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Investigation Commission conducts second round of field trips to northern Rakhine State

Investigation Commission on Rakhine State led by Chairman Vice President U Myint Swe has begun its second field trip to Maungtaw yesterday morning, to investigate violent attacks that took place in October and November.

The aim of the commission's second visit to the area is to investigate into the real causes of violent attacks in Maungtaw, to find means to prevent further attacks and to find out whether measures taken there during the incidents were in accordance with the law and in order to report its findings and recommendations to the President on time.

The commission led by the Vice President left Nay Pyi Taw for Sittway and proceeded to Zinpaingnya and Myothugyi Villages which experienced violent attacks.

First, the Vice President and commission met with residents of Zinpaingnya Village at the post-primary school and discussed about security and development of the village. The village was the place where about 15 people had come and beaten family members of U Nu Mammaud before abducting his two sons, one was 18 years old and another was 12 years old, on 7 November 2016. The commission interviewed some residents and attended to their needs.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, who accompanied the commission, presented 99 bags of rice and 16 bags of chickpeas to residents through the village administrator. The Muslim village has a population of 8821 people of 920 households.

Chairman of Investigation Commission on Rakhine State talks to local people in Zinpaingnyar Village in Maungtaw Township. PHOTO: MNA

Then, the Vice President and the commission met with locals of Myothugyi Village at the post-primary school and talked about security, the socioeconomic situation, trade and transportation difficulties and organizing religious events in freedom, before attending to their needs.

Members of the commission Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin and Daw Kyain Ngai Man met with Muslim women of the village at the school and asked them individually whether violence against women were committed during the incidents but the local women told the commission that there had not been any violence against women in their village and that there were only rumours of such things.

> There had not been any violence against women in their village and that there were only rumours of such things.

Afterwards, the Vice President and the commission members visited the scene of clashes between security forces on area clearance duty when about 20 violent attackers armed with knives and other weapons attacked the security forces. Later seven bodies of the attackers, a homemade gun and three of its bullets were seized on 10 October 2016. The village is resided mostly by Muslim and has a population of 8,879 from 1,240 households. Not a house was burnt down in the village and residents live peacefully.

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Speaker U Win Myint holds talks with Philippine Ambassador in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives NDI Director and Philippine Ambassador separately

PHILIPPINE ambassador H.E. Mr. Alex G. Chua, who had completed his tour of duty, called on Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U Win Myint at 2pm at Pyithu Hluttaw Building yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries, further strengthening of existing good relations between the two countries and promotion of cooperation.

Likewise, Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U Win Myint received Mr. Peter M. Manikas, Senior Associate and Regional Director of Asia programs of National Democratic Institute (NDI) at 3:00 pm on 6 January in Nay Pyi Taw. At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to providing assistance for strengthening the Hluttaw activities and for Hluttaw development tasks.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw speaker U T Khun Myat and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw Office. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Union Minister for Defense Lt-Gen Sein Win receives Chinese Military Attaché

UNION Minister for Defense Lt-Gen Sein Win received a delegation led by Chinese Military Attaché to Myanmar Senior Colonel Xiong Shaowei at 2 pm yesterday at the Ministry of Defense in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to promotion of cooperation between the two armed forces and providing advanced military technology assistance stability of territory of the two countries.

Also present were deputy minister for defence Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and officials.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives NDI director and Philippine Ambassador separately

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received a delegation led by Mr. Peter M. Manikas, Senior Associate and Regional Director of Asia programs of National Democratic Institute (NDI) at 1:30 pm on 6 January at Amyotha Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw. At the meeting, they discussed matters relating to promoting development of Hluttaw.

Likewise, Philippine ambassador H.E. Mr. Alex G. Chua, who had completed his tour of duty, called on Amyotha Hluttaw speaker at 3pm and they discussed matters related to further strengthen existing friendly relations between the two countries and co-operation. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than holds talks with National Democratic Institute (NDI) Director in Nay Pyit Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs receives Egyptian Ambassador

UNION Minister for Ethnic Affairs Naing Thet Lwin received H.E. Mr. Khaled Mohamed Abdelrahman Abdelsalam, the ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Myanmar at 10 am yesterday at Ministry of Ethnic Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, the minister and the ambassador discussed matters relating to measures taken in regard to ethnic affairs, the progress of Union Peace Conference — 21st Century Panglong, and delicate handling of sensitive and subtle Rakhine State affairs.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Existing bus-lines plying in Yangon to be replaced with new bus-lines

ALL the bus lines plying in the city of Yangon will be abolished with effect from January 16, 2017, to be replaced with newly changed 58 bus lines, according to the Yangon Region Cabinet.

"To reduce the traffic jam facing presently in Yangon and to make bus lines systematically formed, the new arrangement was said to have been made," said U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Cabinet's Chief Minister in a press conference held at the Office of Yangon Region Cabinet yesterday.

He added, "Our government is changing into a new system. Starting from January 16, bus lines plying presently will be liquidated and substituted by new bus lines. Later, the system of public-owned bus lines in which the government itself will partially be stakeholders, will be changed.

Passengers gather at a bus stop to take BRT bus in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

There are 20 companies in all, which applied to the Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board to allow them to run in Yangon. It is learnt that by the end of 2017, public-owned bus lines that the Yangon Region government itself will invest their shares will be introduced.

It is said that the existing All Bus Line Control Committee controlling more than 300 bus lines will cease to exist as of January 16.

The said 58 bus lines which will commence their operations starting from January 16 will be supervised by Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board which will review the situations of the operations quarterly, it is said.

Under the new system, bus fare will be collected according to the phase of the journey ranging from K 100, K 200 & K300, and for the convenience of passengers signboards will be posted at bus stops. In addition, assistant helpers will be stationed at bus stops, it is learnt.

Daw Ni Lar Kyaw, minister for electricity, industry and transport, Yangon Region Cabinet said, "Now, there are many bus lines on the same route. So bus lines on the same routes will be combined into one. This had been made in consultation with experts and professionals."

To manage the system, arrangements are required to be submitted to the Yangon Region Transport Supervision Board starting from 7 January.

Naw Pan Thinzar Myo, minister for Kayin ethnic affairs said that Buses plying in the city will be made to run every five minutes and to be connected with bus lines coming from suburban areas.

Dyna and BM buses will be no longer allowed to ply, it is said.

Presently over 2000,000 people are depending on bus lines in Yangon where 6 million people are residing.

On February 7, 2016 the first-ever BRT buses were made to run in Yangon as a private-owned company for the convenience of the people.—*Ko Moe*

Malaysian NGOs's aid flotilla cannot be allowed to enter without prior approval from Government of Myanmar:MOFA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar informed Malaysian Embassy in Yangon regarding the report of Malaysian NGOs' aid flotilla for providing a specific community in Rakhine, dated on 5th January, 2017, according to the State Counsellor's Office Information Committee.

The Ministry presented its compliments to the Embassy and had the honour to draw the kind attention of the Embassy to the news reports of Malaysian NGOs planning to send aid flotilla to help a specific community in the northern Rakhine State, Myanmar, said the committee quoting the statement released by Ministry of Information dated 5th January.

In the statement, the ministry said it welcomed humanitarian assistance from the Governments of the fellow ASEAN Member States to both communities in Rakhine State without any discrimination and the proposal should be made through the proper diplomatic channel.

"In this regard, the Ministry would like to refer to its Note No.31 46 (01) /2017 (12) dated 2 January 2017, addressed to all Embassies of the ASEAN Member States in Yangon, informing of the arrangements to be pursued in facilitating cash or in-kind support to Rakhine State from the ASEAN Member States," said the statement released by the Ministry of Information.

The Ministry informed the Embassy that it is currently working closely with the Embassy of Indonesia for the deliverance of humanitarian assistance, donated by the Government of Indonesia to both communities in Rakhine State through diplomatic channel.

In the statement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs also expressed its hopes that Malaysia, as a fellow member of ASEAN, will also follow the example of Indonesia if the Government or non-governmental organizations wish to provide necessary humanitarian assistance to those in need in Rakhine State.

The press release also stated that the Embassy of Malaysia have been informed that the ministry would be grateful if the Government of Malaysia could kindly take necessary measures to prevent the reported attempt by certain NGOs to send aid flotilla which cannot be allowed to enter without prior approval from the Government of Myanmar.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Investigation Commission . . .

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In the afternoon, the Vice President and the commission met with the Chief Minister, State Minister Dr Chantha, and representatives of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Rakhine State Hluttaw and discussed challenges to regional security and stability and measures taken by the Rakhine State Government and assistance that should be provided by the Union government.

The Vice President explained the responsibilities of the commission, the interim report and requirements for the final report. Participants at the meeting discussed prevention of violent attacks including transportation, the rule of law, regional stability, electricity supply and issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards.

Members of the commission Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin and Daw Kyain Ngai Man met with Rakhine nationals at the Sasana Beikman Hall in Maungtaw while commission members U Thar Nyan and U Saw Thalay Saw met with Muslims at Maungtaw District General Administration Department, with Hindus at the township administration department and abbots in Muangtaw at Myoma Monastery and members of the commission U Tun Myat and U Nyunt Swe met with UN Agencies, INGO's and local civil society organizations separately at the township administration department.

The commission has been findings facts for its final report adopting a cautious approach between acts in breach of the law and rumours.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Eleven Media CEO, chief editor released on bail

TAMWAY Township Court granted bails for Chief Executive Officer Dr Than Tun Aung and Chief Editor U Wai Phyo of the Eleven Media, who have been sued by the Yangon Region Government, yesterday morning.

At today's trial, U Moe Hein, one of the twelve witnesses presented by the plaintiff, was questioned by the judge and the two defendants were granted bails.

The defendants were denied bails for three times before being granted.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*

State Counsellor receives members of MISIS

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the members of Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) led by MISIS's President U Nyunt Maung Shein, Ambassador (Rtd) in the Ayeyawady Hall, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Nay Pyi Taw) at 10:00 am on 6th January 2017. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin, Permanent Secretary U Kyaw Zeya and Directors-General from respective departments of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the meeting, MISIS's President U Nyunt Maung Shein presented the International and regional researches and the processes undertaken by MISIS. U Nyunt Maung Shein, Ambassador (Retd) and U Aye Lwin, Director-General (Rtd) donated their collected documents on the Myanmar foreign relations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—*Myanmar News Agency*

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meeting with members of Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS). PHOTO: MNA

AL Jazeera warns of fake news, pictures on Rakhine issue

AL JAZEERA warned about fake news about human rights abuses in Rakhine on social media, disclosing a man who sent fake news and photos to Al Jazeera.

The name of the man is Ro Nay San Lwin and he posted fake photos of human right abuses in northern Rakhine on Twitter social media after the Human Rights Watch released satellite photos of burnt houses in northern Rakhine, said Leah Harding, the presenter of Al Jazeera, in Twitter In Chief#Rohingya Fake News on AJNews Grid program.

The program is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBhXhOsbMJC.

Ro Nay San Lwin has sent fabricated news and photos to a producer of Al Jazeera.

Many pictures have flowed into the AJ News Grid program and they had made the programme team very frustrated, she said.

Myanmar has been accused of human rights abuses due to pictures of an incident that happened in Nigeria five years ago, she said.

The program has warned other media and social media to be careful of news and pictures in northern Rakhine as there are many fake news and pictures online.

Ro Nay San Lwin also posted a fake picture on the social media and news that a child died due to forced vaccination in Rakhine State.

