THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. II, No. 287, 9th Waning of Pyatho 1377 ME | Tuesday, 2 February, 2016

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A NEW LOWER HOUSE

SECOND PYITHU HLUTTAW BEGINS

U Win Myint (Left) and U T Khun Myat (Right) are sworn in as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw. PHOTO: MNA

THE first regular session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) was convened in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, electing U Win Myint as speaker and U T Khun Myat as deputy speaker.

U Win Myint represents Tamwe Constituency, and U T Khun Myint represents Kutkai Constituency.

Following a formal transfer of duties and an oath-taking ceremony, newly elected Speaker U Win Myint extended greetings, hailing the day as 'Myanmar's historic day, which brings pride to the democratic transition'.

He also pledged to strive, without corruption, in conformity with parliamentary laws, rules and regulations, to create democratic opportunities in the country.

The speaker also urged MPs to bring honour to the country by observing rules, regulations and disciplines related to the parliament, highlighting a well-known saying that says a lawmaker should not be a man who breaks the law.

The parliament will resume on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the second Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) has postponed its first session from Tuesday to Wednesday.—*GNLM*

Myanmar's largest lake becomes a Ramsar Site

The designation of Lake Indawgyi as a Wetland of International Importance will help to maintain the services and benefits the site, provides for people and the environment.

CONSERVATIONISTS in Myanmar have a special reason to celebrate World Wetlands Day today, as Indawgyi Lake is officially added to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Announced by the Myanmar Government and the Ramsar Secretariat today, the designation of Indawgyi Lake as a Ramsar Site marks the Myanmar government's commitment to conserve this special area, which supports the livelihood of some 30,000 people and is also home to a great diversity of water birds, fish and reptiles.

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Indawgyi Lake.
PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY RAMSAR

Myanmar's largest lake...

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According to Dr U Nyi Nyi Kyaw, the director general of the Forest Department, "The new Ramsar Site will ensure the long-term conservation and wise use of Myanmar's most important wetland, the Indawgyi Lake basin, which is only Myanmar's second Ramsar Site. However, the government is committed to designating additional Ramsar Sites to create a national network of protected wetlands."

A place for people and wildlife

Located in northern Myanmar, Indawgyi Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake in Myanmar. The site regularly supports at least 20,000 migratory and resident water birds, including coot, purple swamphen, tufted and ferruginous ducks, lesser whistling ducks and black-headed gulls, to name just a few.

Five globally-threatened turtle and tortoise species are also found here, along with 93 fish species, seven of which are endemic to these wetlands and have only recently been discovered to science.

Around 30,000 people live in the lake's basin, most of whom earn a living from the lake through fishing, rice farming, livestock grazing and extracting forest products from the surrounding watershed.

Some of these practices have been unsustainable, such as overfishing in the lake and firewood extraction in the watershed.

"We have been working at Indawgyi Lake since 2010 to address these challenges together with local communities, the Forest Department and the Department of Fisheries," said Frank Momberg, the Myanmar programme director for Fauna & Flora International (FFI).

Firewood extraction and consumption have been reduced through fuel-efficient stoves and community forestry. To improve fisheries management, local communities participated in the designation of fish conservation zones to protect fish breeding and nursery grounds. The Department of Fisheries just approved nine community-managed fish conservation zones, including a 'no-fishing zone' around Shwe Myint Zu Pagoda, an iconic cultural building on the western side of the lake.

Indawgyi Lake view. PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY RAMSAR

Indawgyi's outstanding cultural and natural heritage have been attracting an increasing number of tourists. To ensure tourism is sustainable and benefits local people, FFI has launched a community-based ecotourism initiative offering new adventures such as kayaking, cycling and trekking—all of which provide jobs for local youths.

According to Momberg, "Local people are often dependent upon wetlands because of the benefits they provide, such as water for drinking and irrigation, as well as providing food such as fish. Therefore, it is critical to promote the wise use of wetlands and manage them in collaboration with local communities."

Despite the good progress for conservation as highlighted by the Ramsar designation, major challenges lay ahead, in particular, illegal artisanal gold mining on streams in the watershed, which is causing sedimentation and pollution in the southern part of the lake.

Demands for new Mingala Market submitted to government

A COLLECTION of signatures calling for the complete rebuilding of the scorched Mingala Market was submitted to the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) and Aung San Suu Kyi, the chairperson of the National League for Democracy, on 1 February.

"We want arrangements for a temporary market to be made as soon as possible. We also haven't yet received the K500,000 that President U Thein Sein said would be given. We want plans to be made for the debts incurred by business owners whose shops were destroyed by the fire. An official request will be made for matters related to the Mingala Market to be set as a priority of the new government," said U Khin Hlaing, owner of a pharmaceutical shop that was burnt down by the fire last month.

The collection of signatures began on 27 January, with over a thousand people in total signing their names in support of the rebuilding of the market.

Nay Myo Htway, another business owner whose cosmetics shop fell victim to the blaze, said: "We can't believe that a building that has caught on fire twice will be safe. Those who come to shop at the market won't believe it either. There's no way a market can survive without shoppers. If the market is to be rebuilt, then it should be in the same design as it currently stands."

The signature campaign included a number of specific requests, including the quick arrangement of a temporary market; the taking of action regarding damages incurred by sellers so they can return to business; the construction of a new, high-quality, sturdy market as opposed to mere restorations to the burnt out section of the current market; and for shops owners to be consulted on the design of the new market, should one be built.

"Testing the endurance level of the scorched section of the Mingala Market has been completed by an engineering team. A decision on a way forward will be made only once results of the test have been received," said U San Shwe Htun, head of the markets department of the YCDC.

Mingala Market, located in Yangon's Mingala Taung Nyunt Township, caught fire in the early hours of 9 January, damaging 1,636 shops.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Mandalay braces for El Niño drought

MANDALAY REGION is bracing for a possible drought caused by El Niño this upcoming summer, according to the region's supervisory committee for efficient water use in agriculture.

Preparatory efforts are being made following the releases of drought warnings that forecast several countries, including Myanmar, are likely to encounter the drought impact of El Niño, which can impact crops, said committee member U Myint Oo.

All departments concerned are involved in taking necessary measures for El Niño, he added. Mandalay region is set to use 100,000 acres of farmland for summer cultivation this year.—*Min Htet Aung*

Kawasaki lovers take motorbike trip to Nay Pyi Taw

A Group of Kawasaki motorbike enthusiasts set off on a journey from Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw starting from the UMG Myanmar Office in Mandalay on Saturday.

More than 60 Kawasaki motorbikes were involved in the 220-mile journey from Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw via Kyaukse, Wundwin, Yamethin, Pyawbwe, Meiktila and Tatkone on the old Yangon-Mandalay highway.

Similarly, another group of Kawasaki lovers from Taunggyi, Bago and Yangon also set out on journeys to Nay Pyi Taw.—*Thiha Ko Ko*

Yuan deflation has trickled down to Kachin State rice growers

RICE traders in the Kachin State township of Mohnyin are struggling as the price of rice exports to China fell in the last week of January.

"Like previous years, farmers have held onto their paddy without selling it at a low price. The value of the [Chinese] yuan has fallen, and because rice traders can't get good prices for their rice, they haven't been in a position whereby they can buy up paddy at good prices anymore. Rather, a lot of rice mills have stopped running as farmers have stopped selling their paddy crops," said Daw Myint Myint Win, a paddy trader from Mohnyin.

A bucket (1.16 bushels) of paddy in 2014 fetched K7,000, while the price of the same quantity of paddy has been going for just K6,500 since 2015.

"Our field, which produced 700 buckets of paddy last year, has yielded just 600 buckets this year. Those who get one bucket of paddy for K1,000 have lost out about 150 buckets' worth of their yield. Some of the crop is also lost through the use of threshing machines. As farmers have been given loans this year by a cooperative association, they can afford to sell just as much paddy as is needed, and only if they get a good price for it," said Mi Mi, a paddy trader from Nyaung Kone Village.

The majority of rice traders in Mohnyin have currently halted their trading enterprises as they cannot make a high-enough profit on their rice due high paddy prices.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Inle Lake draws steady stream of tourists

Visitors feed seagull as they take a boat trip in Inle Lake. PHOTO: THANT ZIN WIN

SINCE it was designated as Myanmar's first biosphere reserve and as a natural world heritage site in 2013, Inle Lake has drawn more attention from international tourists, seeing increasing tourist arrivals year after year.

Official statistics showed that Inle Lake, during the period from April to December in the previous two years, welcomed 79,678 visitors in 2014 and 141,789 in 2015.

There are 78 hotels and motels in and around Inle Lake, creating job opportunities for local people, said U Sai Win of the Inle Speaks Community Skills Development Centre.

A total of 300 local guides have been trained, he added.

With an increase in the number of visitors, there has been an increase in the use of motorised boats, which can reduce oxygen levels in the lake, creating an environmental concern that birds and fish living in the lake are likely to move to other places, said U Sein Tun, an official from the Inle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary Department.

Partnership for Change, a Norway-based organisation, is devising a way to reduce noise produced by the motorised boats by 50 per cent.

In accordance with the country's Tourism Master Plan, which encourages sustainability in the tourism sector, human resources development and environmental conservation, efforts are being made to improve ecotourism around Inle Lake.—*Thant Zin Win*

Thura U Shwe Mann hands over parliamentary documents to next speaker U Win Myint

THURA U Shwe Mann who served as the Speaker of the first Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) handed over documents relating to the position to his successor U Win Myint, who was elected as the next Speaker of the second Pyithu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

First, Thura U Shwe Mann elaborated on the parliamentary documents, before handing over them to U Win Myint.

Next, Thura U Shwe Mann congratulated U Win Myint on his being elected speaker.

The handover ceremony was also attended by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson of the National League for Democracy; U Nanda Kyaw Swa, who previously served as the Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker; U T Khun Myat who was elected as the new Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker; and officials from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw offices.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw session rescheduled for 3 February

THE date of the first regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) has been changed from 10am on 2 February 2016 (Tuesday) to 10am on 3 February 2016 (Wednesday).— *Myanmar News Agency*

Police arrest youths in wake of public panic

POLICE have made several arrests in response to public concern over delinquent youths who have been accused of threatening peace and tranquillity in their Yangon community over the last few days.

Yangon Police Force arrested three men who attempted to attack police officers with knives in a raid at a house in Shwepyitha Township on Sunday. The three men are Khaw Lay (a) Khin Maung Than (a) Thet Htaik, Thagi (a) Su Aung (a) Zwe Su Aung, (a) Athaylay) and Ngarpaik (a) Po Zaw.

During the raid, police seized five knives of various sizes, four mobile phones, 157 stimulant tablets, 9.5 grams of marijuana and a vehicle. According to the police, an investigation is underway to identify whether the suspects have been involved in other criminal activities.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Highway Police Force proves its worth

Khin Maung Htwe

THE Highway Police Department was created on 20 May 2012 to ensure the safe and smooth flow of traffic and passengers along the Yangon-Mandalay expressway, which has a total length of 366 miles and three furlongs.

The department's functions and responsibilities also include initiating road safety measures, accident investigation and traffic rules enforcement, proactive policing and law enforcement, emergency response, traffic security and maintenance of roads and bridges along the road, which passes through four regions, nine districts, 16 townships and 156 villages.

