

■ NATIONAL

State Counsellor receives donation from Thailand for humanitarian efforts in Rakhine State

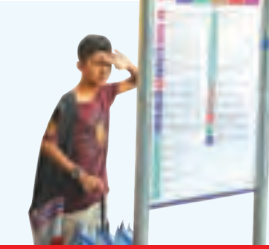
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Gov't pledges to relax laws, to fight illegal trade, to revive tourism, to build estates

THE Union Government would relax some laws in order to help private sector, pledging to take stringent measures on illegal trading, said Vice President U Myint Swe yesterday.

At the meeting with entrepreneurs in Yangon yesterday, the Vice President expressed the government's commitment to development of the private sector, calling on the five working committees under the Private Sector Development Committee he chaired, for carrying on their respective duties in order to assist entrepreneurs in overcoming their challenges in terms of relaxing the laws that no longer comply with the current situations.

"However, as for some parts, it will take time as some laws are to be amended. Yet, we will implement as soon as possible," said the Vice President.

The remarks come at the second regular meeting with Myanmar entrepreneurs at the meeting hall of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Yangon yesterday.

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Myanmar Tourism Federation is drawing the white paper to revive the tourism industry in the country and has asked the government to reopen some tourism sites which were shut down for security reasons.

PHOTO: THIHA TUN

INSIDE



Gold prices rise by over Ks 20,000 per tical during first 2 weeks of January

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Chairman of Myanmar Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win welcomes Ms Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur, in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

Ms Yanghee Lee visits Sittway, Rakhine State

Ms Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, arrived in Sittway, Rakhine State yesterday evening by air.

At about 4.45 pm, Ms Yanghee Lee and party discussed with the Cabinet members led by the Rakhine State Cabinet's Chief Minister U Nyi Pu.

Afterward, Ms Yanghee Lee

and party met with leaders of Islam Community at the Islam Mia school in Aung Mingalar ward, Sittway, inspecting round the ward.

Before departing to Rakhine State, Ms Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, met with responsible officials from

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Opening honorary consulate in Yangon shows our commitment to strengthening our relations with Myanmar: Ukrainian FM Mr Pavlo Klimkin

Q: Myanmar and Ukraine have established the diplomatic relations since 1999. Is this your first visit to Myanmar and how's your visit to Myanmar?

A: We have about 19 years diplomatic relations. This is not my first visit to Myanmar, but this is my first visit to Myanmar as Ukrainian Foreign Minister. In this sense, it's indeed a historic and setting up very important political contact but also people-to-people contact between our politicians and our relations. And, we have another important trend. Yesterday we opened up our honorary consulate in Yangon. It shows our commitment to strengthening our relations with Myanmar. And I also came up with a number of ideas how you increase, how you improve our legal framework because still we don't have the whole legal base for our relations in institutional framework in the sense of the political consultation and in the sense of economic type but of course the fundamental point is for our relations about people-to-people links, this is why I am so positive about my visit.

Q: Your honorary consulate was opened in Yangon very recently and it is a good start for



Ukrainian Foreign Minister talking with reporter from the Myanmar Radio and Television. PHOTO: MNA

the new year between our Myanmar and Ukraine bilateral relations. I'd like to know your impression on Myanmar's democratic transformation while Myanmar is endeavouring for peace and national reconciliation.

A: I believe that Ukraine has a number of challenges to tackle. That is very important. But from my conversation with Myanmar political leaders, I got a very clear and strong commitment to help the process of reforms here. Secondly, I

see the commitment to the reforms. Commitment is really important to get the success of the reforms. Because of that I understand we have a number of areas which we somehow gonna together, we've been going in Ukraine through real reform drive. You've going along the path of reform. I am very positive about how Myanmar political leaders to tackle challenges.

Q: What can Ukraine make economic cooperation with Myanmar?

A: Absolutely, we have a history economic relations.---Our agriculture sector is don't much because we have now minus eight in uk. We are one of the most powerful agricultural producers for example if we talk about sunflower seeds and oil, if we talk about other products. You are very powerful producers in other areas for example for rice, tropical fruits, many areas. So, I believe we would be very successful in matching our imports both in industrial and agricultural productions. And, don't forget, for example tourism. Because tourism has been extremely successful here, in your country. Due to all kinds of your tourist attractions, you are only south east Asian country where you can ski the future. So you should use your unique experiences to attract tourists. We need to work for the people-to-people contacts. We need for our students to exchange. We need to get Ukrainian tourists to Myanmar to understand Myanmar to get essence of Myanmar.

Q: I also want to know your opinion and expectation for Myanmar-Ukraine relations

A: We have very good relations and we have no bilateral problems. But we need better

interaction in the sense of more than contacts. For example, we need a special mechanism for our people from our both ministries to come together. It's not only about two foreign ministers. Officials (of both countries) come in together probably two times a year and talk to each others. It's about diplomats taking about how to help Ukrainians in Myanmar and how to help Myanmar in Ukraine. It's about our cooperation in different international forum, for example in the United Nations. It's about many many issues.

Q: What do you want to say to Myanmar?

A: I would like to have regular contacts and regular visits between us. I write to my counterpart in Myanmar to visit Ukraine. It's about economic ministers to come together probably for bilateral economic connections. It's about a number of new agreements we still don't have economic agreement. for example double taxation. We need to work out these agreements. We need to sign them. We have 19 years of successful diplomatic relations. Now we have to put more substance to the relations. My visit is exactly about this. —Myanmar News Agency

Tatmadaw troops take over KIA battalion headquarters

COLUMNS of Tatmadaw troops occupied three KIA strongholds including the headquarters of Battalion (3) of Brigade (5) yesterday morning. After taking over Gidon post, 768 Laiphong camp and outposts nearby of the KIA during December 2016 and January 2017, Tatmadaw troops launched operations on three KIA posts including Ngakyan Camp, the headquarters of Battalion 3 of the KIA from 10 to 12 January before occupying them. Tatmadaw troops seized some bodies, four assorted weapons, 1500 rounds of ammunition, 600 catridges and 50 shells while some members of security forces sacrificed their lives for the country. —Myanmar News Agency



KIA battalion headquarters. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar-Czech Foreign Office Consultations held

THE 1st Myanmar-Czech Foreign Office Consultations was held by U Kyaw Zeya, Permanent

Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and

H.E. Mr. Martin Tlapa, Deputy Minister for Non-European Countries, Economic and Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, at Ayeyarwady Hall, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw on 13th January 2017 at 10:30 hrs.

At the meeting, matters on promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation on economy, investment, education, and cultural sectors were cordially discussed. —Myanmar News Agency



The meeting of Myanmar-Czech Foreign office consultations in progress. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR GAZETTE

U Myo Myint Maung assigned as Permanent Secretary

Union Government has assigned U Myo Myint Maung, Director-General, Union Minister's Office, Ministry of Information as Permanent Secretary to perform the duties of the permanent secretary. —Myanmar News Agency

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Head of service organization appointed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Lwin Oo, Deputy Director-General, Department of Legislation, Amyotha Hluttaw Office as Director-General of Amyotha Hluttaw Office on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties. —Myanmar News Agency

Notification for Donation in cash to be contributed to the peace fund for National Reconciliation & Peace Center

1. For people to be able to take part in the peace process, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar national reconciliation and peace center announced under the notification 1/2017 on 10/1/2017 that contributions can be donated into the bank account—SF-004048, Nay Pyi Taw branch, Myanmar Economic Bank.
2. Now, to our great rejoice we are receiving contri-

butions into the Peace Fund for the National Reconciliation and Peace Center.