An oversea community, which has received financial assistance from many donors, has been instigating conflicts in Myanmar, said the press release of the State Counsellor's Office Information Committee.—*Myanmar News Agency*

PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Flyover Art Projects under Myenigon, Kaba-Aye overpasses nearly finished

FLYOVER Art Projects which are being implemented under Yangon's Myanigone and Kabar-Aye overpasses are almost finished, with plans to open the two art-filled public spaces on 25 January, project implementers say.

With the aim of transforming the automotive ramps into public, art-filled spaces for pedestrians, the project has been initiated by the Yangon Region government with technical assistance of the French Embassy in Myanmar since the first week of November.

The Flyover Art Project is being implemented into three phases. The first phase is now 90 per cent complete, while the second and third stages of the project are 50 per cent finished, organizers said.

Similar art projects are planned under the Hledan Flyover, 8-mile Flyover, and Shwegondaing Flyover.

Thanks to the new scheme, the public can relax at a pleasant place decorated with artwork, which will be open 24 hours a day.

As part of a cleaning programme across the city, different types of recycling bins will be placed at those decorated public areas.—*200*

YCDC plans to open night market along 52nd Street in downtown Yangon

YANGON City Development Committee plans to open a night market along 52nd Street in downtown Yangon in the second week of this month, its spokesperson said.

For the purpose of public interest and reducing traffic congestions, authorities will arrange to open stalls in a night market. They are now negotiating with Hluttaw representatives from respective townships to move the vendors to the new night market.

An official of the YCDC said that the committee has not yet set the exact date to launch the night market. They are putting forth continuous efforts to implement the project as quickly as possible.

The new night market will have approximately 130 stalls.

Vendors are seen at Strand Road in downtown Yangon on 8 December 2016. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Select vendors selling products along the downtown streets including Anawrahta Road, MahaBandoola Road, Botahtaung Pagoda Road and Bo Myat Tun Road will be invited to open up stalls in the new night market.

The YCDC has already compiled a list of street hawkers.—*200*

Third-party liability insurance compensation raised two times in 2016-2017 FY

MYANMA Insurance Dawei town has raised the compensation rate twofoldfor third-party liability in 2016-2017 finical year, it is learnt from Myanmar Insurance Dawei region office.

There are two types of third-party liability insurance: bodily injury liability covers costs and deadth compensation. In 2015-2016, Myanma insurance paid Ks 500,000 in case of death and Ks 10,000 up to Ks 400,000 for injures, depending on the severity of the case. But, Myanma Insurance has increased their compensation twofold in 2016-2017 finical year.

"The third-party insurance will be paid for registered motor vehicles only. As for the passengers, will get the third-party insurance only when the vehicle they are taking must be registered, and the license needs to be valid," said Daw Thandar Soe, an in charge of Myanma Insurance Dawei region office.

This is double the amount offered at the moment. Beginning from 2016-2017 finical year, Myanma Insurance pays Ks 1 million in case of death and Ks 20,000 up to Ks 800,000 for injuries. If the driver dies in an accident, his beneficiaries will be issued with the third-party insurance only if he is holding a valid driving license.

"Most of the people do not know they are entitled to get the compensation. So, the authorities need to promote the awareness of the third-party insurance when they issue the licenses alone with giving the awareness the traffic rules and regualations," said Ko Kyaw Min Khant, a local from Dawei region.

The victims involved in traffic accidents can apply for the third-party insurance within one year after the accident having occurred. The applicant needs to bring the driver license, national ID, the household list, recommendation letters from the police station, the hospital and township administration they and apply for the compensation at the Myanma insurance office. To claim death compensation requires a dead certificate from a hospital.

In 2015-2016 finanical year, there was only one person who applied for the third-party liability insurance in Taninthayi division. In 2016-2017 finical year, four persons applied for the third-party liability insurance, it is learnt from Myanma Insurance Dawei region office.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Crime NEWS

Police rescue about 100 trafficked victims in 2016

POLICE exposed a total of 130 human trafficking cases in 2016, arresting 11 traffickers with 40 others still remaining to be at large, according to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division.

The authorities rescued 93 trafficked victims, who were sold out to work as forced labour or to enter into a forced marriage in neighbouing countries, between January and December last year.

Police failed to save over 200 victims of human trafficking last year, accelerating their investigation to rescue them in cooperation with relevant organisations.

Shan State remains to be an area with highest cases of trafficking in persons numbering 47, while Yangon was the next highest with 24 cases.

The majority of victims were sent to China, followed by Thailand and Malaysia. Most woman victims were sold into forced marriages in China whereas men were made forced labours in Thailand, with the most of them being helpless women.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime in both developed and developing countries. Forced labour and sexual exploitation are serious international crimes.—*200*

Almost 70 million yaba pills sized nationwide in past 11 months of 2016

POLICE uncovered 8,117 drug trafficking cases over the past 11 months of last year across Myanmar, confiscating nearly 70 million yaba pills from the illegal drug dealers, according to the official figures released by the Myanmar Police Force.

From January to November, the authorities collected opium weighing over 616 kilos, heroin weighing over 544 kilos, 69.835 million yaba tablets, marijuana weighing 146.338 kilos, poppy oil weighing over 44 kilos, low-quality opium weighing 21.785 kilos and ICE weighing 2,369 kilos.

Over 471 kilos of brown opium, more than 340,000 diazepam tablets, 171 bottles of morphine, 0.46 litres of methadone, 700 bottles of fentanyl, and 11,800 kilos of sodium carbonate, 3,827 kilos of ammonium chloride, over 1,775 litres of sulfuric acid, 1,053 litres of phosphoric acid and other illegal chemical substances were also seized last year.

Police could arrest a total of 12,265 people including 10,770 men and 1,495 women relating to illegal drug trading in 2016.

In collaboration with relevant government departments and organisations, the Ministry of Home Affairs is exerting sustained effort to reduce drug related crimes in the country and prevent the spread of stimulant substances among general public especially among students and young people through various programmes.—*Than Oo (Laymyathna)*

One dies and two seriously injured in car crash in Paung township

ONE man was killed and two others seriously injured when a motorbike collided with an oil browser vehicle on Yangon- Mawlamyine road, near Yin Nyein (North) village, Paung township, Mon State, it is learnt from Yin Nyein police station.

The browser was en route to Thaton from Mawlamyine driven by Ye Myint with Thant Zaw Oo aboard crashed into the motorbike heading to Mawlamyine from Thaton driven by Pyayt Son, 28, with Phyo Wai Tun, 26, and Aung Myo Oo,26, on board in the middle of the road.

"The motorbike got hooked with the car. Pyayt Son was pronounced dead at the scene while two others were taken to hospital for treatment. The driver of browser fled the scene. The police are still investigating the case," said an official from Yin Nyein police station.

An oil browser vehicle crased into the motorbike on Yangon-Mawlamying road, Mon State.
PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

The police opened a lawsuit against the both drivers under section 304(A)/338 of the Penal Code while searching for the driver of the browser who managed to escape from the scene. —*Myitmakha News Agency*

LOCAL Business

Myanmar amethysts should be promoted in gems market

AMETHYSTS are one of the most popular gems used in jewellery, particularly the Dawna amethyst, which is primarily mined in Dawna Mountain ranges of Kayin State.

Although the amethysts are exported, local demand is low, making it difficult for Myanmar amethyst traders to earn a profit, said Ko Htay Win, a local amethyst seller.

"Foreign countries such as India, China and Saudi Arabia love to buy the amethysts which are mined in Kyain state. But the amethysts are rare in local markets because we don't have demand. So we need to promote the amethysts in the local market," he added.

The Dawna amethysts from Kayin State are sold at showrooms in Myawady town and Bagan Myothit. To stimulate demand from local market, amethyst showrooms need to be opened in all regions and states, the sellers said.—*200*

180,000 tonnes of rice to go foreign markets via sea in early months of 2017

A farmer harvests rice on a field in Maungtaw, Rahine. PHOTO: MNA

ABOUT 180,000 tonnes of Myanmar's rice will be sold to foreign buyers through normal trade within the first three months of this year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Due to high demand from Africa, this year's export volume of rice has increased when compared with the same period last fiscal year. The ministry is putting forth continuous efforts to penetrate not only the African market but also the European market. During this financial year, the country exported more than 120,000 tonnes of rice to its trade partners via sea routes while over 470,000 tonnes of rice went to neighbours through border trade camps.

Rice exports via the Muse Border Trade Camp this year is lower than that of last year, resulting from recent fighting near Muse border town and China's crackdown on cross-border trade.—*200*

MAPCO to develop Mandalay Development Bank this year

MYANMAR Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO) plans to establish a new public bank called Mandalay Development Bank this year, its spokesperson said.

The new bank will be set up in Mandalay, one of largest commercial cities in the country. The corporation already demanded granting of land for the project from the Mandalay Region government.

MAPCO will start running the new bank with a capital of Ks20 billion, planning to invite shareholders of the members of the corporation to invest in the new business.

Shares of the new banking business will be sold to public.

Plans are underway to open the branches of the bank if the new project will produce successful outcomes.

The MAPCO was formally formed in August, 2012 as the Public Company, to mobilize public savings and to foster broader investment in agriculture and agro-based industries of Myanmar.—*200*

Power Eleven Public Co to run 50 air-con buses in mid January

POWER Eleven Public Company is making arrangements to run buses on the No. 45 bus line on 15 January with 50 air-conditioned buses, it is learnt.

"We are ready to run our buses. Our minister asked that we begin to operate by 15 January. The cars have already been make to be in the smoothly running condition," said Ko Tayote Lay, managing director of Power Eleven Public Company.

The buses were bought from the local market at a high price in order to make the 15 January deadlne. The buses were then reconditioned. Also, the company will give priority to the public to buy shares at a price of Ks 0.1 million per share to enable the public to participate in the public company, Ko Tayote Lay said.

"If we import the buses from Korea, we can reduce the cost. But we would not be able to start the plan in time. So, we just bought the buses from the local market. We will run only between Insein- Danyingone and Sule, he added.

Currently, the No. 45 bus line is running between Insein-Danyingone and Sule with a fleet of 21 buses. A board of directors for Power Eleven Public Company was formed with seven members—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Maha Aung Myay Gems dealers' market likely to raise its head in 2017

Maha Aung Myay Gems dealers' market is likely to raise its head as Chinese merchants could possibly come to Mandalay to purchase gems after Chinese New Year, said Mandalay gems dealers.

The Chinese merchants who normally trade in the Mandalay gems market are currently back to China to participate in the New Year festival. But Mandalay gems market is expected to enjoy high demand once the merchants return, it is learnt.

Maha Aung Myay gems dealers' market has been cool since 2014, according to the gems dealers' market.

"The gems market is not stable yet. It is usual that the Chinese merchants come down to buy them," said Ko Soe Lay, a gem dealer.

The market saw good demand from China and Thailand merchants in January, said Mandalay gems dealers.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar's pomelo to penetrate more international markets

MYANMAR Pomelo Producers and Exporters Association is exerting efforts to penetrate China and European Union market in 2017.

"Myanmar's pomelo supply cannot meet the demand, even though there is demand from foreign countries.

It is not pomelo season yet. We are gearing up to export pomelo to China in August and September. The export volume will depend on the production rate," said U Win Shwe from the pomelo producers association.

