

WALKING THE SAME PATH

Our government will cooperate with the next government: President U Thein Sein



President U Thein Sein delivers an address at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein said his government laid down good foundations for strengthening democracy in Myanmar, calling on outgoing lawmakers to work together with the next government and pledging that members of the outgoing government would cooperate with the next government to bring peace and development to the country.

Speaking to lawmakers who served over the last five years and whose terms expire on Friday at the 40th meeting of the 13th session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, the president hailed the achievements of his five-year term.

“Whatever has been done during the past five years is aimed at the restoration of peace and tranquility before 2015, ensuring the effectuation of a mechanism that will allow political forces to participate in the political process, promoting the socio-economic status of the people and widening the scope of knowledge on the part of the people,” he said.

“We have never thought of which party will win the 2015 election. [The country’s prosperity] is, in fact, a broader and higher objective, regardless of having hope for a second term for me or for my party. This is a national objective, much nobler than individual or group interest. This objective is important to strengthen democracy in Myanmar,” President U Thein said.

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Passenger bus lines oppose cargo trucks’ daily use of Mandalay-Muse road

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Buildings are ready to welcome squatters. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

Mandalay squatters to receive low-cost rental housing

RENTAL housing is being prepared for migrant workers living in unlicensed huts along the Ayeyawady River in Mandalay Region, according to the local development committee.

U Thet Naing Tun, the joint secretary of the Mandalay City Development Committee, said housing projects are under construction along the river in Aungmyaythasan Township.

“The project will help lower crime, landscape the area and at-

tract more tourists,” he said, adding that rental fees will initially be set at K30,000 (US\$23) per month.

The project will include 1,584 units, each measuring 10 feet by 20 feet. The joint secretary quoted the surveys as saying that over 2,600 households in need of homes have been identified.

More projects will come as the demand exceeds the supply, he said.—*Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Subpublishing House)*

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw ends debate on Former Presidents' Security Bill

THE 13th regular session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concluded its discussions on two bills, including the Former Presidents' Security Bill, which Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) debated yesterday.

Yesterday's session documented an event in which President U Thein Sein addressed the parliament regarding activities carried out during the Union government's five-year term.

Next, U Thein Tun Oo of Amarapura Constituency read out the Joint Bill Committee's report on the Condominium Law, which was sent back by the president with remarks.

Then, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann sought parliamentary approval on the bill and approved it in accordance with the laws and regu-

lations of the parliament.

On the president's proposal to merge the Ministry for Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Joint Bill Committee voted against the move, deciding such a move would be more appropriately carried out by the next government.

Next, MPs held discussions on the Former Presidents' Security Bill in an effort to end the debate between the two Hluttaws on the bill.

The bill was subsequently approved in accordance with the laws and regulations of the parliament. Then, Deputy Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swa elaborated on the activities of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 41st session continues today.—*Myanmar News Agency*



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

Amyotha Hluttaw

First Amyotha Hluttaw session concludes



U Win Myint. PHOTO: MNA

THE first Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) session concluded yesterday with a Q&A session in which members of Union-level organisations answered questions raised by parliamentarians.

U Khin Maung Aye, a member of the Union Civil Service Board (UCSB), replied to a question raised by MP Daw Khin Wyne Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency 1 on whether there is a plan to allow civil servants to receive cash instead of leave they have earned but not taken.

The UCSB member said regulation 80, which once allowed civil servants to enjoy cash rewards for their earned leave if



U Khin Maung Aye. PHOTO: MNA

they do not take it, was suspended as after civil servants received four pay raises under the current government due to the country's financial situation.

Likewise, Deputy Minister for Immigration and Population U Win Myint responded to a question raised by MP U Tin Maung Win of Mandalay Region Constituency 3 on whether there are plans to conduct a census on the Lisu population in Mandalay Region.

The deputy minister replied that data on the Lisu population in Mandalay Region will be announced when approval is given after coordination between the



Daw Khin Wyne Kyi PHOTO: MNA

departments and organisations concerned. He also said the data would come from the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census.

There are no new plans to conduct a census on the Lisu population in the region, he added.

Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint explained the implementation of tasks during the period of the first Amyotha Hluttaw.

According to the Hluttaw, the second Amyotha Hluttaw's first regular session is scheduled to be held on 1 February.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw concludes final session

THE first Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) concluded its 13th session in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with lawmakers exchanging farewell statements.

Deputy Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swar called on lawmakers to carry on their contributions to the development of the country by making the best use of their knowledge and experiences gained during their five-year term in the outgoing parliament.

Lawmakers from ethnic parties and representatives of

the Tatmadaw also extended greetings at yesterday's parliament session.

In his concluding remarks, Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann hailed the achievements in the five-term of the Pyithu Hluttaw, referring to discussions on national reconciliation, the rule of law and peace. He also expressed thanks to the lawmakers, acknowledging that they were able to exchange views on different issues, including the unity of all people in Myanmar.—*Myanmar News Agency*



U Khaing Maung Yee. PHOTO: MNA



U Naing Hla Maung. PHOTO: MNA



Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann poses for photo at a donation of funds for the Garuna Gabar Home for the Aged. PHOTO: MNA

MPs oversee donations to senior living facility

PYITHU HLUTTAW (Lower House) speaker Thura U Shwe Mann attended a ceremony celebrating the donation of funds for the Garuna Gabar Home for the Aged at a hall of the Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Lt-Gen Tun Kyi (Retd),

chairman of the committee for the Garuna Gabar Home for the Aged, accepted the cash donations from members of the public.

The ceremony was also attended by U Htay Myint, chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw

Investment and Industrial Development Committee, Dr Khin Shwe, chairman of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Relief and Resettlement Committee and family members of the Speaker.—*Myanmar News Agency*

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To achieve success in democratisation, the outgoing government met with successes and challenges, as well as confrontations and conflicts, he said.

“However, we’ve managed to push the democratisation process forward, and not to regress to conditions of the past, within the framework permitted by the political situation,” he added.

He also pledged for a systematic handover of the duties of the government and presidency to the next government.

The government led by President U Thein Sein initiated the building of a modern, developed, disciplined, democratic nation in a situation deprived of a mul-

tiparty, democratic system for more than five decades.

“The [outgoing] government introduced a new political system using new administrative machinery. At the time when the government started to implement the democratic transition, Arab nations in the Middle East started their own drives toward democratisation, known as Arab Spring. Over the last five years, the Arab nations are getting further and further from reaching their original goal of democracy,” he added.

The 2010 election was considered as the initial step on the path to democratisation in Myanmar, and the 2015 election was a further step along the same path, the president said.—GNLM



President U Thein Sein delivers an address at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

Workers to call for dissolution of Arbitration Council

WORKERS from industrial zones in Yangon have decided to call for the dissolution of the Arbitration Council formed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security to resolve disputes between employers and employees, the workers announced at a press conference on Wednesday.

The workers’ decision came after a meeting held at the Confederation of Trade Unions of Myanmar (CTUM) in Hlaingthaya Township, Yangon.

“The council is biased in favour of employers, and it made decisions without representing employees at the lowest level. Therefore, we decided to call on the present government to dissolve the council,” said Daw Wint The-

ingi Soe, vice chairperson of the CTUM.

“If the current government turns a blind eye to our demands, we are committed to continuing our call for the dissolution of the council,” she added.

The Arbitration Council was formed in 2012 in accordance with Myanmar’s Arbitration Law and includes five members each from three stakeholder groups representing employers, employees and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

“We don’t believe in the council anymore as the council made biased decisions, and no actions were taken against employers who ignored the council’s orders,” said U Tun Min Latt, a trade

union leader from the North Shore garment factory in Hlaingthaya at the press conference.

“Without amending labour laws that are not in conformity with the present time, disputes between the two sides cannot be resolved,” advocate U Htay, who serve as a council member on behalf of the workers.

He stressed the need for legal amendments rather than biases in the council’s decision making, pointing out that the failure to implement resolutions at the township level has led to even more labour disputes.

According to sources, the ministry’s proposal to detain employers and employees who failed to adhere to the council’s decision was not given the green light by the parliament, which only approved a K1 million (US\$773) fine for violators as a maximum sentence.

Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Htin Aung said actions are being taken against violators in accordance with laws and regulations as the parliament rejected the ministry’s proposal to send them to jail.

“As the council was formed in line with the law, the law can be amended in the parliament,” the deputy minister added.—*Khant Ko Lin*



Workers at production line of factory. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Presidential Notification

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointments of the following persons as heads of service organisations shown against each on expiry of the one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(A) Professor Dr Zaw Wai Soe	Rector University of Medicine 1, Yangon Department of Health Professional Resource Development and Management Ministry of Health
(B) Professor Dr Aye Tun	Rector University of Medicine 1, Magway Department of Health Professional Resource Development and Management Ministry of Health

2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Deputy Director-General U Han Win Aung of the Central Equipment Statistics and Inspection Department under the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development as Director General of the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.—*Myanmar News Agency*

MoFA conducts talk on Myanmar history

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted a talk on Myanmar’s history and international relations in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with an opening speech by Deputy Minister U Thant Kyaw.

U Than Tun, member of the

Union Civil Service Board, also spoke at the event, followed by interactive discussions and a Q&A session.

The ministry conducts such talks on a monthly basis in order to enhance the capacity of its staff.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Securities accounts can now be opened for trading of stocks on YSX

THE First Myanmar Investment (FMI) started to open securities accounts on Monday for the trading of stocks on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX), according to Kanbawza Stirling Coleman Securities (KBZSC).

“We’ve joined the Singaporean Stirling Coleman Securities for their technical expertise. We will

use the technology of this company to start to act as mediators for those companies who wish to trade stocks on the YSX. We will start to install software and systems,” explained chief financial officer of KBZSC, U Nay Myo Aung. KBZ Securities Company is a joint-venture between the Kanbawza group and Stirling Coleman Securities

from Singapore. They were the first company to be issued with an underwriter license to offer securities accounts for the YSX.

Stocks will not be traded directly on the YSX, but through third-party securities companies with underwriter licenses.

“Those who wish to trade stocks must first open an account

with a third-party securities company. The account holder will be issued with an account name and a pin-code. Using this information, they will then be able to trade stocks on the YSX online, by logging on to the securities company website. The list of what’s been traded will then be sent to the YSX, after which they will reset the price

[of stocks] accordingly.” said U Nay Myo Aung.

FMI securities accounts can be opened at ten KBZ banks across the country as well as FMI centers in Yangon and Mandalay.

Myanmar’s first Yangon Stock Exchange will be ready for trading stocks this month.—*Myit-makha News Agency*

Confiscated gambling machines burned in Lashio

SLOT machines and gambling equipment that were confiscated by police in Lashio Township in northern Shan State during the 2014-15 fiscal year were set ablaze on 27 January by the Shan State Police Force.

The gambling machines were burned because the period of time in which an appeal could be made for them had expired, said Police Chief Aung Myat Moe.

"The people know the disadvantages of gambling. Let us work together with the Myanmar Police Force, not only to combat gambling but also to be able to

make arrests [against those proping up the industry]," he said.

The police chief Moe also said the confiscation of gambling machines in Lashio was only made possible with involvement of the general public, and that he hoped for their continued support.