In order to ensure the rule of law and safety of road users, the Highway Police Force was formed with four offices, including the commanding officer's office, 16 police stations set up every 23 miles and 40 police outposts set up every nine miles along the road.

Likewise, fleets of patrol cars and motorbikes, administrative vehicles, ambulances and cranes are also available 24 hours a day for passenger buses and private cars running on the road to be deployed while preventing crimes of any sort, including rock-throwing and setting up traps that cause cars to skid off the road to be robbed.

According to official data, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of vehicles on the Yangon-Mandalay expressway, with 3,096,921 vehicles in 2012, 3,755,948 in 2013, 4,574,081 in 2014 and 5,454,894 in 2015.

With the dramatic increase in the number of vehicles, there has been an increasing number of road accidents reported every year, triggered by several factors, including the condition of the vehicles and drivers' negligence.

The Highway Police Force maintains that it has responded to every major car crash on the expressway in a timely and effective manner, including one involving a Land Cruiser that claimed five lives and left two injured in 2012; a bus crash caused by a drowsy driver that killed 11 passengers and injured 16 in 2013; a passenger bus-saloon collision in which all six people in the car were killed in 2014; and an accident in which a passenger bus overturned, killing nine people and injuring 25 in 2015.

According to the Highway Police Force, a fleet of 10 ambulances with standby services are always ready for traffic accidents on the expressway.

Apart from emergency services, the Highway Police also responded to various other incidents, including vehicle breakdowns, tire punctures, fuel shortages and health matters in 2015.

Likewise, the Fire Department has also established 15 fire stations accompanied by 15 fire engines and about 100 fire-fighters to attend to calls for rescue on the expressway.

File photo shows highway Police and rescuers prepare to send the injured from a road accident to the hospital.

According to the department, seven vehicular fires were reported on the road last year.

In cooperation with other departments, the Highway Police Force is also conducting road safety measures that include educating road users and testing drivers for alcohol to prevent drunk driving.

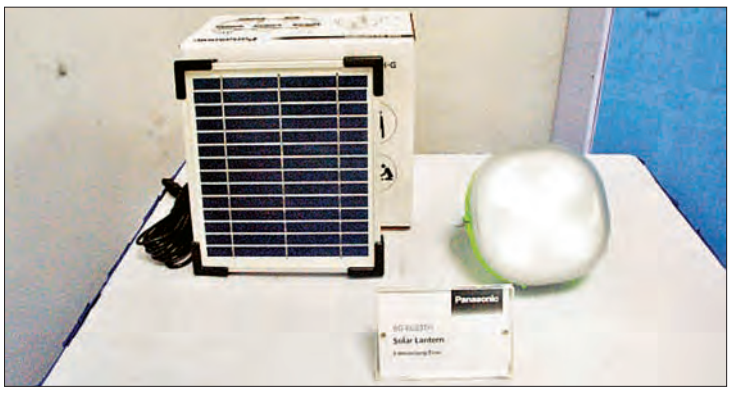
Moreover, road safety campaigns are also being launched at the tollgates on the road and advertised on MRTV, MRTV 4, MWD and the Sky Net police channel.

Panasonic donates solar lanterns to areas without electricity

PANASONIC, one of Japan's leading consumer electronics companies, on Saturday donated 2,400 portable solar lanterns to people across Myanmar through civil society organisations.

Under its 100 Thousand Solar Lanterns Project, this is the fourth time the Japanese electronics giant has donated the solar lanterns since 2012, contributing nearly 10,000 lanterns to areas without electricity in Myanmar via local CSOs.

The aim of the donation was to offer rural populations easy access to electricity and alleviate their dependence on kerosene lamps, which emit black smoke and pose a fire hazard. Dr Kyaw Htut, deputy general secretary of Myanmar Red Cross Society, said: "We plan to donate to flood victims in Kyaunggon, Ayeyawady Region, and Seytoktara and Pwintbyu in Magway Region. Needy families that have elderly members and school children top on the list of the MRCS's priorities." According to the International Energy Agency, 68 per cent of the country's total population has no access to electricity, while 1.32 billion people are living in areas without electricity worldwide.—*Thi Thi Min*



Times City Project to ease housing shortage

The buildings are under construction. PHOTO:163

DEMAND for housing in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial city, has been on the rise as the city sees a swelling population. The government and private construction companies are implementing several housing projects in Yangon to fulfil people's housing needs.

The Times City Project is being developed between Kyuntaw Road and Hanthawaddy Road in Ward 7 in Kamayut Township. The housing project is being built on a nine-acre plot of land in three phases. The project will include two five-storey commercial buildings, one 26-storey hotel, one 20-storey office building and six condo buildings.

The project, which is being developed by the Yangon City Development Committee and Crown Advanced Construction Co. started in May 2013 and is expected to be completed this year.—*163*

Crime News

Series of snatch-and-run cases reported in Hlaingthaya Tsp

SEVERAL snatch-and-run cases were reported last month in Hlaingthaya Township, a suburban area in Yangon, police said. According to police investigation, the crimes were committed frequently within the Shwelinban and Ngwepinlai industrial zones on the University of West Yangon Road by a group of motorcyclists—usually three young men—who have snatched motorbikes and gold jewellery from couples.

On 22 January, a young couple named Tin Soe and Nyo Nyo met with each other near a factory in Ngwepinlai Industrial Zone, where three young men seized their motorbike, phone and gold chain. The thieves are still at large.

Likewise, similar robbers threatened and robbed two men in different areas in the second week of December, leaving a man named Myo Zaw, 25, with serious head injuries. Police are still investigating possible links between the cases.—*164*

Husband stabs wife to death in Magway

A 25-year-old woman was killed by her husband during a family quarrel on Saturday in Hsinpaungwail Township in Magway Region.

Hla Min Tun, 36, stabbed his wife Moe Moe Lwin to death in a bedroom located on the first floor of the house owned by Hla Min Tun's uncle.

Hsinpaungwail Myoma Police Station seized a knife as evidence and filed a suit against Hla Min Tun under Section 302 of the Penal Code.—*Kyaw Zeya*

Man charged under new Telecommunications Law

A MAN who is believed to have uploaded rude comments on Facebook was charged on Thursday under Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law in Kyaunggon Township in Pathein District, Ayeyawady Region.

On 26 January, the plaintiff, who currently serves as a household leader of Hlehseik Village, filed charges against defendant Myo Lay of Ohnbinsu Village for writing a defamatory post on Facebook about several residents of Hlehseik Village, which the plaintiff believes was meant to cause them harm.

The suspect is facing civil charges under the law by the Kyaunggon Myoma Police Station.—*Win Kyaing*

Electronic devices, cash stolen from Magway mobile shop

HANDSETS and other electronic devices were stolen on Saturday from a mobile shop located in Pyidawtha Market in Magway Region.

According to an investigation, over 100 handsets, a pair of sound boxes, five portable TV sets, 13 adapters, top-up cards and nearly K700,000 (US$535) were stolen by an unidentified thief.

U Pyae Phyo Maung, manager of the Shweayeya Mobile Shop, immediately reported on the stolen electronic devices, worth a total of over K18 million ($1,376), to the police. The offenders are believed to be on the run, and police are investigating the case.—*Kyaw Zeya*

Cars overturn on Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw highway

TWO vehicles overturned near mile post No. 102 on the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw highway in Kyauktaga Township in Bago Region on Saturday afternoon, leaving a woman dead and a man seriously injured.

According to a police investigation, a Probox car en route from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon, which was being driven by Kaung Htet Thu, 30, and a Honda Fit driven by Kyaw Lin, 30, of Hlaingthaya Township, Yangon, ran parallel along the road at high speeds.

The two vehicles skidded and overturned en route to Nay Pyi Taw after both drivers lost control of their vehicles.

The woman driving the Honda Fit was killed on the spot, and the other driver sustained serious injuries and is receiving treatment at Yangon General Hospital.

Both drivers were deemed guilty of careless driving by police.—*Khin Ko*

Philippine president names acting economic planning chief

MANILA — Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III has formally appointed Dr Emmanuel Esguerra as Acting Socio-Economic Planning Secretary and Acting Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), a senior government official said Monday.

Esguerra replaced Arsenio Balisacan, who was recently appointed as chairperson of the Philippine Competition Commission, said Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said. Esguerra was a deputy director-general of the NEDA and headed the National Development Office for Policy and Planning.

He was an associate professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics, where he was also chair of the economics department prior to his appointment to NEDA in July 2012.—*Reuters*

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin
Circulation & Advertising
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Ads and subscription enquiries:
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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

Thai PM Prayuth assures general election in 2017

Thailand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha waves to supporters after attending a seminar on capital market development at the stock exchange in Bangkok, Thailand, on 15 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BANGKOK — Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said yesterday that a general election will take place in 2017, amid criticism that a draft constitution unveiled last week would delay the poll.

A draft constitution released on Friday has been pilloried by all major political parties, raising fears it will be rejected in a July referendum, delaying a return to democracy.

"The year 2017, 2017, 2017," a visibly irritated Prayuth told reporters in response to a question about when an election will be held.

Last week, Prayuth said Thailand will hold an election in 2017 even if the draft constitution does not pass the referendum. —*Reuters*

Malaysian central bank chief's imminent exit highlights succession risks

KUALA LUMPUR/SINGAPORE — For 16 years, Malaysia's internationally-lauded central bank governor bolstered the economic credibility of a country otherwise facing a slew of emerging market challenges, ranging from currency crises to a commodities markets crash.

As Zeti Akhtar Aziz prepares to step down as head of Bank Negara Malaysia in April, questions about succession are framed by uncertainties clouding the Southeast Asian economy, notably a collapse in commodity prices and a political scandal that has drawn international scrutiny, according to market participants.

They say their angst centres on three key risks: the future of the central bank's current independence, policy continuity and the competence of Zeti's replacement. If the central bank cuts rates too early or too fast, it could spur capital outflows from Malaysian debt. On the other hand, a rate rise to defend the currency could hurt the economy.

"People are hoping that the successor will be as credible as Zeti has been," said Brian Tan, an economist with Nomura. "But we don't know who is on the list and some people worry the replacement will be politically motivated."

Neither the central bank nor the government responded to Reuters' requests for comment on potential successors or concerns around succession.

So far this year, Malaysia's currency and bond markets have enjoyed a degree of calm after being battered in 2015. Similarly, forward markets in the ringgit, Asia's worst performing currency last year, don't appear to be pricing in rough weather post April.

Some of the issues hounding Malaysia in 2015 have faded, notably the political scandal around allegations of graft at the debt-laden state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and a revelation that about $681 million was deposited into Najib's personal bank account.

While an ongoing Swiss probe into 1MDB's activities shows wider concerns around the fund are yet to be resolved, some say more immediate domestic political risks for the economy have retreated after Malaysia's attorney-general last week cleared Najib of corruption.

Foreign capital has also returned to the ringgit bond markets while Malaysian exports have remained robust.