"We will export the pomelo variety they prefer. Honey pomelo is mostly grown in Myanmar," he added.

Over 12 tonnes of pomelo were exported to Singapore in fiscal year 2014-2015. There are over 3,000 acres of pomelo plantations in Myanmar, mostly in Mon State, but can also found in Kayin State and Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Mandalay regions, it is learnt.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Nuclear, missile tests show 'qualitative' improvement in North Korea capabilities — US

WASHINGTON — The United States said on Thursday North Korea had demonstrated a "qualitative" improvement in its nuclear and missile capabilities after an unprecedented level of tests last year, showing the needed to sustain pressure on Pyongyang to bring it back to disarmament negotiations.

US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a joint news conference after a meeting with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts that North Korea had conducted 24 missile tests in the past year, as well as two nuclear tests, and learned from each one.

"Even a so-called failure is progress because ... they apply what they have learned to their technology and to the next test. And in our assessment, we have a qualitative improvement in their capabilities in the past year as a result of this unprecedented level of activity," he said.

"With every passing day the threat does get more acute," Blinken said, and referred to comments by North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, on Sunday that his country was close to test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) of a kind that could someday hit the United States.

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un smiles as he visits Sohae Space Centre in Cholsan County, North Pyongan province for the testing of a new engine for an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 9 April 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Blinken said it was vital for the United States, Japan, South Korea and other countries to boost cooperation to defend against the threat.

"At the same time, it's absolutely vitally important that we exercise sustained, comprehensive pressure on North Korea to get it to stop these programmes, to come back to the negotiating table, and to engage in good faith on denuclearisation," Blinken said, referring to international sanctions.

US President-elect Donald Trump responded on Monday to Kim's comments on an ICBM test by declaring in a tweet that "It won't happen!"

Experts say preventing such a test is far easier said than done, and Trump gave no indication what new steps he might take to roll back North Korea's weapons programmes after he takes office on 20 January, something successive US administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have failed to do.

Former US officials and other experts say the United States essentially had two options when it came to trying to curb North Korea's fast-expanding nuclear and missile programmes — negotiate or take military action. Neither path offers certain success and the military option is fraught with huge dangers, especially for Japan and South Korea, given their close proximity to North Korea.

Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shinsuke Sugiyama said Tokyo was watching closely to see what kind of Asia policy Trump would follow, but did not expect major changes.

"Will it be exactly the same as we have it now? I doubt it. But basically, I don't see the direction as changing in a significant way," he told the news conference, adding that the US security treaties with Tokyo and Seoul were an important pillar of US policy.

Blinken said an effective sanctions campaign required "determination" and "patience." "I believe that as long as we sustain it and build on it, it will have an effect," he said.

In another tweet on Monday, Trump said North Korea's neighbour and only ally, China, was not helping to contain Pyongyang — despite Beijing's support for successive rounds of UN sanctions.

Blinken said Washington had seen positive signs from China in recent weeks in implementing new restrictions on coal imports from North Korea, but added: "That needs to be sustained ... to be carried forward." —*Reuters*

Thai PM visits flood-battered south: six dead, transport disrupted

BANGKOK — Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha visited flooded parts of the south of the country on Friday where unseasonable downpours have killed six people, cut road and rail links and forced an airport to close.

Thailand's wet season usually ends in late November and heavy rain and flooding is rare in January, which is high season for beach resorts in the south.

Twenty-six flights to and from the main airport in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat airport were cancelled on Friday because the runway was flooded, the Department of Airports said.

"The floods began on 1 January and are due to the unseasonable heavy rain," said an officer at the National Disaster Warning Centre who declined to be identified as she is not authorised to speak to the media.—*Reuters*

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Duterte hopes Russia will become Philippines' ally and protector

MANILA — President Rodrigo Duterte said on Friday that he hoped Moscow, a rival of the Philippine's traditional ally the United States, would become his country's ally and protector as he toured one of the two Russian warships on a four-day visit to Manila.

Duterte's remarks came a day after Russia's ambassador said his country was ready to supply the Philippines with sophisticated weapons and aims to become its close friend.

"We welcome our Russian friends. Anytime you want to dock here for anything, for play, for replenish supplies or maybe our ally to protect us," said Duterte while shaking the hands of Rear Admiral Eduard Mikhailov, head of the Flotilla of the Russian Navy Pacific Fleet.

Duterte has thrown the future of Philippine-US relations into question with angry outbursts against the United States, a former colonial power, and some scaling back of military ties while taking steps to improve relationships with China and Russia.

President Rodrigo Duterte returns the salute of a military officer (not pictured) as he leads the death anniversary celebration of Filipino national hero Dr Jose Rizal in Manila, Philippines, on 30 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

He is due to go to Moscow in April. The visit by the Russian warships was the first official navy-to-navy contact between the two countries.

Last month, Duterte sent his foreign and defence ministers to Moscow to discuss arms deals after a US senator said he would block the sale of 26,000 assault rifles to the Philippines due to concern about a rising death toll in a war on drugs launched by Duterte. Mikhailov said on Tuesday Russia wanted to hold maritime exercises with the Philippines to help combat terrorism and piracy.—*Reuters*

China nibbles at Samsung share to take 50 per cent of India's smartphone market

MUMBAI — Chinese brands took their largest ever slice of the $10-billion Indian smartphone market in late 2016, accounting for more than one in every two phones sold — a growing market share that ate into sales from top-selling Samsung Electronics.

Samsung, the single most popular smartphone brand in India, commanded a roughly 30 per cent market share just over a year ago. That slipped to 21 per cent in November, according to tech research firm Counterpoint, the last month for which data is available.

Meanwhile — thanks to low cost, improved technology and an advertising blitz — Chinese brands like Oppo, Lenovo, OnePlus, Gionee and Xiaomi took a combined share of over 50 per cent, compared to just 19 per cent a year ago.

"Chinese brands are offering quality that is at par with Samsung, at a better price," said Manish Khatri, who owns two multi-brand smartphone outlets in Mumbai. "Of every 10 phones I sell, almost six to seven are now Chinese brands."

Celebrity endorsements from Bollywood actors like Hrithik Roshan and Ranveer Singh, along with huge sponsorship campaigns by brands such as Oppo and Gionee of the wildly popular Indian Premier League cricket franchise have helped improve perception of Chinese brands — once derided for their low quality.

A Xiaomi's Mi 4i phone is kept on display at the venue during its launch in New Delhi, in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

"In a country like India, there are two religions — one is Bollywood and the second is cricket," said Arvind R Vohra, Gionee's India head, noting that both avenues have helped popularize its brand.

Chinese brand executives said innovative product features such as powerful selfie cameras with flash, quicker charging and longer-lasting batteries have also helped them thrive in India, one of the world's biggest and fastest growing smartphone markets.

In the large and ultra-competitive $120 to $440 mid-market smartphone segment, Chinese vendors have more than doubled their market share to 68 per cent, while Samsung has lost 14 percentage points since November 2015, according to Counterpoint.

"Being a global company is Samsung's biggest curse," says Neil Shah of Counterpoint, adding Samsung cannot compete on price like their Chinese rivals, who are focused more on low-cost markets like China, India and Indonesia.

Shah said Chinese vendors' access to low-cost components and their expertise in designing metal casing for cheap phones has let brands like Oppo, OnePlus and Lenovo offer better quality products than Samsung, which uses plastic for its cheapest models.

Adding to Samsung's woes last year was the arrival of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's new telecom venture Jio, with heavily subsidised handsets to get customers on its 4G network.

Dyaneshwar Sarde, a 33-year-old Indian farmer who earlier used a Samsung device, said he wanted to buy a 4G smartphone to use Reliance Jio.

"Samsung phones were comparatively expensive, so I ended up buying a Lenovo a friend recommended."

India's home-grown brands such as Micromax, Lava and Karbonn are feeling the heat even more, according to Counterpoint, with their total market share having dropped to less than 20 per cent from over 40 per cent last year. *—Reuters*

South Korean Volkswagen executive gets jail term in emissions scandal fallout

SEOUL — A South Korean court on Friday sentenced an executive of Volkswagen's (VOWG_p. DE) local unit to one year and six months in prison for fabricating documents on emissions and noise-level tests to achieve certification for vehicles for import.

This is the latest fallout from Volkswagen's emissions-test cheating scandal that last year resulted in a sales suspension in South Korea, a once fast-growing market for the German automaker.

"Volkswagen has by itself undermined its credibility as a global brand as a result of this crime which has caused grave social and economic damages ...," the Seoul Central District Court said in a statement, referring to the suspension.

The court statement only gave the surname of the executive, Yun, and said he was convicted of document fabrication, obstruction of work and the violation of an environment law.

In August, South Korea's environment ministry suspended the sales of 80 models of Volkswagen, Audi and Bentley vehicles, and fined the group's local unit 17.8 billion won ($14.91 million) for allegedly forging documents on emissions or noise-level tests. *—Reuters*

Work begins to remove debris left from massive fire in coastal city

NIIGATA, (Japan) — A city on the Sea of Japan coast began Friday removing debris left behind on privately owned land from a massive fire that broke out last month destroying some 150 buildings and injuring 11 people.

The Itoigawa city government in Niigata Prefecture said it plans to finish clearing up the debris by the end of March following the biggest fire in 20 years not caused by a natural disaster.

The blaze on 22 December destroyed about 150 houses in 40,000 square meters of the city. While most of the debris on the roads has been removed, workers still have to clear up the debris remaining on privately owned land.

In a rare step to lessen the burden on local residents, Environment Minister Koichi Yamamoto told a news conference in Tokyo the central government is coordinating with Niigata Prefecture and Itoigawa city to cover all the debris removal costs through public funds.

Usually, when a fire breaks out on private land, owners are left to fully shoulder the costs of removing debris.

The Environment Ministry said it is planning to cover 90 per cent of the costs to remove debris as it does following natural disasters, and leave the rest to the local governments.

On 30 December, disaster management minister Jun Matsumoto said the government will provide up to 3 million yen (around $25,880) to each affected household, based on a law aimed at helping people affected by natural disasters to return to normal life. The aid is given partly because the blaze inflicted damage on a wide area due to strong wind.

The next day, Toshihiro Nikai, secretary general of ruling Liberal Democratic Party, told Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama and Itoigawa Mayor Toru Yoneda after visiting the city that he does not want to see the burden of debris removal being passed on to residents.

Removal of debris starts on 6 January, 2017, in the Sea of Japan coastal city of Itoigawa, following a 22 December fire which burned down more than 140 buildings. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

To speed up reconstruction efforts, the city was initially thinking of paying for most for the costs, possibly asking residents to shoulder up to 20 per cent.

Still, an official of the Cabinet Office said the fire is unlikely to be designated as a disaster of "extreme severity" because the amount of damage incurred by the fire failed to meet the government-set standard.

Being designated as such paves the way for affected communities to receive higher state subsidies to aid recovery efforts.

Police believe the blaze started at a ramen noodle restaurant, whose owner said he had left a stove burner unattended. *—Kyodo News*

Opinion

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 ***ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.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.

Competitive climbing for a prize on the greasy pole highlights an example for us to follow

Khin Maung Oo

ON the 4th of January last week, lively and teeming ceremonies marking the 69th anniversary of the Myanmar Independence Day were held across the nation. With a view to making our younger generations value the Independence that our forefathers achieved by sacrificing their lives, ceremonies are celebrated annually. We are used to spending this day enjoying ourselves by taking part in joyous competitions in traditional and other various kinds of sports in wards and villages nationwide. Out of all specific days such as National Day, Union Day etc., held in the country, celebrating joyous competitions and events on the Independence Day is more meaningful for us to understand the true essence of Independence.