"It's a good thing these gambling machines have been set on fire. To be honest, I think they should have destroyed these machines shortly after they were confiscated. We lost our motorcycle because my husband gambled on the machines. My son also didn't go to school be-

cause he was addicted to playing electronic games. I've really felt the effects gaming can have on a family. I wish they would close down the remaining amusement arcades in the town," said Daw Phyu Phyu, a resident of Lashio.

In 2014, 33 cases of gambling were reported in Lashio, which resulted in the confiscation of over K9.5 million (US\$7,357) and arrests of over 100 people. In 2015, these numbers rose, with 36 gambling cases reported, over K18 million and 276 gambling machines confiscated and over 190 individuals were arrested.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Regional ministry awaits approval for use of forest land for Mandalay-PyinOoLwin new road section

THE ministry is waiting for the Forest Department's approval on construction of the Mandalay-PyinOoLwin new road section as this road is included in the forest area, said the regional Minister for Road Transportation yesterday.

Submission of approval to the Forest Department was completed but no response has come to us yet, said Minister U Kyaw Hsan, adding that 846 acres of forest area is included in the project to build more than 20-mile long new road section that will be built on the forest area and 546 acres of vacant land as well.

According to the minister,

the existing Mandalay-PyinOoLwin road sees traffic congestions as around 10,000 vehicles are running on it on average every day.

Upon completion, the new road section can help road users reduce travel time as the road which is currently used is more than 40 miles long, said the minister.

The ministry sought approval from the Forest Department to use the forest land for construction of the new road section since last year's August.

"We had already conveyed the ministry's request for the use of forest land for road construc-

tion to the Union Minister," said regional Minister for Forest and Mining U Than Soe Myint, adding that permission is expected to get soon. The minister also stated that travel time can be reduced thanks to the new road section and it can thereby contribute towards regional development and the swift flow of commodities.

According to sources, Axiom Mandalay Highway Construction Co., Ltd was permitted to build the road section under the Built, Operate and Transfer system. The new road section will pass through 10 bridges and an oil pipeline.—*Aung Thant Khaing*

International Furniture Expo to be held in Yangon



Myanmar International Furniture Expo 2016

THE four-day Myanmar International Furniture Expo 2016 will be held at the Tatmadaw Hall in Yangon from 12 to 15 February.

Jointly organised by the Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association (MRBEA) and the Wood-Based Furniture Association (WBFA), the expo aims to boost the capacity of furniture entrepreneurs to meet the international standards with their the products, to reduce

foreign exchange expenditures, to create the job opportunities for local people and to benefit the government, according to the chairman of the Myanmar Forest Products and Timber Merchants Association.

Products from 36 different industries will be exhibited at 164 booths.

The products will be sold at affordable prices to customers at the exhibition, the organisers said.—*Soe Win (MLA)*

Crime News

Weapons, drugs sized from Thai couple



A LOCAL anti-drug squad seized ammunition and drugs from a Thai couple who were staying at the Sweet Dream Hotel at Tachilek on 26 January, according to the Myoma Police.

Acting on a tip-off, police seized a bottle and pipe

used for inhaling drugs, a mobile phone, a pistol, 118 rounds of bullets, an unlicensed Toyota car and other documents from the Thai couple.

The Tachilek police have taken action against the couple.—*Myanmar Police Force*

A drunken man arrested for creating public nuisance

POLICE have filed charges against a man who was apparently creating a public nuisance at Mandalay International Airport on 24 January.

U Hon Yee Pan, 38, a domestic UB-104 flight passenger left gate 5/6 for gate 7 from which Bangkok Airway flight PG 726 passenger had to board. Police arrested him as he strangled one Ms. Baunigatel at gate 7. Police also found that he had kicked seats before leaving gate 5/6. The local police have filed charges against him under section 47.—*Maung Pyithu (Mandalay)*

Young man killed in motorbike accident

ONE Maung April, 21, was killed when his motorbike crashed into a tree near milepost 22/1-0, in Nyaung Paw village, between Mandalay and Pyin Oo Lwin on 24 January. He was leaving Pyin Oo Lwin for Mandalay when the accident occurred. He succumbed to his injuries despite receiving emergency medical treatment at Mandalay General Hospital.—*Maung Pyithu (Mandalay)*

An insane man throws stone at the vehicles

LOCAL police found and held an insane man who threw stones at vehicles at milepost 278/7, Thikone highway road on 23 January.

A Toyota Crown vehicle heading from Yangon to Manda-

lay being driven by one U Zaw San was hit by a stone, sustaining damage. Police checked and found U Thant Sint, 59, insane person, holding the stones. The police sent him back to his family.—*Myanmar police Force*

Lashio authorities destroy gambling machines

AUTHORITIES destroyed 139 gambling machines at the No. 4 Police Station in Lashio on 27 January.

The gambling machines were seized in Lashio during the

2014-2015 fiscal year and were incinerated by the Shan State deputy police commander, the district judge, the district law officer and the township administrator.—*Han Htay*



Viet Nam party boss says tough job ahead for new, expanded leadership

HANOI — Viet Nam's Communist Party unveiled a new politburo yesterday with 12 newcomers and members of the controversial outgoing premier's cabinet, expanding the leadership of a party facing a "heavy" workload of economic reforms.

Nguyen Phu Trong, who stays party chief, pledged to maintain a pro-growth status quo that balances foreign ties and cements a consensus leadership that analysts say was strained by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's assertiveness in the latter years of his administration.

Trong, 71, said he was a reluctant leader of a party that would move Viet Nam towards modernisation.

"My age is high, health is limited, knowledge is limited. I asked to step down, but because of the responsibility assigned by the party I have to perform my duty," Trong told reporters.

"I'm also worried because the upcoming work is heavy."

The 19-member politburo contains conservative and progressive elements, although uncertainty hangs over the outlook for economic reforms rolled out at an unusually fast rate under Dung, whose exit has caused some jitters.



Viet Nam's Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong speaks at a news conference next to Party's Chairman of the Propaganda and Education Commission Dinh The Huynh after the Closing Ceremony of the 12th National Congress of Viet Nam Communist Party in Hanoi, Viet Nam 28 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Those might be assuaged by the inclusion of Nguyen Van Binh, the governor of a central bank praised for its stable monetary policy and tackling of bad debt that swamped a beleaguered banking sector.

Joining him is US-educated foreign minister and Dung's deputy, Pham Binh Minh, seen

by some experts as a signal of the party's pursuit of even ties between competing superpowers China and United States.

Fred Burke, a board member of the US Chamber of Commerce in Viet Nam and managing partner at law firm Baker & McKenzie, said the lineup was reassuring for business and

would pick up where Dung left off.

"It's positive," he said. "It's continuity, but continuity with a 21st century bent, a professional bent, with people who are pragmatists who want to roll up their sleeves and get on with it."

Viet Nam-US relations have warmed dramatically as tensions

between Communist neighbours Hanoi and Beijing have increased over South China Sea sovereignty.

While Trong has been less critical of China's expansionism, Dung was the party's strongest voice in denouncing Beijing and was credited with Viet Nam's smooth accession to a US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Trong was the politburo's sole candidate for party chief, running unopposed despite rumours of a fierce showdown with Dung for the top post.

Adding some personality to a traditionally arcane politburo is Dinh La Thang, a media-savvy transport minister who has won popularity for brash comments, rebukes of officials and Facebook accounts carrying his name.

The politburo retains an authoritarian streak, however, with four members hailing from a police force criticised by rights groups for crushing the party's detractors.

Nominations for president, prime minister and legislative chair were included. They are Tran Dai Quang, Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Nguye Thi Kim Ngan, respectively.—*Reuters*

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Chief Executive Officer -

Nakagawa Kiyoshi
gnlmdaily@gmail.com

Chief Editor - Khin Maung Aye
khinmaungaye@hotmail.com

Deputy Chief Editor - Aye Min Soe
koayeminsoe2006@gmail.com

Chief Reporter

Ye Myint, uyemyint76@gmail.com,

Consultant Editors

Jacob Goldberg
jgold.news@gmail.com

Alec Wilmot

alec.wilmot.gnlm@gmail.com

Editors

Ye Htut Tin

mryehtuttin@gmail.com

Kyaw Thura, kthura.spk@gmail.com,

International news

Tun Tun Naing

tunyunaing@gmail.com

Reporters

Khaing Thanda Lwin

juniorlwin25@gmail.com

Tun Aung Kyaw

tunaungkyaw.31@gmail.com

Translators

Hay Mar Tin Win

haymarfat@gmail.com

Proof reader

Nwe Nwe Tun

Computer Team

Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,

Zaw Zaw Aung,

Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,

Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,

Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin

Circulation & Advertising

San Lwin (+95) (01) 8604532

Ads and subscription enquiries:

adv.gnlm@gmail.com

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Japan Economy Minister Amari says 'will do utmost' to fulfill duties



Economy Minister Akira Amari (L) bows next to Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Taro Aso (C) and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during a plenary session at the upper house of the parliament in Tokyo, Japan, on 28 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — Japanese Economy Minister Akira Amari said yesterday that he would fulfil his responsibility of offering an explanation

over reported bribery accusations, and that he wanted to continue fulfilling his duties as minister "with utmost effort".

Amari, who made the comment in parliament, is due to hold a news conference some time after around 0645 GMT Thursday, according to a government spokesman. Kyodo news agency reported that he plans to deny any wrongdoing.

Last week, Japanese magazine Shukan Bunshun published an article accusing Amari and his aides of accepting money from an unnamed construction company in exchange for helping that firm receive government compensation for disputes over land ownership and waste removal at a public works site. "I will explain this situation to the Japanese people in a way that leaves no doubt," Amari said in parliament. "I will continue to give my all to fulfil the responsibilities that I currently have."

Amari is a close ally of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and core member of his policy team. Amari has played a leading role in the prime minister's economic policies, and led Japan's negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade bloc. If Amari remains in his post, that could ease near-term worries that economy policy will start to lose focus. But some economists say if the problem drags on and new details emerge that could implicate either Amari or his aides, then Amari could come under renewed pressure to give up his post.

The accusations on bribery come at a sensitive time because policy makers are already grappling with a stock market sell-off, a rising yen and worries about a weakening global economy.—*Reuters*

North Korea may be preparing for missile launch: Japan gov't source

TOKYO — North Korea may be readying to fire a long-range ballistic missile from its northwestern launch site, a Japanese government source said Wednesday, citing satellite imagery analyses conducted over the past several days and cautioning that the launch could occur in about a week at the earliest.

Signs of the apparent preparations for a missile launch from Dongchang-ri come while UN Security Council members envisage toughening sanctions

against Pyongyang following its fourth nuclear test on 6 January in defiance of past Security Council resolutions.

The reclusive country's supposed action could be aimed at flouting the council and any plans among its members to tighten sanctions over the latest nuclear detonation.

Since the Security Council has also demanded in past resolutions that North Korea refrain from using ballistic missile technology, a new launch, coupled

with the last nuclear test, would likely step up calls for more stringent measures to punish North Korea.

Pyongyang last engaged in long-range ballistic missile activity in December 2012, calling it a satellite launch. North Korea also tested what it called a submarine-launched ballistic missile in 2015.

