of the joint-scrutinizing committees discussed the two bills and the union ministers, the deputy minister and officials of the respective ministry clarified the two bills.

The meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Correction

Please read "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hosted a lunch in honour of the British delegation" in the last paragraph of the story "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with UK military chief" on page 3 of the 12-1-2016 issue of the GNLM.— *ED*

Political solution to find to build federal Union: President U Thein Sein

The following are the excerpts from the speech delivered by President U Thein Sein at the opening of the Union Peace Conference, held at MICC-2 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



President U Thein Sein shakes hands with Saw Mutu Say Poe, Chairman of the Karen National Union, at Union Peace Conference. PHOTO: MNA

THE indigenous armed organisations have different background histories, different political attitudes and different political will. However, they have common demands - the Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and political dialogue. Despite not all armed organisations signing the NCA this agreement has been collectively drawn up by the government, the parliament, the Tatmadaw and all dialogue partners. In this juncture, it is worth recalling that these armed conflicts originated in the post-independence period. So, it is necessary for a political solution. In this function, the discussions should be made representing not only the armed organisations but also the concerned political forces and mass organisations. What's important is to find a political solution to end the armed conflicts and to build a democratic federal union.

The convening of this Union Peace Conference is an important part of the process of transferring the duties of the incumbent government to the new one. This is a very important function to transfer the duties of the government systematically to the new one within the peace process which is extremely subtle. The mutual trust between and among the political forces can be built by this political dialogue. In fact, this conference is just the beginning of smooth transfer of the duties of the government.—Myanmar News Agency

Political Organizations need to show magnanimity: Thura U Shwe Mann

Tatmadaw opens mind to those who have not signed NCA yet: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

NCA just the first step towards peace within union: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Effort must be continued to be exerted to enable the Political dialogue to be more comprehensive and all inclusive: Saw Mutu Say Poe



Thura U Shwe Mann. PHOTO: MNA



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. PHOTO: MNA



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. PHOTO: MNA



Saw Mutu Say Poe. PHOTO: MNA

THE Union Peace Conference officially began at 9 am yesterday at MICC-2 with President U Thein Sein in attendance. Also present at the meeting were Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, Speaker of the House Thura U Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Senate U Khin Aung Myint, Union Chief Justice U Tun Tun Oo and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing among others.

Speaking at the meeting, Thura U Shwe Mann said that peace is the concern of all the races of the union. It is, therefore, required on the part of all citizens to be involved in the peace process, that commitment and firm resolution play the most important role in the achievement of peace. He went on to say that all the leaders of all organisations are needed to show magnanimity and patience and have mutual understanding

and mutual respect.

Next, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing spoke about the Tatmadaw. He said that the Tatmadaw has laid down the six-point peace policy and has opened its mind to those organisations who have not signed the NCA yet, that efforts need to be exerted to strengthen democracy and to build a modern, developed state. He further stated that indigenous armed organisations are all invited

to join the Tatmadaw.

NLD Chairperson Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that NCA is just the first step towards the prevalence of union peace, that effort must be put forth for all armed organisations to sign, that it is important for both signatories and non-signatories to have differing opinions but uncompromising respect, that the national reconciliation process cannot be neglected by the peace process,

that enduring peace cannot be built without achieving national reconciliation, that the collective participation of all national races is more effective than individual effort, that only all inclusive participation can reach the goal at a fast rate and that a genuine, democratic federal union can be collectively built only through mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual love and mutual respect.—Myanmar News Agency

Indonesian president seeks resumption of executions

JAKARTA — Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo is seeking momentum to resume the executions of convicts on death row, particularly of drug traffickers, the country’s top security minister said yesterday.

“The president will later decide on the timing. He will not change his mind about it, but has only said ‘let’s wait for the momentum’,” Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Pandjaitan told reporters.

On Monday, while visiting a Muslim boarding school in East Java Province, Pandjaitan reportedly said that more executions of drug traffickers may take place this year if the country’s economy gets better, because Widodo wants to focus on the economy before resuming executions.

After urging reporters not to make a fuss about the issue, Pandjaitan said “when the time comes, 20, 30 or 40 (convicts on death row) if necessary, will be

finished (executed).”

Last year, Indonesia executed 14 drug traffickers, including 12 foreigners, in two batches, despite an international outcry.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on Widodo to abandon plans to carry out further executions and impose a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step toward abolition.

At present, Indonesia has at least 130 convicts on death row, mostly for drug trafficking, according to data from the National Narcotics Agency.

The agency’s Chief Budi Waseso said the number of drug users in the country has significantly increased from 4.2 million people in June to 5.9 million in November, the largest figure among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“Narcotics are the top mass killer,” Budi was quoted as saying by the political online portal Tempo Interaktif.—*Kyodo News*

Japan, US and South Korea officials to meet on Saturday

TOKYO — Senior diplomats from Japan, the United States and South Korea will meet this weekend in Tokyo to discuss responses to North Korea’s fourth nuclear test, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said yesterday.

“The idea is to confirm close trilateral cooperation in dealing with North Korea,” Kishida told reporters. Japan is expected to be represented at

the meeting Saturday by Vice Foreign Minister Akitaka Saiki, the United States by Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken and South Korea by Lim Sung Nam, first vice minister of foreign affairs.

Ahead of the meeting, the countries’ chief delegates to the six-party talks to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, which have been deadlocked since late 2008, are slated to meet

Wednesday in Seoul. The other parties are China and Russia.

Kishida also welcomed the US military’s dispatch Sunday of a nuclear-capable B-52 bomber on a flight over South Korea in an apparent show of force to North Korea.

“(The dispatch) reflects the United States’ strong commitment to fulfill its role toward peace and stability of the region,” he said.—*Kyodo News*

Philippine Supreme Court declares military deal with US constitutional

MANILA — The Philippine Supreme Court yesterday declared a security deal with the United States constitutional, allowing an increased US military presence in its former colony as tensions rise in the South China Sea.

Manila has long been a staunch US ally and the pact is widely seen as important for both as the Philippines confronts an assertive China in the disputed Spratly archipelago and Washington launches a “pivot” back to Asia. Voting

10-4, the 15-member court denied the petition of some lawmakers and activists to declare the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) unconstitutional because it surrendered Philippine sovereignty to a foreign power.—*Reuters*

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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

China makes more military reforms, sets up graft busting unit



Chinese soldiers march during a military parade to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Beijing in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIJING — China’s military has set up 15 new units — covering everything from logistics to equipment development, political work and fighting corruption — as part of an on-going drive to modernise the world’s largest armed forces, the Defence Ministry said.

President Xi Jinping’s push to reform the military coincides with China becoming more assertive in its territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas.

China’s navy is investing in submarines and aircraft carriers and its air force is developing stealth fighters.

Late last year Xi inaugurated a general command unit for the army, a missile force and a strategic support force for People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and the 15 new units follow on from that decision.

The Defence Ministry, in a statement released late on Monday, said the new units would

help the military function better and consolidate the Communist Party’s control.

One of the 15 new departments is a dedicated auditing office, which will “organise and guide audits and supervision for the entire military” and strive to be independent, the ministry said, without giving details.

The PLA is reeling from Xi’s anti-corruption campaign, which has seen dozens of officers investigated, including two former

vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission, Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou.

Some analysts say Xi, who heads the Central Military Commission that runs the armed forces, is also eliminating rivals.

Xi, in comments carried by state media on Tuesday, urged the armed forces to be “loyal, clean and responsible” and that they should learn “profound lessons” from Xu and Guo’s cases.

Xu died of cancer last year before he could be put on trial. Guo has yet to face a court.

China has been moving rapidly to upgrade its military hardware, but integration of complex systems across a regionalised command structure has been a major challenge, something the reforms aim to address.

The armed forces are also losing 300,000 members, following a surprise announcement by Xi in September.

The troop cuts and broader reform programme have proven controversial, and the military’s official newspaper has published a series of commentaries warning of opposition to the reforms and concern about job losses.

In a front page commentary on Tuesday, the People’s Liberation Army Daily admitted that “everything is hard in the beginning”, and urged the military to unite behind Xi. “We must keep the mission and our responsibility firmly in mind,” it said.—*Reuters*

North Korea faked sub-launched missile test footage

SEOUL — Footage of a North Korean submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test released by Pyongyang two days after it announced it had conducted the country's fourth nuclear test last week was faked, according to an analysis by a California-based think tank.

In defiance of a UN ban, the isolated country has said it has ballistic missile technology which would allow it to launch a nuclear warhead from a submarine, although experts and analysis of North Korean state media cast doubt on the claim.

North Korean state television aired footage on Friday of the latest test, said to have taken place in December. Unlike a previous SLBM test in May, it had not been announced at the time.

"The rocket ejected, began

to light, and then failed catastrophically," said Melissa Hanham, a senior research associate at the California-based Middlebury Institute's James Martin Centre for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS).

South Korea's military said on Saturday North Korea appeared to have modified the video and edited it with Scud missile footage from 2014 although an official told Reuters that the ejection technology might have improved since the May test.

The CNS analysis shows two frames of video from state media where flames engulf the missile and small parts of its body break away. "North Korea used heavy video editing to cover over this fact," Hanham said in an email. "They used different camera angles and editing to



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un watches a firing contest of the KPA artillery units at undisclosed location in this photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in Pyongyang on 5 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

make it appear that the launch was several continuous launches, but played side by side you can see that it is the same event".

North Korean propagandists used rudimentary editing techniques to crop and flip old video

footage of an earlier SLBM test and Scud missile launch, the video analysis showed.

The North's claim that its fourth and most recent nuclear test, conducted last Wednesday, was of a more advanced and

powerful hydrogen bomb has drawn scepticism from the US government and experts.

It is also unclear if North Korea has developed a nuclear device small enough to mount on a missile.—Reuters

Pakistan shares preliminary probe report into air base attack with India

NEW DELHI — Pakistan has handed over to India the report of its preliminary probe into the recent terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base, sources said yesterday.

"The report mentions about the raids carried out in Pakistan and the arrest of five suspects in the case, though their identities have not been revealed," the sources said.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has also created a joint committee of his top government, military and intel officers to investigate the evidence handed over by India.

However, Pakistani officials have told their Indian counterparts that the mobile numbers dialled by the terrorists just before the massacre are not registered in Pakistan, the sources said.

Pakistan's action in the case came as the dates of the Foreign Secretary-level talks are nearing and India has so far said the meeting depends on Islamabad's action against the attack's mastermind.