Among the events in the Independence Day celebrations, competitive climbing for a prize on the greasy pole is team work for people in every sector of our society to take lessons. A flag or banner is planted on the top of a greasy pole. Competitors in groups are to seize it. In doing so, the flag can be won only if there is team work and habits of collective efforts. It is not easy to get it through a solo selfish effort. The group will win the flag only if a group of four or five members work as a team and in unity. Winning the flag is like a symbol of unity for it is proof of team work, team spirit and unity.

Every team sport needs team spirit or esprit de corps to gain success. As for participants taking part in a competitive climbing on the greasy pole especially need to have a sense of sacrifice, keeping in mind that hard work can bring about success. For the team to get the flag, or rather for a society to be successful, every team member must be willing to bear the pain of being stepped on the shoulders by others. Especially, the spirit of sacrifice of a team member from the lowest level is very important for the success of the team. Stepping on the shoulders of other team members or being stepped on our shoulders is not important. The main goal of every team is to win the flag which is at the top of the pole.

A competitive climbing for a prize on the greasy pole needs strong and fat people and little and thin ones simultaneously. The strong and the thin are respectively essential.

As for organizations and institutions working for various sectors of the country, they are required to exert their collective efforts with the spirit of sacrifice and team spirit according to their positions and age-groups.

Presently, what all national brethren residing in the whole country need is internal peace and national development. If the whole populace has the same wish, I humbly want to assert that we should wholeheartedly contribute our labor to reach the same goal, without having any thought of advantages or disadvantages in our minds.

The Tuths Have Been Revealed

Khin Maung Myint

SINCE the bloody clashes in Maungtaw, during 2012, in the Rakhine State of Western Myanmar, that remote and less known region of our land have become the center of attention in the world---especially in the Muslim dominant countries. Our country have been criticized, condemned and accused of human rights abuses, committing of atrocities, carrying out genocides and ethnic cleansing against the minority Muslims of that place.

Although it was them, the minority group, who instigated the clashes in the first place at that time, the international media portrayed them as the victims of persecutions and discriminations by the government and the Rakhines, the majority race of that State. It was done by a flood of fake and fabricated stories depicting the Bengali living in those areas as the Rohingyas, an ethnic race who were denied recognition as such and were being persecuted and discriminated.

In reality, there was no ethnic race called the Rohingyas at any time in our history. That name came into being about only six decades ago. At that time the name was connected to an underground movement, which was uncovered in the late nineteen sixties. It was called the Rohingya Muslim Independent Revolutionary Front (RMIRF). Their aim was to take up arms against the government and liberate the Buthitaung-Maungtaw area where the majority of the population were and still are the Bengali. Their ultimate objective was to curve out an area of our land to establish a Free Rohingyaland.

From their aim and object, it was quite clear that they were trying to revitalize the lost cause of the Mujahideen rebellion that broke out in that area right after we became independent. When that movement failed when their leaders were apprehended in 1969 in Sittwe (then Akyab) and jailed, that name went into obscurity for sometimes. However, when that name reemerged their tactics had changed. That time around, they used the name Rohingya to deceive the world that they belonged to an ethnic race of Myanmar who were being persecuted and discriminated because of their religion. They also started propagandizing vigorously about atrocities, genocides and ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, which were all lies. It was just a ploy to deceive the world and pave the way for their exodus to other countries in the region.

In the beginning they were accepted as asylum seekers by some countries in the region and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offices there registered them as refugees. That gave them opportunities to be settled in a third country that would take them in. However, as more and more Bengali, mostly from Bangladesh, posing as Rohingyas from Myanmar tried to migrate to those countries, their bluffs were exposed and now they no are longer welcome there.

Thus they changed their tactics again. This time they resorted to take up arms and stage simultaneous assaults on three border police outposts in the Maungtaw area and also spread false and fabricated news to get the international attentions. During such attacks some police personnels and civilians were killed and many arms and ammunitions were stolen by the attackers. All these latest activities were masterminded and led by one religious and racist extremist leader who had connections with the Taliban terrorist group in Pakistan. Some Bangladeshis and a Pakistani are also involved. These people received fundings from certain organizations in the Middle East.

In the past, the clashes between the local Rakhine and the Bengali residents in those areas were just communal conflicts. However, the latest attacks were infringements of our sovereignty, as some foreigners and those who are getting monetary supports from outside are involved. In such circumstances we have every right to take whatever action is necessary to safe-guard our sovereignty.

The enemy have now resorted to create reign of terror by killing, abducting and threatening their own kind, who are thought to be cooperating with the authorities. They burned their own villages to make the world believe they were done by the government troops. Such actions undermine peace and stability of that region and pose threats to our sovereignty. They also carried out propagandas by spreading false and fabricated news on the Internet and some well established Western media are covering those fabricated news. Such irresponsible media are stoking international criticism of our country.

Not very long ago, one prominent Western media posted two satellite images purported to be that of a village that was burned by our armed forces in the Maungtaw area. Of the two images, one was said to be taken before and the other taken after it was burned. I checked the two images thoroughly and found that the two images were not of the same place. The topography of the surrounding areas in the two images were distinctly not the same. I pointed out that fact in my comments on their Facebook post and also questioned them how could they be so sure that it was the work of our armed forces just by looking at those images, but received no response. In my opinion their silence was an admission that they were wrong.

Lately the Myanmar News Agency had released some photos used by the propagandists to spread false and fabricated news. The photos used to fabricate the news were from other countries that had nothing to do with the incidents in our country. When I saw them I was greatly surprised that some people around the world could be so gullible and ignorant to believe those false news and criticize and condemn our country.

For those who haven't seen I will describe some of them to support my statement. One photo was from Tibet, in which Tibetan Buddhist monks in saffron colored robes were preparing to incinerate the dead bodies of those killed by the earthquake in 2010. Though the color of the robes may be similar, Myanmar monks and Tibetan monks are quite differentiable. That photo was captioned as though the Buddhist monks in Myanmar had slaughtered the Muslims. It was totally shameless and absurd to mislead the ignorant people around the world in such a manner.

In another photo there were many charred bodies lying around and black people looking on. It was in fact a fuel tanker fire that caused those deaths in Congo. Again the caption described it as Muslims being burned by the Buddhist monks in Myanmar. Other photos from India, Guatemala, Thailand and even a movie plot from a Hollywood's Rambo series "First Blood", in which Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) wearing black paints on his face, which was described as a "video of torture on Rohingyas" were being used.

I cannot imagine that those people, who carried out the propagandas to be so naive to use those irrelevant photos to mislead Muslims and the world at large. I'm more surprised that many people around the world, including those at the United Nations and some Nobel laureates to be so gullible to believe them. However, thanks to the propagandists, these photos speak volumes and if only the people around the world could lay their eyes on them as they are now being exposed, their perceptions of Myanmar would be changed.

Then there is the Interim Report of the Investigation Commission on Maungtaw released on 3 January, 2017. It would further prove that the stories about the atrocities, genocides, rapes and burning of the villages were done by the armed forces are just fabrications and are far from the truths. Now that the truths are gradually emerging, those who have been voicing concerns about the so-called Rohingyas should be ashamed of themselves, if they have any dignity or self-respect, for being so naive to be misled. My advice to them is: "In the future use your common sense and don't believe blindly everything in the media, whether social, print or broadcast". No one is reliable!

Amphetamine tablets worth about kyats 2000 lakhs in the River Naf

Seized package wrapped with black-color polyethylene bags. PHOTO: MNA

DURING the patrol in the river Naf in Maungtaw Township, security forces found a suspected boat rowing into the border area of the neighboring countries at about 4:30 am yesterday and chased it. Due to the pursuit of the suspected boat, those on board escaped, leaving the boat at the bank. The security forces searched it, finding a package wrapped with black-color polyethylene bags.

In the bag, WY brand amphetamine tablets worth Kyats 2000 lakhs—100000 or so were found. Drugs and the boat seized were handed over to authorities concerned, it was learnt. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Five more who complete training on using weapons seized in Maungtaw Township

IT IS learnt that five more villagers who completed the training on using military weapons were seized in the villages of Darpai Sayar, Maungyitaung and Gordu Thara (East).

Upon receipt of the news that trainer Mawlawi Adu Rawzaw gave a training course to 15 trainees including Mardular for nearly one month in the yard of Sunarli residing in Darpai Sayar starting from July first week of 2016, security forces examined the villagers by checking with the family list of households in the village in the morning of January 5. Sunarli avoided, failing to be examined by the authorities.

So, security forces searched Sunarli's house at 8 am yesterday, arresting him at his house. Similarly, security forces blocked the village of Maungyitaung at 6 am on January 6 to search the suspects, and Marmauk Noman was seized at his house, with Ismai, Marmauk Husan and Mamad Karsein arrested in Gordu Thara village at 7 am.

Sunarli

Marmauk Noman

Mamad Karsein

Ismai

Marmauk Husan

It is learnt that arrangements are being made to take legal action against them in accord with the law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

KIA/TNLA armed groups attack government troops operating area clearance by exploding remote-controlled mine

WHILE making area clearance operations in Kutkai Township, north eastern part of Shan State for the peace and stability in the area, KIA/TNLA armed group comprising of about 40, attacked the government troops in ward 6 of Kutkai at about 3 pm, by exploding a remote-controlled mine and firing with artilleries and firearms.

Due to the cross-fire from the government troops, the armed group retreated into the north at 4:15pm.

It is said that the government troops are making area clearance operation, seizing a body of the armed group, with some troops from the government force injured.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Three suspects accused of remote-controlled explosion under instructions of AA detained

THREE people suspected to have involved in a remote controlled detonation about three miles from Mayhlwun Village in Minbya on Yangon-Sittway Highway on 1 January were detained by authorities.

A combined team of the government troops and Myanmar Police Force conducted area clearance operations to expose the perpetrators and questioned 15 suspects who worked in an iron workshop in Yotayoke Village in Ponnagyun Townshp on 3 January, and discovered that Naing Naing, Aung Aung and Yin Maung were suspected to have involved in the explosion.

Naing Naing was found to have masterminded the highway under instructions of the AA, while the two others assisted him.

Action has been taken against them in accordance with the law and security forces are conducting area clearance operations in the region.

The AA has also been involved in violence attacks in northeastern Shan State together with the KIA and has now resorted to violence acts in Rakhine State with the aim of undermining the stability in Rakhine State. —*Myanmar News Agency*

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for a documentary photo with Philippine ambassador at Byintnaung guest house. PHOTO: MNA

Philippine Ambassador calls on Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

DEFENSE Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Philippine ambassador H.E. Mr. Alex G. Chua, who had completed his tour of duty, at 10am on 6 January at Byintnaung guest house in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to strengthening of ASEAN community as well as to enhancing bilateral relations between the two armed forces and co-operation of mutual benefit.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Armed groups attack Tatmadaw camp operating area security

AN ARMED group comprising of about 30 attacked the government troops at the Monepaw Camp in Muse township in north eastern part of Shan State operating area security from 1000 meter or so, of the Monepaw camp with firearms and artilleries, at about 6:45 pm. Due to the cross-fire, the armed group stopped firing and retreated.