In September, the director of North Korea's National Aerospace Development Administration said the agency was "push-

ing forward at a final phase the development of a new earth observation satellite for weather forecast, etc.," according to a report by the official Korean Central News Agency.

On Wednesday, the foreign ministers of the United States and China, two key members of the UN Security Council, met in Beijing to discuss measures to be taken by the international community in the wake of the North's nuclear test.—*Kyodo News*

Malaysia's top lawyer rejected advice to charge Prime Minister

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's anti-graft agency had recommended that Prime Minister Najib Razak be charged with criminal misappropriation, a source said, amid growing outrage after the premier was cleared of any offences in a multi-million-dollar scandal.

The attorney-general on Tuesday closed all investigations of Najib, after reviewing reports from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on a case that involved the transfer of \$681 million into the prime minister's personal bank account.

Najib has consistently denied any wrongdoing, saying the funds were a political donation and he did not take any money for personal gain. After he was cleared of any offences by the country's chief law officer on Tuesday, he said the scandal had been "an unnecessary distraction".

A source at the MACC told Reuters that, when it handed its findings to the attorney-general last month, the agency had recommended that Najib be charged with criminal misappropriation. The source did not specify the grounds or the legal basis for the MACC's recommendation.

"It's a pretty straightforward case. We had made recommendations for charges to be filed that the attorney-general has instead



Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak leaves parliament in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 26 January.

PHOTO: REUTERS

chosen to reject," said the source, who declined to be identified or to elaborate on the MACC's findings.

The attorney-general's office declined to comment. Najib's office said it had no immediate

comment. The MACC said it would not comment on whether it made any recommendation to charge the prime minister.

In a statement on Wednesday, the agency said it would seek a review of the attorney gen-

eral's decision to close the investigations, but declined to make any further public comment on his findings.

Najib has been buffeted for months by allegations of graft at the debt-laden state fund 1Ma-

aysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and by revelations of the transfer of funds, adding to a sense of crisis in a country under economic duress from slumping oil prices and a sliding currency.

Attorney-General Mohamed Apandi Ali appeared to have drawn a line under the scandal on Tuesday, announcing that the money was a private donation from Saudi Arabia's royal family and that no further action needed to be taken on the matter.

While Malaysian law places limits on the amounts individual candidates can spend in an election campaign, there is no ceiling on donations to parties or requirement for them to disclose the source of their funds.

However, popular opinion seems to be against Najib as he tries to rebuild support ahead of a 2018 general election, and on Wednesday commentators and critics denounced the attorney-general's ruling as a white-wash.

"The court of public opinion will continue to try him," said veteran journalist and former editor-in-chief of the state-linked *New Strait Times* newspaper, A Kadir Jasin.

"As for all of us, we have to do some serious soul-searching if we care for this country and its future."—Reuters

Mortgages offer silver lining for India's banks as corporate loans languish



A cashier counts Indian rupee currency notes inside a bank in Mumbai.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI — India's banks, struggling to boost mainstay corporate loans, are finding a bright spot in a home-buying spree in the country's towns that has driven mortgage-loan growth to the fastest rate in at least six years.

Top lender State Bank of India (SBI) (SBI.NS), and two big private sector peers — ICICI Bank (ICBK.NS) and Axis Bank (AXBK.NS) — say demand for credit from smaller centres in the country is helping grow their overall home-loans books. Outstanding

home loans in India stood at \$103 billion as at end-November.

The mortgage tailwind comes as India's banks are focusing on lending to individuals to counter a sluggish corporate-loan market that has been hit by a three-year long slowdown in Asia's third-largest economy. Home loans also pose lower bad-debt risks for the banks than corporate loans, data shows.

"The Tier 2 cities are picking up," said Jayanthi Lakshmi, chief general manager for real estate lending at SBI. "Connectivity, affordability and rising employment

are helping them to grow faster."

SBI expects an 18 per cent growth in home loans for this fiscal year ending in March, against 14 per cent growth for overall credit.

Rising income levels, increasing urbanisation, lower mortgage interest rates over the past year and easier capital regulations for loans to mid-segment home buyers are driving demand for housing units in India.

The world's second-most populous nation will need 110 million new houses by 2022, consultant KPMG forecasts, as it tries to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious plan of providing housing for all. Central bank data shows housing loans during April-November grew 12.2 per cent, their fastest pace in at least six years, and accounted for nearly a third of total loans made. By comparison, credit to industry, which includes corporate loans, was up just 0.4 per cent. Metros and leading cities account for about 70 per cent of Indian banks' home loan demand. But debt-burdened developers, sharp price run-ups in the past, and record unsold stocks in some of the major cities, including the surrounding areas of national capital New Delhi, are increasing the importance of smaller centres to the lenders.—Reuters

Translation of Japan-US defence guidelines 'distorted': expert

TOKYO — A flawed translation of the Japan-US security guidelines is allowing the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to mislead the public about each country's responsibilities in the event of an attack on Japan, an expert on Japan-US security issues said yesterday.

Mikio Haruna, a visiting professor at Waseda University, said he suspects the government has deliberately worded the Japanese translation to persuade people that US forces would have a greater role in defending Japan than has actually been pledged.

"A big surprise for me in my research (of the guidelines) is that I found a lot of distorted translations from English into Japanese," Haruna said at a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

"Japanese people believe that US forces will defend us when Japan is attacked. The responsibility for the SDF (Self-Defence Forces) to defend Japan is not well understood by the Japanese," said Haruna, a former Kyodo News reporter.

The guidelines were revised last April for the first time since

1997, and in September Japan's parliament enacted legislation to expand the role of the SDF overseas, despite strong protests from opposition lawmakers and voters against what marks a major shift in the country's postwar security policy.

Haruna's allegation hinges on several provisions in the English-language version of the guidelines stating Japan will take "primary responsibility" for defending its citizens and territory in the event of an attack, while the Japanese version implies Japan will act "proactively" or "spontaneously."

Haruna said his decades of analysis of US policy on Japan, including combing of documents in the US National Archives, suggest Washington has always been wary to commit to defending Japan in a conflict, encouraging the primary responsibility to fall on the SDF.

But the Japanese public has been led to believe that much of the burden would fall on US forces, and this misconception is behind their reluctant acceptance of Abe's defence-reform efforts, he said.—Kyodo News

Iran's Rouhani in France to revive business ties after nuclear deal



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani (L) attends a meeting with French employer's body MEDEF union leader Pierre Gattaz (R) and French business leaders and politicians at a hotel in Paris, France, on 27 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

PARIS — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told French business leaders on Wednesday that Iran was open for investment as he started a visit in France to revive business ties despite diplomatic differences.

On Rouhani's first trip abroad since Iran's sanctions-ending nuclear accord with world powers took effect, Italy this week already rolled out the red carpet for the moderate Iranian president and his 120-member delegation of business leaders and cabinet ministers, signing a raft of deals.

But with France having taken a hard line in the nuclear negotiations, being outspoken in its condemnation of Iranian support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and having close ties with Sunni Muslim Gulf Arab rivals of Shi'ite Iran, the Paris leg of Rouhani's European trip was lower key.

"It's true that Iran has returned to the international community, but it doesn't mean we agree on everything, especially on Syria," Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said ahead of Rouhani's arrival.

Nevertheless, since July, French trade and political dele-

gations have travelled to Tehran to explore opportunities. Officials have said certain "commitments" could now be agreed, although how definitive they are is unclear.

"We don't see any obstacles for companies who would want to come and invest in Iran," Rouhani told a French business delegation. "My coming here is to show that Iran is ready for investments," he added, speaking through a translator.

Airbus (AIR.PA) Chief Executive Fabrice Bregier, who was part of the French delegation, said that he held talks this month in Tehran with government and Iran Air officials that could lead to the rapid sale of aircraft.

"We are at the disposal of our Iranian counterparts to help renew the fleet," Bregier said. Iran urgently needs modern, safer and less-polluting airliners after decades of being unable to obtain spare parts or new models due to sanctions.

After starting his trip to Paris by meeting some 20 company executives, Rouhani is due to deliver a speech to business leaders on Thursday at a Franco-Iranian forum, where Iranian

ministers will outline their plans.

Several agreements are due to be announced after a meeting with President Francois Hollande.

Iranian officials have said they are poised to agree on a deal for Airbus aircraft. Car-makers Peugeot (PEUP.PA) and Renault (RENA.PA) may also agree contracts.

Airport design and construction talks may be on the agenda too, potentially involving builders Bouygues (BOUY.PA) and Vinci (SGEF.PA) and airports operator ADP (ADP.PA).

Although many sanctions relating to Iran's nuclear programme have been lifted, most US measures remain in place. Companies are worried about the sanctions snapping back if Iran violated the terms of the nuclear agreement and are including this scenario in their risk analysis.

"Investing in Iran is not exactly like investing in Holland or Denmark," a French diplomatic source said. "Everyone wants to be certain that there's no Damocles Sword hanging over them before investing." —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sweden may expel up to 80,000 of last year's asylum seekers

STOCKHOLM — Sweden is preparing to deport up to 80,000 of last year's record number of asylum seekers, Interior Minister Anders Ygeman said in an interview with business daily *Dagens Industri* yesterday.

Ygeman said he estimated about 60,000 to 80,000 of the 163,000 people who sought asylum last year would be expelled and either leave voluntarily or be forcibly deported. The government fears many of those will go into hiding, *Dagens Industri* reported, and police are increasing their work to find and expel those.

"We have a big challenge ahead of us. We will need to use more resources for this and we must have better cooperation between authorities," Ygeman was quoted as saying. This week, Prime Minister Stefan Lofven promised more resources for police to deal with the increased workload because of the refugee situation. —Reuters

Cyclone alert issued for Western Australia's Pilbara region

SYDNEY — Western Australia state's mining region, Pilbara, is on high alert as a tropical low, which could be the region's first tropical cyclone of the season, is moving towards the Pilbara, Australian weather authorities said yesterday.

A tropical low about 555 kilometers north of Port Hedland is strengthening and may develop into a cyclone on Friday — to be called Stan — and cross the Australian coast on Saturday morning, Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) warned.

People in coastal areas from Wallal and Dampier are being evacuated as the tropical low was moving south at 11 kilometres per hour, with wind gusts up to 85 kilometres per hour near the centre.

"The track maps indicating potentially a crossing somewhere between Port Hedland and Karratha at this stage," Bureau of Meteorology weather observer Daniel Hayes told Australia's national broadcaster. "It's only expected to get up to a category one, but that does still mean we can see wind gusts up to 90-125 km per hour," Hayes said. Even if the system does not develop into a cyclone, there is still likely to be gale force winds and heavy rains. —Xinhua

Jet Airways Kathmandu flight evacuated, second time this week

NEW DELHI — Passengers on a Kathmandu-bound aircraft of Jet Airways were evacuated minutes before take-off from New Delhi on Wednesday due to a security alert, the second such incident this week on the same flight.

The plane's doors were closed and it was ready for take-off when the alert was raised, according to a Jet Airways spokesman. All 122 passengers and seven crew members were asked to leave the plane and security agencies were investigating.