Some six suspected Pakistani militants had carried out the terror attack on the air base, in which six Indian security forces personnel were killed and more than 50 others injured.—Xinhua

Decade-old tattoos tell of devotion, caste and defiance in India

ARJUNI — Mahettar Ram Tandon is still proud of the indelible message he carries almost five decades after he had the name of the Hindu god Ram tattooed over his entire body.

Dressed in a simple white lungi, a traditional Indian garment, and wearing a peacock feather hat called a "mukut", Tandon is part of the Ramnami Samaj religious movement in the eastern state of Chhattisgarh, one of India's poorest regions.

"It was my new birth the day I started having the tattoos," he says. "The old me had died."

Denied entry to temples and forced to use separate wells, low-caste Hindus in the Chhattisgarh first tattooed their bodies and faces more than 100 years ago as an act of defiance and devotion.

Ramnami devotees Ram's name on their bodies as a message to higher-caste Indians that god was everywhere, regardless of a person's caste or social standing.

Now 76, Tandon's purple tattoos have faded over decades under the harsh sun of his village of Jamgahan.

In the nearby village of Gorba, Punai Bai, 75, spent more than two weeks aged 18 having her full body tattooed using dye made from mixing soot from a kerosene lamp with water.

"God is for everybody, not just for one community," says Bai, who lives in a one-room house with her son, daughter-in-



Jhingur Ram, 76, a follower of Ramnami Samaj, who has tattooed the name of the Hindu god Ram on his entire body, poses for a picture outside his house in the village of Chandai, in the eastern state of Chhattisgarh, India, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

law and two grandchildren.

Nowadays the tattoos of Ramnamis, who number 100,000 or more and live in dozens of villages spread across at least four districts of Chhattisgarh state, are usually on a smaller scale.

Since the banning of caste-based discrimination in India in 1955, the lives of many lower-caste Indians have improved, villagers said. As young Ramnamis today also travel to other regions to study and look for work, younger generations usually avoid full-body tattoos.

"The young generation just don't feel good about having tattoos on their whole body," says Tandon, who has always lived in his village of small mud houses surrounded by fields of grazing

cattle, wheat and rice.

"That doesn't mean they don't follow the faith."

Children born in the community are still required to be tattooed somewhere on their body, preferably on their chest, at least once by the age of two. According to their religious practices, Ramnamis do not drink or smoke, must chant the name "Ram" daily and are exhorted to treat everybody with equality and respect.

Almost every Ramnami household owns a copy of the Ramayana epic, a book on Lord Rama's life and teachings, along with small statues of Indian deities. Most followers' homes in these villages have "Ram Ram" written in black on the outer and inner walls.—Reuters

Taiwan minority party leader vows to pursue peace if elected president

TAIPEI — James Soong, leader and presidential candidate of Taiwan's minority People First Party, promised yesterday to work to maintain peace and stability in East Asia if elected president on Saturday.

Soong made the remarks at a press conference held just days ahead of the election he will contest with Eric Chu from the ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) and Tsai Ing-wen from the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party. The three-time presidential candidate said Taiwan should play the role of "strategic buffer" in East Asia and uphold "the essential obligations in maintaining peace and stability" in the region.

"In short, if I'm elected, my foreign policy will be a balanced one," he said. "Taiwan does not need to take sides. We don't need to get too close to any country nor stay away from any of them."

Soong vowed to maintain close ties with Japan and the United States, Taiwan's most important strategic partners, while pursuing independent policies. On relations with China, he said he would continue peaceful dialogue to resolve cross-strait issues would not take unilateral or provocative actions that would compromise peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.—Kyodo News

Merkel under pressure as Cologne police detail assaults



Flowers and posters are placed in the square between the city cathedral and the railway station in Cologne, Germany, on 11 January 2016, where the vast majority of dozens of New Year Eve assaults on women took place. PHOTO: REUTERS

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel faced growing pressure to harden her line on refugees on Monday as the first extensive police report on New Year's Eve violence in Cologne documented rampant sexual assaults on women by gangs of young migrant men.

Cologne police said at least 11 foreigners, including Pakistanis, Guineans and Syrians, had been injured on Sunday evening in attacks by hooligans bent on revenge for the assaults in the western city.

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere condemned those attacks and warned against a broader backlash against refugees following the events in Cologne, which have deepened scepticism towards Merkel's policy of welcoming migrants.

The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party seized on the latest developments to attack the chancellor while members of her own conservative party warned that integrating the hundreds of thousands of migrants who arrived last year would fail if the influx were not stopped immediately.

"If the influx continues as it has, then integration can't work,"

said Carsten Linnemann, a lawmaker in Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU). "If we get another 800,000 or a million people arriving this year, then we won't be able to do this," he added, playing on Merkel's optimistic "we can do this" mantra.

Speaking on Monday evening, Merkel said Europe was "vulnerable" because it was not yet in control of the situation as it would like to be. In the eastern city of Leipzig, well over 2,000 anti-Muslim LEGIDA protestors took to the streets, their ranks swelled by anger over the Cologne attacks. They yelled "Merkel needs to go!" and one carried a sign featuring Merkel wearing a hijab and the words: 'Merkel, take your Muslims with you and get lost'.

A police spokeswoman said there was a roughly equal number of counter-demonstrators.

A report from the Interior Ministry in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) state, where Cologne lies, said 516 criminal complaints had been registered, 237 of which were of a sexual nature.

A separate report from the Cologne police gave graphic descriptions of the crimes, listing

case after case of women surrounded by gangs of men who put their hands in the victims' pants and skirts, grabbed them between the legs, on the buttocks and the breasts, often while stealing their wallets and cell phones.

A total of 19 suspects have been identified, all foreigners.

NRW Interior Minister Ralf Jaeger spoke of "serious failures" by the police, who were significantly outnumbered but never called for reinforcements.

He also criticised them for refusing to communicate in the days after New Year's Eve that the vast majority of the perpetrators were people with migration backgrounds, blaming this on misguided "political correctness".

"More than 1,000 Arab and North African men gathered on New Year's Eve near Cologne cathedral and the main train station. Among them were many refugees that came to Germany in the past months," Jaeger told a special parliamentary committee in NRW.

"After alcohol and drug excesses came the excesses of violence, peaking with people who carried out fantasies of sexual power."

A survey conducted by polling group Forsa for RTL television showed 60 per cent of respondents saw no reason to change their attitude towards foreigners after the assaults. About 37 per cent said they viewed foreigners more critically.

In Leipzig, Olaf Schwermer, one of the LEGIDA protestors, said he was concerned about more attacks if borders were not closed and migrants not deported: "What happened in Cologne only gave us a taste of what's about to come," he said. Elsewhere in the city around 250 right-wingers, probably football hooligans, were detained after they set bins on fire, damaged property and set off fireworks, a police spokeswoman said.—Reuters

Austria to take tougher action to turn away 'economic migrants'

VIENNA — Austria will take tougher action at its borders to turn away "economic migrants" in order to reduce overall immigration, Chancellor Werner Faymann said, striking a harsher tone on asylum seekers.

Hundreds of thousands of people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Afghanistan and elsewhere have entered Austria, many en route to Germany, in the past year. Around 90,000 of those sought asylum in Austria — a country of 8.5 million people — in 2015, around three times more than the previous year, ORF radio said, citing

Interior Ministry statistics.

"One must transit to a Plan B. That means to intensify policies together with Germany to send back economic migrants and decrease overall numbers," Social Democrat Faymann said in an interview with Austrian newspaper *Krone* published yesterday.

He said Austria needed to explore the legal framework for differentiating between those fleeing war and those who migrate for economic reasons.

"One thing is certain in any case: shortly, we will be more active at our borders than today. The Germans will also do more," Fay-

mann said. Once more lenient on accepting migrants, Faymann has come under pressure from his conservative coalition partners and the far-right Freedom Party, which in recent opinion polls won the support of around a third of those surveyed. Last month, Faymann said Austria should step up deportations of people who do not qualify for asylum. In Germany, attacks on women in several cities on New Year's Eve have prompted hundreds of complaints, with police suspicion resting on asylum seekers, putting pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel and her open-door migrant policy.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Freed Guantanamo detainees say they seek peace in Ghana

ACCRA — Two Yemenis transferred to Ghana after their release from the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba said on Monday they hoped to live peacefully and rebuild their lives in the West African country.

Mahmud Umar Muhammad Bin Atef and Khalid Muhammad Salih al-Dhuby were held in Guantanamo for more than a decade. Their transfer to Ghana was announced by the US Defence Department last week. "We were wrongly arrested for 14 years without any charge against us but we are not looking for revenge. We want to live in Ghana quietly and peacefully and we want to put our life together," Bin Atef told state radio on Monday. Dozens of countries have received former Guantanamo Bay detainees but the transfers of Bin Atef and Dhuby were the first to Ghana.

The government has granted permission for the two to remain in the country for two years, subject to security clearances, and has sought to play down concerns about their presence in Ghana.

US Government documents posted online by the *New York Times* identified Dhuby, who was sent to Guantanamo in May 2002 after his capture in Afghanistan, as someone who had been assessed as "a probable member" of al Qaeda. Bin Atef was identified by in the same documents as "an admitted member of the Taliban." Both men had been cleared for release by the Pentagon years ago, however.—Reuters

3 killed, 12 injured as school bus falls into ditch in northern India

NEW DELHI — At least three children were killed and more than 12 others injured in a school bus accident in the northern Indian state of Punjab yesterday, the police said. "The mishap happened when a bus carrying some 20 school children plunged into a ditch in the state's Gurdaspur district," a police officer said, on condition of anonymity.

He added: "The driver lost control of the vehicle and collided with a taxi in dense fog early in the morning, which led to the mishap."

While three children were killed on the spot, those injured have been admitted to a local hospital. A probe has been ordered into the incident, he added.—Xinhua

Drones banned over China's largest lake

XINING — Drones have been banned over Qinghai Lake in northwest China's Qinghai Province out of fear that growing use of the devices to capture aerial photographs is scaring away wildlife.

Visitors have been chasing after migratory whooper swans with drones, said the lake's administrative bureau yesterday.

The number of swans settling on the lake is dramatically down this winter as a result, said local amateur photographer Wang Qiwen.

Some visitors have also been using car horns and fireworks to agitate the birds for better photos, said ornithologist Fang Hua.

The administrative bureau has increased the frequency of its patrols around the lake to control visitor behaviour.—Xinhua

Dengue fever kills 38 children in Cambodia last year

PHNOM PENH — Dengue fever claimed the lives of 38 Cambodian children in 2015, up 81 per cent from the year before, according to the latest figures yesterday.

The Southeast Asian country reported 15,412 dengue fever cases last year, a 314 per cent rise from the year before, said the report of the National Centre for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control.