Another comforting factor is that BNM's independence is sanctified by the law, which institutionalises the bank's autonomy for the formulation of monetary policy. "The independence issue would not be an institutional one because some of the institutional anchoring has been done. It will be more to do with coziness between the government and the central banker," said Vishnu Varathan, an economist with Mizuho Bank. He noted a lack of clarity around succession could impact sentiment in broader markets as Zeti's term draws to a close.—*Reuters*

Toyota to suspend domestic production from 8 February after explosion

NAGOYA — Toyota Motor Corp said yesterday it will suspend all domestic production of its vehicles from 8 February through 13 February as an explosion at a steel plant in central Japan in January has caused parts shortages.

It will be the first time the Japanese automaker has stopped all production within the country since 2011, when the massive earthquake and tsunami hitting northeast Japan disrupted its supply chain.

Production lines at a total of 16 factories will be suspended, including those producing Toyota vehicles at the plants of subsidiaries Daihatsu Motor Co. and Hino Motors Ltd. Operations are expected to resume on 15 February, Toyota said, adding that production at its overseas plants will not be affected.

"Toyota will continue to take any measures necessary to minimize the impact of the incident on vehicle production," the automaker said in a statement.

The explosion occurred on 8 January at a steel plant in Tokai, Aichi Prefecture, operated by Aichi Steel Corp. The Toyota affiliate is working to resume plant operations by the end of March.

The world's top automaker usually produces around 13,000 to 14,000 vehicles a day in Japan.

While Toyota recently beefed up its production amid robust orders for new models, including the fourth-generation Prius hybrid released in December, the blast has prompted the automaker to cancel overtime work at all of its plants in the country during weekdays this week.—*Kyodo News*

Toyota Motor Corp's Motomachi Plant, where the luxury sedan Crown is produced, in the central Japan city of Toyota. The automaker said 1 February, 2016, that it will suspend all domestic production of its vehicles from 8 February through 13 February as an explosion at a steel plant in central Japan in January has caused parts shortages. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Opposition parties OK restart of Diet deliberations amid Amari scandal

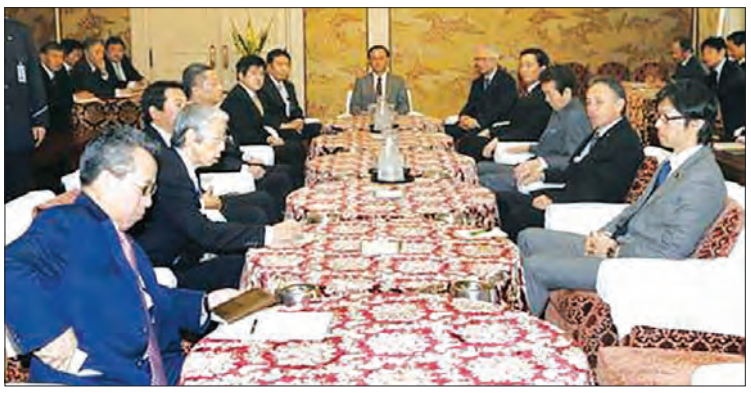
TOKYO — Opposition parties agreed yesterday with the ruling bloc to resume Diet deliberations that had been delayed following the resignation last week of Akira Amari as economy minister amid a cash-for-favors scandal, senior lawmakers said.

At the meeting of secretaries general of ruling and opposition parties, the opposition parties made the decision as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party agreed to their calls to have Nobuteru Ishihara, who succeeded Amari as minister of economic and fiscal policy, redo an economic speech Amari delivered 22 January in the Diet.

The meeting was held to discuss management of the Diet after the Amari scandal brought parliamentary deliberations to a standstill.

Among the items to be postponed was a government explanation about an outline of the fiscal 2016 budget, initially set for last Friday at the House of Representatives Budget Committee.

Ishihara's speech and subsequent questioning could be held as early as Tuesday, while LDP leader and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will also answer questions, LDP lawmakers said. Following Ishihara's speech and questioning, the LDP and its junior coalition partner the Komeito party want to start Diet deliberations as soon as possible, with an aim to pass the state budget for fiscal 2016 starting April by the end of March.



The secretaries general of Japan's ruling and opposition parties agree in Tokyo on 1 February, 2016, to resume Diet deliberations that had been delayed following the recent resignation of Akira Amari as economy minister amid a cash-for-favours scandal. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

"A budget that directly links to people's lives has been presented (to the Diet). We are requesting Diet deliberations over it to start as soon as possible," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference.

Amari, who was known as the driving force behind the "Abenomics" policy mix, aimed at beating deflation and putting Japan on a sustainable recovery path, stepped down from the Cabinet post Thursday to take responsibility for the cash-for-favors allegations against him and his aides.—*Kyodo News*

US envoy on North Korea was secretly in Beijing last week

BEIJING — The United States' top envoy on North Korea held secret talks with his Chinese counterpart late last week in Beijing, diplomatic sources said Monday, as the UN Security Council discusses imposing fresh sanctions on Pyongyang following its fourth nuclear test.

A meeting between Sung Kim, US special representative for North Korea policy, and his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei, took place on Friday, according to the sources.

One of the sources said major differences between China and the United States remain over a new UN Security Council resolution against North Korea and there appeared to be no tangible progress in the latest consultations.

Kim arrived in Beijing for his two-day visit on Thursday, a day after a lengthy meeting took place between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to the sources.

During their talks in Beijing, Kerry and Wang agreed to accelerate coordination on a new UN resolution to punish North Korea for its 6 January nuclear test.

In stark contrast to Kerry's call for tougher UN sanctions, however, Wang reiterated China's long-held stance, saying that it is more effective and important to deal with the nuclear issue by bringing back multilateral negotiations involving Pyongyang.

China, which shares a border with North Korea, has traditionally been reluctant to impose steps that would have a serious impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people in its unpredictable neighboring country, out of fears that any serious social instability there could spill over into its own territory. Six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program have been stalled since 2008.—*Kyodo News*

China sentences two men to death in killing of Tibetan religious leader

BEIJING — China has sentenced two men to death for the 2013 killing of a prominent Tibetan religious leader, state media said, in what had been one of Tibet's most closely watched murder cases.

Choje Akong Tulku Rinpoche, who lived in exile in Scotland and became a British citizen, was among the first spiritual leaders to teach Tibetan Buddhism to followers in the West.

He, his nephew and his driver were killed in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu in October 2013 over what police had said was a financial dispute.

One of those sentenced was Thubten Kunsal, who had been an artist at Akong Rinpoche's monastery in Britain between 2002 and 2011, the Chengdu intermediate court said in a statement carried by the official Xinhua news agency on Sunday.

He and another man, Tsering Paljor, were given the death sentence for stabbing the three men to death in a confrontation at the monk's Chengdu home over 2.7 million yuan ($410,000) in wages that Thubten Kunsal said he was owed. A third man was given three years in prison for hiding the knives used in the killings.

Questions surrounding the murders had underscored the distrust that many Tibetans have of the Chinese government, which has ruled Tibet with an iron first since "peacefully liberating" it in 1950.

Analysts have said that among exiled Tibetans, there was a widespread assumption that there must have been a political plot behind the crime, though there was no evidence for that.

Thubten Kunsal and Tsering Paljor had admitted to involvement in the crime, according to earlier statements by their lawyer, but had argued the deaths were not intentional.

"The defendants' methods were ruthless, the details extremely malicious, and the result extremely serious," the court said in the statement.

Lawyers for the three men could not be reached after the sentencing, but the court said Thubten Kunsal and Tsering Paljor would appeal. The third man had not decided whether to appeal, it said.

Akong Rinpoche was one of the few Tibetan religious leaders who succeeded at balancing the interests of the Chinese government and Tibetans, and he was revered by Tibetans in China for his work with charities and in promoting education.

The Samye Ling monastery, founded by Akong Rinpoche in Scotland, did not mention the case on its website and could not be reached immediately for comment.—*Reuters*

Macau gambling revenue drops in January, analyst say worst may be over

HONG KONG — Gambling revenues for the Chinese territory of Macau dropped 21.4 per cent in January, ahead of a Lunar New Year week-long holiday which is expected to boost the number of visitors to the world's largest casino hub.

Revenue in the former Portuguese colony fell for the 20th consecutive month to 18.7 billion patacas ($2.33 billion), government data showed yesterday, in line with analysts' expectations of an 18-26 per cent decline.

Macau, which relies on the casinos for revenue, has been battered by a two-year-old anti-corruption campaign and slowing growth in China's broader economy. Gambling revenues are hovering around five-year lows but there are signs the worst may be over.

Casinos operated by Las Vegas magnates Las Vegas magnates Steve Wynn and Las Vegas Sands Corporation's Sheldon Adelson reported stronger-than-expected fourth quarter revenues, largely due to an increase in the more middle class, so-called mass market gamblers.

Appealing to these gamblers has become a priority for casinos that once relied on the wealthier VIP gamers for most of their revenues — a category that has been the hardest hit by the crackdown on corruption and illicit money flows out of China.

New casino resorts set to open this year, will include features such as a miniature Eiffel Tower and large lake fronted with a gondola ride, to draw in China's burgeoning middle class.

On Monday, Chinese gamblers milled around the huge gaming room of the Sands China Venetian casino while families shopped and ate at the resorts' multiple restaurants and boutiques.

Analysts and executives expect the Lunar New Year holiday, which starts on 7 February, to further boost the number of mass market gamblers to Macau from China, which accounts for up to two-thirds of overall visitors.

Billy Ng, analyst at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, forecast total revenue growth to remain flat this year, compared to 2015 when revenues dropped 34 per cent on the year. Other analysts have forecast revenues to fall by up to 10 per cent or rise by up to 1 per cent. —*Reuters*

When Trump tells supporters not to donate, they mostly listen

US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event at the Orpheum Theatre in Sioux City, Iowa on 31 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK — Donald Trump likes to boast to his supporters that he's so rich he doesn't need outside money to pay for his presidential campaign. His fans seem happy to oblige him, according to financial disclosures released on Sunday.

The New York businessman's quest to become the Republican party's presidential nominee has attracted massive crowds but only a trickle of donations, the disclosures filed with the US Federal Election Commission show. He raised just $2.6 million from donors in the last three months of 2015.

Three quarters of that money came from sales of merchandise like baseball caps bearing his campaign slogan "Make America Great Again," while only about $540,000 came from individuals giving more than $200.

Most of his Republican rivals have raised far more. His nearest rival, Senator Ted Cruz, raised $20.5 million, while former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who was once the front runner but has fallen sharply in the polls, raised $7 million.

Yet Trump still leads in every national poll as voters in Iowa prepare to gather for the country's nominating contest on Monday.

The bulk of the cash Trump is using to fund his presidential run comes from $12.6 million in loans he made to his campaign in 2015.

Some of that money has gone right back to his businesses: His biggest campaign expenditure in the fourth quarter of 2015 was the $826,590 he paid TAG Air, Inc, which runs his fleet of private aircraft, to shuttle him between campaign stops and his homes in New York and Florida.

Trump's second largest expenditure was $478,000 to Wizbang Solutions, a printing and design firm, followed by $411,000 his campaign paid to a consulting company that collects signatures to get candidates onto states' election ballots.

He's the only billionaire in race, although a few of his competitors are millionaires. Supporters across the country often say his financial independence appeals to them because they believe he can't be bought by special interest groups.

Trump's financial reports show his fundraising isn't the only area that sets him apart from the other candidates.