3. We respectfully informed that for those wishing to donate in cash to be more convenient, current account, CF—003434 has been opened at the Nay Pyi Taw branch, Myanmar Economic Bank.

National Reconciliation and Peace Center

State Counsellor receives Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Mr. Martin Tlapa, Deputy Minister for Non-European Countries, Economic and Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

of the Czech Republic, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and the Czech Republic.—*Myanmar News Agency*



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Deputy Minister of the Czech Republic Mr. Martin Tlapa. PHOTO: MNA

Advisory body of PC holds talks with DPN delegation in Chiang Mai

THE advisory body of the Peace Commission and the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) led by U Khu Oo Reh of the United Nationalities Federal Council-UNFC in Chiang Mai, Thailand, yesterday morning.

U Aung Kyi, the chairman of the advisory body of the Peace Commission, and U Khu Oo Reh, leader of the DPN, delivered addresses at the meeting, before discussing the 9-point demand of the UNFC, future talks in Yangon and matters related to the Joint-Monitoring Committee.

U Hla Maung Shwe, one of the members of the advisory body, said that they had explained the policy of the government and the talk was successful to some extent but added that not all matter were solved at the meeting.

The talk, which was attended by U Hla Maung Shwe, Dr Min Zaw Oo and U Kyaw Lin Oo of technical supporting team on the government side and U Khu Oo Reh, General Gun Maw and Dr Nai Shwe Thein on the DPN side, concluded in the evening.—*Ye Khaung Nyunt*



U Khu Oo Reh, leader of the DPN side speaks at meeting with Advisory Commission of the Peace Commission. PHOTO: HMS



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi accepts USD 200,000 of cash assistance from Mr. Pisanu Suwanajata, Ambassador of Thailand at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor receives donation from Thailand for humanitarian efforts in Rakhine State

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received USD 200,000 of cash assistance from the Kingdom of Thailand to support Myanmar's humanitarian efforts in Rakhine State at the

meeting with Mr. Pisanu Suwanajata, Ambassador of Thailand at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at 11:00 hrs yesterday.

The assistance has been remitted to the relevant bank account which has been opened for

providing humanitarian assistance.

When received, it will be transferred to the Rakhine State Government to be used in its humanitarian's efforts.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Ms Yanghee Lee visits Sittway, Rakhine State

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Peace Commission at the National Reconciliation & Peace Center in Kamayut township, Yangon yesterday morning.

In the meeting, Dr Tin Myo Win, chairman of the Peace Commission and members replied to the queries raised by Ms Yanghee Lee, concerning the activities of the Peace Commission and the preparation on 2nd Meeting of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong.

In answer to the questions raised by Ms Yanghee Lee and party, U Win Mra, chairman of the Myanmar national human rights commission and members clarified at the Office of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission in Hlaing township.

Then, Ms Yanghee Lee and party went to the Insein Correctional Department, enquiring inmates—two convicts and another two under trial separately.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*



Ms Yanghee Lee holds talks with officers from the Insein Correctional Department. PHOTO: MNA

Gov't pledges to relax laws, to fight illegal trade, . . .

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The second meeting is aimed to help solving difficulties, suggestions and submissions of private entrepreneurs and businessmen as soon as possible in accord with rules and regulations.

The first meeting was held on 1st December 2016.

The Private Sector Development Committee comprising of 18 members, was formed on October 24, 2016, and held its first meeting with entrepreneurs on 1st December last year.

Five working committees were formed under the committee in order to carry out improvement of laws, rules and regulation, financial sector, trade and investment,

redrawing nationalized sector in business on commerce and services and human resources building.

At the meeting, developers suggested the committee to reduce the tax in order to boost the real estate sector including tax over condominium and under K15-million affordable housings. They also discussed issues related to import and export and establishing Health Care Zone in Yangon.

Regarding the affordable housing, Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Kyaw Win suggested the private investors to construct low-cost housings for the pensioners on the land allotted by the government.

Meanwhile, Yangon Region

Chief Minister suggested to review 29 industrial zones, which are facing the problem of squatters, in order to run through the Public-Private Partnership model.

Regarding the tourism sector, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung stressed the need to establish a public company to building the tourism fund.

He also suggested the entrepreneurs to form companies first before applying license for tourism business.

In the previous meeting, sector on illegal trade, sector on foreign exchange rate, sector on upgrading imports, power supply sector and New Yangon City Project sector discussed 27 matters.—*GNLM*

Yangon Region Government meets volunteers for new public transportation system

YANGON Region Government met with volunteers for a new public transportation system in Yangon Region Hluttaw Building yesterday afternoon.

Yangon City is launching a new bus line on 16 January and the volunteers will help advice the public on new bus lines.

Yangon Region Chief Minister met with the volunteers and discussed the role voluntary service in the new public transportation system.

"We discussed the part to be played by the volunteers for passengers. There may be difficulties

at the beginning. The volunteers will help solve their difficulties. We do not like the previous system," said a student from the Institute of Economics. The volunteers include members of philanthropic organizations as well as those from university students. Hluttaw representatives and authorities will also cooperate with volunteers to help solve the difficulties of travellers.

The meeting was attended by Yangon Region Government, Region Hluttaw representatives, senior officials of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society, philanthropic organizations civil society

organizations, students from universities and volunteers.

The Yangon Region Government and the Yangon Region Transportation Authority launching a reform on public transportation system of the city, previously overseen by the All Bus Line Supervisory Committee. More volunteers have been invited at the meeting.

Yangon based companies will also contribute to the launching of the new bus system by changing office hours while some companies offered to transport to travellers in difficulty.—001



Yangon Region Chief Minister meeting with volunteers for new public transportation system at the Yangon Region Government office in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

ITBMU holds 18th Anniversary of ceremony for paying homage to teachers



Students of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University pay respects to Sayadaws. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

THE 18th anniversary of ceremony for paying homage to teachers in International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University was held at the university premises in Mayangone township, Yangon, yesterday morning.

Firstly, Ashin Sitta Pala begged for a solemn pardon for forgiveness from the Reverend Sayadaws if there had been a mistake committed towards the teachers, if ever.

Afterwards students learning at the University, paid respects to Sayadaws, by reciting Okatha Kadawcho sayings. On behalf the Myanmar students,

Ashin Esaka and Ashin Pon-na for foreign students spoke words of thanks to the teachers and donated offerings.

Then, Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa, the Rector of the ITBMU, gave a speech to the students.

Present at the ceremony were the Reverend Sayadaw led by Rector Sayadaw with Buddhist nuns, Teachers and students from America, England, Laos, India, Belgium, China, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Bhutan, Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar as well as donors and invited guests paying homage to Sayadaws.—Myanmar News Agency

Police discovers male body in Maungtaw

A POLICE patrol team in Tonchaung (Chaungwa) in Maungtaw township discovered a decayed body of a man about 300 metres from the police outpost yesterday morning.