It is learnt that the government is making area clearance operations nearby the area.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Arms and ammunitions seized nearby the village of Monepaw

DURING the area clearance operation in Muse township at 2 pm on January 4, the government troops found 5 small palm-thatched-and-walled huts for couples and 5 fighting pits, seizing two M21 guns, one M 22 gun, two M 22 magazines and 57 bullets, one R-3 sniper rifles with binoculars, 3 magazines and 60 bullets, one bullet-proof helmet, one solar plate and one cycle battery, it is learnt.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Vehicle explodes in Laukkai

AN EXPLOSION on a Mark II parked in Kyelsin Street in Ward-1 in Laukkai, Shan State (North) forced firefighter to put out the resulting fire yesterday afternoon.

The vehicle and its driver, who left the vehicle and took a taxi, were seen on CCTV camera nearby and the authorities are taking measure to arrest the suspect.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Firefighters put out the fire of Mark II in Laukkai. PHOTO: MNA

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Raul Castro Ruz,
President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba
Mr President,

On the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar's Independence, I offer you my warmest congratulations. Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mohammed VI
King of Morocco
Excellency,

As the Republic of the Union of Myanmar celebrates Independence Day. It gives me great pleasure to send you my warmest congratulations and my best wishes for good health and happiness. I also wish your people further progress and prosperity.

I should like to take this opportunity to say how keen I am to continue working with you to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our countries and enhance our cooperation in all sectors of common interest, bilaterally as well as in the framework of the ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. This would serve our peoples Interests and reinforce the spirit of South-South cooperation.

From Mr. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Mr President,

It is with pleasure that I extand to Your Excellency heartfelt congratulations on the anniversary of the Independence Day of Myanmar.

I take this opportunity to confirm the importance of promoting and developing the strong relations between our two friendly countries and peoples.

I wish you all the best of health and happiness and your people evermore progress and prosperity.

From Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma
President of the Republic of South Africa
Excellency,

On the auspicious occasion of the celebration of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January 2017, the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa join me in convoying to Your Excellency, the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, warmest greetings and sincere congratulations.

May I take this opportunity to express the wish for Your Excellency's good health and also reaffirm our desire to further enhance and consolidate the excellent bond of friendship that exists between our countries.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan
President of the Republic of Turkey
Yours Excellency,

On behalf of my nation and on my own behalf. I would like to congratulate Your Excellency with my heartfelt wishes on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I sincerely believe that the friendly relations and cooperation existing in many fields between Turkey and Myanmar will develop further on the basis of the interests of our people by our mutual endeavours.

I would like to assure Your Excellency of Turkey's continued support to your efforts to establish an inclusive democracy that embraces all segments of the nation in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Myanmar.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my best wishes for Your Excellency's well-being and happiness as well as for the welfare and prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

Foreign Ministers send felicitations to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Ministers sent to State Counsellor, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January.

From Ms. Claudia Ruiz Massieu Salinas
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
Your Excellency,

"In commemorating the anniversary of Myanmar's National Holiday, I am pleased to send you a warm and sincere congratulations.

I am sure that through open dialogue and understanding we will continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship that will enrich our nations.

I take this opportunity to send a cordial greeting and reiterate to you, the assurances of my highest consideration."

From Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba
Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar's Independence, I offer you my warmest congratulations and reaffirm our resolve to continue developing the relations of friendship between our countries.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar
Excellency,

On the occasion of the day of Declaration of Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I am delighted to convey to Your Excellency my earnest congratulations, with my best wishes of ample health and well-being, and to your friendly nation, evermore development and prosperity, as we look forward to working together on enhancing and developing cooperation between our two friendly countries.

Kindly accept Your Excellency, my highest regard.

From Mr. Mevlut Cavasoglu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey
Excellency,

I would like to convey to Your Excellency my warm congratulations on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I reiterate our sincere desire to further develop the existing friendly relations and enhance our cooperation in every field to the mutual benefit of our nations.

Turkey will continue to support your efforts to establish an inclusive democracy in multi-ethnic and multi religious Myanmar.

Please accept my best wishes for you health and happiness as well as for the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Receives Director of National Democratic Institute—Asia

U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and chairman of cooperation and coordination on the development of Hluttaws received Mr Peter M Manikas, director of the national democratic institute—Asia and party at 11 am yesterday at the guest room of the Office of the Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, in the Hluttaw Premises.

U T Khun Myat, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw holds talks with Mr Peter M Manikas, director of the national democratic institute—Asia. PHOTO: MNA

In the meeting, matters of NDI's plans to cooperate in the development of the Hluttaw, matters of MoU to be signed between the Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw and NDI, conditions of the formation of JCC, cooperation with international organizations, cooperation between JCC and NDI were cordially discussed.

Present at the meeting were Daw Aye Aye Mu, member of the Assessment Commission Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases, and responsible officials from the Offices of Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Food delivered to nearly 1,300 households in Maungtaw Township

Aids from the government were delivered to 1,279 households in 12 villages in Maungtaw Township yesterday.

The team led by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye delivered 320 bags of rice and 639 viss of peas to the villagers in villages in Zinpaingnya Village-tract, Hlaphokaung Village, Kyaukpyinseik Village, ThuOoLar Village, Thayetoak Village and Darkyisar Village in Maungtaw Township.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye meeting with local people at a village in Maungtaw Township. PHOTO: MNA

Meanwhile, a mobile medical team comprising doctors and nurses from Kyeinchaung Station Hospital, who were along with the union minister and party, also provided health care to the villagers during the trip.—*Myanmar News Agency*

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE

YANGON TO BANGKOK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-304	09:50	11:45	Daily
TG-2302	15:00	16:55	1,5,6,7
TG-302	15:00	16:55	Daily
TG-306	19:50	21:45	Daily
PG-706	6:00	8:15	Daily
PG-702	10:30	12:25	Daily
PG-708	15:30	17:25	Daily
PG-704	18:20	20:15	Daily
8M-335	7:30	9:15	Daily
8M-331	16:30	18:15	Daily
UB-017	15:45	19:15	2,4,6,7
UB-017	17:45	19:15	1,3,5
UB-019	8:00	9:30	3,5,7
UB-019	8:55	10:25	1,6

BANGKOK TO YANGON

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-303	8:00	8:45	Daily
TG-2351	10:10	11:00	1,5,6,7
TG-301	13:15	14:00	Daily
TG-305	18:05	18:50	Daily
PG-701	8:45	9:40	Daily
PG-707	13:45	14:40	Daily
PG-703	16:45	17:35	Daily
PG-705	20:30	21:45	Daily
8M-336	10:15	11:00	Daily
8M-332	19:20	20:05	Daily
UB-020	10:35	11:10	3,5
UB-018	21:05	21:35	Daily
UB-020	11:30	12:05	1,6,7

YGN TO DMK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-252	8:30	10:15	Daily
FD-256	12:55	14:20	Daily
FD-254	17:35	19:25	Daily
FD-258	21:40	23:30	Daily
DD-4231	08:00	9:45	Daily
DD-4235	12:00	13:45	Daily
DD-4239	21:00	22:45	Daily
SL-201	11:00	13:35	Daily
SL-207	19:45	21:45	Daily

DMK TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-251	7:15	8:00	Daily
FD-255	11:35	12:25	Daily
FD-253	16:20	17:05	Daily
FD-257	20:15	21:10	Daily
DD-4234	10:30	11:15	Daily
DD-4230	6:30	7:15	Daily
DD-4238	19:25	20:15	Daily
SL-200	08:45	10:00	Daily
SL-206	17:10	18:35	Daily

YGN TO CAN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-012	07:00	11:30	7
8M-711	8:40	13:15	2,4,5,7
CZ-3056	11:35	15:50	3,6
CZ-3056	17:40	22:20	1,5

CAN TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-012	12:30	15:45	7
8M-712	14:15	15:50	2,4,5,7
CZ-3055	8:40	10:35	3,6
CZ-3055	14:40	16:40	1,5

YGN TO SIN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-231	8:20	12:40	Daily
SQ-997	10:25	15:10	Daily
MI-515	14:20	18:50	1,3,5
MI-519	17:35	22:10	Daily
MI-522	16:20	20:50	4,6
MI-533	13:35	20:50	2
3k-584	19:40	00:10	Daily
3K-582	11:35	16:05	1,3,4,5,6,7
TR-2823	9:45	2:15	1,2,4,5,6,7
UB-001	7:30	11:45	Daily

SIN TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-232	13:40	15:15	Daily
SQ-998	07:55	09:20	Daily
MI-522	11:30	15:30	4,6
MI-518	15:15	16:40	Daily
MI-516	12:00	13:25	1,3,5
MI-533	11:30	12:45	2
3K-583	17:30	19:00	Daily
3k-581	09:10	10:40	1,3,4,5,6,7
TR-2822	7:20	8:45	1,2,4,5,6,7
UB-002	13:00	14:30	Daily

YGN TO NRT

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
NH-814	22:10	06:45	Daily

NRT TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
NH-813	11:00	16:30	Daily

YGN TO ICN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily

ICN TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KE-471	18:30	22:30	Daily

YGN TO KUL

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily
AK-503	19:10	23:30	Daily
8M-501	16:00	20:15	2
8M-501	11:45	15:45	1
MH-741	11:15	15:40	Daily
MH-743	16:00	20:15	1,4,6,7

KUL TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
AK-504	6:55	8:00	Daily
AK-502	17:20	18:30	Daily
8M-502	16:45	17:45	1
8M-502	21:10	22:10	2
MH-742	13:55	15:05	1,4,6,7
MH-740	09:10	10:15	Daily

YGN TO KMG

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-416	12:30	16:00	Daily
MU-2032	15:30	18:50	Daily
MU-2012	12:55	19:55	3

KMG TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-415	10:50	11:30	Daily
MU-2031	14:00	14:30	Daily
MU-2011	08:20	11:55	3

YGN TO TPE

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CI-7916	10:50	16:10	Daily

TPE TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CI-7915	7:00	9:50	Daily

YGN TO PEK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-906	23:50	0550+1	3,7

PEK TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-905	19:30	22:50	3,5

YGN TO HAN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-956	19:10	21:35	Daily

HAN TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-957	16:40	18:10	Daily

YGN TO SGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-942	12:10	14:55	2,3,4,5,7

SGN TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-943	9:25	11:10	2,3,4,5,7

YGN TO HKG

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KA -251	1:05	5:25	Daily
UB-8027	09:00	13:30	1,3,5,7

HKG TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KA-250	21:50	23:45	1,3,5,7
KA-252	22:20	00:10	2,4,6
UB-8028	14:50	16:20	1,3,5,7

YGN TO DOH

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
QR-919	8:05	11:30	1,4,6

DOH TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
QR-918	20:10	5:20	3,5,6

YGN TO CNX

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG -724	13:40	15:35	Daily

CNX TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-723	12:00	12:55	Daily

YGN TO DAC

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
BG-061	16:45	18:30	1,3,6

DAC TO YGN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
BG-060	13:30	16:00	1,3,6

MDL TO DMK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-245	12:55	15:15	Daily

DMK TO MDL

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-244	11:10	12:25	Daily

MDL TO SIN

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-533	15:45	20:50	2
MI-522	14:15	20:15	4,6

SIN TO MDL

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-522	11:30	13:20	4,6
MI-533	11:30	14:50	2

MDL TO BKK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-710	14:10	16:35	Daily