The incident comes two days after the same Jet Airways' Delhi-Kathmandu 9W 260 flight was delayed due to a security scare, but investigations later found nothing unusual. "It is the same flight. This is something that doesn't happen normally," a company spokesman said. Police at Delhi's international airport were not immediately available for comment on what caused the security scare. Indian media said police received an anonymous call warning bombs were on two aircraft. The other aircraft, operated by Air India, was also headed to Nepal's capital Kathmandu. The plane was taken to a bay area and security personnel screened the baggage, the company said on its Twitter account. In a separate incident, AirAsia India, part-owned by Malaysia's AirAsia Bhd, said late on Wednesday that it received a specific bomb threat after one of its aircraft landed in Bengaluru from Jaipur. —Reuters

NATO looks to combat Russia's 'information weapon'

BRUSSELS — NATO may combat Kremlin "weaponisation of information" used to support action such as the 2014 seizure of Crimea by creating a new more powerful communications section and declassifying more sensitive material, according to draft plans.

Both NATO and the European Union are concerned by Russia's ability to use television and the Internet to project what they say is deliberate disinfor-

mation. The EU set up a special unit last year to counter what it considers overt propaganda.

Draft proposals by NATO's military committee seen by Reuters set out how military tactics — to understand adversaries and then influence foreign audiences — could become part of a more integrated communications strategy.

The 23-page document, part of a long-running debate at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisa-

tion, is sensitive.

NATO, in its own parlance, is considering "strategic narratives that lead to aligned words and actions ... appropriately adapted and culturally attuned to resonate with all audiences and counter opposing narratives."

NATO declined to comment on the draft but said its military committee is working on a policy of strategic communications. "Nations are yet to discuss this draft policy and it is the nations

who will ultimately approve it," said Eva Svobodova, public affairs and strategic communications advisor to the chairman of the military committee.

Though favoured by Britain and others, the United States is wary of any strategy that could be construed as base propaganda. Officials say the credibility of NATO, an alliance of 28 democracies, relies on being open and truthful.

"One of the main principles

of NATO is that we cannot counter propaganda with more propaganda," said NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu, who grew up in Romania under communist rule.

Russia has invested in a state-of-the-art media organisation with hundreds of journalists abroad intended to wean the world off what it calls aggressive Western propaganda — dubbing it, with echoes of the Cold War, Sputnik. —Reuters

OPINION

Change depends neither on chance nor time

Kyaw Thura

IT is not an easy task to transform a country that had distanced itself from multi-party democratic practices for over five decades into a disciplined, prosperous democracy. Myanmar's transition to democracy coincided with democratic uprisings in the Arab world, often called the 'Arab Spring', very few of which succeeded.

Five years ago, our country started its move toward democracy by implementing new

political and administrative systems. Over the last five years, we have been shocked by the violent scenes breaking out in the short-lived new democracies in the Middle East, which have left these countries on the brink of collapse and threatened the lives of millions of innocent people. The rise of anarchism and extremism has put the prospect of democracy on hold until the chaos clears.

In his inaugural speech, President U Thein Sein promised us a country of stability and prosperity, giving assurances that his government would implement political and economic reforms to bridge the gap between rich and poor. Despite some remaining challenges, our country has succeeded in its undertaking to gradually push ahead with its democratic reforms.

Tangible achievements in the reform process have led to the easing of economic sanctions against our country, thereby clearing the way for unprecedentedly massive investment flows into the country over the past five years. According to official statistics, local investment rose

from K241.75 billion (US\$186 million) in 2011 to K5,179 billion (\$4 billion) in 2015, while foreign investment hit \$22 billion in 2015, up from \$4 billion in 2011.

It will definitely take time to correct the administrative mechanisms that have grown rusty from years of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Immediate action is required simply because a change of character is more important than a change in government. After all, change depends neither on chance nor on time.

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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.

This lithium-ion battery of the future won't overheat

The battery automatically shuts down if it gets too hot

Stanford University/IDGNS

RESEARCHERS at Stanford University have developed a lithium-ion battery that shuts down as it begins to overheat, potentially meaning the types of catastrophic fires seen in hoverboards, laptops and airliners could become a thing of the past.

Lithium-ion batteries are used in just about all portable electronics. They're light, can store a lot of energy and are easily recharged, but they are also susceptible to overheating if damaged. A short circuit in the battery often leads to fire.

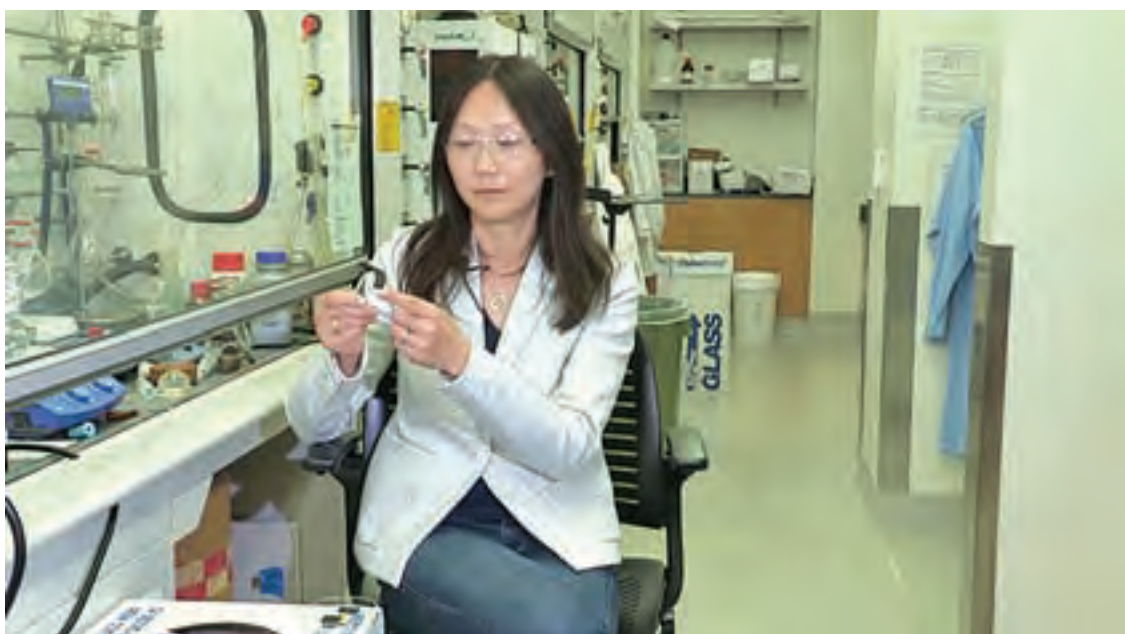
In the new Stanford battery, researchers employed a polyethylene film that has embedded particles of nickel with nanoscale spikes. They coated the spikes

with graphene, a conducting material, so that electricity can flow over the surface.

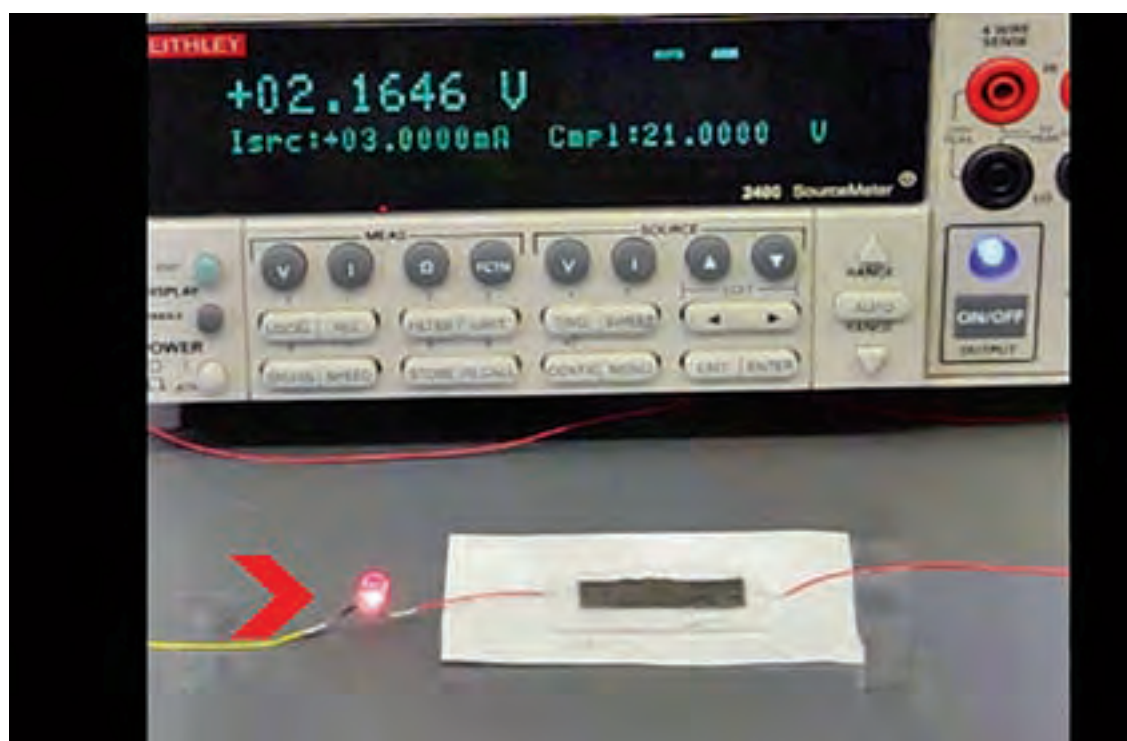
But when the temperature rises, the film expands, and at about 70 degrees Celsius (160 degrees Fahrenheit) the conducting spikes no longer touch each other, breaking the circuit and causing the battery to shut down.

Once the battery shuts down, a runaway thermal reaction is avoided and the battery cools, eventually bringing the nickel spikes back into contact and allowing the electricity flow to resume.

"We can even tune the temperature higher or lower depending on how many particles we put in or what type of polymer materials we choose," said Zhenan Bao, a professor of chemical engineering at the university and



Zhenan Bao, a professor of chemical engineering at Stanford University, examines a polyethylene film in a lab at the university.



A polyethylene film is tested for its reaction to heat in a lab at Stanford University.

one of the research team.

The research was also carried out by Stanford engineer Yi Cui and postdoctoral scholar Zheng Chen. Details were published on Monday in the journal Nature Energy.

"Compared with previous approaches, our design provides a reliable, fast, reversible strategy that can achieve both high

battery performance and improved safety," Cui said in a statement.

The battery is a second job for the nickel-embedded polyethylene material. Bao, the Stanford professor, used the same material in a wearable sensor she developed to measure body temperature.



Zhenan Bao, a professor of chemical engineering at Stanford University, examines a polyethylene film in a lab at the university.

Passenger bus lines oppose cargo trucks' daily use of Mandalay-Muse road



Cargo trucks are seen using Mandalay-Muse road daily. PHOTO: AUNG YE THWIN

PASSENGER bus lines have proposed the scheduling of special dates for trucks with large cargos to run along the Kutkai-Huskh-intha road section of the Mandalay-Muse road, where such vehicles are seen as a primary cause of traffic congestion.

"If a cargo truck broke down

on it, all other vehicles, including passenger buses, would be blocked," said Ko Myint Swe, suggesting that specific dates should be set for cargo trucks to run on it.