The unidentified body was found without any injuries, according to the police. The body was inspected before witnesses and sent to Maungtaw People's Hospital for autopsy.—Myanmar News Agency

Fire destroys two houses in Maungtaw

A FIRE broke out in Thetkalpyin (East) Village, Maungtaw Township, yesterday morning, burning down two houses.

The fire started the kitchen of the house of Harby Solem in the village and it spread to his neighbor, Mahazarrakhatu. The fire was put out by residents of the village at about 6.30 am. An investigation has been launched into the outbreak of the fire.—Myanmar News Agency

Armed group explodes a Hoax sound mine in Kutkai

A HOAX sound mine was exploded in Kutkai, north-eastern Shan State, at about 8 pm on January 12.

Upon hearing bomb explosion, at the west of the Myanma Economic Bank in ward 1 of Kutkai, local security forces went there to clear the area and found two motor bikes driving towards them with high speed.

Though the government

troops tried to stop the bikes, they refused to stop. The Tatmadaw troops fired warning shoot in attempt to stop them.

Having checked the site which the explosion occurred, the armed group exploded a hoax sound mine, intending to frighten the local people. The government troops are pursuing the two suspected motor bikes.—Myanmar News Agency

Drug cases double in Bago region

BAGO region saw a two hundred per cent increase in case of narcotics this year, compared to that of the same period last year, according to the local police force.

In 2016, the police arrested 137 drug users and traffickers in 86 narcotics cases, up from 35 cases in 2015.

The officials seized over 15 million Yaba tablets and marijuana weighing 6.760 kilogram from 57 cases of drug seizures.

"We seized Yaba tablets the most around regarding drug cases. It means that the drug abusers used Yaba tablets the

most of all drugs. Bago region has the third highest drug seized rate among all states and regions. We want to request the public to cooperate with our police," said Police Captain Win Lwin, Bago region anti-narcotics unit 36.

Moreover, there have been one abuse case of diazepam, one case of black opium, 13 cases of other drugs and 14 cases of marijuana.

The police have taken action against the drug abusers and traffickers under sections 15/16 and 19.—Myitmakha News Agency

Crime NEWS

Stimulants seized in City Development Guesthouse in Nay Pyi Taw

ACTING on an information tip-off, Police led by Inspector of Police Khaing Myo Tun arrived at Ma La Phai Nan Yaw alias Thida Aung's room at No.6, building 2 of City Development Guesthouse in Zabuthiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw to search her room. However, she was found in front of her room.

Police found stimulants drugs from her slang bag with the brand of LUMAND. Ma Thida Aung, upon being inter-

rogated, answered she bought 250-tablet packs for Ks 150,000 per pack from Ma Eik Shan to sell for Ks 2,000 per tablet.

Police seized Ks 31,200, 248 WY-tablets in pink colour and 2 tablets in green colour, making a total of 250 tablets worth Ks 750,000. Police have taken action against her under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Nyi Nyi Than (Nay Pyi Taw)

A handmade mine found on Muse-Lashio union road

A HANDMADE mine was found while the members of Tatmadaw were conducting an area clearance operation on the western side of Muse-Lashio Union road, northeastern Shan State on Thursday.

Local authorities said that the improvised explosive device was planted 15 miles south of Muse by the ethnic army troops. The authorities deactivated that mine.—Myanmar News Agency

LOCAL Business

Over one million tonne of pulses exported in past nine months

EXPORT volume of all pulses over the first nine months of the current financial year was more than one million tonne, a rise by almost 150,000 tonnes, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

Between April and end of December of this FY, Myanmar earned over US\$1 billion from the export of beans and pulses weighing over 1.002 million tonnes. The country sent a total of 853,649 tonnes to its trade partners compared with the same time last year, receiving \$802.125 million.

The country sold \$1.214 billion worth beans and pulses weighing 1.2 million tonnes in 2015-2016 FY.

According to the figures issued by the Ministry of Commerce, agricultural products amounting to over \$2.075 billion were sold to foreign buyers between 1 April and 6 January of this FY, including \$0.043 million from the government sector and \$2.075 billion from the private sector. The export value increased by over \$208 million compared with the similar period in FY 2015-2016.

Around 80 per cent of Myanmar's pulses normally go to Indian market while the rest has been exported to China, European countries, ASEAN member states, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The majority of exports go through shipping route.—*Wah Wah*

Mandalay real estate market expected to be active after Chinese New Year

MANDALAY real estate market is expected to be active again after 2017 Chinese New Year. The rental service can also be expected to raise its head again in post Chinese New Year Period, it is learnt from Mandalay Real Property market.

The realty market has been cool since the previous election. Most of the Chinese people went back to their country to spend their new year there. The property market is hoped to be selling well again after the Chinese New Year. The Chinese people are interested to buy the land, said U Tun Tun Naing, the owner of Gabar Myay Aung Real Estate Agent.

Although Mandalay real estate market is a slow-selling market, the prices of rental houses range is cost from Ks 1 million to 4 million in the crowded area of Mandalay region. But, those of rental houses in not strategic locations range from Ks 0.2 million to Ks 0.5 million.

Currently, a 40x60 square feet of land costs Ks 250 million, down from Ks 350 million last year, it is learnt from Mandalay real estate market.

The Chinese buyers are observing the political situation after 2016. So, the Mandalay real estate agencies are hoping for a stable market after Chinese New Year.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Paddy price declines despite increasing rice price in Mawlamyinegyun

WHILE the price of paddy is falling, the villagers from Mawlamyinegyun township still must buy rice at a high price, it is learnt from local villagers.

"The price of rice never seems to go down. The villagers believe the rice price is likely to continue to rise. So we can only pray for the rice price not to be raised," said Daw San San Htay, a villager.

The villagers from Mawlamyinegyun township grow many kinds of paddy, such as Manawthuka, Ayeyar Min, Hsin Thuka and Zero paddies. The paddy cost is Ks 350,000 to Ks 360,000 per 100 baskets.

"The price of rice is still rising because the traders purchased

rice in the town to sell the rice in their regions. Another reason the rice transportation costs, said Ma Myint Khin Win, a rice trader from Mawlamyinegyun township.

The villagers from Mawlamyinegyun township are relying on paddy farming for their livelihood. They mostly grow Ayeyar Min, Hsin Thuka and Manaw Thuka strains of paddy.

High-quality Paw San Hmwe rice was sold at Ks 29,000 per bag while low quality rice was sold for Ks 21,000 per bag in 2016. But this year, high-quality rice has been sold for Ks 33,000 per bag, while low-quality rice sold for Ks 26,000 per bag.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Gold prices rise by over Ks 20,000 per tical during first 2 weeks of January

THE rising value of gold on the global market has resulted in the price of Myanmar gold rising by over Ks 20,000 per tical during the past ten days, according to gold dealers.

The price of Myanmar gold has increased in value from Ks 843,000 per tical on 3 January to Ks 867,000 per tical on 13 January.