"The incident rate is 93.5 cases out of 100,000 people," the centre's director, Huy Rekol, said in the report. "Some 71 per cent of the patients were children aged between 5 and 14 years old."

Dengue fever is a viral disease transmitted through the bite of an Aedes mosquito which is a day-biting mosquito. Its symptoms include sudden onset of high fever which can last from three to seven days, severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, and rash.

The outbreak of the mosquito-borne virus usually begins in the rainy season from May to October.—Xinhua

Turkish police seal off historic Istanbul square after blast

ISTANBUL — Turkish police sealed off a central Istanbul square in the historic Sultanahmet district yesterday after a large explosion, a Reuters witness said, and the Dogan news agency reported several people were injured in the blast.

Ambulances rushed to the scene of the explosion in Sultanahmet square, close to the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia, in a major tourist area of Turkey's most populous city.—Reuters

Aid convoy reaches starving Syrian town of Madaya

MADAYA (Syria) — An aid convoy entered a besieged Syrian town on Monday where thousands have been trapped without supplies for months and people are reported to have died of starvation.

Trucks carrying food and medical supplies reached Madaya near the Lebanese border and began to distribute aid as part of an agreement between warring sides, the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

“Offloading of aid expected to last throughout night,” ICRC spokesman Pawel Krzysiek tweeted.

Dozens are said to have died in the town from starvation or a lack of medical care and activists say some inhabitants have been reduced to eating leaves. Images said to be of emaciated residents have appeared widely on social media.

At the same time, another convoy began entering two Shi’ite villages, al Foua and Kefraya in the northwestern province of Idlib 300 km (200 miles) away. Rebel fighters in military fatigues and with scarves covering their faces inspected the aid vehicles in the rain before they entered.

Madaya is besieged by pro-Syrian government forces, while the two villages in Idlib Province are encircled by rebels



A convoy consisting of Red Cross, Red Crescent and United Nations (UN) gather before heading towards to Madaya from Damascus, and to al Foua and Kefraya in Idlib Province, Syria, on 11 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

fighting the Syrian government.

A Damascus-based UN official who entered Madaya and oversaw the entry of the convoy of 44 trucks gave an eyewitness account of the plight of people in the rebel-held town of around 40,000 people.

“We have seen with our own eyes severely malnourished children ... so there is starvation, and I am sure the same is true on the other side in Foua and Kefraya,”

Yacoub El Hillo, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, told Reuters by phone from Madaya.

Women cried out with relief as the first four trucks, carrying the banner of the Syrian Red Crescent crossed into Madaya after sunset, with civilians waiting on the outskirts of the town as the temperature dropped and it began to get dark.

The full aid operation was

expected to last several days, the ICRC said.

Images said to be from Madaya and showing skeletal men with protruding ribcages were published by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a group that monitors the war, while an emaciated baby in a nappy with bulging eyes was shown in other posts. Dr Mohammed Yousef, who heads a local medical team, said 67 people had died either of

starvation or lack of medical aid in the last two months, mostly women, children and the elderly.

“Look at the grotesque starve-or-surrender tactics the Syrian regime is using right now against its own people. Look at the haunting pictures of civilians, including children — even babies — in Madaya, Syria,” Samantha Power, US Ambassador to the United Nations, said on Monday.

“There are hundreds of thousands of people being deliberately besieged, deliberately starved, right now. And these images, they remind us of World War II; they shock the conscience. This is what this institution was designed to prevent.”

The United Nations said last Thursday the Syrian government had agreed to allow access to the town. The world body is planning to convene peace talks on 25 January in Geneva in an effort to end nearly five years of civil war that have killed more than a quarter of a million people.

But Syrian opposition coordinator Riad Hijab accused Russia of killing dozens of children in a bombing raid on Monday and said such action meant the opposition could not negotiate with President Bashar al-Assad’s government.

There was no immediate comment from Russia, which denies any targeting of civilians in the conflict.—Reuters

4-way Afghanistan peace talks stress direct talks with Taliban insurgents

ISLAMABAD — Officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the United States gathered in Pakistan on Monday for the first of a series of meetings to devise a road map for peace in war-torn Afghanistan and called for direct talks between Kabul and Taliban insurgents.

A joint press statement released after the meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghanistan said the four countries “underscored the importance of bringing an end to the conflict in Afghanistan that continues to inflict senseless violence on the Afghan people and also breeds insecurity throughout the region.”

The discussions in Islamabad “focused on undertaking a clear and realistic assessment of the opportunities for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and anticipated obstacles and measures that would create a conducive environment of peace talks with the shared goal of reducing violence and establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan,” the statement said.

“The participants emphasised the immediate need for direct talks between representatives of the government of Afghanistan

and representatives from Taliban groups,” the statement said. The Taliban did not attend Monday’s meeting.

The four nations decided to meet regularly and would hold the next round of talks in Kabul on 18 January, the statement said.

“In order to promote reconciliation between the Afghan Taliban and the Afghan government, it is necessary to offer incentives rather than issuing threats.”

Sartaj Aziz
Adviser to the Pakistani Prime Minister

At the meeting, Sartaj Aziz, adviser to the Pakistani prime minister on foreign affairs, said the first objective of the reconciliation process is to create conditions to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table and offer them incentives that can dissuade them from using violence to achieve their ends.

In order to promote reconciliation between the Afghan Taliban

and the Afghan government, it is necessary to offer incentives rather than issuing threats, he said.

“Proper sequencing of measures and actions should be significant in paving the way for talks,” he said, adding, “Threat of the use of military action against irreconcilables cannot precede the offer of talks to all the groups.”

Afghanistan is represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Karzai, Pakistan by Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry, the United States by special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson and China by special envoy for Afghanistan Deng Xijun.

“In our view, assigning specific targets among us in accordance with the principal of shared responsibility will be crucial in achieving the desired outcome,” Aziz said.

Aziz was of the view that confidence-building measures could encourage certain Taliban groups to join the negotiation process. He said that while charting the course of action, the group has to be realistic and flexible. It should broadly define steps and phases, but avoid unrealistic targets and deadlines, he said.—Kyodo News

Blast in Istanbul tourist district kills at least 10 people

ISTANBUL — An explosion in the heart of Istanbul’s historic Sultanahmet tourist district killed at least ten people and wounded 15 yesterday and some local media reports said a suicide bomber may have been responsible.

Several bodies lay on the ground in the Sultanahmet square, close to the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia, a major tourist area of Turkey’s most populous city.

A police officer and witness at the scene reported also seeing several bodies and body parts.

The Istanbul governor’s office said the authorities were investigating the type of explosive used and who might have been responsible for the attack. It said ten people were killed and 15 wounded but gave no further details.

“The explosion was very loud. We shook a lot. We ran out and saw body parts,” one woman who works at a nearby antiques store told Reuters, declining to give her name.

Turkey’s A Haber television said the blast may have been caused by a suicide bomb-

er but this was not independently confirmed.

Ambulances rushed to the scene, ferrying away the wounded as police cordoned off streets.

“We’re taking precautions against a second explosion,” the police officer said, ushering people out of the square.

The blast comes just over a year after a female suicide bomber blew herself up at a police station for tourists off the same square, killing one officer and wounding another.

That attack was initially claimed by a far-left group, but later turned out to have been perpetrated by a woman with suspected Islamist militant links, officials said.

Kurdish, leftist and Islamist militants have all carried out attacks in Turkey in the past.

Turkey has also become a target for Islamic State, with two bombings last year blamed on the radical Sunni Muslim group, in the town of Suruc near the Syrian border and in the capital Ankara, the latter killing more than 100 people.—Reuters

OPINION

Winners or Whiners

Khin Maung Aye

WINNERS can be said to have firm beliefs and proper behaviour that has helped them to win success. They win because they believe in their ability to perform. However, the whiners have only learnt improper behaviour that can cause problems, not knowing that whining or complaining is the enemy of victory. In my own personal experience, I have come across a lot of people who never achieved success because they were always complaining, not finding the ways to accomplish tasks and not taking remedial measures upon meeting with failures. In this regard, it is worth remembering that things cannot always

happen as we wish them to because they happen according to the God's will if you believe Him. What is certain is that unexpected things can always happen any time regardless of faith. Therefore, we should be prepared for failures, holding plan B and plan C as alternatives. Another important quality of the winners is freedom from fear whereas the whiners are obsessed with worries that can lead the latter to loss of confidence without which important tasks cannot be accomplished. It is true that people can sometimes feel frustrated. Frustration is not a big problem as long as we have the courage to solve. In this circumstance, we need to learn to encourage ourselves, being optimistic and not letting the goal be lost. Otherwise, frustration can lead to depression, which the whiners are struggling with. As a matter of fact, whining or complaining is the evil consequence of pessimism. As long as we are pessimists, we cannot be winners. Another important quality of a winner is the ability to achieve what he wants whereas the whiners are daydreaming, aiming at achieving the unachievable. In addition, it is worth

noting that winners win because they find ways and means to accomplish the tasks whereas the whiners are always inclined to giving lame excuses. In a nutshell, if one wishes to achieve success, he needs to follow suit of how the winners are doing things and avoid the wrong mindset, mentality and attitude of the losers who are just whining, not finding the correct ways and means, not drawing lessons from their failures and on top of all, not being optimistic.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email khinmaungaye@hotmail@gmail.com with your name and title. Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

What is Turmeric?