Representatives of passenger bus lines pointed out that the situation on the road is not suitable for

daily use by cargo trucks, which exacerbate traffic congestion.

According to sources, there are 15 passenger bus lines operating on the Mandalay-Muse road, and delays caused by traffic jams have stranded road users for up to two days on the road section.—*Aung Ye Thwin*

Over half a million tonnes of watermelons for Chinese export



Watermelon are seen ready to export to China. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

CHINESE New Year falls for the Chinese at a time when watermelons are yet to be cultivated in their country, over half a million watermelons from Myanmar will be exported to its big neighbour in the north in a bid to make up the shortfall, it is known from the Myanmar Fruit and Vegetable Producer and Exporters Association (MFVPEA).

The watermelons will be exported through the main Myanmar – China overland trading point of the town of Muse in northern Shan State after an increasing numbers of orders for the fruit have been received from Chinese buyers.

"Up to about 250 watermelon trucks can directly reach Muse everyday. There is a big demand coming from China at the moment because it's the run up to Chinese

New Year but it's not yet their watermelon season. There will be up to 530,000 tonnes of watermelon that will be exported to China by the end of the current fiscal year which comes to an end in March," said U Naing Win, chairman of the MFVPEA.

China started purchasing Myanmar watermelons in October 2015 and will continue to do so until May of this year, at which point demand for the fruit will wane as it will become seasonal in China.

"Watermelons bought by China vary in price between 1,300 – 2,200 kyats, dependant on weight and quality. If there's a lot of demand for the selling of the fruit in Myanmar then it pushes down the price," said Ko Min Hsway, a watermelon grower

from Tatcone township. There are 69 watermelon wholesalers in the Myanmar – China boarder town of Muse, where Myanmar watermelon producers meet directly with traders from China for the selling and export of the fruit.

Over 250 trucks arrive in Muse each day packed full of watermelons from all over the country, included among which are as many as 50 trucks, carrying 17 tonnes of watermelons, from the main areas in the country that produce the fruit - Mandalay, Sagaing and Bago Regions.

It is anticipated that by March, a total of 530,000 tonnes of watermelons will have been exported to China, 10,000 more tonnes than was able to be exported during the previous year.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Applications go on sale for affordable housing project in Hpa-An

THE Mya Htay Kywal Linn Company has begun selling applications for its affordable housing project in the Kayin State capital of Hpa-An, the company announced.

Interested buyers will be required to pay a monthly sum of K30,000 for a total period of 30 years and will be able to move into their property after the two-year construction is complete. The state government will take responsibility for looking after the monthly instalment fees, said U Saw Kyi Linn, the Kayin State minister for electric power.

"The government will hold onto the monthly K30,000 payments from the public. The construction company will carry out its activities with their own finances. It has already been said in a state government meeting that the government will take care of looking after the monthly cash instalments," he said.

The Mya Htway Kywel Linn Company and the Infrastructure of Myanmar Company held a foundation-laying ceremony for the project on 24 January.

The application forms are currently available for purchase

from the Mya Htay Kywel Linn Company at the Hpa-An highway bus terminal. The housing project will feature 2,560 apartments, 20 by 30 feet in size and be constructed close to Hpa An's industrial zone in the village of Nyein Chan Tharyar Sanpya.

"The price of an apartment has been set at K10.8 million (US\$8,364) and will be paid off in monthly instalments for a period of 30 years. People will have the option to resell their apartment should they wish to move out before they've completely paid off the instalment fees, but that's a matter to be settled between the buyer and the seller. The K30,000 kyats a month is a normal rate," said U Saw Than Mya, owner of the Mya Htay Kwel Linn Company.

The housing project will be divided into three sections: 30 per cent for the public, 40 per cent for government staff and the remaining 30 per cent to be sold to people affiliated with the company. An area of 20 acres of land has been purchased at a price of K13 million (\$10,067) per acre from the state government.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

400,000 children receive polio vaccines in Rakhine State

THE Ministry of Health plans to expand its polio immunisation programme in 330 townships in all 14 states and regions between 20 and 22 February.

Nearly 400,000 children under five years of age among a target of 481,599 received polio vaccines during the nationwide polio immunisation campaign in Rakhine State.

People of various ethnicities, including those thought to have Bengali ancestry, received polio vaccines in Maungdaw and Buthetaung townships last year, covering 27 townships and nearby areas.

The polio vaccination programme has been carried out since 23 January this year across the country by the Ministry of Health.—*Ko Gyi Saw*

Chemically fertilised crops increase in market

CROPS grown with chemical fertilisers have become more common in markets as local people are using more chemical fertilisers and dyes to grow crops and vegetables, said Dr U Kyaw Tha Hla Aye, a retired professor from the health ministry.

The retired professor warned people not to choose suspicious fruits and vegetables in the markets. Some crops in the market are very colourful. Generally, they are also larger

than normal ones.

The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with its partner organizations, is putting more effort into raising awareness among the general public about the danger of dyed foods in vegetables. The ministry's partner organisations are carrying out several inspection tours to markets.

Crops grown with chemical fertilisers and dyes may cause cancer and other chronic diseases in humans.—*Phoe Htaw*

UN says Syria ignored most of its requests to deliver aid

UNITED NATIONS — The Syrian government in 2015 ignored most United Nations requests to deliver humanitarian aid to some of the 4.6 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas and only 620,000 received help, the UN aid chief said on Wednesday.

Stephen O'Brien told the UN Security Council that last year the United Nations made 113 requests to the Syrian government for approval of inter-agency aid convoys, but only 10 per cent were able to deliver assistance.

Another 10 per cent were approved in principle by the Syrian government, but could not proceed due to a lack of final approval, insecurity or no deal on safe passage, while the UN put 3 per cent on hold due to insecurity.

O'Brien said the remaining 75 per cent of requests went unanswered.

"Such inaction is simply unacceptable," he said. "The impact on the ground is tangible: in 2013, we reached some 2.9 million people through the inter-agency convoy mechanism, but only 620,000 (in 2015)."

"More and more people are slipping out of our



Syrian refugees stand in line as they wait for aid packages at Al Zaatari refugee camp in the Jordanian city of Mafraq, near the border with Syria, on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

reach every day as the conflict intensifies and battle lines tighten," O'Brien said.

In total, the UN said 13.5 million people in Syria need humanitarian aid, up from 1.3 million from 2014.

"Even with the worsening situation and continued access challenges, humanitarian workers in Syria continue to stay and deliver aid often at great personal risk," O'Brien said.

He said that in 2015 food was delivered to nearly 6 million people a month; health aid to almost

16 million people; water, sanitation and hygiene support to 6.7 million; and basic household items to 4.8 million.

"Let me be clear: the continued suffering of the people in Syria cannot be blamed on humanitarian organisations and staff," O'Brien said. "It is the failure of both the parties and the international community that have allowed this conflict to continue for far too long."

Syria UN mediator Staffan de Mistura hopes to convene talks on Friday

on ending the civil war, but those plans appeared in doubt after the opposition said it would not show up unless attacks on civilian areas stopped first.

The civil war was sparked by a Syrian government crackdown on a pro-democracy movement in early 2011. Islamic State militants have used the chaos to seize territory in Syria and Iraq, and some 4.3 million Syrians have fled the country.

The UN says at least 250,000 people have been killed.—Reuters

Islamic State-linked hacker makes first US appearance in federal court

WASHINGTON — A Kosovar citizen accused of hacking the personal data of more than a thousand US officials and sending it to Islamic State militants in Syria appeared in US federal court in Virginia on Wednesday.

It was the first time Ardit Ferizi, 20, had publicly appeared in the United States since being extradited from Malaysia, where he was detained in October on a US provisional arrest warrant.

Ferizi, who is believed to be the leader of a Kosovar Internet hacking group, hacked the computer server of a US online retailer and stole the personal identification information of 1,351 US military personnel, according to charging documents.

The criminal complaint says Ferizi provided the list to Islamic State members including the British hacker Junaid Hus-

sain, who linked to the list in an 11 August, 2015, tweet titled "NEW: US Military AND Government HACKED by the Islamic State Hacking Division!"

Twitter messages from Ferizi to other Islamic State-affiliated Twitter accounts show that he also offered to build the group a computer programme enabling them to post propaganda that would "never get deleted," according to court records. US officials called Ferizi's case the "first of its kind" when his arrest was announced last year, but he is one of at least 79 individuals whom US prosecutors have charged with Islamic State-related crimes in the past two years.

An Albanian interpreter has been appointed in advance of his next court appearance on Friday.

Ferizi faces a maximum sentence of 35 years in prison if convicted.—Reuters

Mass grave in Iraq's Ramadi holds at least 40 Islamic State victims

BAGHDAD — Iraqi authorities have uncovered a mass grave in Ramadi containing at least 40 bodies, including women and children, apparently killed by Islamic State insurgents when they seized the city in May, police and Provincial officials said.

Footage posted on the Facebook page of the provincial police on Wednesday showed what appeared to be bodies in varying states of decay being pulled from a shallow grave in the capital of Anbar Province which Iraq's military recaptured last month.

Police chief Major General Hadi Razij spoke in the video about the grave, and an adviser to the governor confirmed the images were authentic. Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Saad

Maan confirmed the reports.

"We believe they were the last to fight #DAESH before #Ramadi fell in May 2015. Investigation ongoing," Anbar Governor Sohaib al-Rawi said in a tweet with a picture of body bags lying in a street. Daesh is the Arabic acronym for Islamic State, which is also called ISIS or ISIL.

Islamic State overran Ramadi last year as the Iraqi army abandoned its posts for the second time in less than a year, setting back government efforts to push back the ultra-hard-line Sunni militants.

The military, backed by US-led coalition air strikes, recaptured the city in December, but widespread destruction and explosives planted by the

insurgents in streets and houses have prevented civilians from returning.

Several mass graves have been uncovered in areas retaken from Islamic State, which imposes strict restrictions and harsh punishments on the millions of civilians living under its control.

The United Nations has said the militants are responsible for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly genocide.

Muhannad Haimour, the governor's adviser, told Reuters at least 15 of the bodies, which were discovered in the central district of al-Jamaaiya, belonged to police officers, according to ID cards retrieved from the grave.

He said not all the bodies had been identified,

but some were believed to belong to women and children related to the police.

Haimour said the grave was discovered through interrogations with captured Islamic State militants.

It was not clear how the victims were killed, but the video appeared to show some of them had been handcuffed at the time of death. Haimour said there were signs of torture and gunshot wounds on some bodies, but that could not be immediately confirmed.