"The price of Myanmar gold has appreciated in response to the increase in the value of gold on the global market. The price of dollar has decreased slightly. The value of Myanmar

gold fetched around Ks 865000 during these days," said U Zaw Aung, the owner of Taik Sein gold shop.

The price of global gold has increased US\$ 1203 per ounce, up from US\$ 1150 per ounce on 3 January.

"Usually, the gold price is fluctuating in January. So it is difficult to estimate the market value these days. Currently, we cannot say the price of gold in Myanmar market because the value of gold on the global market and US dollar have caused unstable prices," U Maw Maw,

the general manger of Aung Thamardi gold shop.

The price of gold in Myanmar market has reached Ks 900,500 per tical in 2016.

According to current prices on the morning of 13 January, Myanmar gold price fetched Ks 867,000 while 15 carat Myanmar gold was priced at Ks 808,000. The price of gold on the global market was valued at US\$ 1203 per ounce. The foreign exchange rate of Myanmar kyat was around Ks 1360 per dollar.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



The file photo shows sale staff shows gold bracelets to customers at gold shop. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Border trade value rises by over \$55 million

BORDER trade value between Myanmar and its neighbours counted up until 6 January this fiscal year hit more than US\$5.4 billion, an increase of over \$55 million compared with the same period last FY, according to Commerce Ministry.

From 1 April to 6 January of this FY, the trade value through borders reached \$5.411 billion in toto, including \$3.315 billion from export sector and \$2.096 billion from import sector.

This time last FY, border trade value was \$5.356 billion. Border trade exports amounted

to \$3.334 billion while the total imports reached \$2.021 billion.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, fisheries products, mining products, forestry products and industrial goods. The country predominantly imports personal goods, industrial raw materials, construction equipment, automobiles and capital goods mainly from China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Germany, France and Hong Kong.

Roughly 80 per cent of Myanmar's total external trade is through sea routes.

The border trade camps

with China include Muse, Lweje, Kanpikete, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung. The country has carried out border trade with Thailand through Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, Hteekhee and Mawtaung border gates. The cross-border trade camps between Myanmar and Bangladesh are Sittwe and Maungtaung, while the country trades directly with India via the Tamu and Reed border gates.

The Muse border has the highest volume and value of total border trade.—*Khine Khant*

Abe, Duterte affirm importance of US commitment to Asia-Pacific

DAVAO, (Philippines) — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte agreed on Friday on the importance of US contribution to peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region ahead of the inauguration of Donald Trump as US president amid uncertainty about his foreign policy.

Meeting for the second day in Duterte's hometown of Davao in the southern Philippines, the two leaders had talks following a breakfast together and other events in Abe's diplomatic gesture aimed at building personal ties. They also touched on the issue of China's military buildup in the South China Sea, confirming a policy to resolve disputes under the rule of law, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

The Philippines has conflicting claims with China in the disputed waters along with four other governments.

Duterte told Abe he is ready to have direct talks with China concerning the South China Sea, according to the ministry. Duterte has previously suggested



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (R) hands over a Philippine Eagle stuffed toy named Sakura to Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the ceremonial eagle naming at the garden area of Waterfront Insular Hotel in Davao City, southern Philippines, on 13 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

setting aside territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea, opting to boost economic cooperation with the world's second-largest economy.

Abe hopes the Philippines and China act based on the ruling last July of the UN-backed tribunal in The Hague which concluded that China's claim over almost the entire South China Sea has no legal ba-

sis. China has not accepted the decision over the case brought by Duterte's predecessor Benigno Aquino.

With the Philippines assuming the chairmanship of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations for this year, Abe said in the talks with Duterte that he hopes to coordinate with Manila on stressing the principle of the rule of law at a series

of ASEAN-related meetings, which culminates with a summit also involving leaders from the United States, Japan and China, the ministry said.

Abe and Duterte shared the view that continued US commitment to the Asia-Pacific region is needed. Duterte reacted angrily last year when the administration of US President Barack Obama aired

concerns about extrajudicial killings in Duterte's anti-drug campaign.

Trump, who has suggested a shift to a protectionist trade policy and a more muscular foreign policy, will take office as US president on 20 January.

Duterte vowed to continue his country's cooperation with the United States under a bilateral alliance, according to the ministry.

Earlier Friday, the leaders held informal talks over breakfast at Duterte's private residence in Davao on the island of Mindanao, where the Philippine president has spent around half of each week even after taking office last June.

It is the first visit by a sitting foreign leader to Davao, where Duterte served as mayor for around 22 years and enjoys a more than 90-per cent approval rating, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

On Thursday in Manila, the leaders agreed on economic and security cooperation amid China's growing assertiveness in the region. Abe also pledged a public-private package of 1 trillion yen

(\$8.7 billion) to spur infrastructure development in the fast-growing Southeast Asian country, including for promoting agricultural business in Mindanao.

Davao is home to many Filipinos of Japanese descent and is a recipient of Japanese-funded projects for development, according to Japanese officials. Japan has a consular office there.

China, meanwhile, is also seeking to increase its presence in the area, saying last October it will open a diplomatic mission in the city.

The Philippines is Abe's first stop on his six-day overseas trip since Thursday. He will also travel to Australia, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

Also Friday, the two leaders attended a ceremony where Abe named a critically endangered Philippines eagle "Sakura," which means cherry blossom in Japanese, according to the ministry.

The bird, also known as the monkey-eating eagle and endemic to the Philippines, is the national bird of the Philippines. —Kyodo News

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Australian heatwave causing roads to melt in outback town

SYDNEY — The Australian outback township of Bourke in New South Wales state is on track to break the state's record for 22 consecutive days above 40 degrees Celsius as the country's scorching heatwave continues Friday.

A build-up of a hot air mass has been stuck over

central and Western Australia with not enough cold air coming from the south to move the heat around, sending the mercury soaring to 46 degrees in Bourke.

"The Bitumen roads melt. It doesn't run or anything, but if you're wearing thongs it gets really tacky and sticks to the bottom of them," a resident told the

Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The state's hottest recorded temperature of 49.7 degrees was also registered at Bourke in 1903.

The community of Wilcannia, 300 km south west of Bourke, will experience the state's highest temperature Friday at 47 degrees.

Australia's extreme conditions continue across the rest of the state with parts of Sydney expected to reach 42 degrees.

Total fire bans remain in effect across New South Wales and other states after a large grass fire shut down a major expressway 200 km north of Sydney on Wednesday. —Xinhua

Working Japanese expatriate population in Indonesia drops in 2016

JAKARTA — The number of registered Japanese workers living in Indonesia decreased 1 per cent to 12,490 in 2016 from 12,653 in 2015, while the total working expatriate population increased 7 per cent, according to data from the Ministry of Manpower.

The country's total foreign working population was 74,183 on a monthly average in 2016 as of November, the latest month available, compared with 69,025 in 2015.

Some other expat populations also declined, in-

cluding Thais, down 28 per cent, US expats, down 25 per cent, Indians, down 14 per cent, and Malaysians, down 4 per cent.

In contrast, registered workers from some countries increased last year, with those from China showing the biggest increase of 21 per cent to 21,271, followed by South Koreans with an 11 per cent rise to 8,424.