BKK TO MDL

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-709	12:00	13:20	Daily

MDL TO KMG

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MU-2030	14:25	17:15	Daily

KMG TO MDL

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MU-2029	13:20	13:15	Daily

NYT to BKK

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-722	19:50	22:50	1,3,4,5,6,7

BKK TO NYT

Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-721	17:20	19:20	1,3,4,5,6,7

AIRLINE CODES

8M	= Myanmar Airways International		
BG	= Biman Bangladesh Airlines		
MH	= Malaysia Airlines		
MU	= China Eastern Airlines		
NH	= All Nippon Airways		
SQ	= Singapore Airways		
PG	= Bangkok Airways		
UB	= Myanmar National Airlines		
VN	= Vietnam Airline		
3K	= Jet Star	AK	= Air Asia
AI	= Air India	CA	= Air China
CI	= China Airlines	CZ	= China Southern
DD	= Nok Airline	FD	= Air Asia
KA	= Dragonair	KE	= Korea Airlines
MI	= Silk Air	QR	= Qatar Airways
TG	= Thai Airways	TR	= Tiger Airline

DAY			
1	= Monday	4	= Thursday
2	= Tuesday	5	= Friday
3	= Wednesday	6	= Saturday
		7	= Sunday

A protestor poses with a sample bottle during a demonstration ahead of Reckitt Benckiser's annual general meeting, over claims that a sterilising hygiene product made by the company has led to deaths in South Korea, in London, Britain on 5 May 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

South Korea court convicts ex-Reckitt Benckiser unit chief in steriliser case

SEOUL — A South Korean court convicted on Friday a former head of the local unit of the British consumer goods maker Reckitt Benckiser (RB.L) over the sale of humidifier sterilisers linked to deadly lung injuries, sentencing him to seven years in prison, Yonhap news agency said.

The Seoul Central District Court found the former executive, Shin Hyun-woo, guilty of criminal negligence for failing to inspect the safety of the product and allowing its sale, Yonhap reported.

In May last year, the current head of the company's South Korean unit apologised and accepted responsibility.

The South Korean government said in 2015 that 92 people were believed to have died from causes related to humidifier steriliser products, not all of them made by the Reckitt Benckiser unit.—*Reuters*

Regeneron, Sanofi to appeal US judge's ban on cholesterol drug sales

NEW YORK — Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc and Sanofi SA said on Thursday they would appeal the US District Court ruling which banned the two companies from selling their cholesterol drug, Praluent, on grounds of patent infringement.

A federal judge had earlier blocked Sanofi and Regeneron from selling the drug after Amgen Inc accused them of infringing its patents.

US District Judge Sue Robinson in Delaware had ordered that the ban not take effect for 30 days to give Sanofi and Regeneron time to appeal.

"It is our longstanding position that Amgen's patent claims are invalid and that the best interests of patients will be greatly disserved by an injunction preventing access to Praluent," Sanofi's Executive Vice President Karen Linehan said in a statement.

Amgen was up about 4 per cent in after-hours trading, while Sanofi's US shares were down 3.6 per cent. Regeneron was down 1.1 per cent before the company requested that trading be halted.

Amgen had sought the ban in an October 2014 lawsuit against Paris-based Sanofi and Tarrytown, New York-based Regeneron. It said Praluent, a drug intended to lower "bad" LDL cholesterol by blocking a protein known as PCSK9, infringed its patents related to the protein.

Thousand Oaks, California-based Amgen makes a rival drug called Repatha.

A jury found Amgen's patents valid in March. The defendants said after the verdict that they planned to appeal to the US Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, which reviews patent disputes.

The companies could still decide to reach a settlement that would give Amgen royalties on Praluent sales.

The US Food and Drug Administration approved Praluent and Repatha to reduce bad cholesterol in 2015.

The drugs are more costly than other cholesterol drugs, with a list price topping $14,000 annually.

Sales of the expensive new drugs, seen as potential blockbusters, have been very slow to take off as health insurers and other payers have been reluctant to pay for them. Amgen reported just $40 million in Repatha sales in the third quarter.—*Reuters*

Leader of 2004 Haitian coup extradited to US on drug rap

PORT-AU-PRINCE — A Haitian politician and former coup leader was arrested and extradited on Thursday to the United States, where he is wanted for alleged drug trafficking and money laundering, authorities said.

Guy Philippe, who led a coup that drove Jean-Bertrand Aristide from the presidency in 2004, had been due to take up his seat in the Senate on Monday, which could have afforded him immunity from some criminal proceedings.

Joris Mergelus, head of the anti-drug unit in the Caribbean nation, said Philippe was arrested by police acting on an international warrant for drug trafficking.

Philippe, who was elected senator from the southwestern Grand Anse region on 20 November, was picked up after giving a radio interview in Petionville, near the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Garry Desrosiers, spokesman for the Haitian national police, said that while agents from the US Drug Enforcement Administration did not participate in the operation, they were at the police station where Philippe was taken.

Philippe was later put on a plane in Port-au-Prince and extradited to the United States, a Haitian official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Philippe was suspected in 2015 of involvement in an attack on a police headquarters in the southern city of Les Cayes in which at least six people were killed.

Haitian officials issued a warrant for Philippe's arrest over the incident, but his lawyers said it was invalid because he was a candidate in the November election.—*Reuters*

Guy Philippe, former police chief police, participates in a march into the city of Gonaives, Haiti, in 2004. PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain's Diana, the Princess of Wales and Prince Harry attend VJ (Victory over Japan) Day ceremonies in the Mall, in London, on 19 August 1995. PHOTO: REUTERS

Princess Diana letter about troublesome son Harry sold at auction

LONDON — A collection of handwritten notes by the late Princess Diana, one of which reveals that her younger son Prince Harry was constantly in trouble at school, went under the hammer on Thursday, selling for well above target prices.

The six notes, sold at Cheffins auction house in Cambridge, were written to Cyril Dickman who served as chief steward of Buckingham Palace for over 50 years. Diana's sons Princes William and Harry feature prominently.

One message dated 20 September 1984, five days after Harry's birth, reads: "William adores his little brother and spends the entire time swamping Harry with an endless supply of hugs and kisses, hardly letting the parents near!..."

"The reaction to one tiny person's birth has totally overwhelmed us and I can hardly breathe for the mass of flowers that are arriving here!" That note sold for 3,200 pounds ($3,950), comfortably exceeding its estimate of 400 to 600 pounds.

Another, from October 1992, says how both young princes "are well and enjoying boarding school a lot, although Harry is constantly in trouble!". It fetched 2,400 pounds, against an estimate of 600 to 900 pounds.

Other items auctioned by Dickman's family included letters, cards and photographs from other members of the royal family, including Prince Charles, Princess Margaret, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.—*Reuters*

Merkel's conservatives gain support despite Berlin attack — poll

BERLIN — Support for Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative bloc is up despite the Christmas market attack in Berlin that killed 12 people, and most Germans are not worried about terrorism, an opinion poll showed on Friday.

Merkel's conservative "Union" alliance of her Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) rose 2 percentage points from a month ago to 37 per cent, the survey by pollster Infratest dimap for broadcaster ARD showed.

The poll of 1,505 voters was conducted from 2 January to 4 January. The Berlin attack, in which a rejected asylum-seeker from Tunisia drove a truck into a Christmas market, took place on 19 December. He fled and was shot dead by Italian police in Milan four days later.

The centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), junior partner in Merkel's ruling grand coalition, slipped 2 points to 20 per cent. The anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained 2 points from a month ago to 15 per cent, the poll showed.

Merkel's government has proposed new security measures in response to the Berlin truck attack claimed by Islamic State, triggering fierce debate in an election year in which the chancellor, 62, is seeking a fourth term in office.

A separate Infratest dimap survey for ARD showed 73 per cent of Germans felt safe despite the Berlin attack. AfD supporters were an exception — two thirds of them did not feel safe.

Refugee policy will be the biggest issue for voters in September's federal election, the poll showed.

Merkel's conservatives have been bleeding support to the AfD over her open-door policies that allowed into Germany about 1.1 million refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere since mid-2015.

The Bavarian CSU has long bristled at Merkel's migrant stance and insisted on a limit of 200,000 refugees per year, which she rejects.—*Reuters*

Mexico gas price hike spurs looting, blockades as unrest spreads

MEXICO CITY — Mexicans angry over a double-digit hike in gasoline prices looted stores and blockaded roads on Wednesday, prompting over 250 arrests amid escalating unrest over the rising cost of living in Latin America's second biggest economy.

Twenty-three stores were sacked and 27 blockades put up in Mexico City, Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said, days after the government raised gasoline costs by 14 to 20 per cent, outraging Mexicans already battling rising inflation and a weak currency.

Mexican retailers' association ANTAD urged federal and state authorities to intervene quickly, saying 79 stores had been sacked and 170 forcibly closed due to blockades.

Deputy interior Minister Rene Juarez said over 250 people had been arrested for vandalism and that federal authorities were working with security officials in Mexico City and the nearby states of Mexico and Hidalgo to address the unrest. "These acts are outside the law and have nothing to do with peaceful protest nor freedom of expression," Juarez said in a press conference late on Wednesday.—*Reuters*

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Yangon Region Government
Yagon City Development Committee
Invitation for Bids

Date 3rd January 2017

Name of Project: Installation, Maintenance and Operation of Street Furniture Items in the City of Yangon.

1. YCDC invites bids from the interested bidders for the Installation, Maintenance and Operation of Street Furniture Items and the grant of an exclusive right to advertise on the street furniture items in the City of Yangon.

2. The interested bidders may obtain further information about this invitation for bids from the following office during office hours:

Engineering Department (Road and Bridge), Yangon City Development Committee, City Hall, Yangon.
Telephone no. 09-431 93314

3. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased upon submission of a written application to the above address and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Kyat 50000 (fifty thousand kyats only) to YCDC..

4. Bids documents shall be delivered in person to the above office on or before 15 hrs. on 17th February 2017. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Any bid submitted after the designated dated and time will be rejected.

5. All Bids must be accompanied by bid security (tender guarantee) in the amount of Kyat 300,000,000 or USD 250,000 issued by local bank as described in the bidding documents.

6. Bids will be opened in a session to be held at the office of Yagon City Development Committee in the presence of representatives of the bidders on the date and time as may be notified to the bidders.

Yangon City Development Committee

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(1 / 2017)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-079(16-17)	Spares for CNG Compressor Cooling System (7) Items	US$
(2)	DMP/L-020(16-17)	Assorted Kind of Engineering Workshop Tools (3) Groups	Ks
(3)	DMP/L-021(16-17)	Brandt Shale Shaker Screen for NAT; 55 Series (3) Items	Ks
(4)	DMP/L-022(16-17)	Mechanical Seal for Andritz Pump(6)Items	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time - 24-1-2017, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 5TH January, 2017 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph . +95 67 - 411206 / 411274

Snow storm takes aim at US South, Southeast

WASHINGTON — A winter storm packing heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain is on track for the US South and Southeast where roads may become impassable and power outages are possible starting on Friday and into the weekend, forecasters said.

A large swath of the United States, from Louisiana northeast through the Appalachian Mountains and into southern Pennsylvania, is expected to get as much as 8 inches (20 cm) of snow with 1 inch (3 cm) of sleet, according to the National Weather Service.