WHAT is turmeric? The earliest record of turmeric comes from an ancient Assyrian herbal history in about 600 B.C. It is a bright powder that comes from rhizome of a plant of ginger family, used for flavoring and coloring in Asian cooking and is also a fabric dye. It has acclaimed the name "Kitchen Queen" as the main spice used in Indian curry, giving a spicy taste and yellow color. It's botanical name is "Curcuma Longa" and called in Myanmar as Hsanwen or Sanawin or Sanae. Turmeric has been used in East India and Middle East and is now one of the most highly priced spices in the world. In ancient medicines, the use of turmeric began when it is noted as an anti-inflammatory agent, and also for treatment of a wide variety of diseases, such as jaundices, menstrual problems, blood in the urine, hemorrhaging, toothache, bruises, chest pain, flatulence, colic, stimulate the liver to increase its production of bile. Yellow brown or green fluids which help digestion, creating contraction to move food through the gastrointestinal tract, prevention of gall bladder infection, increase excretion of cholesterol and also commonly we find that our woman folks after the delivery of a child, used the application of turmeric powder mixed with boiled water to the whole body in order to have the effect on contracting the womb after birth and relaxing the tension of the stomach birth scars as well. Turmeric is derived from the Persian word for 'Saffron', the yellow orange color used to make curry, a domesticated plant rather not wild. India remains one of the most prominent producer of turmeric, followed next by Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Jamaica, Haiti and Myanmar. Turmeric usually grow well in the rich loamy soil in humid conditions, having 2 feet high and a multi-rhizomatous rootstock. India is a major exporter to the world, sharing a world market of 60%. Also among many others, China has a share of world market of 8% and Myanmar 4%. India has an annual production of 180,000 tons of cured turmeric. Spice trade, spices such as cinnamon, cassia, cardamom, ginger, pepper and turmeric were largely known and traded in the Eastern World way back in antiquity. These spices found their way into the Middle East before the beginning of the Christian Era, where the true source of these spices was withheld by the cunning traders, covering up with fantastic horror tales. But from the prehistoric carvings of the Neolithic age had been obtained, indicated that India's South West Coast, especially Kerala as the land of spices or Spice Garden of India was established as the main place of supplying center of turmeric. At this juncture, sometime later that led to the famous explorers like Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama to venture into the unfamiliar water of the seas and oceans to search for a sea route in order to establish a lasting spice trade. Over the past several years, numerous studies have

U Win Sein

emerged on the benefits of turmeric and its anti-cancerous preventive properties. Curcumin which is present in turmeric [Curcuma Longa] is a powerful anti-inflammatory and is very effective in treating all kinds of inflammatory diseases as well as arthritis, tendinitis, injuries. The plant is also a powerful blood purifier and is highly effective in reducing excessive cholesterol. Turmeric is very safe and has been used in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicines for more than 4000 years. Many of the health benefits of turmeric can be observed by thinking of our food as a medicine, which was the advice given by Hippocrates in the 4th century B.C. This bright yellow spice traditionally used as food and medicines contain vital antioxidants and benefits from studies have shown that could fight diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. In another study, extracts of turmeric were used on ultraviolet radiation damaged skin for six weeks, scientists reported that improvement can be seen in skin hydration and skin burn and in the olden days Myanmar, pay leaves were first boiled and once the black secretions which oozed out from the surface have been removed, the pay leave strips were weighed down and dried. They were later rubbed smooth and cut into the required lengths, using a mixture of water with Sanawin [turmeric] to make them last for a long time. Turmeric Medicinal Properties Digestion -- liver Protects the liver and prostate from toxins [traditional usage] ---gastric acid ---indigestion ---food and drug poisoning ---speed up healing of gastrointestinal ulcers [traditional usage] -----helps to prevent cancer of the colon, pancreas, prostate. Skin, esophagus, liver, lung [synergy with Goji Berry and Cannabis] -----digestive problems -----candida albican [synergy with Garlic] -----destroys Helicobacter pylori -----Crohn's disease [synergy with Goji Berry and Cannabis] -----Irriable Bowel Syndrome -----Cuts down excessive cholesterol [synergy with Ginseng] -----Hemorrhoid -----ulcerative colitis. Anti-cancer-----Anti disease-----Anti inflammatory -----powerful general anti-inflammatory [synergy with Ginger and black pepper] -----detoxifies the body

[synergy with chlorella and Spirulina] -----helps to prevent colon cancer [synergy with Ginger and Black Pepper] -----helps to prevent stomach cancer [Synergy with Ginger and Black Pepper, cinnamon] -----helps to prevent liver cancer -----helps to prevent pancreatic cancer [Synergy with Ginger and Black Pepper] -----helps to prevent lung cancer [Synergy with Ginger, Black Pepper and Garlic] -----helps to prevent prostate cancer -----helps to prevent skin cancer [Synergy with Aloe Vera] -----helps to prevent esophageal cancer -----helps to prevent the growth of lymphoma and cancerous tumors -----Alzheimer's disease [Synergy with Ashwagandha] -----Chronic disease ---respiratory infection [bronchitis, asthma whooping cough] -----[Synergy with Goji Berry] -----ear infection, flu, cold Joint and Muscular pain---inflammatory Joint inflammation [synergy with Harpagophytum, Boswellian and Ginger] -----rheumatism,-- osteoarthritis [Synergy with Harpagophytum] -----joint and muscular pain, tendinitis, neuralgia sciatica Turmeric has even been said to be more efficient than Hydrocortisone[theory] cardiovascular inflammation -----reduce inflammation and skin damaged during radiation therapy [Synergy with Aloe Vera and Ginkgo Biloba] -----reduce inflammation of the lung, asthma -----regeneration of liver cells [alcohol liver pollution] -----certain cases of swelling Skin ---- Blood purification -----purified the blood, removes toxins [traditional usage] -----Skin problems [traditional usage] [Synergy with Aloe Vera] -----combats eczema [; traditionalusage] -----Dry skin -----Helps to treat scabs and fungal infections [external use] -----Skin disease linked to diet. *****

About the author

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Giant fish found dead in Thandwe



A giant dead fish is stranded on the beach in Gwa. PHOTO: KO KO WIN

A GIANT dead fish was found on the sands of the Launkyo Village beach in Gwa Township, Thandwe District, Rakhine State on Sunday.

The fish on the beach had been witnessed rotting in the

sun when officials including the township administrator and the head of the local fisheries department arrived around 10 a.m that morning to inspect the carcass.

"It is assumed by looking at the body structure (33 feet in

length and 16 feet in girth) that the carcass is that of a whale, which is not in fact a fish," an official said.

Removal of the carcass will be carried out by the Fisheries Department.—Ko Ko Win

New bridge in Sagaing projected to be finished before monsoon season

A NEW bridge is being constructed at the Manin-Minkone Village-tract in Banmouk Township, Sagaing Region, and is expected to be finished within the next three months, a spokesperson for the project said.

The construction of the bridge which has been underway since early January is aimed at developing trade, business and affluence in the region.

The township faces flooding

from the Manin-Manlaung Creek every year with the current local bridges at risk of destruction.

"Currently we require beams for the project. We have sent a request to the departments concerned," said Township Administrator U Tin Pe.

After finishing the project, the bridge will link Banmouk, Homalin and Pinlebu townships providing access to public transportation. —Ni Toe



Workers are carrying out earth work near a new bridge construction. PHOTO: NI TOE

Giant snake statues on Mandalay Hill attract foreign visitors



Foreigners crowded at Mandalay Hilly to enjoy the sunset.

PHOTO: KYAW KYAW

THE majority of foreigners who visit Mandalay Hill show a great deal of interest in observing the statues of two giant snakes on the hill and their history, a member of pagoda's board of trustees said.

Mandalay Hill which is located to the northeast of the city centre of Mandalay receives a flock of international tourists every day.

According to legend, the two huge snakes visited Mandalay

Hill one day and took shelter under the hermitage while a hermit named U Khanti was practicing Buddhist meditation. The hermit provided food to the snakes because they did not attack him and so man and snake lived in peace.

The hermit and the two snakes have since become symbolic of Mandalay Hill.

"I feel like those snake statues are alive and watching us," said an American tourist at the

hill. "I enjoy watching the sunset from up here and taking in the landscape of the city. Where I am from does not offer such beauty, or snakes."

Mandalay, one of the largest cities in Myanmar and the last royal capital, is located 716 km north of Yangon on the east bank of the Ayeyawady River. The city has a population of just over 1.2 million, according to the 2014 census.—Kyaw Kyaw

Crime News

Young man commits patricide in Magway

A man has been charged with murder after allegedly killing his father, according to a police report from Mindon Township, Magway Region.

The report alleges that on Friday, 8 January, Daw Aye Tin, 62 saw her husband being killed by his son while she was on her way to their farm. Aung Ngwe, 28, admitted to killing his father because his father, U Pain, 70, had accused his son of being drunk and talkative.

The local police station has charged Aung Nwe for murder.—Kyaw Zayyar

Yabba and ice seized in Mawlamyine

A LOCAL anti-drug squad in Mawlamyine discovered 100 yabba pills on one Naing Zaw Tun alias Tayoke, 23, at the corner of Shwe Pyai Aye road and Okpo road on Thursday.

An investigation led police to

search a house belonging to one Tay Zar Aung alias Aung Ko Latt alias Ko Latt, 31, and discovered 720 yabba pills and 1.5 grams of ice. The police have filed charges against the men under the anti-Narcotic Law.—Police IPRD

Five die of suffocation in Rakhine

FIVE people died of suffocation on Saturday in Thandwe township, Rakhine State.

According to an investigation, Ye Min Tun, 23, was pumping water down inside a well belonging to U Maung Htet, 75. After 30 minutes of work Ye Min Tun complained of breathing difficulties and requested rescue from the pit of the

well. Five fellow workers named Maung Chanthar, 32, Aung Tin Win, 38, Soe Min Paing, 25, Kyaw Win, 29, and Zaw Oo, 35, went down the well to aid him. Only Zaw Oo survived the fatal rescue attempt as the other crew members also succumbed to suffocation. Police are currently investigating the case.—Police IPRD

Four men killed in Waw car accident

FOUR people were killed in a vehicle accident that occurred on the Mawlamyine- Yangon road, Waw township, Bago region on Friday.

According to an investigation, a light truck being driven by Sai Saw Lin, 32, crashed into another light truck being driven

by Min Aung San Oo, 25, who was carrying two passengers. All four succumbed to their injuries.

The vehicle driver was deemed guilty of careless driving under section 304(A) of criminal law.—Police IPRD

Two Magway men wanted for snatching money

TWO men are wanted by police for snatching K1.5 million from a girl in Taungdwingyi Township, Magway Region, on 8 January. According to the investigation, the girl had just borrowed the money from her

friend and was returning home by bicycle.

The two unknown men followed her and snatched money before fleeing on a motorbike. Police are still investigating the case.—Bo Pyay

Carmakers' rush to put latest tech in lower-priced models

DETROIT — Rapidly evolving technology is upending the traditional pecking order in the luxury car market, which until now has operated on the principle that bigger is better.

Now, Mercedes-Benz and a host of others are quietly changing the rules.

Mercedes' new E-Class mid-sized sedan, unveiled at the Detroit auto show Monday, will come with better computer chips, cameras, software and sensors than those in the larger and more expensive S-Class — the flagship that has for decades showcased the automaker's latest technology.

"The speed of innovation is so fast that you have to use every launch of a new model to roll stuff out," Dieter Zetsche, head of Mercedes-Benz Cars told Reuters on the sidelines of an event to launch the new E-Class at the Detroit Auto Show.

The shift reflects intense pressure on automakers to keep their model lineups on the technological edge, especially to compete for younger customers. Another sign: features that can be updated with software, a tactic used often by Silicon Valley electric car maker Tesla Motors and likely to spread across the industry.