Ramadi is the largest city retaken from Islamic State since the insurgents swept across large swathes of Iraq and neighbouring Syria in mid-2014, declaring a modern-day caliphate and killing or capturing thousands of people.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (142W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ESM CREMONA VOY NO (142W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ORINET OVERSEAS
CONTAINER LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV BANGSRIMUANG VOY NO (136)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV BANGSRIMUANG VOY NO (136) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.1.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T-2 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

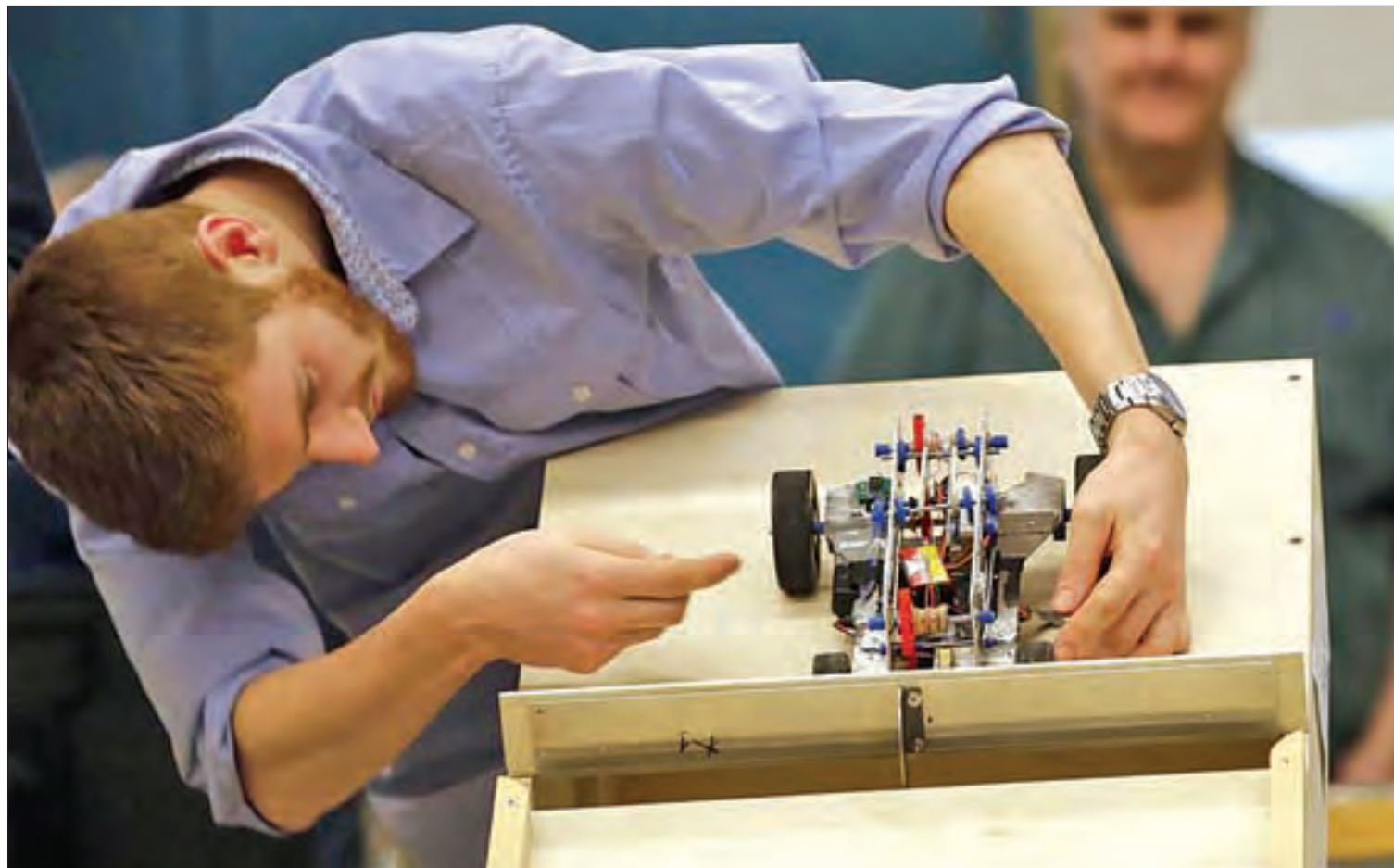
Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S WONGSAMUT OCEAN CO
LTD.**

Phone No: 2301186

Robotic vehicle competition held at UBC in Vancouver, Canada



A student adjusts his robotic vehicle during a competition at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, on 27 January 2016. The robotic vehicles are made by UBC's engineering students, all equipped with automatic braking and speed control system. PHOTO: XINHUA

Samsung Elec warns of difficult 2016 as smartphone troubles spread

SEOUL — Tech giant Samsung Electronics Co Ltd yesterday warned of possible weaker earnings this year due to softer sales of gadgets such as smartphones, a trend that is also hurting rival Apple Inc and major chipmakers. The South Korean firm's warning came a day after Apple shares fell more than 6.5 per cent, the biggest percentage drop in two years, as the iPhone maker forecast its first quarterly sales drop in 13 years.

Slowing economic growth in China and weaker emerging market currencies are undercutting sales of electronics ranging from televisions to personal computers, spelling trouble for not only for Samsung and Apple but for their suppliers and the broader industry.

"Broadly weaker IT demand will make it difficult to maintain 2016 profits at the level of the previous year's," Samsung said in a statement accompanying its fourth-quarter results, adding that "challenging business conditions" would remain for the current quarter and last throughout the first half of this year. Samsung said its October-December operating profit was 6.1 trillion won (\$5.05 billion), matching its earlier guidance. Revenue rose 1.1 per cent to 53.3 trillion won, slightly better than the 53 trillion won it guided for.

The maker of Galaxy smartphones and tablets reported a full-year operating profit for 2015 of 26.4 trillion won, compared with 25 trillion won the previous year.

Samsung shares were down 2.4 per cent as of 0322 GMT, underperforming a 0.2 per cent rise for the broader market.

Some investors and analysts believe Samsung will see its profit fall for the second time in three years in 2016, as slack demand for gadgets undercuts prices of memory chips and displays that helped to offset declining mobile profits last year.

The semiconductor division was the top earner for the sixth straight quarter in the October-December period, lifting its operating profit to 2.80 trillion won from 2.70 trillion won a year earlier. Mobile division profit slipped 7.3 per cent from the third quarter to 2.23 trillion won, its weakest result in four quarters. Samsung said first-quarter mobile profits would improve slightly, boosted by the launch of new smartphones, although overall smartphone shipments were expected to decline slightly.—Reuters

Facebook shares soar as mobile drives big jump in ad sales

SAN FRANCISCO — Facebook Inc (FB.O) smashed investors' expectations with a 52-per cent jump in quarterly revenue as it sold more ads targeted at a fast-growing number of mobile users, sending its shares sharply higher after hours.

The world's biggest online social network bucked the trend of underwhelming tech results from Apple Inc and eBay Inc, in the face of economic uncertainty around the world and a strong US dollar depressing the value of overseas sales.

"It's phenomenal at these (currency headwind) levels that they're accelerating to that level of growth," said Rob Sanderson, an analyst at MKM Partners.

Facebook's dominance in mobile advertising helped to allay Wall Street concerns over its heavy investments in messaging service WhatsApp and virtual reality unit Oculus, which have not yet generated profits.

"I don't think there's going to be too many people crying for them to start monetizing other properties anytime soon because the core business is so strong," said Sanderson.

Facebook shares rose almost 12 per cent in after-hours trading to \$105.32. They were helped by Chief Financial Officer David Wehner's comment on a call with analysts that he expected operating expenses to increase by 30 to 40 per cent over the course of the

year, a slower clip than last year.

Total revenue rose to \$5.84 billion from \$3.85 billion a year earlier, with ad revenue increasing 56.8 per cent to \$5.64 billion in the holiday shopping period, when spending on advertising typically spikes. Excluding some items, the company earned 79 cents per share. Analysts on average had expected earnings of 68 cents per share and revenue of \$5.37 billion, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

Apart from focussing on mobile, Facebook has been ramping up spending on what it calls "big bets," including virtual reality, artificial intelligence and drones to connect the remotest parts of the world to the Internet.

Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, who returned from two months of paternity leave on Monday, has said virtual reality represents the next major computing platform. In January, Facebook began taking orders for a consumer version of the Oculus Rift, a head-mounted virtual reality unit.

The company has also begun monetizing some of its other units, such as photo-sharing app Instagram, which surpassed 400 million users last year and began selling ads in September.

Facebook said mobile ads accounted for 80 per cent of total ad revenue in the quarter, compared with about 78 per cent in the third quarter and 69 per cent a year earlier.—Reuters

Gold slips from 12-week high on less dovish Fed, firm dollar

MANILA — Gold edged down from 12-week highs yesterday after the US Federal Reserve acknowledged a challenging global economy but signalled it was unlikely to be deterred from raising interest rates this year.

The less dovish tone of the Fed's statement helped boost the dollar against a basket of currencies and weighed on gold, which had gained on global uncertainties from China to Europe.

Spot gold was down 0.7 per cent at \$1,117.64 an ounce by 0635 GMT. It peaked at \$1,127.80 on Wednesday, its highest since 3 November.

US gold for February delivery was up 0.2 per cent at \$1,118

per ounce, off a session high of \$1,125.70.

After keeping US interest rates unchanged as expected, Fed policymakers said the economy was still on track for moderate growth and a stronger labour market even with "gradual" rate increases, suggesting its concern about global events had diminished but not squashed chances of a rate hike in March.

Investors were also taking profits on gold after its recent run-up, said Daniel Ang, investment analyst at Phillip Futures in Singapore.

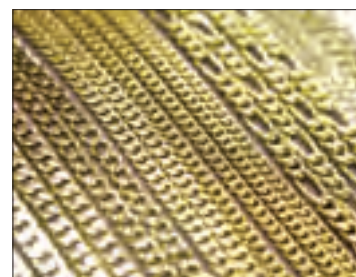
"I think the safe-haven appeal of gold is tapering off a bit and investors are looking at other

havens such as the Japanese yen," Ang added.

Prior to the Fed's first policy meeting for the year, expectations for a US rate hike in March had receded amid the global economic headwinds.

But traders believe the Fed will still take the slow route to raising rates, boding well for gold. "Although the Fed's comments were not as dovish as hoped, the continued expectation that future interest rate rises will be slow and gradual will support the metal," MKS Group trader James Gardiner wrote to clients.

A mild recovery in Asian stocks also dented gold's appeal as investors slowly returned to



Gold chains are seen on display for customers at the Korea Gold Exchange in Seoul. PHOTO: REUTERS

battered equities.

Other precious metals were similarly under pressure. Spot silver slipped 0.6 per cent to \$14.39 and platinum was down 0.7 per cent at \$873.65. Palladium was steady at \$497.—Reuters

Brazil's Rousseff declares war on mosquito spreading Zika virus

RIO DE JANEIRO — President Dilma Rousseff said on Wednesday that Brazil must wage war against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus linked to a surge in cases of a dangerous birth defect, focusing on eliminating the insect's breeding grounds.

Since September, Brazil has registered 3,700 cases of babies with microcephaly, a condition linked to Zika infection in which children are born with an abnormally small head and a brain that has not developed properly.

The jump in cases has prompted a global health scare, with several countries cautioning pregnant women against travelling to the 22 nations in the Americas where the virus has been reported.

Without a Zika vaccine and with little known about the causes of microcephaly, Brazil has few options available for fighting the spread of the virus and the birth defect. The mosquito thrives in dense tropical cities, and Rousseff called for the elimination of stagnant water spots where it lives and reproduces.

"We must wage war against the *Aedes aegypti*, the vector of dengue, of chikungunya and of Zika," Rousseff said through her Twitter account, referring

to two other viral diseases transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes.