Trump spent $6.9 million during the last three months of 2015. His distant rival for the Republican nomination, the retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, spent $27 million. Cruz spent $15.5 million.

And the man now seen as the most plausible establishment alternative to Trump, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, spent $14.8 million in the fourth quarter.

That's about $2 million more than Trump spent in all of 2015.—*Reuters*

Russia's military says Turkey's airspace violation claim a 'provocation'

MOSCOW — Turkey's allegations that a Russian warplane violated its airspace are not backed by any factual data and are a premeditated provocation, Russia's Defence Ministry said yesterday.

"The hysteria launched by the Turkish side that we define as 'unsubstantiated propaganda' looks pretty much like a premeditated provocation," the ministry's spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, said in a statement.

Russia's military is in possession of a video, provided by Syria's general staff of the armed forces and a Syrian opposition group, which shows "a Turkish artillery battery shelling a Syrian frontier village", the statement said.

It said Russia's Defence Ministry was awaiting a prompt explanation from NATO, the Pentagon and the Turkish armed forces on the shelling incident. —*Reuters*

NEWS IN BRIEF

War crimes should not be part of any Syria amnesty: UN rights boss

GENEVA — Starvation of Syrian civilians is a potential war crime and crime against humanity that should be prosecuted and not covered by any amnesty linked to ending the conflict, the top United Nations human rights official said yesterday.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, speaking to a news briefing in Geneva as Syria peace talks were being held said: "In the case of Syria, we are there to remind everyone that where there are allegations that reach the threshold of war crimes or crimes against humanity that amnesties are not permissible."

Pointing to the what he said was the starvation of people in the town of Madaya, and the siege of 15 other towns and cities in Syria, he said this was "not just a war crime but a crime against humanity if proven in court."

"We estimate that tens of thousands are held in arbitrary detention and clearly they need to be released," Zeid added.—*Reuters*

UN rights boss calls on Turkey to investigate shooting by security forces

GENEVA — The top United Nations human rights official called on Turkish authorities yesterday to investigate the shooting of unarmed people 10 days ago in the mostly Kurdish southeast of the country.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein appeared to be referring to an incident in which 10 people were wounded in the town of Cizre on 20 January when their group, which included two opposition politicians, came under fire while rescuing people hurt in earlier clashes.

He said that "extremely shocking" footage filmed of the incident showed what appeared to be a man and woman holding white flags and pushing a cart — possibly carrying bodies — across a street, watched by an armoured military vehicle.—*Reuters*

Davenport hopes Russia will not undermine Serbia's EU path

BELGRADE — The head of the EU Delegation to Belgrade, Michael Davenport, has said that Serbia, like other European countries — including EU member states — is developing relations with Russia and expressed hope that this will be pursuable, but in a way that does not undermine Serbia's European path and EU accession.

In an interview to Danas, Davenport said that the EU sees Serbia as a country that will back the pursuance of a joint foreign policy, being an EU membership candidate that has also opened the first chapters in its accession talks.

Serbia is expected to align progressively its foreign policy to the EU, Davenport said.—*Tanjug*

Debris found on Malaysia's east coast not from flight MH370: minister

KUALA LUMPUR — Aviation officials said on Friday a metal object recovered from Malaysia's east coast a day earlier was not from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370.

It was the second time in a week authorities have dismissed speculation that wreckage from the jet had been found, after a similar piece of ocean debris recovered from a beach in Southern Thailand on 23 January proved not to be from MH370. Malaysia's transport minister Liow Tiong Lai said the two-metre-long object found in the eastern state of Terengganu on Thursday had been examined by officials from the ministry, the Department of Civil Aviation and Malaysia Airlines.

"The assessment found that the debris does not match those of a Boeing 777, thus confirming that the debris is not from MH370," he said in a statement.

Flight MH370 disappeared with 239 people on board on its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in March 2014.—*Reuters*

Suicide bombing kills bomber, wounds 7 civilians in eastern Afghan province

GHAZNI, (Afghanistan) — Seven civilians were injured as a suicide bomber blew himself up in Gilan district of the eastern Ghazni Province yesterday, provincial police spokesman Fahim Amiri said.

"A terrorist with explosive device tied in his body blew himself up inside the compound of police headquarters in Gilan district, killing himself and injured seven others," Amiri told Xinhua.

All the seven injured, including a woman, are civilians, the official added.

Without giving more details, the official added that an investigation has been launched into the case.—*Xinhua*

OPINION

Putting moral character first

Khin Maung Aye

EVERYONE has personal values. This being so, different people value different things. Some people set a high value on material pleasures, while others value academic achievement, professional success or political power. And some people highly value self-esteem.

For those who respect themselves, they are very much afraid of committing deadly sins, like graft and corruption. Their personal value is morality. In fact, maintaining good morality is beneficial not only to this existence but also to the existences to come until one attains nibbāna. This is the reason why the wise one are used to saying that when wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; but when the moral character is lost, everything is lost. Morality matters most if one wants to become a noble person.

Although morality is chiefly concerned with a person's mind-set or mentality, governments are also responsible for ensuring freedom from graft and corruption. There is no need to say that the administrative machinery of a government will not be effective and efficient as long as it cannot annihilate corruption. In this function, the incumbent government has revoked the Anti-Corruption Law of 1948 by promulgating the Anti-Corruption Law of 2013, which came into effect on 17 September 2013. Since then, the incumbent regime has been fighting graft and corruption as a national duty.

Freedom from graft and corruption can promote the image of both individual citizens and the country. This being so, The Global New Light of Myanmar would like to make its earnest request to all citizens to abide by Myanmar's laws, rules and regulations in order to enable the country to improve its corruption record.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email wallace.tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

What kind of 'farm' is the Thaketa Crocodile Farm?

Jacob Goldberg

"CROCODILES are easy to sell," said Than Htike, the deputy director of the Thaketa Crocodile Farm. "But we can't do it until we get our certificate."

The farm hasn't sold a crocodile in nearly two decades. Nonetheless, it brands itself as a farm, prompting Yangonites and tourists to wonder—what kind of farm is the Thaketa Crocodile Farm?

But that is not the whole truth. Today, no one is making any money off Myanmar's crocodile breeding industry. Entry into the Thaketa Crocodile Farm, which for the time being functions as a crowded crocodile storage facility, only costs K500 for locals and K1,000 for foreigners. In fact, the farm barely has enough money to feed its crocodiles, even with the support of the government; the farm staff only feeds them three times per month.

Luckily, kind locals come to the farm every weekend to help out. Grandparents, parents and children stand on a wooden platform a few metres above a shallow pond and toss fish into the reptilian orgy below. Children yelp as the crocodiles leap over each other and snatch fish out of the air with their long snouts.

Than Htike, 47, sat in front of a shiny, brown crocodile skin mounted on a board as he explained why the skin, which was taken from a crocodile that had died naturally several years ago and was processed outside the farm, was the only non-living crocodile skin the farm has ever seen.

He started his job as the man in charge of Yangon's strangest wildlife institution five months ago, during which time has learned what few people know about the farm's history. According to Than Htike, Myanmar's crocodile breeding industry has changed several times in the years since 1968, when Yangon breeders first plucked saltwater crocodiles, or Crocodylus porosus, from the rivers around Bogale, Ayeyawady Region, for breeding. Their activities were eventually recognised by the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, which established the farm in Thaketa Township in 1978.

A local family sells fish and discarded crocodile teeth to eager visitors. PHOTO: JACOB GOLDBERG

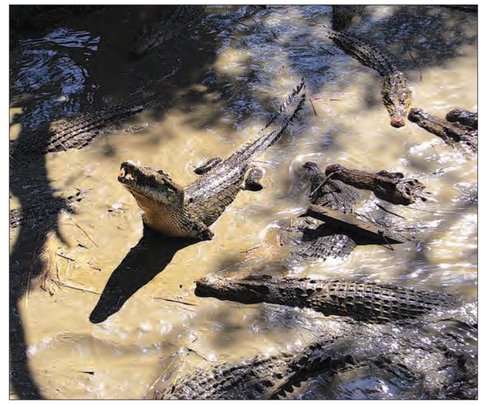
Back then, the farm was a farm like any other—it bred animals and sold them for human consumption. In 1988, an American man living in Singapore visited Yangon and bought 100 of the farm's roughly 1,000 crocodiles.

What did he do with them? I asked U Thein Lwin, 57, who has worked at the crocodile farm for over 20 years.

"I have no idea," he said, feeling the scars left on his arms by years of encounters with an animal species that sees him as prey. "The farm was not very well-regulated at the time."

But that changed in 1997, when Myanmar signed onto the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CITES is an agreement between signatory governments to ensure that the trade of plants and animals does not threaten their species' survival.

Under the convention, crocodiles cannot be sold commercially until they have been bred in captivity for three generations, Than Htike said. But no genealogical records were kept at the Thaketa Crocodile Farm for decades, so the farm cannot sell its livestock until three generations of breeding in captivity have been verified through DNA analysis. This process is further complicated, he said, by the fact that a Cambodian crocodile species was interbred with some of the Thaketa crocodiles at some point before he began working there.



A beast in captivity ponders life in the wild. PHOTO: JACOB GOLDBERG

Visitors toss fish into the hungry crocs' jaws. PHOTO: JACOB GOLDBERG

The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development is currently in the process of commissioning international experts to perform the DNA analysis. No one at the farm knows when the process will be completed. And until then, the farm will not sell any animals, though demand persists.

"About eight years ago, a Japanese buyer came to buy some crocodiles, but we didn't have CITES approval. We had to turn him away," said U Thein Lwin, the veteran crocodile farmer.

According to Than Htike, when the DNA analysis is complete and the farm receives the ministry's green light to start selling its animals, its primary market will be wildlife sanctuaries in Thailand, where tourists flock to see saltwater crocodiles, which are the largest reptiles in the world.

Will the farm sell crocodiles for leather? I asked Than Htike. He did not hesitate to say it would, just as it did in its unregulated past.

"We don't have the technology or expertise to process the skins on site. We will have to sell live crocodiles to leather producers," he said.

Why can't you just sell crocodiles that have died naturally? He said this is impossible. The skin becomes unusable if it remains on the body for more than four hours after the animal is dead. Furthermore, saltwater crocodiles have a lifespan of around 70 years; waiting for them to die would not be the best business strategy.

Instead, the live animals must be sold to people who know how to process the leather.

How do you kill a crocodile?

Than Htike smirked.

"Just stab them in the belly with a knife."

* * * * * * * *

A Viable Town Plan is Necessary

Khin Maung Myint

During my Bangkok trips, I had noticed the villages and small towns along the routes are neat and tidy with the roads running through them are wide and spacious. In Thailand, the roads passing through the towns are wide enough to afford ample room for the smooth flow of traffics, there are diversions or by-passes for those who want to avoid the traffic lights inside the towns.

Over the years since my first visit in 2012 to this area, many industrial estates had sprung up along the route. In the wake of the emergence of the industrial zones followed the property developments. Many new hotels, housing projects, shop-houses, restaurants, cafes and shopping malls are appearing everywhere in the area. What impressed me most was the disciplined and well planned appearances they displayed, which are visible to even the casual observers. Undoubtedly, these are the results of systematic town planning. I'm mentioning these to depict a picture that town planning plays an important role in developing a country and I don't want the readers to think I'm unnecessarily admiring Thailand.