Mercedes plans similar soft-

ware updates and is moving aggressively to update its hardware as well. It has cut the time it takes to produce a prototype to 10 months from 18 months, in part through the use of digital prototypes. Aerodynamic testing, for example, is done largely with simulation software, cutting development time in a wind tunnel.

The E-Class has fourth-generation driver assistance systems, while the top-of-the-line S-Class makes do with third-generation technology, executives at Daimler (DAIGN.DE), parent company of Mercedes-Benz, explained in Detroit.

More recent sensors and software give the new E-Class better algorithms to recognise a street, a vehicle or a pedestrian, giving the vehicle a better ability to interpret its surroundings. This in turn allows the Mercedes to travel greater distances in self-driving mode.

It also has car-to-car communications technology, allowing it to exchange information with vehicles ahead to receive warnings about potential accidents or broken down vehicles ahead.

The current S-Class model, which has been in showrooms since 2013, does not have the same capabilities.

That is because the launch



Dr Dieter Zetsche, Mercedes-Benz Chairman of the Board of Management, attends the Mercedes-Benz new E-Class introduction prior to the opening of the North American International Auto Show in Detroit on 10 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

date of the new E-Class was better timed to take advantage of improvements in computing and sensor technology, as well as regulatory changes needed to make autonomous and semi-autonomous driving a reality.

Mercedes plans to continue the strategy of introducing its latest breakthroughs with the earliest feasible model debut. Other automakers may well follow suit.

"The best features were always introduced into the highest end vehicles. That is not going to be the best solution for the car industry anymore," said

Thilo Koslowski, vice president of the automotive practice at technology market research firm Gartner. "Younger customers want the latest features immediately, and this will force carmakers to change their offerings, and it will change the way they define premium."

Mercedes-Benz already introduced its Collision Prevent Assist Plus into the compact B-Class before it spread it to larger vehicles.

Zetsche acknowledged that the shift could cause some would-be S-class buyers to migrate to the less expensive E-class, but

the more important purpose is to steal customers from Audi and BMW. "We are interested in external conquest," Zetsche said.

Further, he said, Mercedes may choose to update older models like the S-class as well.

Consumers are driving the changes, said Andrew McAfee a principal research scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who studies how digital technologies are changing business and society.

"A car is the second-biggest investment you will ever make, so you do not want to buy something obsolete," he said.

Other automakers are also moving away from waiting on top-shelf models to package new technology. When BMW AG launched its new 2-series in 2014, it had a navigation system that could be upgraded over the air, a company spokesman said. The company's top of the line 7-series only got that function when it was redesigned last year.

Ford Motor Co (F.N) is using its mid-sized sedan, the Fusion, as the package for new hands-free automatic parking and lane-keeping features.

In the past, the automaker might have waited for the release of the next flagship from its Lincoln luxury division to unveil top-end technology.—Reuters

UK stores suffer 'disappointing' Christmas as sales growth slows

LONDON — British retail spending over the crucial Christmas period recorded its weakest quarterly growth in more than a year as stores competed to offer discounts, industry data showed yesterday.

The British Retail Consortium said retail spending rose by a "disappointing" 0.9 per cent in the three months to December compared with a year earlier.

That was the slowest such rise in retail sales values since the three months to November 2014, and the softest calendar quarter since the third quarter of 2014.

"Despite a number of positive economic indicators, retail sales over Christmas were relatively flat with more products on discount and the depth of discounting also deeper," David McCorquodale, head of retail at accountancy firm KPMG, which sponsors the survey.

In December alone, retail sales rose just 1.0 per cent, after a 0.7 per cent increase in November. After stripping out changes in shop prices — which fell 2 per cent in the 12 months to December on the BRC's own measure — the volume of retail sales rose an annual 3.0 per cent in December.

Although Britain's economy probably ended last year as one of the fastest-growing in the developed world for a second year in a row, there are concerns that the



Shoppers are reflected in a store window as they pass sales advertisements on Oxford Street in London, Britain in December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

growth is driven too much by consumer spending.

The BRC said a mix of rising consumer borrowing, a robust housing market and falling store prices should continue to support retail sales in 2016.

But it added that retailers faced rising costs from local property taxes and a higher minimum wage coming in April.

Payment card company Visa Europe on Monday published figures showing inflation-adjusted

consumer spending in December was 2.3 per cent higher than a year earlier, the fastest annual rate of growth since July and the second strongest since 2008. The best performing areas were hotels, restaurants and bars, but supermarkets also did better than of late.

"The grocers had a fairly admirable Christmas with total food and drink sales back in the black for the first time since September in spite of the persistent price deflation in the sector," said Mc-

Corquodale of the BRC survey.

Supermarket chain Sainsbury's (SBRY.L) is expected to be the best of a bad bunch when Britain's biggest food retailers announce Christmas trading numbers this week against the backdrop of a margin-sapping price war.

Morrisons (MRW.L) will update on Tuesday, when industry data will also be published, followed by Sainsbury's on Wednesday and market leader Tesco (TS.CO.L) on Thursday.—Reuters

Toyota aims at 2.5 million vehicles in 2016 US sales

DETROIT — Toyota Motor Corp. is projecting sales of 2.5 million vehicles in the US market in 2016, slightly greater than last year's sales of just below that mark, a Toyota official said Monday.

The Lexus luxury brand is expecting sales of around 345,000 units this year, topping last year's record high sales of 344,601, according to Brian Smith, vice president in charge of Lexus marketing in the United States.

Speaking at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, he noted solid demand for the RX sport utility vehicle after restyling.

Toyota's overall sales increased 5.3 per cent in 2015 to 2,499,313 units — its third-best annual result after 2.62 million in 2007 and 2.54 million in 2006.

The biggest Japanese automaker is predicting the US auto market to grow slightly to top 17.5 million units in 2016 from 17,470,499 in 2015. Last year's sales figure broke the previous record of 17.40 million cars sold in 2000.—Kyodo News

Back to school for children displaced by Los Angeles-area gas leak



Brian Seligman holds a sign to protest a gas leak in the Porter Ranch area of Los Angeles before a meeting of the California Air Quality Management District in Granada Hills, California on 9 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — In the latest disruption from the biggest methane gas leak in California history, nearly 2,000 Los Angeles children returning to class this week after winter break have been reassigned to schools outside the affected area over health concerns.

The Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest public school system, announced the plan after students described headaches, bloody noses, nausea and breathing irritations.

Eleven-year-old Cameron Michaels said he suffered daily health problems from the gas leak.

"You can't focus, you can't concentrate, you can't learn at all," he said.

Hundreds of residents have reported similar symptoms to the Los Angeles County Public Health Department, a county official said.

County health officials said in a report the symptoms are likely temporary.

"I hope they're absolutely right, but I can't take that chance," said School Board member Scott Schmerelson, who led the student relocation effort. "I'd rather err on the side of safety."

Schmerelson's district includes the Porter Ranch community on the outskirts of Los Angeles near where the leak was first discovered in October in a cracked pipe at an underground storage field.

Methane, the main component of natural gas, is not considered toxic.

Common sources of methane emissions include

wetlands and livestock operations. County health officials say the symptoms residents are describing are caused by the odorant added to natural gas.

Methane is the second-most common human-generated greenhouse gas in the United States.

The leak has accounted for about a quarter of the state's total emissions of methane, which is seeping out of the ground at the site in amounts never before seen in California.

Southern California Gas Co, which owns the site, said drilling a relief well and repairing the broken pipe could take until late March.

Last week, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency to address the leak.

On Monday, a California lawmaker announced proposed legislation that if passed will impose a moratorium on new injections of natural gas into the storage facility at Aliso Canyon, and the use of decades-old wells for production, until authorities audit the site for safety.

The proposal would also seek production restrictions at the site, though they would not interfere with "energy reliability" in the region, or with fixing the leak, the bill's sponsor said.

Separate proposals expected over the next two weeks would push for annual inspections of similar facilities statewide, among other regulations.

Southern California Gas Co did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Classes were scheduled to resume yesterday.—Reuters

Singapore Researchers make key finding in brain cancer treatment

SINGAPORE — Singapore researchers said on Monday they had made a key finding which could improve brain cancer treatment.

Researchers from the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN) have proven that the cell microenvironment plays an essential role in the growth of brain cancer cells.

This discovery could lead to a possible breakthrough in fighting glioblastoma, a deadly form of brain cancer, according to a press release of the IBN of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

Stem cells found in the tumors are responsible for making glioblastoma hard to treat because they are drug-resistant and self-renewing. IBN's study is the first to focus on how the extracellular matrix surrounding the tumor affects the development of cancer stem-like cells in a 3D microenvironment.

"There is currently no cure for glioblastoma, and it is important to eradicate the tumor-initiating cells in order to treat this cancer success-

fully," said IBN Executive Director Professor Jackie Y. Ying.

"By focusing on how the extracellular matrix promotes the development of brain cancer cells, we hope to provide a fresh approach towards tackling the problem, and develop new and more effective therapies."

Led by IBN team leader and principal research scientist Dr Andrew Wan, the researchers studied the growth of glioblastoma cells in a 3D model using a scaffold of electrospun fibers, and in 2D using conventional tissue culture polystyrene plates. The gene and protein expression results showed that the 3D microenvironment promoted the development of brain cancer stem-like cells, when compared with the 2D microenvironment.

In particular, the IBN researchers found evidence that two specific types of molecules on the surface of glioblastoma cells, called integrin alpha-6 and integrin beta-4, interacted with a specific group of laminin proteins in the extracellular matrix, to promote the development

of cancer stem-like cells.

This finding was supported by their collaborators at the National Neuroscience Institute using computational approaches to analyse patient tumor and molecular information, which confirmed that these same integrins and laminins were associated with more aggressive brain tumors, in particular, grade IV glioblastoma.

"We are excited to have successfully demonstrated that the extracellular matrix and 3D microenvironment work together to affect the stem-like properties in glioblastoma cells," said Dr Andrew Wan.

"Our finding may also apply to other cell types besides glioblastoma cells, and be used to develop more accurate cancer disease models for drug testing and development," he said.

"We will conduct further studies with clinical samples from the National Neuroscience Institute, with the goal of improving brain cancer treatment." This finding was published recently in the leading journal *Biomaterials*.—Xinhua

US panel finalises breast cancer screening recommendations

COLUMBIA — An influential panel of US experts issued final recommendations on Monday reaffirming their controversial position that mammogram screening should start at age 50, but also said some women may benefit from screening starting at age 40.

Under the US Preventive Services Task Force guidelines, mammogram screening every two years for women 50 to 74 got a grade of "B", meaning doctors should offer the service. Screening for women in their 40s got a "C" grade, meaning doctors should offer the service for select patients, depending on individual circumstances.