"If you don't have to travel, don't travel," said Matthew Grantham, a NWS meteorologist in Alabama, adding that conditions were expected to worsen after dark on Friday.

A weather warning was in effect until Saturday afternoon for most of North Carolina along with northwest South Carolina and northern Georgia where heavy snow, freezing temperatures and wind gusts of up to 25 miles per hour (40 kph) were expected.

"The heavy snow will make many roads impassable and may produce widespread power outages," the weather service said.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for 79 counties and Alabama Governor Robert Bentley issued a state of emergency for his entire state.

The poor weather forced the postponement of the inauguration events that were scheduled over the weekend for North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, who was elected in November.—*Reuters*

Macron gains on Fillon, Le Pen in new French election poll

PARIS — Conservative candidate Francois Fillon's lead in France's presidential election race has narrowed according to an opinion poll showing independent Emmanuel Macron gaining on both the former prime minister and far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

In a series of scenarios, Fillon was seen winning up to 28 per cent of the first-round vote — down by between 7 and 8 points since the Elabe polling institute's last poll, published just after he won the centre-right primary in November.

Le Pen was seen arriving second in April's first round and qualifying for the run-off alongside Fillon in all but one scenario, where Macron took the number-two spot. Le Pen was seen securing between 22 per cent and 24 per cent in the first round, according to the poll published on Thursday by Elabe for business daily Les Echos. That was down slightly from November.

Macron polled at between 16 per cent and 24 per cent, up on last month's poll, with variations depending on who gets picked by the Socialists in their primaries later this month, and on whether Francois Bayrou — a centrist like Macron — runs or not. Macron was seen cementing his position as the election's "third man", distancing both leftist firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon and any other traditional Socialist candidate, the pollster said in a text accompanying the survey.

The scenario where he reached the second round was one where former industry minister Arnaud Montebourg was the winner of the Socialist nomination over favourite and ex-prime minister Manuel Valls, and where Bayrou did not run.

Elabe did not test scenarios for the second round, which will be held in May. Only the top two candidates of the first round qualify for the run-off. Other polls have shown Fillon winning over Le Pen in that run-off.

The poll was conducted among 995 people on 3 and 4 January.—*Reuters*

Emmanuel Macron, head of the political movement En Marche !, or Forward !, and candidate for the 2017 French presidential election, attends a political rally in Paris, France, on 10 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KORALIA VOY. NO (760)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KORALIA VOY. NO (760) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 8.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T.-3 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 MERIDIAN SHIPPING AGENCIES PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ESI ANAX VOY. NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ESI ANAX VOY. NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7.1.2017 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 BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ASCL EMMA VOY. NO (EM 1611)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ASCL EMMA VOY. NO (EM 1611) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T-3 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 BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MCC JAVA VOY. NO ( )

Consignees of cargo carried onMV MCC JAVA VOY. NO ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

Engagement Reception

Parents of both families cordially request the honour of your presence at the **"Engagement Reception"** of

Dr. Nandar Mon

M.B.,B.S (Ygn.), University of Medicine (1) MRCP (UK) daughter of **Tun Myint & Aye Kyu**

to

Jia Ruey Khwa

Master of Science (Electrical Engineering), University of Southern California (USC) Bachelor of Science (Electrical Engineering), University of California, Los Angeles son of **David Soonhwe Khwa & Linda Gyorkree Khwa**

Programme

Date …. 2nd January, 2017 (Monday)
Time …. 9:00 a.m to 11:00 a.m.
Place …. **Sule Shangri-La Hotel** (Bago Room) Sule Pagoda Rd., Yangon.

Streaming overtakes US digital music sales for first time: Nielsen

NEW YORK — Canadian rapper Drake helped music streaming services explode in 2016, rising by 76 per cent in the United States to overtake digital sales of music for the first time in history, Nielsen Music said on Thursday.

Americans used on demand streaming platforms, such as Apple Music, Google Play, Spotify, Pandora and Amazon Music, to listen to 431 billion songs in 2016, led by hip hop and R&B artists like Drake, The Weeknd, Kanye West and Rihanna, Nielsen said in its 2016 US year-end report.

Some six songs, including New York rapper Desiiigner's "Panda" and Rihanna's "Work," surpassed 500 million total on demand streams in 2016, compared with just three that hit that mark in 2015.

The growth in streaming was more than enough to offset declines in other formats, particularly digital sales, leading to an overall 3 per cent increase in music consumption compared with 2015, the report said.

"The music industry continues to grow at a healthy rate, and 2016 showed us that the landscape is evolving even more quickly than we have seen with other format shifts," said David Bakula, senior vice president of industry insights at Nielsen Music.

Drake, 30, was by far the biggest beneficiary. The singer had the most digital song sales, the most streams — more than 5.4 billion — by a huge margin, and the most heavily consumed album of the year with "Views."

But the "Hotline Bling" singer had competition from Britain's Adele and rock star Prince.

Adele's 2015 release "25" was the best-selling album of 2016 for the second straight calendar year with total sales of 1.7 million units. It was also the best-seller for 2015. Prince became the best-selling artist in terms of album sales, selling more than 2.2 million units following his death in April at age 57 of an accidental painkiller overdose. The day after his demise, Prince sold over 1 million digital songs and more than 200,000 digital albums. His catalog was tightly controlled on streaming services.—*Reuters*

Drake performs during the iHeartRadio Music Festival at The T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada, US, on 23 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Bollywood mourns veteran actor Om Puri's sudden demise

MUMBAI — Bollywood celebrities including Akshay Kumar, Priyanka Chopra, Karan Johar and Javed Akhtar expressed their shock over veteran actor Om Puri's sudden demise, calling it a huge loss to Indian cinema.

The actor, who gave countless memorable performances in movies of diverse genres, died at his residence here this morning after a massive heart attack. He was 66.

Taking to social media, Puri's former co-stars and friends mourned his death.

Akshay Kumar, who worked with Puri in films like "Aan: Men at Work", "Hera Pheri", "Awara Paagal Deewana" and "OMG Oh My God!", tweeted, "Sad to hear about the passing away of the very talented Om Puri, my co-actor in many films...heartfelt condolences to the family. #RIP

Director Karan Johar said in Puri's death cinema had lost a brilliant artist.

"Solid actor....Solid filmography....immense talent....

#RIPOmPuri ....cinema has truly lost a brilliant artist," Johar tweeted.

Actor Om Puri arrives for the British gala screening of 'The Hundred-Foot Journey' at the Curzon Mayfair in London, on 3 September 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

Actor Anupam Kher, who also worked with Puri in many films, said the actor's death came as a shock to him.

"Seeing him lying on his bed looking so calm can't believe that one of our greatest actors #OmPuri is no more. Deeply saddened and shocked."

Priyanka Chopra, posted, "The end of an era... The legacy lives on.. RIP #OmPuri."

Veteran scriptwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar said Puri was not only a great actor but also a brilliant human being.

"It's really a great loss. Wonderful person, great actor and with such impressive body of work right from Satyajit Ray to any commercial Hindi film to films in US and Pakistan. He played all kind of roles.

"Om puri will be missed as a friend. It's a bit shocking at the moment and I'm feeling a bit numb. In the moment all of us are taken aback."

Mahesh Bhatt said, "Goodbye Om! A part of me goes with you today. How can I ever forget those passionate nights we spent together talking about cinema and life."

Shoojit Sircar, tweeted, "RIP Om puri... interactions with you were always full of life.. you were one of the finest artists we are proud of..

Madhur Bhandarkar, wrote, "Shocked to know that the immensely talented actor #OmPuri passed away. Big loss to our film industry. RIP

While, Riteish Deshmukh, posted, "Shocked beyond words to learn that #OmPuri ji is no more. Will miss you sir.

Condolences to the family. RIP #HugeLoss.—*PTI*

Tom Holland, Ruth Negga among BAFTA awards Rising Star nominees

LONDON — Tom Holland, the latest actor to don the "Spider-Man" suit, and "Loving" actress Ruth Negga are among the nominees for this year's EE Rising Star Award, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) said on Thursday.

The list of five nominees includes Spanish actress Laia Costa, known for "Victoria", "The Witch" actress Anya Taylor-Joy and "Manchester by the Sea" actor Lucas Hedges.

Past winners, who are voted for by the public, include "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" actor John Boyega and Oscar nominee Tom Hardy. BAFTA will announce the full list of nominees for this year's film awards, which will be held on 12 February, next week.—*Reuters*

Ruth Negga arrives on the red carpet for the film 'Loving' during the 41st Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), in Toronto, Canada, on 11 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Escapism or realism? Awards season gets serious with Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES — Independent films, diversity and the tussle between escapism or realism mark Hollywood's 2017 awards season, which swings into high gear on Sunday with the Golden Globes ceremony.

The laid-back Globes dinner in Beverly Hills kicks off two months of red carpets and black tie events punctuated by Oscar nominations on 24 Januaryand culminating in the Academy Awards ceremony on 26 February. Musical "La La Land," indie grief drama "Manchester by the Sea," and black coming-of-age film "Moonlight" are leading the awards buzz in a season that has been dominated by small, intimate fare.

"I think 'La La Land' is the one to beat overall this year, and also it's doing really well at the box office and that's another big plus," said Pete Hammond, awards columnist for entertainment website Deadline.com.

Cast member Ryan Gosling poses at the premiere of 'La La Land' in Los Angeles, California US, on 6 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

"La La Land," a romantic musical about a jazz pianist and an actress struggling in Hollywood, has a leading seven Golden Globe nods, including for best musical/comedy, stars Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, and writer-director Damien Chazelle.

The Golden Globes are unique in having separate categories for film dramas, and musicals or comedies, assuring "La La Land" several wins on Sunday, according to awards pundits.

The drama category, both at the Globes and elsewhere, appears to be a closer race between "Moonlight," a low-budget movie about an impoverished black boy in Miami struggling with his sexual identity, and "Manchester by the Sea" a study of family grief starring Casey Affleck.

The crunch for awards voters may ultimately come down to the mood in Hollywood after a 2016 marked by celebrity deaths and the election as U.S. president of Donald Trump, who was opposed by much of the entertainment industry.

"I think it's a good year not so much for escapism but for uplift," said Tim Gray, who covers awards for Hollywood trade publication Variety.

"I think a bummer movie, something that leaves you depressed, is going to have a tougher job this year. I feel like people, especially in America, have felt beat-up all year, and you don't want another film that's gonna make you feel beat-up," Gray added.—*Reuters*

Japanese railway commemorates 10th anniversary of cat stationmaster

WAKAYAMA, (Japan) — A Japanese railway operator held an event Thursday to commemorate the 10th anniversary of a cat's appointment as a stationmaster, drawing more than 100 fans of the iconic mascot despite it having died more than a year ago.

Tama, a female calico cat, was credited with rescuing Wakayama Electric Railway Co. from financial difficulties, as the novelty of a cat stationmaster attracted tourists from around Japan and the world.

The railway company also unveiled its newest feline recruit, Yontama, during the event. The 8-month-old cat, also a female calico, will start "working" next week as an apprentice stationmaster at Idakiso Station on the Kishigawa Line in Wakayama Prefecture, western Japan. Yontama will only be on duty Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Tama became the master of Kishi Station on 5 January, 2007. Until its death in June 2015, the stationmaster cap-wearing Tama entertained many tourists, ensuring the once money-losing Kishigawa Line would continue operating.