The number of expatriates brought in increases at the beginning of major projects, as they often are needed to install imported machinery because blue-

prints and manuals are in foreign languages, but numbers decline over following years as equipment is operated by locals, said the chief of Indonesia's Investment Coordinating Board, Thomas Lembong, in a press release.

Diminishing expatriate numbers are adversely affecting the housing industry and some other segments of the economy, including the rental tenant market, particularly in Jakarta.

"In Indonesia, the expatriate housing sector has been driven by growth in

the oil and gas industries. However, this business is declining as many expatriates return to their home countries," Ferry Salanto, senior associate director of real estate service company Colliers International, said at a press conference in Jakarta on 5 January.

The number of houses being offered in the sublease market is on the decline as some multinational companies have canceled projects, creating opportunities for tenants to get competitive rental rates, according to industry insiders. —Kyodo News

Thailand's constitutional amendment under king's request passed in parliament

BANGKOK — Thailand's parliament on Friday voted overwhelmingly to approve amendments to the interim constitution as suggested by the new king's office.

The amendment was passed in three readings, with 228 members voting in favour of it and three members abstaining, according to a televised session of the vote.

After amended, the interim constitution allows a group of experts to amend the clauses in the draft constitution that says head of king's advisory body, the Privy Council would serve a temporary regent automatically when the throne is vacant or the monarch does not reside in the kingdom.

After the draft constitution is amended, the monarch will decide whether there should

be a regent.

A 10-member special committee led by Meechai Ruchupan, chairman of Consitution Drafting Committee, will be formed to amend the new constitution.

The government submitted the draft constitution for royal endorsement in early November last year, which is the last process for the draft constitution to be promulgated. The king was expected to endorse the draft constitution in February.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said on Tuesday that King Maha Vajiralongkorn's office had asked for several changes related to royal power in the draft constitution, a rare intervention by a sitting Thai monarch.

Prayut said to make those changes, the parliament, or the National Legislative Assembly,

has to first amend the interim constitution.

The draft constitution, adopted in a referendum last August, plays an important role in the junta's road map to return to civilian rule.

Once promulgated, the new constitution will allow a general election, after which an elected government will be formed to rule the kingdom.

Prime Minister Prayut promised a general election will occur late 2017. He emphasized on Tuesday that they are not postponing the election, which will be held after the royal cremation of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej and coronation of King Vajiralongkorn.

He said Thailand will have a new government in 2018 anyway.—Xinhua

One deminer killed, one injured in mine explosion in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH — One Cambodian demining expert was killed and his female-teammate seriously wounded in an unsuccessful attempt to defuse an anti-personnel mine during a clearance operation in western Pailin province on Friday.

Heng Ratana, director-general of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), said the two victims worked for the Britain-based mine charity organisation, the Halo Trust, that has been in Cambodia since the 1990s.

"According to the information I got, one male-deminer was killed outright and his

female-colleague was badly injured in the explosion," he told Xinhua, adding that the injured was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Phnom Penh for treatment.

Cambodia is one of the most landmine-affected countries in the world. An estimated 4 to 6 million landmines and other munitions were left over from nearly three decades of war that ended in 1998.

According to government figures, from 1979 to 2016, landmines and unexploded ordnances had killed 19,748 people and either injured or amputated 44,914 others.—Xinhua

Vietnamese capital offers 300,000 USD reward for traffic solutions

HANOI — Vietnamese capital will award prizes worth a total of 300,000 US dollars to design consultancy firms that come up with the best solutions to ease traffic congestion, according to Hanoi People's Committee on Friday.

The city just launched a competition on transportation planning and traffic congestion reduction in Hanoi until 2025, with a vision to 2030. The first prize will be worth 200,000 US dollars while the second prize goes 100,000 US dollars. There will be just one winner each.

Entries will be selected by a board of examiners based on their capabilities, experiences and credibility, reported local Vietnam News

online newspaper.

National and international design consultancy firms can submit applications on 19-23 January for the preliminary round.

The board will shortlist five best solutions from the preliminary round to develop traffic solutions, which will be sent to the city's transport department on 27 April.

Between 27 April and 10 May, the shortlisted participants will have to explain and defend their projects. The winners are expected to be announced latest on 25 May.

Apart from the two prizes, each of the remaining three participants will get financial aid of 25,000 US dollars.—Xinhua

South Korea's ex-opposition party head leads ex-UN chief in opinion poll

SEOUL — A former head of South Korea's biggest opposition party kept a comfortable lead in a presidential opinion poll over former UN chief, who returned back to his home country, a local survey showed on Friday.

According to a Gallup Korea poll conducted from Tuesday to Thursday, 31 per cent respondents supported Moon Jae-in, former chief of the main opposition Minjoo Party.

His approval ratings far exceeded the 20-per cent score garnered by Ban Ki-moon, who arrived in South Korea on Thursday from New York after ending his second, five-year term in the top UN post.

Local media outlets speculated that Ban indicated his run for the presidency though he has never declared it officially.

Ban has long been seen as the best hope in the conservative bloc as support for conservative politicians sank after the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye. If the constitutional

court upholds the impeachment, a presidential election must be held in 60 days.

Lee Jae-myung, mayor of Seongnam city to the southeast of Seoul who is affiliated with the Minjoo Party, was at the third place in the recent presidential survey with 12 per cent.

Ahn Cheol-soo of the minor opposition People's Party ranked fourth with approval scores of 7 per cent. In a three-way scenario of presidential election, the former Minjoo Party chief would be elected as the next leader with 44 per cent in support, far exceeding the former UN chief's 30 per cent and Ahn's 14 per cent.

In the simulated showdown between Moon and Ban, the former won 53 per cent, greatly beating the latter's 37 per cent.

Meanwhile, support rate for the Minjoo Party was 41 per cent. It surpassed the ruling Saenuri Party's 12 per cent, the People's Party's 10 per cent and the Righteous Party's 7 per cent.—Xinhua



People look at a portrait of Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun at a royal memorabilia shop in Bangkok, Thailand, on 13 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

China, Russia agree to further respond to THAAD deployment

MOSCOW — China and Russia have agreed to take further countermeasures in response to the proposed deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence system (THAAD), officials from both countries said on Thursday.

The countermeasures will be aimed at safeguarding interests of China and Russia and the strategic balance in the region, said a statement released after the sixth China-Russia consultation on security situation in the Northeast Asia.

The two countries reiterated their serious concerns about and firm opposition to Washington and Seoul's constant attempts to deploy THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea, according to the statement.

China and Russia urged the

United States and South Korea to address their security concerns and stop the deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula, it said.

Seoul and Washington abruptly announced a decision in July last year to deploy one THAAD battery by the end of this year, triggering strong opposition from China and Russia as the US missile defence system's X-band radar can peer into territories of the two countries.

The United States and South Korea claim that THAAD will be used to neutralize missile threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, while China and Russia believe the powerful system will harm their strategic interests.

Both China and Russia believe the current situation in the Korean Peninsula and in the Northeast

Asia is complicated and sensitive, the statement said.

The two countries urged all relevant parties to exercise restraint to prevent activities which could aggravate tensions, it added.