Critics have stressed that keeping 50 as the starting age for screening could threaten insurance coverage for millions of women aged 40 to 49. That is because insurers are not required to cover screening for women in their 40s, according to provisions in the Affordable Care Act. Lawmakers, however, have already weighed in, adding an amendment to the 2016 US spending bill that guarantees coverage for mammograms for women starting at age 40 through 2018.

Debate over the proper age at which doctors should start offering screening mammograms has raged since the task force first issued its recommendation in 2009. At the time, the panel cited evidence showing that the harm from over screening outweighed the benefits in cancer prevention.

Since that time, the task force has maintained that 50 is the best age to start routine screening. But it has left the door open for individu-

als who might benefit from screening starting at age 40.

"The task force believes that the science supports a range of individual choices for women to make for when to start screening, all the way from starting at age 40 or waiting until age 50, or anywhere in-between," said Dr. Michael LeFevre of the University of Missouri School of Medicine, Columbia, former chair of the government-backed panel.

The new, more inclusive wording of the guidelines is more in line with new recommendations from other cancer groups, such as the American Cancer Society. The society released new breast cancer screening guidelines in October pushing back the starting age for screening mammograms to 45 from 40, and recommending that younger women should have the choice to start screening as early as 40.

Dr Otis Brawley, chief medical officer for the American Cancer So-

cety, said he is happy with the Task Force's conclusions.

"We all recognise that the patient should be empowered and the patient should control her own body," he said.

According to the task force, screening 10,000 women in their 50s will result in eight fewer deaths, versus four fewer deaths for women who start screening at age 40.

Possible harms of breast cancer screening include unnecessary treatment for potentially harmless forms of breast cancer, incorrect results known as false positives and unnecessary additional testing.

As long as women understand the balance between benefits and harms, they can make a reasonable decision to start screening anytime in their 40s, LeFevre said.

Women with mothers or sisters with a history of breast cancer may benefit more from screening in their 40s, according to the task force.—Reuters



A monitor shows the image of a breast cancer. PHOTO: REUTERS

Warning comes with improvement in New Zealand home affordability

WELLINGTON — New Zealand's housing crisis could worsen despite recent improvements in home affordability, according to a report out yesterday.

Housing in Auckland — home to a quarter of the population and the focus of the country's housing problems — was a record 59-per cent less affordable than the rest of the country, said the Massey University Home Affordability

Report. The report showed an overall improvement in national affordability of 5.7 per cent in the last quarter of 2015.

Housing in Auckland improved in affordability by 1.4 per cent, despite continuing high values and "severe unaffordability."

Report author Dr Susan Flint-Hartle said there was a real possibility of deteriorating affordability in the coming months.

"Recent reductions in

borrowing costs and positive sentiment about a two-year hiatus in interest rises hold the potential to keep pushing house prices higher," Flint-Hartle said in a statement.

Interest rates continued to fall and there was some speculation that the Reserve Bank of New Zealand's (RBNZ) historically low official cash rate of 2.5 per cent might fall even further.

"This may encourage

more people, both homeowners and investors, into the market increasing demand and putting upward pressure on prices," she said.

There had been a minor drop in the national median house value to 459,500 NZ dollars (301,012 US dollars), but house prices had still risen in almost all regions.

On Monday, the government welcomed figures showing consents for new

homes hitting a 10-year high in November last year, after rising 17 per cent year on year.

Consents in Auckland numbered a record 966, but it was still below the 1,000 per month that the government estimates is needed to match demand.

The RBNZ has repeatedly warned that soaring house prices in Auckland pose a risk to the country's financial stability.—Xinhua

Vucic: Serbia will be no easy target for anyone

BELGRADE — Serbia is working on strengthening its military capabilities and the purchase of the Nora and Lazar weapon systems will not be budget-funded, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic said on Monday, noting that Serbia will definitely not become a victim of aggression or an easy target for anyone.

Countries in the region have arms-related obligations under the Dayton agreement and other agreements, which some others do not respect and claim that Serbia is nervous, Vucic said. "I am not nervous, but worried. The ballistic rockets and launch pads that Croatia is planning to acquire have ranges of 300 and 350 km. You can target any location in central Serbia from Zagreb or any other location," the prime minister told reporters after a meeting with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin. Vucic noted that he does not see a need to procure offensive weapons.—Tanjug

US, 3 other countries oppose Japan's whaling in Antarctic Sea

WASHINGTON — The United States, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands reiterated their opposition Monday to what Japan calls its research whaling in the Antarctic Sea following Tokyo's recent decision to resume it.

"We do not believe that Japan has sufficiently demonstrated that it has given due regard to the

guidance found in the 2014 International Court of Justice judgment" that ordered Japan to suspend whaling in the sea, the four countries said in a joint statement.

"Our governments remain resolutely opposed to commercial whaling," the four countries said, while warning antiwhaling activists against "dangerous, reckless, or unlawful be-

haviour." The statement was released after a fleet of whalers left Japan in early December for research whaling in the Antarctic Sea. The Japanese Fisheries Agency said in November that the whaling ships planned to begin operations in the Antarctic Sea in late December. Following the 2014 decision by the ICJ, Japan notified the Interna-

tional Whaling Commission of a review of the country's whale hunting plan, including a reduction of its annual minke whale catches by two-thirds to 333. The four countries' joint statement said, however, that Japan has yet to follow relevant IWC procedures for resuming its Antarctic whaling.

Japan has said the whale hunt is aimed at

contributing to resource management by researching whale ecology through analysis of such things as stomach contents and organs.

"The science is clear: all information necessary for management and conservation of whales can be obtained through non-lethal methods," the statement said.—Kyodo News

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MAERSK ABERDEEN VOY NO (1581)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MAERSK ABERDEEN VOY NO (1581) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Venezuelan court nulls congress decisions over barred lawmakers



A man walks in front of a building of the Venezuela Supreme Court in Caracas in 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CARACAS — Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled on Monday that the new National Assembly's decisions are void unless three banned opposition lawmakers are removed from office, deepening a power struggle over the opposition's new legislative majority.

Already beset by a deep economic crisis, Venezuela now seems to be sliding into a protracted period of political turmoil as both a

newly-emboldened opposition and President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government play hardball with each other. The Supreme Court in December blocked four lawmakers — three opposition and one allied with the government — from taking office after the Socialist Party made allegations of irregularities during last month's legislative election.

The opposition dubbed the ruling a bid to strip it of its super majority, and

defiantly swore in the three barred opposition lawmakers anyway, one of a number of tussles between the newly convened congress and the court. "Decisions taken or to be taken by the National Assembly while these citizens are incorporated will be absolutely null," the court, which almost always rules in favour of the ruling Socialists, said in a statement on Monday. The Socialists said congress was now effectively powerless unless the

lawmakers, who hail from the southern jungle state of Amazonas, were removed.

"The logical, sane and democratic step is for the National Assembly's leadership to revoke the swearing-in of these lawmakers," said Socialist Party No 2 and former National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello.

"If the National Assembly is in contempt, nobody is going to recognise it," he said. The Supreme Court's constitutional chamber had stepped in during similar situations in the past, he said.

The opposition said the measure was an authoritarian grab. "The big loser is going to be Maduro because he's going to create a constitutional crisis. He wants to immobilise the National Assembly, like Fujimori," said Ramon Escovar, a lawyer advising the opposition bloc, referring to Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's dissolution of congress in 1992.

The opposition plan to introduce an amnesty law yesterday for jailed politicians and activists, while government lawmakers intend to push for a declaration of "national emergency" over the economic crisis.—Reuters

Michigan governor to request federal aid in Flint water crisis

DETROIT — Michigan Governor Rick Snyder on Monday said the state was beginning to put together a request for federal assistance in dealing with the lead-contaminated drinking water in the city of Flint.

"We also have engaged FEMA in this process," the governor said at a news conference in Flint. A spokesman for the governor said Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials were already in Flint providing technical assistance on the issue.

"We actually have li-

aision officers from FEMA in dialogue already," Snyder said. "We have not made a specific request of assistance yet, but we are in dialogue with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and talking to them about how we can best work together."

The financially strapped city was under the control of a state-appointed emergency manager when it switched its source of tap water to the nearby Flint River in April 2014 from Detroit's water system to save money.

Flint, about 60 miles (100 km) northwest of De-

troit, returned to Detroit water in October after tests found some children had elevated levels of lead in their blood and lead was found in higher-than-acceptable levels in the water.

While the process has begun, the state needs to determine the full extent of the needs in Flint before a request for federal aid is made and that could take a period of time that he did not specify, said Dave Murray, press secretary for the governor.

Snyder apologised again on Monday for the state's mishandling of the situation. In late December,

he accepted the resignation of the state official whose agency, the Department of Environmental Quality, oversees water quality.

Last week, the US Attorney's Office in Detroit said it was investigating the lead contamination of Flint's water and Snyder declared a state of emergency in Genessee County, which includes Flint, authorising additional state resources to address health and safety issues.

Flint residents have filed a federal lawsuit accusing the city and state of endangering their health.—Reuters



The Flint River is seen flowing through downtown Flint, Michigan, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Azeri oil disaster an open wound for survivors

BAKU — For the survivors of a lifeboat which hung between a blazing oil rig and 10-metre waves on a wind-lashed sea, the horror lives on while the search for the comrades they saw die is not complete.

A fire still burns from the worst ever accident in Azerbaijan's oil industry. An enquiry continues on the 4 December disaster which took around 30 lives when a 27-hour storm raged across the Caspian Sea.

"When the fire started, we sat in two lifeboats, but did not put them down on the sea surface as we were afraid that a storm could break them into pieces," Al-lakhverdi Mamedov, who was in charge of the stricken platform above the Guneshli oil field, told Reuters.

"We were sitting and waiting for rescuers, when the hawsers of the other boat ripped, it dropped into the

water and collapsed. Hawsers, which were holding other boats, broke as they did not withstand the pressure from the storm."

That lifeboat was sent plunging into the sea where the impact broke it up, spilling those on board. Only two workers from that boat survived.

Those in Mamedov's lifeboat spent the night dangling from the platform. They were only rescued the following day when, after the storm had subsided somewhat, a rescue helicopter was able to land on the platform.

Thirty workers were lost after Guneshli, operated by Azeri state energy company SOCAR caught fire after the storm caused some of its production equipment to collapse, damaging a natural gas pipeline.

"I thought it was the last day of my life. We were

afraid that the platform would blow up. The picture was horrible — heavy wind, high waves ... My very close friends died. It's very painful to recollect that events," another worker, who declined to give his name, said.