Here, I would like to recall how China went about developing Beijing over thirty years ago. The Chinese government commissioned an American architect of Chinese origin, to come up with a town plan to develop and modernize their capital. Their idea was to create a modern city without affecting their cultural heritage by hiring someone who had roots in China. If we go further backwards in time, we would find how Indonesia rebuild Jakarta. From what I learned from my mentor, who had been to Jakarta before and after it was developed, the way the Indonesians developed Jakarta was quite impressive and praiseworthy.

What they did was to plot the positions of all the historic and heritage monuments and buildings on a template before laying out the town plan. Then the town plan was drawn on that template, the way they wanted to rebuild. The template was superimposed on the existing map and the reconstruction of the road systems and other necessary building works were done according to the plan. Any building obstructing the constructions were removed to give way to the new town plan. According to my mentor the results were overwhelming. He said the first time he was there, Jakarta was unclean and congested. However, on the second time, that was after the reconstructions, Jakarta was totally changed beyond recognition. The boulevards and avenues were more wider and systematic than before. The clogged and smelly canals in the city were properly maintained, making them cleaner and devoid of foul smells, with the water flowing freely. The whole city was majestic.

Yangon too had seen many developments during the past decades, under different regimes. Although there were significant changes, such as the increases in the number of high rise buildings, widening of the roads and constructions of many flyovers or overpasses at congested road junctions, they are nothing remarkable in the sense of the word "developments". The reason, in my opinion, is because there was no proper overall or master town plan laid down for those developments and were done un-systematicly on piece meal basis. To validate my statements, I will cite a few instances, which lacked proper planning.

The first instance is the constructions of many buildings in the Mingalarzay compound. In most developing countries, they would definitely utilize that whole compound to build a single modern shopping mall, complete with enough parking lots incorporated in it, instead of building so many small buildings piece meal. That place was a prime piece of land and it was a waste and ugly sight with so many buildings crammed into the place without adequate provision for car parkings or recreational areas for the public. Also the interiors of those market buildings are too congested. The mentality of our people is, we want to utilize every inch of space to generate income without giving any consideration for the convenience of the public..

The second instance is the constructions of some overpasses. As I understand, the overpasses are built to facilitate the easy flow of traffic to ease congestions. However, most drivers complained that the overpass at the Hledan junction is causing more pile-ups at the Hanthawady round about than before its construction. Similarly, the same is happening at the U Htaung Bo round about due to the overpass at the Shwe Gon Daing junction. Thus they are creating problems instead of serving their purposes.

> **"The overpasses are built to facilitate the easy flow of traffic to ease congestions."**

Another instance was allowing to build eight-storied buildings without facilities for car parkings within. That was the main cause of congestions inside the residential blocks that led to the residents to park their cars by the roadsides around the clock. In Thailand, even in the remote provinces, such sights are nowhere to be seen.

The worst instances are the controversial construction projects. The stoppage of the construction of the Dagon City Project was one example and there are some more projects that are facing oppositions and eventual shutdowns. That project should not have been given the green light in the first place, because even a layman like me knew that construction of tall buildings that would obstruct the view of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda is prohibited. There are many more such indiscriminate undertakings, without having regards for rules and regulations, but I will not go into detail as I hope I had made my point about the lack of proper town plans.

A few days ago, I came across a very interesting piece of news, online. It was about the out-spoken member of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) threatening to bring about the stoppage of another two building projects that do not agree with the rules and regulations. If what was mentioned in the news are true, it further confirmed my opinion about the lack of proper town planning. The news of the YCDC member opposing the decision of the Yangon Region government, which granted permission for the constructions based on the recommendations of the YCDC engineering department, was very interesting indeed. These controversies indicate the lack of proper coordination in the same department, which is the YCDC and again I presume this stemmed from the lack of a master town plan. If such a plan should have existed, these controversies would not have emerged.

I admire the actions of the YCDC member, if what was mentioned in the news about him being the driving force that brought about the stoppage of the Dagon City Project were true. We need more people like him in building our nation. It is very refreshing to know such a person with high moral standards and principles is on the board of the YCDC. Such voices were unheard of in the past.

I understand that there are a few successful Myanmar national town planners and architects working abroad. If there is no one at home who can do the proper town planning, the services of those who can do it should be sought after, instead of doing randomly at the whims and fancies of some individuals in positions of authority, without any expertise. As Yangon is the point of entry for most foreign visitors, its image should be uplifted. To do so would need a proper town planning done by accomplished architects and town planners of international standards and outlooks with Myanmar cultural background, like in the case of China.

Oxfam says some states in Syrian war fail to help victims

A Syrian refugee man sits in front of his tent at Al Zaatari refugee camp in the Jordanian city of Mafraq, near the border with Syria, on 30 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIRUT — A report by international charity Oxfam yesterday showed some of the countries most deeply involved in Syria's civil war, including Russia, Saudi Arabia and France, are among the least generous in helping its victims.

Oxfam released the report ahead of a donor conference in London on Thursday along with an appeal for increased aid and resettlement abroad for 10 per cent of the refugees registered in Syria's neighbours by the end of the year.

Most rich countries were contributing less than their "fair share" of financial aid, the amount a country should contribute relative to the size of its economy. Countries gave 56.5 per cent of the $8.9 billion requested by aid appeals for 2015, it said.

Russia gave 1 per cent of its fair share and Saudi Arabia 28 per cent. Neither have pledged to take in Syrian refugees.

At the same time, Riyadh gives military aid to insurgents fighting against the Syrian government and Moscow supports Damascus with air strikes against rebel groups.

Among western countries, France, which joined the United States-led air campaign against Islamic State in Syria in September, gave 45 per cent of its "fair share", Oxfam aid. Paris took in about 5,000 Syrian refugees last year.

"As a bare minimum the international community needs to fund the aid appeals (for refugees)," Oxfam's Daniel Gorevan said via telephone. The conflict has created more than 4 million refugees and displaced another nearly 7 million inside Syria.

The United States donated 76 per cent of its fair share, but was the biggest single donor. Several European countries gave well over their fair share, such as Denmark (318 per cent), Norway (385 per cent) and Britain (237 per cent).

Kuwait donated 554 percent. But the vast majority of countries fell far short in terms of refugee admissions and resettlement pledges, also based on economy size, Oxfam said.

On refugee resettlement, the United States has pledged to take seven per cent of its fair share with at least 10,000 refugees, and Britain 23 percent with 20,000 by May 2020.

Canada, Norway and Germany have pledged to take well over 100 per cent of their fair share of refugees. Germany registered over 158,000 Syrian asylum seekers last year and many more refugees from the civil war are believed to be in the country.

Russia has not pledged to take any refugees and Gulf countries were not included in the resettlement figures because they have not signed the UN Refugee Convention. They have not officially taken in any Syrians as refugees.

Gorevan said there had been a "significant drop off in Gulf funding" for Syria aid and the overall lack of funds was exacerbating the crisis.

"The impact of the aid cuts has been quite devastating, with food rations cut, and less access to services like health and education. A smaller number of refugees are receiving less assistance," he said.

The crisis is straining neighbouring countries, which host the vast majority of Syrian refugees and have contributed disproportionately highly as a result.—*Reuters*

Al Qaeda militants seize southern Yemeni town

ADEN — Dozens of al Qaeda militants reclaimed the town of Azzan in Yemen's Shabwa Province on Monday, residents said, exploiting a security vacuum in the country's south as a civil war rages.

Azzan is a major commercial hub of about 70,000 people in an arid and mountainous region and was controlled by al Qaeda for around a year until the group was ejected in 2012 by an alliance of tribesmen and armed residents loyal to Yemen's since ousted central government.

"Dozens of al Qaeda gunmen arrived in the early hours of the morning and set up checkpoints at the entrances to the town and in its streets. They planted their black flag on government buildings," one resident who declined to be named told Reuters by telephone.

"They faced no resistance or clashes," the resident said, adding that tribal militia forces quit the area as it was being taken over.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has expanded during Yemen's civil war, which triggered a military intervention by a Gulf Arab coalition last March, and also controls the major port of Mukalla in a neighbouring province.

Sunni Muslim AQAP is viewed by Western analysts as the most dangerous arm of the global militant organisation, and claimed responsibility for the deadly January 2015 attack in Paris on the satirical French magazine Charlie Hebdo.

It has made its advances in Yemen as the Saudi-led coalition forces, which back the ousted government, have clashed with the country's ascendant Houthi movement, which they fear is a proxy for Shi'ite Muslim Iran. The Houthis and Iran deny this.

Al Qaeda views the group, hailing from the Zaydi branch of Shi'ite Islam, as apostates.

AQAP has suffered setbacks, losing its leader and several top officials to US drone strikes, and is also facing competition from the new Yemen branch of the ultra-violent Islamic State group. —*Reuters*

Iran gives medals for capture of US sailors

DUBAI — Iran's supreme leader has awarded medals to navy commanders for capturing US sailors who entered Iranian territorial waters this month, Iran's state media said on Sunday.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has said Iran should remain wary of its arch-enemy the United States even after a landmark accord over Tehran's nuclear programme, awarded the Fath (Victory) medal to the head of the navy of the Revolutionary Guards and four commanders involved in the seizure of two US Navy boats.

Iran has awarded the Fath medal since 1989 to war heroes, military commanders and politicians, especially those linked to the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

Iran freed the ten US sailors on 13 January, a day after detaining them aboard the two US Navy patrol boats in the Gulf, bringing a swift end to an incident that had rattled nerves shortly before the expected implementation of the nuclear accord with world powers.

The Revolutionary Guardss said it had determined the patrol boats had entered Iranian territorial waters by mistake.

The quick resolution contrasted with previous cases in which British servicemen were held by Iran for considerably longer, in once case almost two weeks.—*Reuters*

Death toll up to 70 from Islamic State Damascus attack — monitor

BEIRUT — The death toll from a suicide attack in Damascus on Sunday that was claimed by the Islamic State militant group has risen to more than 70, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A car bomb and two suicide bombers attacked the Sayeda Zeinab district, home to Syria's holiest Shi'ite shrine, as representatives of Syria's government and its divided opposition began convening in Geneva in an attempt to start the first peace talks in two years.

The Syrian state news agency SANA has put the death toll from the attack at more than 50.

The British-based Observatory, which monitors the war using contacts on the ground, said the attack had targeted a military bus carrying Shi'ite militiamen who were changing guard, and that 42 of the dead were fighters allied to the government.

The Lebanese Shi'ite militant group Hezbollah and other Iraqi and Iranian militias have a strong presence in Sayeda Zeinab, which is a site of pilgrimage for Shi'ites from Iran, Lebanon and other parts of the Muslim world.

While much of the Syrian leadership is drawn from an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, Islamic State espouses a radical version of Sunni Islam and considers other sects to be heretical.