Yontama (L), an 8-month-old calico cat, receives a letter of appointment from Wakayama Electric Railway Co. on 5 January 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

The success sparked a trend of appointing rabbits, cats, dogs and other animals as stationmasters for financially struggling local railways across Japan, which keep the animals at stations to attract passengers and tourists. "I have been a fan of Stationmaster Tama for more than 10 years," said Kanna Matsumoto, a 22-year-old from Iwade in Wakayama Prefecture. "Yontama is also adorable. I hope she will keep the station lively."

The event was also attended by Wakayama Gov. Yoshinobu Nisaka, Wakayama Electric Railway President Mitsunobu Kojima and Nitama, Tama's successor cat currently serving as the master of Kishi Station.

After its death, Tama was appointed to the post of "honorary eternal stationmaster." —*Kyodo News*

World heat shatters records in 2016 in new sign of global warming

OSLO — Last year was the hottest on record by a wide margin, with temperatures creeping close to a ceiling set by almost 200 nations for limiting global warming, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service said on Thursday.

The data are the first of the New Year to confirm many projections that 2016 will exceed 2015 as the warmest since reliable records began in the 19th century, it said in a report.

The Arctic was the region showing the sharpest rise in temperatures, while many other areas of the globe, including parts of Africa and Asia, also suffered unusual heat, it said.

A few parts of South America and Antarctica were cooler than normal.

Global surface temperatures in 2016 averaged 14.8 degrees Celsius (58.64°F), or 1.3C (2.3F) higher than estimated before the Industrial Revolution ushered in wide use of fossil fuels, the EU body said.

In 2015, almost 200 nations agreed at a summit in Paris to limit global warming to "well below" 2C above pre-industrial times while pursuing efforts to hold the rise to 1.5C as part of a sweeping shift away from fossil fuels towards clean energy.

Temperatures last year broke a 2015 record by almost 0.2C (0.36F), Copernicus said, boosted by a build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and by a natural El Niño weather event in the Pacific Ocean, which releases heat to the atmosphere.

In February 2016 alone, temperatures were 1.5C above pre-industrial times, the study said. Rising heat is blamed for stoking wildfires, heat waves, droughts, floods and more powerful downpours that disrupt water and food supplies.

The UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the main authority on global temperatures, compiles data mainly from two US and one British dataset that will be published in coming weeks. It also uses input from Copernicus.—*Reuters*

mitv Myanmar International
Programme Schedule

(7-1-2017 07:00am ~ 8-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon-The Exhibition Hall of The Great Chronicle of Buddha
07:53	Am	Great Minds of Myanmar - U Kyaw Win (Anthropologist)
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Ar Khar New Year Festival
08:49	Am	Kay Tu Mar Lar "The Decision"
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	A Highland with Peace and Charm
09:45	Am	Htan Taw Drums (Part-II) "Dobat"
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	NEXGEN: Next Generation (Swam Yee Tun Lwin)
10:35	Am	A Bike Ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Episode-2)
10:52	Am	Wet Markets of Yangon: Thirimingalar Market

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Bago: A City Of Famous Historic Pagoda
07:47	Pm	Today Myanmar: Auto Mobile Market 2017
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Writer, Philanthropist: Daw Than Myint Aung (Part-1)
08:54	Pm	Young Talents: Animator Swan Thura Htun

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

Volunteers, tequila makers lift imperiled bat off the mat, US says

SALMON, (Idaho) — An unusual alliance of volunteer researchers and tequila makers have helped rescue a crucial American Southwest pollinator known as the lesser long-nosed bat from the brink of extinction, according to US wildlife managers who want the bat removed from the endangered and threatened species list.

The bat, known for feeding on nectar and playing a key role in the pollination of such plants as agaves in Mexico, was protected under the US Endangered Species Act in 1988, when its population had dwindled to just 1,000 at 14 known roosts, government biologists said.

Habitat destruction threatened the bat with extinction, US wildlife managers said. For instance, its roosting areas in Mexico were destroyed as part of an eradication effort aimed at rabies-infected vampire bats, while development affected other roosting and feeding areas.

Today, the lesser long-nosed bat is estimated to number 200,000 at 75 roosts across a range stretching from southern Mexico to southern Arizona and New Mexico.

Citizen scientists in Arizona monitored the bat's night-time use of hummingbird feeders, providing biologists with a better understanding of the elusive creature's migratory and other habits, US wildlife managers said.

Tequila makers in Mexico provided a valuable assist by making bat-friendly varieties of the liquor, the US Fish and Wildlife Service said. This raised the profile of the once-struggling bat and popularized the campaign to protect it and its habitat.

The tequilas are marketed in Mexico by producers who rely on agaves pollinated by lesser long-nosed bats.

In the United States, lesser long-nosed bats mostly roost and forage on agaves and cacti like saguaro and organ pipe on public lands where measures have been adopted to limit human interference with roost sites like caves and abandoned mines, according to the wildlife agency.

Several of the bat populations reside year-round in southern Mexico but others migrate to that country's northern tier and across the US border to southern Arizona and New Mexico in search of maternity roosting sites. The nocturnal creature's foraging is driven by a so-called nectar trail made up of flowering agaves, cacti and other blooming plants that form the bat's diet.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting public comment through 7 March on its proposal to delist the lesser long-nosed bat.

It was declared recovered by Mexico in 2015 and removed from that country's endangered species list.—*Reuters*

Lesser long-nosed bat captured during a citizen science research project is pictured in southern Arizona in this undated handout photo obtained by Reuters on 5 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Athletic Bilbao players celebrate victory in King's Cup soccer match at San Mames stadium, Bilbao, Spain on 5 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Barcelona lose first leg of cup tie in fiery Bilbao affair

BARCELONA — King's Cup holders Barcelona have a fight on their hands if they are to remain in the competition after losing a fiery first leg of their last-16 tie at Athletic Club 2-1 on Thursday despite playing the final 10 minutes with a two-man advantage.

Spain striker Aritz Aduriz headed Bilbao in front in the 25th minute and the veteran produced an audacious flick to tee up youngster Inaki Williams to volley in the second three minutes later. Talisman Lionel Messi pulled a full-strength Barca side back into the game with a free-kick in the 52nd minute which came off the underside of the bar and over the line.

Brazilian forward Neymar had a strong penalty appeal turned down in the first half and was the victim of more aggression after the break, leading to Raul Garcia and then Ander Iturraspe being shown second yellow cards late in the game.

Roared on by the famously passionate San Mames faithful, Athletic produced a resilient display to hold on for the win despite a barrage of late attempts by Barca, which included Messi hitting the post with the last kick of the match.

The second leg takes place next Wednesday at the Nou Camp.—*Reuters*

Djokovic and Murray through in Doha as oldies bow out

Djokovic celebrates after winning Qatar Open, Men's Singles in Doha, Qatar, on 5 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

DOHA — Ageless Czech Radek Stepanek's run at the Qatar Open was ended by defending champion Novak Djokovic on Thursday and fellow veteran Ivo Karlovic also bowed out at the quarter-final stage.

World number one Andy Murray, bidding for a third Doha title, joined Djokovic in the semi-final with a hard-earned victory over Spain's Nicolas Almagro, his 27th consecutive win.

Stepanek, at 38 the oldest player to reach an ATP quarter-final since Jimmy Connors in 1995, was no match for a clinical Djokovic, who made light of the breezy conditions with a straightforward 6-3, 6-3 victory.

The 37-year-old Karlovic, the oldest top-20 player since Ken Rosewall in 1978, lost 6-2, 7-5 to Spain's Fernando Verdasco.

Verdasco will face Djokovic for a place in the final.

Briton Murray beat Almagro for the fifth time in six matches but was never comfortable against the hard-hitting Spaniard before posting a 7-6(4), 7-5 victory.

Almagro threw everything at the 29-year-old, striking 32 winners to his opponent's 24, but Murray's defensive skills proved decisive in the end as he wore down the world number 44.

Murray will play Tomas Berdych, victor over France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 7-5, 6-3, in Friday's semi-finals.—*Reuters*

Herrera expects United to continue fight for every trophy

LONDON — Midfielder Ander Herrera expects Manchester United to "fight for every trophy" as the FA Cup champions begin the defence of their title with a third round tie against Championship side Reading at Old Trafford on Saturday.

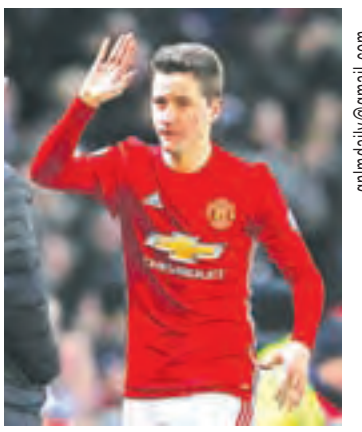
United saw off League One sides Sheffield United and Shrewsbury Town, and Championship outfit Derby County on their way to a 12th FA Cup win last season and Herrera believes the club is obliged to defeat lower tier opponents at home.

"We are United, we have to fight for every trophy and at home against Reading we have the obligation to try to win, to score goals and to get to the next round," the Spaniard told MUTV of their promotion-chasing opposition.

"They are a strong team and are high in the table so it will be difficult but it's a big tournament for us and we want to get to the next round."

In Jose Mourinho's first season at the club, United are currently sixth in the Premier League, have reached the semi-finals of the League Cup and also progressed to the knockout stages of the Europa League.

"But, we are United, we have to fight for every trophy and at home against Reading we have the obligation to try to win, to score goals and to get to the next round," he added.—*Reuters*



Manchester United's Ander Herrera. PHOTO: REUTERS

Guardiola plays down 'early retirement' comments

LONDON — Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has clarified comments that suggested he was making plans for an early retirement, with the Spaniard insisting he was not ready to quit management.

The 45-year-old had told NBC in an interview earlier this week that his current stint at City could be one of his last managerial assignments, a view he sought to elaborate on in his first season at the Etihad.

"Maybe it was inappropriate to say I'm starting to say goodbye to my career. I'm not thinking that I'm going to retire," the Spaniard told reporters ahead of Friday's FA Cup third-round clash against West Ham United.

"I said in the interview that I won't be a trainer when I'm 60. But I'm 45. I'm not going to retire in two or three years.

"I love my job and I'm in the perfect place to do my job especially here in England," he added.

Guardiola also reiterated that goalkeeper Claudio Bravo can adapt to the intensity of the Premier League.—*Reuters*

Chelsea's Mikel joins China gold rush with move to Tianjin

BEIJING — Nigeria midfielder John Obi Mikel has become the latest big name player to join the Chinese Super League gold rush after leaving Chelsea for Tianjin Teda.

Mikel, who failed to make a single appearance for Antonio Conte's side this season, had a medical in the port city some 130 kilometres from Beijing on Thursday and the Asian Football Confederation confirmed the deal on Friday.

The 29-year-old, who spent more than a decade at Stamford Bridge, was given a free transfer by the London club and will earn 140,000 pounds a week in China, according to local media reports.

After joining Chelsea in 2006, Mikel was part of a squad that won a Champions League crown, two Premier League titles and four FA Cups.

Chinese clubs have made several high-profile signings over the last month with Argentine striker Carlos Tevez moving to Shanghai Shenhua for a reported 84 million euros (70.7 million pounds).

Less than a week later, Brazilian midfielder Oscar joined local rivals Shanghai SIPG from Chelsea in a deal believed to be worth 60 million euros.—*Reuters*

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