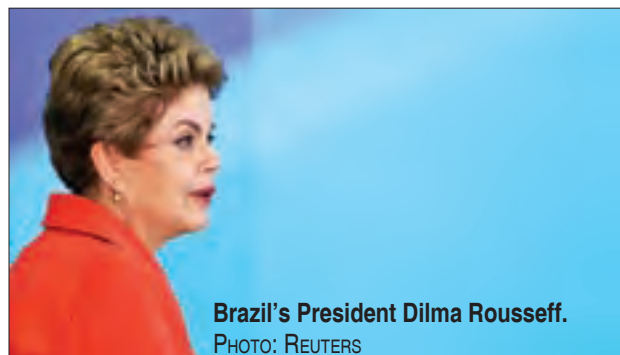
"While we do not have a vaccine against the Zika virus, the war must be concentrated on the elimination of breeding grounds for the mosquito," Rousseff added. "Getting rid of Zika is the responsibility of all of us."

The move comes as Brazil desperately looks to raise awareness of the virus and encourage people to combat the mosquito.

Brazilian Health Minister Marcelo Castro on Monday promised 220,000 troops would be deployed next month to distribute educational pamphlets and help scour cities for mosquito breeding grounds.

Similar moves have been successful in the past. A huge eradication effort in the 1940s and 1950s, motivated by the spread of yellow fever also carried by *Aedes aegypti*, led Brazil to be declared free of the mosquito in 1958. But as the programme was relaxed, the insect returned.

With Carnival celebrations just over a week away and the Olympic Games set for Rio de Janeiro in August, Brazil is poised to receive hundreds of thousands of visitors in the coming months, adding to concerns over the spread of the virus.—Reuters



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff.
PHOTO: REUTERS



Residents carry their belongings as they flee from Sur District, which is partially under curfew, in the Kurdish-dominated southeastern city of Diyarbakir, Turkey on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Curfew widened in southeast Turkey, clashes kill 23

DIYARBAKIR — Security forces killed 20 Kurdish militants in southeast Turkey while three Turkish soldiers died in a rebel attack, the military said on Wednesday, as authorities widened a curfew in the mainly Kurdish region's largest city, Diyarbakir.

Hundreds of locals, including children and the elderly, fled curfew-bound areas of Diyarbakir's Sur district as gunfire and blasts resounded and police helicopters flew overhead, a Reuters witness said. Some people cried as they carried away possessions. Southeastern Turkey has endured its worst violence in two decades since a 2-1/2-year-old ceasefire between the state and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants collapsed in July, reviving a conflict that has killed 40,000 people since 1984.

The army said 11 PKK members died in the town of Cizre, near the Syrian border, and nine more in Sur on Tuesday, bringing the militant death toll in the two towns to some 600 since security operations began there last month. It said three soldiers were killed in a militant attack in Sur, where security sources said militants opened fire with rifles and a rocket launcher.

The ancient Sur district, enclosed by Roman city walls, has suffered extensive damage in the fighting and much of it has been under a round-the-clock curfew since 2 December.

The district governor's office said the curfew was extended to five more districts so security forces could remove explosive devices and barricades and fill in ditches set

up by militants.

Turkey, the United States and the European Union all classify the PKK as a terrorist organisation. The PKK says it is fighting for autonomy for Turkey's Kurdish minority.

Rights groups and locals have voiced growing concern about the civilian death toll in the security operations since last month. The pro-Kurdish HDP party puts the toll at nearly 120.

Rights groups and the HDP have highlighted the plight of some 28 people sheltering in a Cizre cellar, where four have died and three are in a critical condition, according to information obtained by Emma Sinclair-Webb of Human Rights Watch. "Medical attention is not being provided to those in need. This is an urgent situation that the Turkish govern-

ment needs to address imminently to prevent loss of life," she told a news conference in Istanbul.

Rights groups, and a doctors' association have called for ambulances to be allowed to rescue the wounded. The HDP said three of its parliamentarians had gone on hunger strike and were staging a sit-in at the offices of the Interior Ministry to force authorities to send ambulances.

The local governor's office said emergency services were unable to enter the area because of the PKK. "Our ambulances have been sent to the closest (safe) location and have asked for all the wounded, if any, to be brought to this location. But despite all our efforts, our call has been ignored," the Sirnak province governor's office said.—Reuters

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'Fifty Shades' movie gets its own parody

LOS ANGELES — Last year, E.L. James' hugely successful erotic novel "Fifty Shades of Grey" got its big screen adaptation in a movie starring Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson.

This year, that very film gets its own parody "Fifty Shades of Black", the latest comedy from "Scary Movie" and "White Chicks" actor and writer Marlon Wayans. The movie follows the storyline of the "Fifty Shades" film adaptation however Johnson's Anastasia Steele is now

Hannah, played by Kali Hawk, and Christian Grey is now Christian Black, portrayed by Wayans.

"I think we all have an inner Christian Grey in us but mine is just a really clumsy one and I try to project that in the movie because Christian Grey is a way better lover than Christian Black," Wayans said at the film's premiere on Tuesday.

"Even though Christian Grey is kind of mediocre, Christian Black is actually a little bit worse."—Reuters

Black or White? Actor Fiennes cast to play singer Michael Jackson



Michael Jackson and Joseph Fiennes. PHOTO: REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — British actor Joseph Fiennes has been cast as iconic African-American pop star Michael Jackson in an upcoming TV comedy, provoking scorn on social media on Wednesday and fueling a controversy in the entertainment industry over opportunities for black artists.

Fiennes, who is white, will play the late "King of Pop" in an apparently real-life story for Britain's satellite TV channel Sky Arts about a road trip across the United States the singer is said to have taken in 2001 with movie stars Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando.

Sky Arts said in a statement on Wednesday that the 30-minute comedy, called "Elizabeth, Michael & Marlon," is "part of a series of comedies about unlikely stories from arts and cultural history. Sky Arts gives producers the creative freedom to cast roles as they wish, within the diversity framework which we have set."

Jackson, who had the medical condition vitiligo that lightened the colour of his skin, died in June 2009 at the age of 50 after an overdose of the sedative propofol.

News of the casting decision came two weeks after the omission of any actors of colour from the 2016 Oscar nominations for a second year that led Will Smith and Spike Lee to shun the Oscar ceremony in February and Oscar or-

ganisers to bring more women and people of color into their ranks.

Stereo Williams, an entertainment writer for The Daily Beast, said the casting of Fiennes was a "symptom of Hollywood's deep-seated race problem."

"They seriously couldn't find a black actor to play Michael Jackson?" tweeted US civil rights activist DeRay Mckesson, a member of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"So Joseph Fiennes (A WHITE DUDE!) is gunna play Michael Jackson... I say Denzel Washington plays Elvis in the next movie just to be fair," said @nicomadden on Twitter.

So-called "whitewashing" has become a contentious issue in the movie and TV industry, highlighted by the casting of Emma Stone as a character of Hawaiian and Asian heritage in the 2015 film "Aloha," and the choice of white British actor Charlie Hunnam to play a Mexican-American drug lord in an upcoming Hollywood movie.

"Elizabeth, Michael & Marlon" will also star Stockard Channing as Jackson's late, close friend Taylor, and Brian Cox as Brando. It is expected to be broadcast sometime in 2016.—Reuters

20 years on, TV series brings O.J. Simpson case full circle on race

LOS ANGELES — When producers began work three years ago on a new TV series about the O.J. Simpson murder trial, they took a chance on whether Americans would still care about a case that captivated the nation 20 years ago.

Turns out, the timing was right.

"The People v. O.J. Simpson," a 10-episode drama series starting on the FX network on 2 February, sets the 1994 arrest, year-long trial and acquittal of one of America's best-loved sporting heroes firmly in the arena of the nation's still troubled history of race relations.

The first image viewers see is TV footage of the 1992 Los Angeles riots that followed the acquittal of four white police officers in the beating of black motorist Rodney King.

"The show is about race in America," said Scott Alexander, one of the show's executive producers. "It's about how problems between police and black Americans never really go away."

"The O.J. case has always remained of interest but it feels more ripped from the headlines now than ever," he added, referring to the deaths of more than 30 unarmed black people at the hands of US police since 2014.

The series also reflects an unwavering obsession with the so-called "trial of the century" that was broadcast live on US television throughout its eight-month duration.

"The O.J. case has now assumed the same status as the Kennedy assassination," said David Schmid, an English professor at the University at Buffalo, and edi-



Cast member Cuba Gooding Jr. (C), speaks as Sterling K. Brown (L), Sarah Paulson (2nd L), John Travolta, Courtney B. Vance (2nd R) and David Schwimmer (R) look on during a panel for the FX Networks "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story" during the Television Critics Association (TCA) Cable Winter Press Tour in Pasadena, California on 16 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

tor of the 2015 book "Violence in American Popular Culture."

Starring Cuba Gooding Jr. as Simpson, John Travolta as his attorney Robert Shapiro, and David Schwimmer as family friend Robert Kardashian, the TV series produces no new evidence about the murder of Simpson's ex-wife Nicole and her friend Ron Goldman.

Instead, it explores the behind the scenes drama among prosecutors, police and the former football star's defence team. It is also about "the beginning of the 24-hour news cycle, the beginning of reality TV, and gender politics," said Alexander.

One episode focuses on prosecutor Marcia Clark, who was criticized for her hair style, her

collapsed marriage, and for losing what initially seemed a slam-dunk conviction.

Although Simpson, now 68, was acquitted of the two murders, he is currently serving a 33-year prison term for the 2007 armed robbery in Las Vegas of what he said was his own stolen sports memorabilia.

Schmid says the Simpson case brought together "everything our culture is most fascinated by — namely sex, sports, violence, celebrity, and in this case, race."

"Add to that this widespread perception that in some sense O.J. got away with it and you have a sure fire recipe. ... It's a bit like the Jack the Ripper murders. Why? - because it's still unsolved," he said.—Reuters

Cate Blanchett to make Broadway debut



PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Oscar-winning actress Cate Blanchett is poised to make her long-awaited Broadway debut in acclaimed drama "The Present".

Following a sold-out run in Australia last summer, "The Present", adapted by Blanchett's playwright husband Andrew Upton from Anton Chekhov's first play, "Platonov", will have a limited engagement on the Great White Way later this year, reported Guardian online.

Blanchett, 46, originated her per-

formance at the Sydney Theatre Company, where Upton serves as the artistic director.

Also joining her from the Australian production is actor Richard Roxburgh, who appeared alongside the "Carol" star in the 2012 Sydney Theatre Company production of "Chekhov's Uncle Vanya", also adapted by Upton, at the New York City Centre.

"The Present" is set in the mid-1990s at a country house, where friends gather to celebrate the birthday of a widow, played by Blanchett. One of the most prominent guests is the sarcastic and witty Platonov (Roxburgh). The Broadway production of "The Present" will be directed by "Brooklyn" filmmaker John Crowley.—PTI

Cambodia's tourism plan looks to China

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia's Tourism Ministry has released a white paper for capitalising on the rapid growth in Chinese inbound tourism, with the aim of drawing and catering to roughly 2 million Chinese tourists per year by 2020, a local newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The tourism sector development guide, titled “China Ready for Cambodia Tourism,” includes a five-year strategy for increasing the share of Chinese tourists to the kingdom to about a third of the overall 7.5 million annual tourists projected by 2020.