The area witnessed heavy clashes in the first few years of the war, prompting the army and allied Shi'ite militias to tighten security, notably with roadblocks.—*Reuters*

Residents and soldiers loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad inspect damage after a suicide attack in Sayeda Zeinab, a district of southern Damascus, Syria on 31 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Alphabet to give first peek at cost of 'moonshot' bets

A Google employee on a bicycle acts as a real-life obstacle for a Google self-driving prototype car to react to during a media preview of Google's prototype autonomous vehicles in Mountain View, California in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO — How much is Google-parent Alphabet Inc (GOOGL.O) spending on "moonshots" — self-driving cars, glucose-monitoring contact lenses, Internet balloons and other ambitious projects?

Investors will get their long-awaited answer when Alphabet reports fourth-quarter results after markets close on Monday.

The report will be the first time Alphabet will break out results for what it calls "Other Bets," which includes Google Fiber; smart home accessory maker Nest Labs and the secretive "X", home to the self-driving cars project.

The results will also show how successful Google was in targeting ads at a fast-growing number of mobile users, especially after Facebook Inc's (FB.O) stellar report.

A strong report could boost the stock enough for Alphabet to surpass Apple Inc (AAPL.O) as the most valuable company in the world.

"For the first time they (Alphabet) have a real catalyst to the stock, aside from a standard beat-and-raise," said James Cakmak, an analyst at Monness, Crespi, Hardt & Co Inc.

The market has wanted four things from Alphabet: consistent revenue growth, margin stabilisation, greater disclosure and share buybacks, and they will get all of them this quarter, RBC Capital Markets analyst Mark Mahaney said.

The reading may not be pretty.

A Raymond James survey showed that 72 per cent of investors expect "Other Bets" lost more than $1.5 billion in 2015.

"We believe revenues from Other Bets will be fairly immaterial for Alphabet given the early stages of most of these businesses," Raymond James analysts wrote in a note.

To be sure, almost all of Alphabet's revenue comes from its Google unit.

The unit houses its Internet and related businesses such as search, ads, maps, YouTube and Android as well as hardware products such as its Chromebooks.

Google's revenue has been bolstered by its efforts to drive sales from its mobile and video advertising as well as Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat's increased discipline on expenses.

Ad sales to mobile users is going to be the main driver to Google's results, just as it was at Facebook.

Analysts on average are expecting Alphabet's profit to rise to $8.10 per share from $6.88 and revenue to rise 14.7 per cent to $20.76 billion, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

Alphabet shares closed at $761.35 on Friday, valuing the company at about $517 billion, 4.4 per cent shy of Apple's valuation of about $540 billion.—*Reuters*

Nokia boosts revenue with Samsung patent resolution

HELSINKI — Finland's Nokia yesterday settled its patent dispute with South Korea's Samsung, saying the arbitration verdict would boost its patent sales by hundreds of millions of euros.

Nokia said the settlement would lift sales at its patent unit Nokia Technologies to around 1.02 billion euros (777 million pounds) in 2015, include catch-up revenue from the past two years, from 578 million euros in 2014. The annualised net sales run-rate for the patent unit is now about 800 million euros, Nokia added. Nokia entered into a binding arbitration with Samsung in 2013 to settle additional compensations for Nokia's phone patents for a five-year period starting from early 2014. "The use of independent arbitration to resolve differences in patent cases is a recognised best practice, and we welcome the additional compensation payable to Nokia under the extended agreement," said Ramzi Haidamus, the head of Nokia Technologies.

Nokia added it expects to receive at least 1.3 billion euros of cash during 2016-2018 related to its settled and ongoing arbitrations, including the Samsung award. Nokia currently has a similar dispute with LG Electronics. Nokia, which once dominated the global mobile phones market, is now focussed on telecom network equipment but still holds a large portfolio of phone patents.

The company is due to close its 15.6 billion euro all-share takeover of French network gear rival Alcatel-Lucent this quarter.—*Reuters*

Asia stocks edge up after Japan policy boost; debt shines

HONG KONG — Asian stocks started a new month on a cautious note yesterday, with the Bank of Japan's surprise policy easing sparking some buying but further signs of economic weakness in China and a fall in oil prices keeping investors on guard.

European stocks were broadly expected to open steady with spreadbetters expecting FTSE 100 .FTSE to open up 0.4 per cent, Germany's DAX .GDAXI to open 0.2 per cent higher, and France's CAC 40 .FCHI to be unchanged.

The greenback continued to benefit from the growing monetary policy divergence between the US and its counterparts in Europe and Asia while bonds, especially investment grade debt, received a boost after Japan's surprise decision to introduce negative interest rates last week.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS edged up 0.1 per cent, after losing 8 per cent in January.

Australia and Japan .N225 led regional markets with gains of 0.8 and 2 per cent, respectively, while Chinese stocks .SSEC. CSI300 slipped in afternoon trade.

"In the short-term, the surprise move by Japan will be a catalyst for global equities but it only underlines the weakness of the global economy and we need to see some strong economics data for a sustainable rally," said Cliff Tan, head of global markets research with Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

Monday's batch of economic data from China added to worries about the health of the world's second-largest economy and only increased calls for more policy easing from China. Activity in China's manufacturing sector contracted at its fastest pace in almost three-and-a-half years in January, missing market expectations, while growth in the services sector slowed, official surveys showed yesterday.

"As deflationary pressures remain high, further reserve requirement cuts are still needed to support the slowing economy and permanently inject liquidity into the market," ANZ strategists wrote in a note. They expect a total of 200 basis points of cuts this year with a 50 basis points cut coming in the first quarter.

"In fact, refraining from further easing could risk an even weaker economy, which will then intensify depreciation expectation and capital outflows." The Shanghai Composite Index .SSEC fell more than 2 per cent, while the CSI300 index .CSI300 of the largest listed companies in Shanghai and Shenzhen falling by 2.2 per cent, extending its dismal performance from January.

January was the worst monthly performance for the Shanghai market since the 2008 crisis with more than a 10 per cent loss.

The Bank of Japan said it would charge for a portion of bank reserves parked with the institution, an aggressive policy pioneered by the European Central Bank (ECB). Earlier in January, the ECB indicated it could cut rates further in March.

"The fact that both the BOJ and the ECB suddenly showed additional easing stance after the markets' rout suggests policymakers in Japan and Europe share concerns and take actions," Masafumi Yamamoto, chief currency strategist at Mizuho Securities, said. —*Reuters*

Drought tests a changed Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, — On a treeless plain in eastern Ethiopia, thousands of destitute pastoralists have set up camp outside the tiny village of Fedeto. Over the past six months the camp has swelled as one of the worst droughts in decades has decimated herds, dried up pasture and made even drinking water scarce.

"We wandered for three months, losing every single animal apart from two donkeys," said Saido Ahmed Keyat, a 29-year-old mother of five, whose family had boasted 200 sheep and goats, 15 cattle, eight camels and seven donkeys. "All my children are malnourished. They need milk, they need many things."

Ethiopia's failed rains, which meteorologists blame on the El Niño weather phenomenon, have created a drought in some areas of the country worse than the 1984 crisis. Back then, water shortages and conflict combined to cause a famine that killed an estimated one million people.

In the years since, Ethiopia has transformed under a government that promotes rapid economic development, although it is criticised for limiting many political freedoms. One of its signature schemes is a rural support programme designed to keep Ethiopians from starvation.

A girl sits outside a temporary shelter in the drought stricken Somali region in Ethiopia, on 26 January . PHOTO: REUTERS

The new drought is putting that model to the test.

More than 10 million people are now critically short of food, according to figures compiled by the government with its humanitarian partners. That is putting a strain on the government as well as the budgets of international aid groups and donors.

"The scale of the need is really huge and has outstripped the Ethiopian government's ability to do this on their own," Carolyn Wilson, chief executive of charity Save the Children told Reuters after touring some of the afflicted regions in the country's north and east.

In all, an estimated $1.4 billion is needed for food and other resources in 2016, according to the government and aid partners. The government said about 30 per cent of that had been raised from donors so far. The WFP said last week about $500 million was needed by the end of February to extend the aid effort beyond April.

In a world facing the demands of the migrant crisis and conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, that won't be easy.

"It's not that donors have not responded," said WFP Country Director John Aylieff. "But they have not managed to keep pace."

Today's needs would be far greater were it not for the massive changes in Ethiopia over the past three decades.

In 1984, the then-communist government known as the Derg tried to hide the famine, while conflict and social engineering projects like farm collectivisation exacerbated the scale of hunger.

Rebels toppled the Derg in 1991 and the government that followed has delivered stellar economic growth rates, hitting double digits in some years, visible from endless construction in the capital and new highways crossing the nation.

In 2005, Ethiopia started the Productive Safety Net Programme, which was helping 7.9 million people facing chronic food insecurity even before the latest drought. Those people receive food or cash transfers in return for community work.

To deal with the drought, the government allocated $272 million extra spending in 2015 and a further $109 million this year, Mikitu Kassa, head of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, told Reuters. To put that extra spending in perspective, it is roughly equivalent to Ethiopia's entire state budget two decades ago, he said.

The government says no one has so far died from starvation. Some of those in the worst affected area contradict this. One woman in Fedeto said 20 had died in the past two months, though it was not possible to verify this.

Mikitu said the government would spend what it takes if aid did not flow, although he said it could mean cutbacks on other projects. But he said the government's "mega projects" — new national railways, roads and dams — would go ahead.

Those projects are part of plans to industrialise Ethiopia. Eighty percent of the nation still relies on agriculture, mostly rain-fed pastures or subsistence smallholdings. The better transport links have already proved vital, allowing easier access for relief workers.

"The nature of the government that we had in 1984 is quite different from the current government," Mikitu said in Addis Ababa, where Sub-Saharan Africa's first metro system opened last year and now snakes its way above traffic-clogged streets. —*Reuters*

လူပျောက်ကြော်ငြာ

(အဘ) ဦးသိန်းဝင်း၏ သမီးဖြစ်သူ မသီတာသိန်းဝင်း (၁၂/မဂတ(နိုင်)၁၀၂၆၆၃) သည် ၃၁-၁-၂၀၁၆ ရက်နေ့ ည ၆း၃၀ နာရီတွင် နေအိမ်မှအပြင်သွားရာ အိမ်ပြန်ရောက်မလာခဲ့ပါ၍ လက်ခံထားသူများနှင့် တွေ့ရှိသူများရှိပါက အောက်ပါ ဖုန်းနံပါတ်များသို့ ဆက်သွယ် အကြောင်းကြားပေးပါရန် ကြေညာ အပ်ပါသည်။

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The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Transport
Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River System (DWIR)
Ayeyarwady Integrated River Basin Management (AIRBM) Project
Project Implementation Unit (PMU)
Tender No. AIRBMQ (g-2) 2/2016

1.PMU invites quotation from the interested suppliers for the following Goods contract packages:

Contract Package	Description
G1.4.2 – DWIR Office Equipment	Office equipment for DWIR Yangon Office
G1.4.3 – DWIR Office Furniture	Office furniture for DWIR Yangon Office
G2.1.4 –DMH Office Furniture	Office furniture for DMH Yangon and NPT Offices

2.Interested suppliers may submit quotation for all or any of the packages listed above.