Rescuers have discovered nine bodies and search for 21 more as well as three workers who were swept into the sea from another platform some 11.5 miles (18.5 kilometres) away.

The rig accident was the worst since the US drilling ship Seacrest capsized during a typhoon in the Gulf of Thailand in 1989, killing more than 90 people.

The previous biggest accident on an offshore oil platform in Azerbaijan killed 22 men in 1957.

"This is the biggest tragedy in SOCAR's history. The fire on Guneshli platform was the biggest

in Azerbaijan's oil industry since 1949, when the country started offshore oil production," SOCAR's vice president, Khalik Mamedov, told Reuters.

"We lost 33 men in one day and that's horrible."

"The chances of finding anyone alive equal zero," said SOCAR's first vice president, Khoshbakht Usifzade. "We lost our friends ... But we do our best to find bodies and hand them over to relatives."

Azeri and American specialists worked together to put out fires from oil and gas wells.

"Thank to these efforts, the fire was extinguished on several wells, including one, where there was the risk of an oil spill, but some gas wells are still on fire," said Balamirza Agaragimov, chief engineer at Azneft, SOCAR's production union.—Reuters

NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF CITY GOLF RESORT FOR PAYMENT OF MONTHLY FEES

1. It is found out that some members (Myanmars / Foreigners) of the City Golf Resort, Yangon City Development Committee, have failed to pay their monthly fees for various reasons.

2. According to paragraph (9) of the rules and regulations of the City Golf Resort, those members (Myanmars / Foreigners) who fail to pay their monthly fees for a period of one year and over shall cease to be a member of the Resort, and so they are intimated to come and clear their outstanding dues by (29-2-2016) at the latest.

General Manager
City Golf Resort

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MAENAM 1 VOY NO (537N)

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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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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S WAN HAI LINES PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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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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'Blackstar' sales soar as Bowie's musical and financial legacy endures

LOS ANGELES — Sales of David Bowie's last album — released two days before his death from cancer — soared on Monday along with downloads of his greatest hits, testimony to the powerful appeal of a pioneer in pop culture and the music business.

Streaming giant Spotify said streams of Bowie's music were up 2,700 per cent on Monday, while the Official Charts Company in the UK said Bowie's "Blackstar" album was headed to the top spot on the charts with sales of 43,000 since its Friday release.

Bowie, who produced hits such as "Ziggy Stardust" during a career featuring daringly androgynous displays of sexuality and glittering costumes, died at age 69 on Sunday.

He was the first recording artist to sell bonds, known as 'Bowie Bonds,' against his intellectual property and backed by future earnings of his music.

The bonds, which are now paid off, were bought by Prudential Insurance in 1997 for \$55 million, and let Bowie retain ownership of his work rather than selling the copyright.

The model, constructed by



A Japanese fan takes a photo of portraits of British rock star David Bowie at a music retailer in Tokyo, Japan on 12 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

investor David Pullman, was later adopted by artists such as James Brown and the Isley Brothers.

In an interview on Monday, Pullman estimated that Bowie's estate could be valued upward of \$100 million, in part because Bowie owned 100 per cent of his music.

"He was smart enough to have confidence in himself. Most artists sell themselves short, and they don't hold out for the rights," Pullman said. "He was able to retain his legacy. His songs were his baby."

The move also spared Bowie taxes he would have faced had he sold the rights, Pullman said.

"The real annuity for an artist's estate is owning copyright and catalogue. That's the revenue stream," said Bill Werde, chief executive of entertainment agency Fenton and former editor of music trade publication Billboard.

Still, he said, Bowie bonds were not all about money. "This was more about Bowie's blood, sweat and tears, and the idea that someone else owned part of it

never sat right with him," Werde added.

The critically praised "Blackstar" was the top-selling album on Apple's iTunes US and UK platforms on Monday morning. Bowie's longtime producer, Tony Visconti, called the album the singer's "parting gift."

The 2002 "Best of Bowie" compilation album was the second most popular on the US site, outpacing Adele's blockbuster album "25."

Bowie's 1972 album "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" was in fourth place on the US iTunes platform, according to the site. Apple does not generally release iTunes sales or download figures.

On Amazon's US and UK websites, "Blackstar" was the No.1 "best seller" on Monday.

In a music video accompanying the album's first single, "Lazarus," the singer is shown in a hospital bed with bandages around his eyes.

"Look up here, I'm in heaven," Bowie sings. "I've got scars that can't be seen. I've got drama, can't be stolen. Everybody knows me now. Look up here, man, I'm in danger. I've got nothing left to lose."—Reuters

One Direction to guest star on 'Family Guy'

LOS ANGELES — The four members of boyband One Direction will appear on the popular adult animated sitcom "Family Guy", in a cameo for a May episode.

The fearsome foursome will appear in a campfire scene, during which Stewie (Griffins) will tell them a horror story about non-skinny jeans, according to Entertainment Weekly.

One Direction mastermind Simon Cowell is also a character in the episode, but, like Harry Styles and Niall Horan, it's unclear who voiced his toon.

The episode, called "Run, Chris, Run," will air after the boys begin their hiatus in March.

Liam Payne and Louis Tomlinson lent their voices to an episode about Chris running for homecoming king.

The group's latest album, "Made in the AM", dropped in November, selling 460,000 copies in its first week. One Direction was the most-discussed musical artist on Twitter in 2015.

"Family Guy", now in its 13th season, airs Sundays on Fox.—PTI

Rupert Murdoch, Jerry Hall announce engagement

LOS ANGELES — Media baron Rupert Murdoch announced his engagement to former supermodel Jerry Hall in an advertisement published yesterday in *The Times* newspaper, which is owned by Murdoch's News Corp.

The advertisement, published in the classifieds section of the newspaper read, "Mr Rupert Murdoch, father of Prudence, Elisabeth, Lachlan, James, Grace and Chloe Murdoch, and Miss Jerry Hall, mother of Elizabeth, James, Georgia and Gabriel Jagger, are delighted to announce their engagement."

"They have loved these past months together, are thrilled to be getting married and excited about their future," a spokesman for the Murdoch family was quoted as saying in *The Times*.

Hall, a former supermodel



Model Jerry Hall and media magnate Rupert Murdoch arrive at the 73rd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California on 10 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

and actress, was married to The Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger for more than 20 years, although in divorce proceedings, Jagger claimed that they were never legally married.

Murdoch, executive chairman

of News Corp and 21st Century Fox, has been married three times earlier. His last marriage was to Wendi Deng, a former executive at Murdoch-owned Star TV, who he divorced in 2013 after 14 years of marriage.—Reuters

Rihanna, Drake reunite to film new music video together

LOS ANGELES — Two singing superstars Rihanna and Drake have reunited on a song called "Work".

In a leaked casting call sheet that a Twitter user recently posted online, the video was shot on 8 January and 9 January and would include horseback riders as well as cops, reported Ace Showbiz.

Supporting the information, some other Twitter users claimed over the weekend that they spotted Drake, Rihanna and some horses at Los Angeles' Eagle Rock Plaza.

"Drake and Rihanna are filming a music video in our mall rn," wrote a fan.

"Why are there horses at the eagle rock plaza what is going on

omg," another said. Other fans tweeted some pictures from the filming set and what might be snippets of the song "Work".

Prior to "Work", Rihanna and Drake have worked together twice, on her 2010 hit "What's My Name" and on "Take Care" off his 2011 album of the same title.—PTI

Lady Gaga to release new album this year

LOS ANGELES — Singer Lady Gaga has confirmed that she will be releasing her new album sometime this year.

The 29-year-old "Poker Face" hitmaker, who won the Golden Globe for her performance in "American Horror Story: Hotel," did not give out any specific release date, reported Entertainment Weekly.

"You know, I am putting out an album this year. I won't tell you when! That's a difficult thing to say as I don't know that you yet know what I will look

like for my next album, as I'm still creating all of those things.

"It's something that is a gradual change always with me," Gaga said.—PTI

Lady Gaga poses with the award for Best Performance during the 73rd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California on 10 January. PHOTO: REUTERS



Smell test for Indonesia's motorcycle taxi candidates

JAKARTA — So stiff is competition between Indonesia's motorcycle taxis app companies that new entrants are going to extreme lengths to stand out.

Aris Wahyudi, the founder of the newest motorcycle-sharing company, reckons he has found a unique way to win business: not-so-smelly drivers.

"We took the decision to do an odor test for our customers' satisfaction," Wahyudi said, speaking in a sweltering basement car park, where prospective drivers are lining up to have their armpits sniffed as part of a selection test.

Dozens of companies have set up in Indonesia in the past year or so, seeking to emulate the success of Go-Jek, the first local firm to use smart phones to tap into the country's millions of traditional motorcycle

taxis, known locally as ojek.

There are now nearly 40 such firms operating in Indonesia, including Malaysia's GrabBike, and local firms Ojeks Syari, which advertises the Islamic credentials of its jilbab-wearing, women-only drivers, and Limobike, which offer a deluxe service with Vespa-style scooters.

Endang Ahmad, 37, takes his job as a professional armpit-sniffer very seriously.

"I have already found many types of body odor smell," he says, clutching a clipboard which he uses to score candidates as they stand, arms outstretched, in front of a fan meant to simulate the headwind of a motorcycle ride.

"The ones who have sweat smell and armpit smell mixed we don't give

a pass." How to respond to the rapid expansion of ride-hailing services in Indonesia, a mostly tropical, sticky country of some 250 million people where public transport is patchy, has caused friction within the government.

Last month, President Joko Widodo overturned a ban on such services only hours after his transport minister imposed it, amid a popular outcry on social media.

Wahyudi, a former electronic engineer who took money from friends, family and investors to set up UberJek, which has no connection to global car-sharing service Uber, says his company is the only one to conduct such stringent smell checks.

When the company launches in a month or two with some 3,000 drivers, customers will be able to



A motorcycle-taxi driver candidate sits on his motorcycle during a test at a basement car park in Jakarta, on 9 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

use the app to rate drivers based on their smell. Drivers who accumulate too many negative reviews will get a warning and could be suspended if they fail to scrub up.

Muhammad Ali, 44, wants to supplement the salary he earns working in a bank by driving a motorcycle taxi in the evenings. He has come prepared for the odor test.

"I have brought Rexona (deodorant) because, according to my wife, I have smelly body odor," he said. "But I am really optimistic I can pass all the tests today."—Reuters



Entertainment Channel

(13-1-2016, Wednesday)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6:00 pm
• Songs of Yester Years | 8:55 pm
• Musical Programme |
| 6:15 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti | 9:10 pm
• Pyi Thu Ni Ti |
| 6:30 pm
• Fashion Show | 9:25 pm
• Joint Performance by State Orchestra |
| 6:50 pm
• Musical Programme | 9:45 pm
• Myanmar Movie (Black & White) |
| 7:10 pm
• TV Drama Series | Midnight
• Close Down |
| 8:00 pm
• TV Drama Series | |

From 13.1.2016 (Wednesday) 06:00 Pm

To 14.1.2016 (Thursday) 06:00 Pm

This schedule will be repeated four times in 24 hours.