Tourism Minister Thong Khon said at the white paper's release on Monday that despite the rapid increase in the num-

ber of Chinese tourists visiting Cambodia — ranked second of all travellers in 2015 — the ministry's focus would be on improving the quality of Cambodia's tourism products through targeted marketing.

“Marketing Cambodia as a tourist destination in the Chinese market is still limited and tourism facilities are not meeting the

expectations of Chinese tourists,” Khon was quoted by the Phnom Penh Post as saying.

Southeast Asia received close to 13 million Chinese tourists in 2014, with only 560,000 visiting Cambodia, while other neighbouring countries like Thailand and Viet Nam received 7.9 million and 1.6 million respectively,

he added. The white paper lists steps to be taken by tourism authorities to facilitate visits by Chinese tourists, such as providing Chinese signage and documents for visa processing, encouraging local use of the Chinese yuan currency, and ensuring that food and accommodation facilities are suited to Chinese tastes.

Chea Seng, manager of

Hong Yi Travel Service, a travel company that caters to Chinese tourists, said the Chinese were big spenders, and enjoyed shopping and nightlife activities while travelling. “They will spend money if we can create services for them,” he was quoted by the newspaper as saying. “And if they are happy, they will come back again.”—Xinhua

In Atlantic City: pride, anger, worry as city teeters on edge



A man looks at the ocean through the windows of the Playground Pier, a luxury shopping mall, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on 20 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

ATLANTIC CITY, (N.J.) — Inside the dimly lit Moose Lodge 216 last September in Atlantic City, Frank D'Alonzo discussed a few of the ideas he has heard over the years to revitalise the cash-strapped New Jersey gambling hub.

A monorail. Water parks. And now a push to bring in more conventions and transform the casino-heavy town with a seedy image into a family-friendly destination.

“It would be great for them to diversify,” said the long-time businessman. “The city has a lot to offer.”

But the avid fisherman and former construction manager sounded resigned: the seaside resort he loves is “the smallest big city” with blight and crime that are “not good publicity,” he said.

Brimming with promise but ground down by

poverty, Atlantic City is trying to reinvent itself even as it teeters on the edge of fiscal ruin. Its perception as a seedy locale is just one of several hurdles.

The city has been devastated by the quick collapse of its one-time monopoly on East Coast casino gambling and could see its cash flow run dry by April. The ravaged local economy laid bare the city's bloated budget and over dependence on a single industry.

Now, even as local elected officials are faced with the potential of a state takeover, they hope some seeds they planted to clean up crime-ridden areas and diversify the economy could begin bearing fruit before long.

The city has added new recreation and entertainment venues from Philadelphia developer

Bart Blatstein, for example. Stockton University, which is nearby and has about 8,600 students, unveiled plans to expand there, and the city played host to a summer of successful beach concerts.

Clean-up efforts at a Texas Avenue playground and other parks have also worked. Overall, crime in Atlantic City fell by 9.3 per cent in 2015 through November, compared to the same period the previous year, and has been declining for most of the last decade, according to state police data compiled by Reuters. For a factbox on Atlantic City, click.

Over the past three years, federal prosecutors also helped cripple a large heroin-dealing gang in the city's most notorious housing project, the Stanley Holmes Village.

“I see a lot of real

positive results with what we've done. We're basically putting the roots into the ground,” said Thomas Gilbert, a retired State Police Lt. Colonel who commands Atlantic City's tourism district.

Even so, these are baby steps, with poverty high and incomes low. When four big casinos closed in 2014, jobs became even more scarce and foreclosures ballooned.

Development has focused on commercial projects near the boardwalk, while “the neighbourhoods have been left to languish,” said Lisa Washburn of Municipal Market Analytics.

If tourists veer off the boardwalk on the wrong block, the effects of drug use on some of the city's residents and stark poverty are as prominent as the hulking, shuttered casinos.—Reuters



Myanmar
International

(29-1-2016 07:00 am ~ 30-1-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Invites You
07:41	Am	Moyingyi Wildlife Sanctuary
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	On the River
08:47	Am	Challenges and Chances
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Safari World
09:36	Am	Living Myanmar Glazed Ceramics
09:51	Am	Talented Musicians
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Products Of Myanmar - Stone Of The Heavens
10:50	Am	Kay Tu Mar Lar “The Decision”

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Thursday 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	Five Treasures in the Ancient City Of Mrauk U
07:43	Pm	Shan Novices To Be.....
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Great Po Sein
08:22	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: Impressionism

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



News Channel
in Brief

(29-1-2016, Friday)

6:00 am

• Paritta By Hilly Region
Missionary Sayadaw

7:35 am

• People's Talks

8:35 am

• Current Affairs

10:35 am

• MRTV's Youth
Programme

11:35 am

• Science and Technology
Program

1:20 pm

• TV Drama Series

1:50 pm

• CLEVER

2:26 pm

• Myanmar Traditional
Boxing

2:35 pm

• Football Magazine

3:15 pm

• Ooredoo MNL-1
2016(LIVE)
(Ayeyawaddy United Vs
Yangon United FC)

5:35 pm

• Hyper Sports

6:35 pm

• The Farmer

7:15 pm

• TV Drama Series

8:00 pm

• News / International
News/ Weather Report

9:00 pm

• News
• TV Drama Series
• Oral History

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

Aguero heads Manchester City into League Cup final

MANCHESTER City reached the League Cup final after recovering from a shaky start as Sergio Aguero's brilliant header sealed a 3-1 win over Everton in the semi-final second leg on Wednesday to clinch a 4-3 aggregate victory.

Ross Barkley's bullish run and powerful finish put Everton ahead on the night after 18 minutes, but the lead was soon wiped out when Fernandinho's effort was deflected into the visitors' net.

If that was a lucky break for City, they were even more fortunate when Kevin de Bruyne side-footed them level in the tie after replays showed the ball had gone out of play before being cut back for the Belgian to score after 70 minutes.

City's third goal, however, was all about the brilliance of striker Aguero, who angled a superb header into the corner to set up a final against Liverpool on

28 February at Wembley.

"I am very happy, to play a final at Wembley, it is very important," City manager Manuel Pellegrini told Sky Sports. His Everton counterpart Roberto Martinez, however, was understandably annoyed by the decision to allow De Bruyne's goal.

"Everyone that has seen the replay can clearly see the ball is out of play," the Spaniard told the BBC.

With only a slender first-leg lead to defend, Everton, who have never won the League Cup, resisted any temptation to sit back and had made a handful of threatening breaks before Barkley put them ahead.

The midfielder has faced criticism for failing to make the most of his obvious talents, but powered into the heart of City territory like an express train before drilling the ball right-footed into the bottom corner.

City had looked sluggish



Everton's Romelu Lukaku in action with Manchester City's Nicolas Otamendi during Capital One Cup Semi Final Second Leg at Etihad Stadium, on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

and there was little evidence they were capable of dragging themselves back into the tie before Fernandinho restored parity on the night six minutes later.

Aguero's strike from outside the box cannoned back into the path of the Brazilian midfielder whose shot took a wicked deflection off Leighton Baines and looped away from Everton keeper Joel Robles into the net.

Far from inspiring a relentless City onslaught, however,

the goal did little to enliven the hosts, although they did finally get some momentum at the start of the second half before De Bruyne put them 2-1 ahead on 70 minutes.

Replays, however, showed the goal should not have stood as Raheem Sterling had let the ball run out of play before pulling it back for the Belgian substitute to lash home.

De Bruyne, who was carried off on a stretcher before the end

with a knee injury, was the architect of Aguero's decisive goal, curling a beautiful cross in for the Argentine to leap and angle a superb header into the far corner from 10 metres.

Three-times League Cup champions City reached the final of the competition for the second time in three seasons and will face record eight-times winners Liverpool, who came through on penalties against Stoke City on Tuesday.—Reuters

Serena demolishes Radwanska to make final in Australia

MELBOURNE — Serena Williams' break from tennis at the end of last year to "just chill" appeared to have done her a world of good as the rejuvenated American bulldozed her way into the Australian Open final yesterday.

The 34-year-old world number one totally demolished fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska in the first set before she emphatically sealed her place in a seventh Melbourne Park final with three aces in the final game in the 6-0, 6-4 win. Every time the American has made the final at Melbourne Park she has gone on to win the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup.

"I needed time off just to take a minute and just chill and re-heal, get ready," she said after the 64-minute battering of the Pole. "I felt like I really committed myself ... it's just a great thing to be in the final af-



PHOTO: REUTERS

ter taking such a long time off."

Williams withdrew from the last four months of 2015 after she was bundled out of the US Open in the semi-finals by Italy's Roberta Vinci, ending her hopes of emulating Steffi Graf's calendar grand slam in 1988. The American, however, can join Graf on 22 grand slam titles, the most in the

Open era, if she beats Angelique Kerber, who considers her fellow German Graf as her idol, in Saturday's final.

Despite not wanting to tempt fate, Williams added she did not want to repeat last year's memories of the US Open, tacitly sending Kerber a message she better be ready for a similar onslaught that Radwanska faced.

"I was one off last year, too," Williams said.

"If I don't win on Saturday, I'll still be one off. It took me forever to get to 18. I was so stressed out. I don't want to re-live that at all." Kerber, who is in her

first grand slam final, will need to hope that Williams does not play like she did against Radwanska.

The world number one broke the Pole's serve in the first game with Radwanska's lack of power highlighted by the blistering nature of the American's returns.

Radwanska's fastest serve in the first game reached just 140 kph. Williams was returning the ball at over 130.

Williams cleaned up the first set in just 20 minutes before Radwanska elicited the largest cheer of the match when she held serve in the first game of the second set, avoiding an embarrassing potential 'double bagel' 6-0, 6-0 score.

Radwanska managed her first break in the sixth game of the second set to level it at 3-3, giving the crowd on Rod Laver Arena an opportunity to produce a roar of support. Williams, however, Williams broke again in the ninth game and then served out to end Radwanska's agony on Rod Laver Arena.

"Going against Aga, you have to be ready or be ready to go home (and) I was able to do everything that I needed to do," she said. "I've always said that when I'm playing at my best, it's difficult to beat me."—Reuters

Djokovic puts down Federer fightback to reach final

MELBOURNE — Champion Novak Djokovic foiled a stirring fightback from Roger Federer to defeat the Swiss 6-1, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 at the Australian Open yesterday and charge into a fifth successive grand slam final.

Storming to a two-set lead within an hour, Djokovic appeared destined to complete a stinging humiliation under the lights of Rod Laver Arena but the net-rushing Federer responded brilliantly in the third as a partisan crowd roared him on. In a fourth set riven by tension, the world number one took Federer's serve in the eighth game, benefiting from a lucky netcord that gave him a crucial break point, and served out the match to love in two hours and 19 minutes.

"Definitely I've played an unbelievable first two sets but that's what is necessary against Roger," the Serb said courtside after setting up his sixth final at Melbourne Park against either Andy Murray or Milos Raonic.

"I knew he was going to be aggressive and try to mix up his pace and come to the net. "I executed everything perfectly. A two-set lead is more comforting but it was a battle in the end."—Reuters