3.Further information can be provided, and Invitation to Quote (ITQ) can be reviewed and obtained free of charge from the below address:
Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River System (DWIR), Procurement Section,
No: 400, Lower Pazundaung Road, Pazundaung T/S. Yangon, Myanmar
Telephone : 01-291533 or 095035527
e-mail: kohtinkyaw1 @ gmail.com with a copy to karenglaja29 @gmail.com

4.The deadline for submission of the quotations is **17.02.2016**

Malala seeks to raise $1.4 bln to educate Syrian refugees

LONDON — Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai will seek to inspire world leaders at a conference in London on Thursday to commit $1.4 billion this year to give Syrian refugee children access to education, she told Reuters on Sunday.

Heads of state and government and ministers from countries around the world will converge on London for the "Supporting Syria and the region" conference, which aims to raise funds for humanitarian crises caused by the Syrian war.

Some 700,000 Syrian children living in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon and in other Middle Eastern countries are out of school, according to a report issued by the Malala Fund, which campaigns and fundraises for educational causes.

"I have met so many Syrian refugee children, they are still in my mind. I can't forget them. The thought that they won't be able to go to school in their whole life is completely shocking and I cannot accept it," Malala said in a telephone interview.

"We can still help them, we can still protect them. They are not lost yet. They need schools. They need books. They need teachers. This is the way we can protect the future of Syria."

Malala Yousefzai listens to 17 year old Syrian refugee Muzoon Almellehan speak to journalists at the City Library in Newcastle Upon Tyne, Britain in December 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

A Pakistani teenage education activist who came to prominence when a Taliban gunman shot her in the head on her school bus in 2012, Malala continued campaigning on the world stage and in 2014 became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Now 18, she lives in Britain but devotes much of her time and energy to the cause of education for Syrian refugee children. An accomplished public speaker who brought a United Nations audience to its feet in a celebrated speech in 2013, she hopes to make a powerful impact at the London event.— *Reuters*

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Tourists take pictures beside red lanterns in the Hanyuan Forest of Steles in Kaifeng, central China's Henan Province, on 1 February, 2016. The Longting scenic spot in Kaifeng was decorated with red lanterns for the traditional Spring Festival, or lunar New Year, which starts from 8 February this year. PHOTO: XINHUA

US Justice Dept to review San Francisco police after shooting death

SAN FRANCISCO — The US Department of Justice said on Sunday it was set to announce a "comprehensive review" of the San Francisco Police Department, which was the target of protests after a black man was shot and killed by police in December.

Acting US Attorney for the Northern District of California Brian Stretch and Ronald Davis, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services Director, would hold a news conference in San Francisco on Monday at 2 pm PST (1700 GMT Sunday), it said in a statement.

The statement gave no details about the nature or reason for the investigation. Protests broke out in the city in December over the police killing of a black man earlier that month, with demands that the city's police chief be fired.

San Francisco's Mayor Edwin Lee and police chief Greg Suhr were also slated to attend the news conference, the Justice Department statement said.

Protesters have railed against Suhr numerous times over the shooting death of 26-year-old Mario Woods, which was captured on camera by bystanders and described as unnecessary by the San Francisco public defender.

Suhr said Woods, who was a suspect in a stabbing, was a threat to officers. He has called for equipping his police force with Tasers to prevent similar shootings in the future.

Police said they first tried using pepper spray and firing bean bag rounds at Woods, who they said refused orders to drop a knife he was holding.

Video of the shooting showed one of about a dozen officers in a phalanx move directly in front of Woods, who was attempting to walk away. Officers opened fire, killing him in a hail of gunfire.

Police said in a statement he was a danger to others and that "officers could not allow him room to harm anyone else."

Woods' family filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city in December. The San Francisco shooting came amid US unrest over high-profile police killings of black people from cities like Ferguson, Missouri, to Chicago and Baltimore since mid-2014, and a renewed civil rights movement under the name Black Lives Matter.

In May, San Francisco's district attorney appointed three retired judges to review the integrity of 3,000 arrests involving more than a dozen police officers who engaged in racist and homophobic text messages. District Attorney George Gascón said the officers' actions compromised public trust in law enforcement.— *Reuters*

Thailand gears up for 1 million visitors during Lunar New Year

BANGKOK — Thailand expects a million visitors during the upcoming Lunar New Year, 19 per cent more than last year, the country's tourism authority said yesterday.

Nearly half were expected to come from neighbouring countries— China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, the Tourism Authority of Thailand said.

The Lunar New Year period, which falls from 6-14 February this year, will generate around 29 billion baht ($814 million) in revenue, said the tourism authority, up 32 per cent from the previous year.

Tropical Thailand is a top destination for Chinese tourists, and there was little sign of them being scared off by the bombing at a shrine in Bangkok in August that killed 20 people, more than half of them foreign tourists.

Over 8 million Chinese travelled to Thailand in 2015, a record, and the country expects more this year.

The tourism ministry is preparing Chinese language brochures, a spokesman said.

Vendors in Bangkok's Chinatown, where the streets are festooned with red lanterns, are preparing for the peak period. Celebrations will include shows by music and dance troupes from around China. The city's Chinese restaurants are also preparing menus offering traditional seasonal dishes like dim sum and Yee Sang, a salad eaten by a family.

"In the Chinese New Year there are more Chinese staying at the hotel so we prepare accordingly," said Wattana Krisanakan, manager of China House Restaurant, part of Bangkok's Mandarin Oriental hotel.

Thailand expects 32 million foreigners to visit its beaches and temples in 2016, a record driven by tourists from China who helped turn Bangkok into the region's most-visited destination in 2015.— *Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV GSS YANGON VOY NO (1045W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV GSS YANGON VOY NO (1045W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CHINA SHIPPING LINES
Phone No: 2301185

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MV PHUONG NAM 68 VOY NO (01-2016)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PHUONG NAM 68 VOY NO (01-2016) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.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 G-LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD.
Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV OCEAN PREFECT VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV OCEAN PREFECT VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.2.2016 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P.L where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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‘Kung Fu Panda 3’ kicks Up $41 million to dominate US box office

LOS ANGELES — “Kung Fu Panda 3” showed plenty of power at the US box office with a solid opening weekend of $41 million at 3,955 theaters as the durable family franchise dominated moviegoing.

Disney’s launch of Coast Guard rescue adventure “The Finest Hours” saw only modest returns with $10.3 million at 3,143 sites — trailing both “The Revenant” and the seventh weekend of “Star Wars: The Force Awakens.”

Marlon Wayans’ spoof “Fifty Shades of Black” generated only middling business at about $6 million at 2,075 locations and Natalie Portman’s oft-delayed Western “Jane Got a Gun” was nearly invisible with less than $1 million at 1,210 screens.

“Kung Fu Panda 3,” distributed by Fox for DreamWorks Animation, will finish its first weekend near 2011’s “Kung Fu Panda 2,” which opened with $47.7 million domestically on its way to $162.5 million. The 2008 original bowed to $60.2 million and ended its US run with $215 million.

The cartoon also helped the US box office turn in a respectable performance following a dismal weekend that saw business hit hard by the massive East Coast snowstorm. Leonardo DiCaprio’s “The Revenant” won the frame with only $16 million in its third weekend of wide release.

Cast members Lucy Liu, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie, Jack Black, Bryan Cranston, Kate Hudson and JK Simmons (L-R) pose at the premiere of ‘Kung Fu Panda 3’ at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood, California in January. The movie opens in the US on 29 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

“The Revenant” remained a solid draw in second place in its fourth weekend of wide release, thanks to its dozen Oscar nominations and DiCaprio’s star power. It finished the weekend with $12.4 million at 3,330 sites for a decline of only 25% and has now generated an impressive $138.2 million domestically.

DiCaprio is widely expected to win his first Oscar for his gritty portrayal of fur trapper Hugh Glass in “The Revenant.” He won the SAG Award on Saturday.

Disney’s “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” led the rest of the pack with $10.8 million at 2,566 locations, lifting its record-setting US total to $895.4 million. That was enough to edge the studio’s “The Finest Hours” for fourth.

Universal’s third weekend of “Ride Along 2” followed in fifth with $8.4 million at 2,412 sites, lifting its 17-day total to nearly $71 million.—*Reuters*

Fans brought ‘Deadpool’ to the big screen: Ryan Reynolds

LONDON — Ryan Reynolds has credited movie fans with helping to get his dream project “Deadpool” into production after 11 years of delays.

The “Green Lantern” star was given the chance to reprise his role as an X-Men mutant in the spin-off in the comic book film franchise in 2009, five years after the project was first mooted.

However, the production was hit with a series of delays, including fears the script was too dark and violent, and it was only when a small sample of the intended movie was leaked online that Hollywood bosses realised the support for the film and gave it the go-ahead.

“It’s the best and worst relationship I’ve ever had — ittook 11 years. We even made a taster but that sat on the shelf for four years until someone leaked it on the web and then within 24 hours it got the green light. I tried to make it happen for all that time but the fans got it made,” he said.

“Deadpool”, due out later this year, stars Ryan as the title character and his alter-ego Wade Wilson, a cancer-stricken mercenary who becomes an indestructible mutant following a genetic experiment.—*PTI*

Oscar nominated actor Frank Finlay dies at 89

LONDON — Frank Finlay, the British actor known for his Oscar-nominated work as Iago in “Othello” and 1975’s “The Three Musketeers”, has died, according to his website. He was 89.

“We are very saddened to announce that Frank died on 30 January, 2016 at home surrounded by his family,” the statement read.

“He was a fine actor and will be very much missed by his friends and family.”

Finlay, who was preceded in death by his wife of 50 years, Doreen Shepherd, had over 100 credits to his name and last appeared in the UK’s television mini-series “Four Seasons” in 2009. Notable roles include Casanova in the similarly titled 1971 mini-series and 1976’s “Bouquet of Barbed Wire”.

The actor was also once a member of Laurence Olivier’s National Theatre Company, where he first faced off against the iconic star in the stage production of “Othello”.

“RIP my Grandfather Frank Finlay CBE,” musician Josh Coombes, his grandson wrote on Twitter.

“Funny, loving, amazing storyteller, inspiration & one of the best actors this country has ever seen.—*PTI*

Will Smith confirms return to music

LONDON — Will Smith is making a musical comeback, over 10 years after he released his last album.

Smith, 47, said he also plans to tour again with his former musical partner and hitting the UK this summer with Jazzy Jeff, reported Contactmusic.

“I’ve been working on something and this. We’ve recorded about 25 songs and have four or five I actually like. Jeff and I will be back here (in the UK), this summer to do shows — real shows,” Smith said on a TV show.

Smith first announced his return to making music with Jeff back in October when he was interviewed by Zane Lowe for his Beats 1 radio show.

Smith revealed that he had more than 30 newly recorded songs, adding there was “six or seven that I really, really like, that I’m trying to get the ideas to come out right.”

Speaking about how much the music industry had changed since he and Jeff first started working together in the late 80s, Smith said, “I’m from the era of 16 bars, hook, 16 bars, hook, bridge, hook, out.”

“I’m definitely interested in pushing the envelope of spittin’—how far can you go? I’ma keep giving it a shot up until I’m 70 or 80 years old. I’m just trying to still find that voice; I have so many things that I wanna say. I’m struggling with saying ’em in a way that fit the flavor of music that I tend to like.”—*PTI*

‘I will eventually make a song with Taylor Swift’

LOS ANGELES — Singer-actress Selena Gomez hopes to team up with “best friend” Taylor Swift in near future.