They also reaffirmed their insistence on the goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, safeguarding peace and stability of the peninsula, and searching for solutions through dialogue and consultation.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen communication and coordination to jointly cope with the situation in the Northeast Asia.

Thursday's meeting was co-chaired by China's Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov.—Xinhua

Opinion

Write for us

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

Love and Happiness Come First and then other Things Follow

Dr.Nu Nu Win

FOR all young and old, those who are babies or children in early or late childhood, or those who are adolescents, this saying is still true. This means, if a baby or a child or an adolescent, receives enough loving kindness in his or her early days, all other things such as success, being well-disciplined, having non-selfish heart, gentleness, responsibility, respect for others, sympathy and empathy and so on ... all the good things will follow automatically once they have received loving kindness.

Once, there was an old lady teacher from whose school, many successful old students were born. And the responsible persons from the Ministry of Education were so curious to find out the reasons behind this remarkable success.

So, they interviewed that old lady teacher to find out how she had been able to produce so many successful students and what kind of methodology she had used to train

them in her school. The old teacher thought for awhile silently. Then, she answered very simply,

"Just because I love my pupils so much"

That is the Secret of Success in Teaching and Learning.

When a child (a pupil) gets enough loving kindness from his or her parents and teachers, the first thing he or she gains as a natural present is happiness, and then self-confidence follows it. When a child has confidence in the depth of his or her heart, he or she is able to continue on the path to learning. Imagine how much a child can become curious about everything and everybody around him or her, how nice that he or she can ask his parents or teacher all about what he or she wants to know without any punishment, and how much he or she can experiment and experience about all the things he or she is so curious to know.

Then, the courage to see,

to find, to write, to ask, to experiment, to experience will follow and all these lead him or her to enjoy learning by him or herself. Sometimes he or she will become happy to know that something is not a very difficult thing for him or her to study, it is what he or she can see very easily find in their surroundings. It will bring joy to them. It will make them to become happy in learning and studying. And it will lead them to enjoy life-long learning. They will follow the path, "Learn to Live and Live to Learn".

All these will help them succeed in life, knowing what self-discipline is, which are the correct moral beliefs and ways to follow, how sympathy and empathy can make them happier, how they should have responsibility from very small things so as to keep themselves and their surroundings neat and tidy, how they should stand on their own feet to do anything without depending so much on adults and so on up to the

ability to keep democracy in their life path, to follow the Laws, and to have the hearts to live peacefully.

There are very important pillars in Learning, such as

To learn to know,

To learn to do,

To learn to think,

To learn to learn and

To learn to live together peacefully.

If a child starts learning all these since his schooldays, it will not be difficult for him to keep peace and reconciliation among different societies. It can lead to a developed and peaceful society in every corner of the world.

As the Bible says, "Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men", we should start from the very beginning of the process which is "Loving-kindness".

So, Love and Happiness come first and then other things follow.

It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to spread "Love and Happiness" over all children and youths.

Pragmatic approach to establish "Home for the Aged" on self-help basis

Daw Myint Myint Kyi
(Wachet Hospital)

(Continued from 13-1-2017)

NEW recruits are required to attend at least six months practical training.

Even if the donor for the new building does not come up during these waiting years, it does not matter. The new recruits as nurse aid could be attached to the Wachet Sangha Hospital after the training. The cost incurred for the training for six months must be provided from the fund of Wachet Hospital. However, before sending them to nurse aid training at the Hninzigone, a "Service Bond" should be signed to the effect that the new recruits are obliged to serve for certain years as may deemed fit by the Management Committee either at the "Home for the Aged" or at the "Wachet Hospital".

The past episodes at the Wachet Hospital showed that some well trained nurses at the expense of the hospital left Wachet and joined some other health care institutions for better salary. They

happened to be job changers. In most of the cases, the trained nurses encountered difficulty at the new job and new surrounding, and wanted to come back to Wachet Hospital in Sagaing Hills. During the lifetime of the founder Kyaswa Sayadaw, the mind changers were not allowed to come back to work at Wachet Hospital.

I have shared motley assortment of approaches to Patrons and EC Members for establishing "Home for the Aged" with nurse aids in Sagaing Hills. The catch point is that concerned persons in Wachet EC must understand the core concept of the delicate plan.

In the following days in October 2016, I discussed with the former Chief Matron of the Wachet Hospital regarding the intended training for the new recruits at Hninzigone. A separate discussion was made with the incumbent Chief Matron of the Wachet Hospital on the proposed nurse aid training. Despite the fact that the matrons and senior nurses could provide nurse aid training in theory at Wachet Hospital, they were of the view to im-

part training at Hninzigone for practical training in caring the elderly persons at Hninzigone Home. At that juncture, I have to ascertain whether it is possible to find new recruits to attend nurse aid training in Yangon. It was happy to note that there are young girls with keen interest to participate.

Meanwhile, I came across an interesting article of prominent Sayadaw on aging depicting over a Myanmar saying "The old body could not follow where the mind goes". According to Buddhism, life is a combination of mind (nama) and matter (rupa). Mind consists of the combination of sensations, perceptions, volitional activities and consciousness. Matter consists of the combination of the four elements of solidity, fluidity, motion and heat. Sayadaw expounded that "the old body" is "Rupa" and the "Mind" is "Nama", and the status is that "Rupa" has decreased its strength, anchored and could not move, while the "Nama" could maneuver and moves ahead. This situation opens up the path to search the "Four Noble Truth" by using

the "Nama" with plenty of time in hand.

While thinking and writing about the pragmatic approach to establish "Home for the Aged" with nurse aid on self-help basis in Sagaing Hills, I have found the way leading to the gateway of Nirvana by using and realizing "Nama".

At a time, when we could not follow the "body" as aging persons, we should stay at an environment with clean air and comfort such as "Home for the Aged" supported with nursing aid, and enter into meditation by using the "mind".

In the first week of October 2016, I have had the opportunity in the exchange of views with responsible persons of Lower Myanmar and Upper Myanmar ECs for the Home. With keen interest, the senior engineer of Upper Myanmar has already drawn up a sketch design on the structure of two storied building for "Home for the Aged" with Grand Main Prayer hall, reading room and attached with elevator, facing famous Ayeyawaddy River.

I am happy to learn that there

are many options in the actual implementation of the building.

The estimated total cost of the Home would be kyats (150) million as Wachet area has many local skilled workers.

If the older persons are keen and desirous to own the room permanently at the Home, contribution of kyats (10) million to the common fund is sufficient.

The project could be realized even without the main donor.

That is what the EC called "self-help basis".

My dream for establishing "Home for the Aged" with nurse aid is ready to transform into reality soon.

Meanwhile, all concerned persons with Wachet Jivatadana Sangha Hospital in Sagaing Hills are expecting for a donor or donors to contribute kyats (150) millions.

Concluded

(Daw Myint Myint Kyi is a Retired Senior Government Officer and currently serving as the Honorary Secretary of Wachet Hospital Committee for Lower Myanmar). (Translated by Sayar Mya).

US troops' move to Poland unnerves Kremlin

WARSAW/MOSCOW — Poland on Thursday welcomed several thousand US troops along with tanks and heavy equipment under a planned NATO operation to beef up its Eastern European allies, vexing the Kremlin, which said the troops' presence is a threat to Russia.