News Channel in Brief

(13-1-2016, Wednesday)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6:00 am
• Paritta By Hilly Region Missionary Sayadaw | 2:35 pm
• Myanmar Traditional Boxing |
| 7:35 am
• Money Talk Myanmar | 3:35 pm
• University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — Third Year (Botany) |
| 9:35 am
• Science and Technology Programme | 4:35 pm
• Money Talk Myanmar |
| 8:35 am
• People's Talks | 5:35 pm
• Master Craftsmen in High Technology (Nimble Fingers For Fashion) |
| 10:35 am
• Meet The Successful | 6:35 pm
• Real Story Real Movie |
| 12:50 pm
• Teleplay (Part-4) | 9:00 pm
• News |
| 1:00 pm
• TV Drama Series | • TV Drama Series |
| 1:45 pm
• TV Drama Series | • Fine Arts-Bosom of Dramatic Performance |

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Foreign tourist spending in Japan set for record of over 3 trillion yen

TOKYO — Foreign travellers spent an estimated around 3.5 trillion yen (\$29.8 billion) in Japan last year, the tourism minister said yesterday, suggesting the figure is certain to shatter the previous high of about 2.03 trillion yen recorded in 2014.

"The economic impact on our country brought (by foreign travellers) is tremendous," said Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Keiichi Ishii at a

press conference. "Meanwhile, there remain issues in terms of conditions for welcoming foreign visitors, and we would like to take appropriate measures to improve the situation," he added.

The government has targeted annual spending of 4 trillion yen by foreign tourists with 20 million visitors from overseas. But it plans to set a new target by the end of March as achieving 4 trillion yen in spending is in sight. The number of foreign

visitors to Japan in 2015 is thought to have reached the upper 19 million range, a jump from 13.41 million in 2014, and spending is increasing accordingly.

The likely record figure for spending follows government efforts including increasing the range of goods free from sales tax for foreign visitors in October 2014 to include expendable items such as foods in addition to electronics and other products.

In 2015, the government established a system which allows foreign shoppers to go through the tax refund process at a single counter.

To help revitalise Japan's economy, the government also aims to lower the minimum spending requirement for a tax free purchase to 5,000 yen from over 10,000 yen per shop per day for certain items such as electronics and folk craft goods.—Kyodo News

Confucius tourist venues free to senior citizens

JINAN — Tourist attractions in the eastern city of Qufu, including many associated with Confucius, are now free for citizens aged 60 or above, the local government said Monday.

The Temple, Family Mansion and Cemetery of Confucius (Kong Zi), which

welcome four million visitors each year, are all now free to visit for senior citizens, together with a dozen others associated with Confucius and Mencius.

According to the city's cultural relics bureau, since the attractions became free to senior citizens on 1 Jan-

uary, 4,631 seniors have visited the sites. The city also waived the entry fee for China's 15 million teachers wanting to visit the Confucius venues since the beginning of the year.

Born near the present-day town of Qufu, Confucius (551-479 BC)

is believed to be the first person to set up private schools in China and enroll students from all walks of life. Mencius (372-289 BC), or Meng Zi, was a pupil of Zi Si, grandson of Confucius. He spent his whole life expounding Confucianism.—Xinhua



Myanmar International

(13-1-2016 07:00 am~ 14-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| 07:03 | Am | News |
| 07:26 | Am | Taung Byone Nat Festival (Ep-2) |
| 07:52 | Am | Sweet Delicacy of Patheingyi |
| 08:03 | Am | News |
| 08:26 | Am | Myanmar Classic Cars Rally 2015 (Part-III) |
| 08:37 | Am | Buddha Image Built of Bamboo Strip |
| 08:49 | Am | Gold from Garbage |
| 09:03 | Am | News |
| 09:26 | Am | Myanmar Chef (Japanese) |
| 09:34 | Am | "Myanmar's Traditions and Culture" Novicehood in Myanmar |

- | | | |
|-------|----|----------------------------------|
| 10:03 | Am | News |
| 10:26 | Am | Htan Taw Drums (Part-II) "Dobat" |
| 10:42 | Am | Development Momentum Of Sittway |

(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 | MraukU, Treasure Trove of Rakhine Culture |
| 07:45 | Pm | Ywar Thit's Monhinkhar |
| 08:03 | Pm | News |
| 08:26 | Pm | Myanmar Traditional Identity (EP- 2) Myanmar Chinthe (Myanmar Lion) |
| 08:40 | Pm | A Girl Guide |
| 08:47 | Pm | Entrepreneur "Nan Ei Ei Zar" |

(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)

Messi wins Ballon d'Or for fifth time

ZURICH — Lionel Messi reclaimed the FIFA Ballon d'Or award for the world player of the year on Monday from his great rival Cristiano Ronaldo who had walked off with the award for the previous two years.

The Barcelona and Argentina forward took 41.33 per cent of the votes followed by the Portuguese and Real Madrid forward (27.76 per cent), with Brazil and Barcelona forward Neymar third (7.86 per cent).

"It is a very special moment for me to be back here on this stage, winning again another Ballon d'Or after being there in the audience watching Cristiano win," said Messi as he accepted the award at the end of a drawn-out 90-minute ceremony.

"It's incredible this is my fifth." Barcelona's Luis Enrique was voted coach of the year while United States World Cup winner Carli Lloyd, who scored a hat-trick in the final against Japan, was named women's player of the year. Initially started as the FIFA World Player of the Year award in 1991, it became known as the Ballon d'Or after merging with France Football's European footballer of the year award in 2010.

The award, shared exclusively between Messi and Real Madrid's Ronaldo since Brazilian Kaka won in 2007, has been heavily promoted by FIFA and was broadcast to 190 countries with 1,100 guests including players and coaches attending the ceremony.

But it is not everyone's cup of tea and some critics, such as Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger, say it is not appropriate in a team sport.



PHOTO: REUTERS



Winners of the FIFA/FIFPro World XI 2015 pose with their trophies during the FIFA Ballon d'Or 2015 soccer awards ceremony in Zurich, Switzerland, on 11 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"I'm a big enemy of the Ballon d'Or. Who will win it? You know as well as I do that it's certainly Messi who will win it. I think so. Overall I'm not a big fan of that," the Frenchman said earlier on Monday.

The breakdown presented by FIFA also revealed tactical voting among the 165 national team coaches, 162 national team captains and 171 media representatives who cast votes. Messi, eligible to vote as Argentina captain, named Barcelona team mates Luis Suarez, Neymar and Andres Iniesta as his top three.

Portugal captain Ronaldo choose three Real Madrid team mates — Karim Benzema, James Rodriguez and Gareth Bale.

Belgium captain Vincent Kompany opted for his compatriots Eden Hazard and Kevin de Bruyne as his top two.

More surprisingly, Spain captain Iker Casillas — the former Real Madrid goalkeeper who now plays for Portuguese club Porto — was among those who did not vote. Despite a red carpet and plenty of glitz, the event had a low-key air of predictability about it and was held against the backdrop of FIFA going through the worst corruption crisis since it was founded in 1904. The sport is facing criminal investigations in both Switzerland and the United States, where some leading FIFA officials are among 41 individuals and sports entities who have been

indicted on corruption charges.

Outgoing FIFA president Sepp Blatter, normally a central figure in the ceremony, was not involved after being banned for eight years by the Ethics Committee in December and there was no President's Award, usually given out by Blatter for outstanding services to the game. Past recipients have included Pele, former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, the Haiti national team, Queen Rania of Jordan and South African anti-apartheid activist and veteran cleric, Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Acting president Issa Hayatou played a low-key role, reading a brief speech before the start and appearing on stage when the

awards for best player and women's player were presented.

Ronaldo said the players did not want to discuss FIFA's problems.

"We avoid answering this kind of question," he told a press conference before the ceremony.

"We are professional football players, we compete every week, every day, we train and we just focus on that. These things happen not just in football but in life, and the best thing would be no corruption anywhere."

In terms of individual achievement, Ronaldo had slightly the better in the last year, scoring 54 goals in 52 games for Real Madrid, compared to Messi's 48 in 53.—Reuters

Queasy Kerber joins Sydney International exodus



PHOTO: REUTERS

SYDNEY — World number seven Angelique Kerber has pulled out of the Sydney International with a gastro-intestinal illness, the latest in a string of withdrawals to hit the Australian Open warm-up.

Organisers announced the German's withdrawal on the tournament's Twitter account.

The 27-year-old won her opening match of the tournament on Monday, defeating Ukraine's Elona Svitolina 4-6, 6-0, 6-3, af-

ter coming off a runner-up finish at the Brisbane International on Saturday.

Defending champion Petra Kvitova also pulled out of the tournament with a stomach bug and world number five Agnieszka Radwanska withdrew with a left leg injury. World number two Simona Halep, who opens her tournament against Frenchwoman Caroline Garcia later on Tuesday, is the top seed at the event.—Reuters

Liverpool can't outpass Arsenal, Klopp mulls other plays

LIVERPOOL — Liverpool cannot match Arsenal's brand of possession football and they will not try that either in Wednesday's Premier League clash, manager Jurgen Klopp has said.

Liverpool have lost three of their last six league matches and are currently eighth going into the match against the table-topping Gunners.

"Arsenal and Arsene (Wenger) have their own style, it's possession football, so it's clear that if we want to play the same way we will be without a chance because they've been doing it for longer," Klopp told British media.

The job is not easy for a Liverpool team smarting from Friday's disappointing 2-2 FA Cup draw with fourth-tier side Exeter City but Klopp was ready for the challenge.

"Arsenal are not only a good possession team, that's the problem, they have good counter-attacks too and that's what you have to be aware of.

"It's a job but it's a really nice job to think about solutions and how to stop them coming through with their plan. I like things like this."

Liverpool have sustained multiple injuries in recent weeks and German Klopp, who took over as manager in October, has expressed

his concern at the number of matches in December and January.

Wenger said it was only normal for Klopp to complain about the packed fixture list as he used to coach in Germany, where clubs get winter break.

"You get that from everybody who comes to England at the start because you have to adapt to the English style," Wenger told British media.

"I was like that and I'm still in favour of a winter break — but without losing the traditions of English football. "I believe that for the Germans they are maybe more surprised as they have a good winter break."—Reuters