The singers have posed on red carpets together besides appearing in the same music videos, reported E!Online.

Asked if there is any chance of the pop superstars making a song together, Gomez said, “Oh, I don’t know. I mean, eventually, right? She’s my best friend. We’ll see.” Gomez was present at the Sundance Film Festival.—*PTI*

Selena Gomez. PHOTO: REUTERS

Dubai tourism allure undiminished by hotel fire: tourism chief

People watch a fountain in front of Burj Khalifa in Dubai in 2013. PHOTO: REUTERS

DUBAI — Bookings in Dubai's tourism industry are looking strong for the first quarter of this year despite the fire which swept through a downtown hotel on New Year's Eve, the head of the emirate's tourism department told Reuters on Sunday.

Fire engulfed the 63-storey Address Downtown luxury hotel and residential tower as thousands gathered below the nearby Burj Khalifa to watch a huge fireworks display.

Pictures of the blaze, the emirate's second major fire of 2015, were beamed around the world, but Dubai's allure as a tourism hub has not been diminished, according to Helal Saeed Almarri, director-general of Dubai Tourism.

"Quarter 1 forward bookings are looking strong and we remain focused on this growth," he said, noting the "swift and efficient handling of the incident at a very busy time of year" highlighted that people's safety was always a priority.

Tourism is a key pillar of the economy of Dubai, which has established itself as a entertainment and conference hub.

Overnight visitor numbers jumped 7.5 per cent in 2015 to 14.2 million, as the emirate built on its policy of attracting tourists from a wide range of countries, aided by the expanded reach of airlines Emirates and Flydubai, Almarri said.

Asia was the largest source of growth, with a 26 per cent year-on-year jump in Indian visitors to more than 1.6 million people, making India Dubai's number one source of visitors.

South Asia as a whole saw an increase of 21.7 percent year on year, with the rest of Asia rising 17.9 per cent, led by a continued gain in Chinese tourists.

Turning to 2016, the slackening of economic growth in Asia would be among the main challenges for Dubai's tourism sector, Almarri said, as would currency fluctuations.

With the US dollar — to which the United Arab Emirates' dirham is pegged — at multi-year highs against many currencies, the cost of visiting for many has escalated.

The impact has already been seen with visitors from Russia, CIS countries and Eastern Europe slumping 22.5 per cent in 2015. The Russian rouble has been hit by the impact of Western sanctions, while Central Asian nations are suffering from the collapse in oil prices. Almarri added Dubai was focusing on attracting families as their numbers were on the rise, especially among Gulf nations — which constituted the largest segment of visitors at 3.3 million in 2015.—*Reuters*

Japan looks to music therapy as population grays

TOKYO — As Japan's population grays and diseases of aging increase, some hospitals and municipalities are introducing "music therapy" as a way to help patients living with dementia.

Experts believe that that music has the power to give relief from pain and bring back memories. In the United States, the profession of music therapy dates back to World War I, when it developed as a way to help soldiers suffering from traumatic war injuries.

According to the Japanese Music Therapy Association, music therapy is aimed at reversing physical and mental dysfunctions as well as improving quality of life.

Aomori Jikeikai Hospital in northeastern Japan's Aomori Prefecture is one of the medical institutions to have introduced music therapy. Last December, at the hospital's palliative care unit, Yumiko Sato, a 38-year-old music therapist, was playing Dvorak's Symphony No 9 "From the New World" on the harp for a female patient lying in bed.

"My father used to play this piece on the violin," said the 85-year-old patient, as the sound of the instrument filled the room.

"I can see a smile on your face when you talk about your father. Were you a daddy's girl?" Sato responded. Sato received her professional education in the United States and was accredited as a music therapist there. She worked at a hospice for 10 years.

Music therapists attach an importance to talking with patients to analyze their symptoms — a key process before choosing what kind of music to play for them.

If a patient seems to be short on physical strength, a therapist would play music that makes the patient feel relaxed so that he or she can get some sleep, medical experts say. For those in pain, playing an instrument can be an effective way to take their mind off it, experts say. Another patient, an 84-year-old man who used to be an elementary school teacher, talked nostalgically about his younger days and his hometown when he listened to an Irish folk song as part of his music therapy. "I used to practice really hard to play the organ so as to become a teacher," he said.

Junichi Koeda, a doctor in charge of music therapy, said music can sometimes help ease patients' pain when medication does not work.

"There are cases in which (patients) listen to music as a recreation" but music therapy is something different, said Koeda. In Japan, there are some 2,700 music therapists accredited by the Japanese Music Therapy Association, while several other organisations also issue certifications.—*Kyodo News*

Keikyu railway offers heart-covered box seats for Valentine's Day

TOKYO — Keikyu Corp yesterday began operating a special "Love Train" as a promotion for Valentine's Day.

The "Keikyu Love Train," featuring four non-reserved box seats decorated with heart designs, will operate through 14 March, according to the Tokyo-based railway operator.

Valentine's Day on 14 February has been marketed in Japan as a day on which women give chocolates to men, with White Day on 14 March promoted as an occasion for men to return the favour.—*Kyodo News*

A couple rides the "Keikyu Love Train" featuring four non-reserved box seats decorated with heart designs in Tokyo on 1 February, 2016. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

mitv Myanmar International

(2-2-2016 07:00 am~ 3-2-2016 07:00 am) MST

Today Fresh

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Insight Myanmar (Child Protection) "Overview of Child Protection Program"
07:48	Am	A Tourist Destination of Shan State
08:03	Am	News
08:27	Am	Discovering Tribes: Pre Kayaw (Their Life and Customs) (Part-1)
08:52	Am	Graffiti: Portraiture
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Hand Down Arts Heritage
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Myanmar HR Conference (2015) (Part- II)
10:45	Am	A Traditional Doctor
10:51	Am	Today Myanmar: Tram Line

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm) - Monday 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
07:27	Pm	A Day Out With Sarah (EP-7)
07:52	Pm	Yangon Markets: Nyaung Pin Lay Market
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Trend Of Kachin Dress
08:52	Pm	Traffic Police

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) - Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am) - Monday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) - Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

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

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(2-2-2016, Tuesday)

6:00 am
- Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:35 pm
- Socio Economic Scenes

8:35 am
- Documentary

9:35 am
- MRTV's Youth Programme

10:35 am
- Science and Technology Programme

11:35 am
- Documentary

12:35 pm
- TV Drama Series

1:25 pm
- Fine Arts Bosom of Dramatic Performance (Part-1)

2:00 pm
- Sing & Enjoy

4:35 pm
- Football Magazine

5:35 pm
- Money Talk Myanmar

6:35 pm
- People's Talks

7:15 pm
- Fine Arts Bosom of Dramatic Performance (Part-2)

8:00 pm
- News / International News / Weather Report

9:00 pm
- News
- TV Drama Series
- Yes or No Talk Show (Facebook Cele) (Part-2)

Note/ Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)

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Tuesday, 2 February, 2016

Britain's Johanna Konta serves during her quarter-final match against China's Zhang Shuai at the Australian Open tennis tournament at Melbourne Park, Australia, on 27 January. PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain's Konta out of Fed Cup with 'intestinal issue'

LONDON — Britain's Johanna Konta, who reached the Australian Open semi-finals, will miss next week's Euro-Africa zone rounds of the Fed Cup in Israel with an intestinal issue, she said on Sunday.

Konta became the first British woman into the last four of a grand slam in over 30 years before her exhilarating run was halted on Thursday by eventual champion Angelique Kerber.

She had been due to compete in Eilat, Israel where two of the 14 teams taking part will win promotion to World Group level.

"I have been advised by the doctors that playing there would jeopardise an ongoing intestinal issue that got progressively worse through the Australian Open," she said in a statement.

Britain will play Georgia and South Africa in the round-robin phase, with the group winner facing a playoff.

"While its obviously very disappointing, we still have a squad of players capable of winning through the Euro/Africa Zone Group 1," captain Judy Murray said.—*Reuters*

Chelsea and Everton crush minnows' FA Cup dreams

LONDON — Chelsea banished any fears of a repeat of last season's shock FA Cup fourth-round exit to Bradford City when they crushed Championship (second-tier) side Milton Keynes Dons 5-1 to reach the fifth round on Sunday.

Everton comfortably won 3-0 at League Two Carlisle United in the early kickoff, with the fourth-tier club playing at home for only the second time after floods damaged their Brunton Park home in December. A first half hat-trick by Brazilian Oscar put Chelsea in command by halftime at Milton Keynes thanks to a tap-in after 15 minutes and two superb strikes after 32 and 44 minutes. Chelsea dominated the game with 15 shots on goal in the first 45 minutes.

Eden Hazard, who had not scored for 30 matches, made it 4-1 from the penalty spot after 55 minutes before substitute Bertrand Traore, who had been on the pitch five minutes, scored his first goal for Chelsea to make it 5-1 in the 62nd. MK Dons, who defended poorly in an entertaining match, got a brief glimmer of hope after 22 minutes when former Liverpool midfielder Darren Potter scored with a long-range shot that looped over Chelsea keeper Thibaut Courtois after taking a deflection off Nemanja Matic.

Chelsea are unbeaten in nine games under interim boss Guus Hiddink, who led the club to victory in the 2009 final during his first spell in charge.

"These games are always difficult. When you play Arsenal, Man U, Man City..., the concentration is automatically high but for these games you have to be well prepared mentally." Chelsea missed at least five clearcut chances in the first half, but MK Dons never looked like emulating the achievement of League One Bradford, who won 4-2 at Chelsea at this stage of the competition last year after trailing 2-0. "I thought they were scary. They were on it, and they were unplayable," said MK Dons manager Karl Robinson.

Carlisle's hopes of an upset were doused within two minutes of kickoff as Arouna Kone tapped home the simplest of goals after Aaron Lennon swept down the right and sent in a low cross.—*Reuters*

Ronaldo hat-trick as Real hit Espanyol for six

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo. PHOTO: REUTERS

MADRID — Prolific Cristiano Ronaldo hit a 35th hat-trick for Real Madrid who swept aside Espanyol 6-0 in a ruthless attacking display in La Liga on Sunday.

The Portuguese led the way as Real sought to keep in the title chase after an inconsistent season so far that still leaves them in third place, four points behind leaders Barcelona.

Karim Benzema headed in a whipped cross from James Rodriguez after seven minutes and then Ronaldo won and struck home a penalty. A Rodriguez strike was deflected in after 16 minutes and Ronaldo showed a sublime touch to beat two players and curl a 20 yard shot into the corner before halftime.

Ronaldo headed in from close range after 82 minutes and is now joint top scorer in La Liga on 19 goals with Barcelona's Luis Suarez.

Espanyol's misery was complete with an own-goal from Oscar Duarte. Barca are three points clear, on 51 points, after their 2-1 victory in the top of the table clash with Atletico Madrid on Saturday. Ronaldo gave his backing to coach Zinedine Zidane with the side having scored 16 goals in three home games since he took over from Rafa Benitez.

"Zidane is doing well and you can see the results on the pitch," Ronaldo told reporters. "Zidane has come with a different idea of work and the atmosphere is better. We are winning by big margins. "We will keeping chasing Barcelona and Atletico, and see where we are at the end of the season."—*Reuters*

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www.facebook.com/globalnewlightofmyanmar

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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