The largest US military reinforcement of Europe in decades of around 2,700 troops, out of 3,500 planned, arrived as part of operation Atlantic Resolve, aimed at showing Moscow Washington's commitment to its allies.

"The main goal of our mission is deterrence and prevention of threats," US Army Colonel Christopher R. Norrie, commander of the 3rd Armoured Brigade Combat Team, said at a welcome ceremony in Poland's western city of Zagan.

Poland and the Baltic former Soviet Republics requested US and NATO troops after Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in 2014, fearing further military operations in the region by President Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin, which has previously criticised NATO for its reinforcement in Eastern Europe, said on Thursday the deployment was an aggressive step along its borders.

"We consider this a threat to us," Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin's spokesman, told journalists on a conference call. "We are talking here about a third



US soldiers arrive to Zagan as part of NATO deployment, Zagan, Poland, on 12 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

country stepping up its military presence in Europe near our borders."

Modernisation of the army has been a key priority for Poland's year-old government run by the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, which built its popularity partly on promising greater security capabilities.

On Thursday, Polish Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz said on the state TVP Info news channel that the NATO deployment puts an end to Russia's influence in the region.

"Even after 1989 we had to continuously wonder whether the Russians won't veto this or that action," said Macierewicz, who has been seeking better ties and contracts with the US military.

"Russia's veto power in Central Europe, in Poland, has ended once and for all."

Moscow, however, has already deployed in retaliation nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in its European exclave of Kaliningrad, in a move the US State Department said was "destabilising to European security."

The US deployment to NATO's eastern flank includes more than 80 main battle tanks and hundreds of armoured vehicles. The military unit will rotate through several countries, including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania.

"Their arrival is just one small but meaningful example of how we are quickly building combat power here," Norrie said. —Reuters

Australia says TPP not dead, despite Trump opposition

SYDNEY — Australia has declared the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) not dead ahead of key trade talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Sydney on Saturday, despite opposition to the trade pact from US President-elect Donald Trump.

The talks between Australian Prime Minister Turnbull and Abe also come amid heightened regional tension as China asserts its claims over the disputed South China Sea, setting up a potential clash with the incoming Trump administration.

"Talk of the TPP being dead is premature. We need to give the Americans time to work through this issue," Australian Trade Minister Steven Ciobo told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) radio on Friday.

The 12-member TPP, which aims to cut trade barriers in some of Asia's fastest-growing economies but does not include China, can not take effect without the United States.

The deal, which has been five years in the making, requires ratification by at least six countries accounting for 85 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of the member nations.

Given the sheer size of the American economy, the deal cannot go ahead without US participation.

US President Barack Obama has said not moving forward with TPP would undermine the US position in the Asia-Pacific.

Ciobo said if the TPP was rejected, Australia would seek free trade agreements with individual Asian nations. "We will certainly continue to look for trade opportunities. Australia is a trading nation," he said.

Japan is the only signatory to have ratified the TPP, which has a two-year timetable for all members to sign into law.

Besides trade, Turnbull and Abe are expected to discuss regional security, with tensions rising as China flexes its territorial

claim in the South China Sea and Trump and his incoming administration challenging Beijing.

China's recent naval exercises in the disputed seaway and the building of islands there, with military assets, has unnerved its neighbours. Taiwan scrambled jets and navy ships this week as China's only aircraft carrier sailed through the Taiwan Straits after exercises in the South China Sea.

Trump's nominee for secretary of state has said China should be denied access to islands it has built in the South China Sea.

China claims most of the resource-rich South China Sea through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. Neighbours Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam also have claims.

While Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on China and raised questions over the "one China" policy, which sees Beijing claiming the self-ruled island of Taiwan as part of China. —Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

China establishes technological cooperation with 158 countries, regions

BEIJING — China has established cooperation ties in science and technology with 158 countries and regions in the world, according to the Ministry of Science and Technology Friday.

The ministry said that a total of 111 intergovernmental agreements on science and technology cooperation had been signed, and the nation had taken part in more than 200 intergovernmental organisations devoted to boosting such cooperation.

A stable intergovernmental cooperation mechanism, which covers major countries, regions and international organisations, has taken shape, contributing to the improvement of the nation's capability in science and technology cooperation, according to the ministry.

Statistics from the ministry also showed that some 70 offices of science and technology had been set up in Chinese embassies, consulates and diplomatic missions in 47 countries, regions, international organizations and multilateral mechanisms, with 146 diplomats. —Xinhua

Japan defence chief inspects US missile defence system in Guam

GUAM — Japanese Defence Minister Tomomi Inada visited a US air base in Guam on Friday to inspect an advanced antiballistic missile defence system at a time when her country is seeking to improve its ability to counter threats from North Korea.

After seeing the US missile shield system known as the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence at the Andersen Air Force Base, Inada told reporters, "We have no concrete plans to introduce THAAD, but we want to explore what is possible."

The THAAD system is designed to intercept ballistic missiles flying at high altitudes in and outside the atmosphere, providing a longer-range defence than the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 system already deployed by the Japanese Self-Defence Forces. Installation costs are believed to reach hundreds of billions of yen. —Kyodo News

Hungarian camerawoman gets probation for tripping migrants

BUDAPEST — A Hungarian camerawoman was sentenced to three years' probation late on Thursday for kicking and tripping migrants fleeing police near the border with Serbia in September 2015, the news website Index.hu reported.

Petra Laszlo was fired from her job at N1TV, a television station with nationalist sympathies, after video footage spread online appearing to show her kicking a girl and a young man.

Index.hu reported late on Thursday that a court in the town of Szeged, near the Serbian border, had found Laszlo guilty of disorderly conduct after a hearing in which she testified by video-link. It said she had appealed. Prosecutors had previously said there were no grounds to charge Laszlo with a racially motivated hate crime.

Hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa passed through the Balkans and Hungary in 2015, en route to western Europe. —Reuters

Spain arrests two accused of connections to Islamic militants

MADRID — Spanish police have arrested two people in Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta accused of connections with Islamic militants, the Interior Ministry said on Friday.

The two detained had been through a long radicalisation process and formed part of a group which was thought to be at an advanced stage of preparation for potential attacks, it said.

Police were searching six locations in relation to the arrests, the ministry said. Spanish police have arrested 180 people accused of connections to Islamic militants since raising the country-wide security alert to one below the highest level in 2015. —Reuters

Cyprus talks to resume on 18 January, UN hopes for 'last effort'

GENEVA — Talks to resolve the decades-old division of Cyprus ended without agreement on Thursday but with a plan for officials to reconvene on 18 January to tackle the thorny security question, before a fresh attempt to forge a political deal.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Reuters he was confident that the participants were determined to make a "last effort" to find a solution. There was no precise date set for the guarantors of the process — the Greek, Turkish and British foreign ministers — to meet again. —Reuters



People inspect the damage at the site of a car bomb explosion, in the centre of the Syrian town of Jableh in the coastal Mediterranean province of Latakia, Syria, in this handout picture provided by SANA on 5 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

At least seven killed in suicide attack in Syrian capital — state tv

AMMAN — A powerful blast caused by a suicide bomber hit a heavily policed district of the Syrian capital on Thursday with at least seven killed, a police source told state television.

The source was quoted by state television as saying a suicide bomber blew himself in the Kafr Sousa neighbourhood where some of Syria's main security installations are located.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights which tracks violence across the country said the death toll was expected to rise with several of the wounded in a critical condition.

Footage on state media showed splattered blood and wreckage of several cars with dozens of heavily armed security personnel at the site of the explosion.

Last July a car bomb also hit Kafr Sousa near an Iranian school in an attack that killed several people in the area, close to the main Umayyad Square that connects the city with several highways.

Insurgents fighting to topple President Bashar al Assad say the district houses many recruits from Iranian-backed militias fighting alongside the army. —Reuters

Turkey's parliament approves key articles of constitutional reform

ANKARA — Turkey's parliament approved key articles of a constitutional reform overnight which would allow the president to be a member of a political party and issue decrees, bringing a step closer the executive presidency sought by Tayyip Erdogan.

The ruling AK Party, backed by the nationalist MHP, is pushing through the legislation that President Erdogan says will bring the strong leadership needed to prevent a return of the fragile coalition governments of the past.

The three articles approved overnight set out parliament's supervisory role, enable the president to retain ties with a political party and detail the president's executive powers as head of state, including the power to

issue decrees.

Their approval is a positive sign for the AKP, although the changes will need to pass in two more rounds of voting before the constitutional package as a whole is put to a referendum, expected in the spring.

The main opposition CHP and the pro-Kurdish HDP, the second largest opposition party, fear these changes will fuel authoritarianism.

The previous night, lawmakers from the AKP and CHP came to blows as tempers boiled over in debate on the bill, after which a ruling AK Party deputy warned elections would be held if the bill was not passed.

A deputy from the main opposition CHP party responded late on Thursday with a call for such a move.

"Today instead of seeking such a regime change, we as the CHP give full support to an early election decision. We say bring it on," the CHP's Ozgur Ozel told the general assembly.

Under the planned changes, a president can be elected for a maximum of two five-year terms.

The plans envisage presidential and general elections being held in 2019.

The 18-article bill needs the support of at least 330 deputies in the 550-seat assembly to go to a referendum, expected in the spring. The AKP has 316 deputies eligible to vote and the MHP 39.

The articles passed overnight with the support of between 340-343 lawmakers. —Reuters

Iraqi forces reach a second Mosul bridge, fight near university, military says

MOSUL (Iraq) — Iraqi special forces pushed forward to reach a second bridge that links eastern Mosul to the city's west, which is still fully controlled by Islamic State, a military statement said on Friday.

Troops further north meanwhile battled to try to seize the strategic Mosul University area, capture of which would help parallel advances towards bridges over the Tigris river, a Reuters correspondent nearby said.

Elite counter-terrorism service (CTS) units reached the southern 2nd Bridge, also called Freedom Bridge, one of five running across the river that bisects Mosul from north to south, the military statement reported by state TV said.

Iraqi forces have now reached two of the bridges, after fighting their way to the southernmost 4th Bridge several days ago.

All the bridges have been hit by US coalition air strikes in an effort to hamper Islamic State militants' movement across the city. US and Iraqi military officials say Islamic State has caused further damage to at least two of them to

try to hamper any Iraqi advance across the river. Iraqi forces are now in control of most of eastern Mosul. Assaults on the west, which Islamic State still fully holds, will be able to begin once they have secured the east bank of the Tigris.

In Mosul's northeast, CTS forces battled to drive militants out of the Mosul University area, the Reuters reporter in a neighbouring district said.

An Iraqi officer said army units backed by air strikes had meanwhile taken control of Hadba district, north of the university, and would aid the assault on the complex. The recapture of the university would enable further advances because it overlooks areas closer to the river, a commander said this week. The ultra-hardline group seized nuclear materials used for scientific research from the university when they overran it in 2014, the United Nations says.

The US-backed campaign to drive Islamic State out of Mosul, involving a 100,000-strong force of Iraqi troops, Kurdish fighters and Shi'ite militias, began in October. —Reuters

Turkish airstrikes hit 187 IS targets in northern Syria

ANKARA — 41 Islamic State (IS) militants were killed and 187 targets belonging to terrorists were hit by Turkish army in Al-Bab of northern Syria in last 24 hours, Turkish General Staff said on Friday.

According to the Turkish army, 177 positions belonging to the terrorists have been shelled, destroying defence positions, shelters and command facilities, as well as weapons and vehicles.

A total of 10 airstrikes have been carried out in Suflaniyah and Bzagh districts near Al-Bab in Northern Syria, destroying 4 shelters, 4 headquarters and 2 arms-laden vehicles.

A total of 2917 improvised explosive devices and 43 mines have been destroyed since the beginning of the operation, the

military added.

The Turkish Armed Forces launched the Euphrates Shield Operation last August against both IS and the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

Turkey regards the YPG and the PYD as terrorist organisations due to their links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Meanwhile, Delegations from the Russian and the Turkish chiefs of staff have signed an agreement to define mechanisms regarding flight security and co-operation between the countries during operations against "terrorist targets" in Syria following a meeting in Moscow, the Turk-

ish Armed Forces announced 12 January.

The statement said the meetings were held between Russian and Turkish military representatives to ensure flight security and prevent undesired incidents during operations in Syria.

The agreement also stated mechanisms would be determined in terms of coordination and cooperation between Russian and Turkish warplanes to ensure flight security during offensives against terrorist threats in Syria.

Last month, Moscow and Ankara agreed to back a ceasefire between the Syrian government and rebel groups, with the truce largely holding in vast areas of the country, though clashes have continued to occur near Damascus. —Xinhua



Iraqi army members clash with Islamic State militants from the roof of a building, eastern Mosul, Iraq, on 12 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE															
YANGON TO BANGKOK				BANGKOK TO YANGON				YGN TO ICN				ICN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TG-304	09:50	11:45	Daily	TG-303	8:00	8:45	Daily	KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily	KE-471	18:30	22:30	Daily
TG-302	15:00	16:55	Daily	TG-301	13:15	14:00	Daily	YGN TO KUL				KUL TO YGN			
TG-306	19:50	21:45	Daily	TG-305	18:05	18:50	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-706	6:00	8:15	Daily	PG-701	8:45	9:40	Daily	AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily	AK-504	6:55	8:00	Daily
PG-702	10:30	12:25	Daily	PG-707	13:45	14:40	Daily	AK-503	19:10	23:30	Daily	AK-502	17:20	18:30	Daily
PG-708	15:30	17:25	Daily	PG-703	16:45	17:35	Daily	8M-501	16:10	20:10	2	8M-502	16:45	17:45	1
PG-704	18:20	20:15	Daily	PG-705	20:30	21:45	Daily	8M-501	11:45	15:45	1	8M-502	21:10	22:10	2
8M-335	7:30	9:15	Daily	8M-336	10:15	11:00	Daily	MH-741	11:15	15:40	Daily	MH-742	13:55	15:05	1,4,6,7
8M-331	16:30	18:15	Daily	8M-332	19:20	20:05	Daily	MH-743	16:00	20:15	1,4,6,7	MH-740	09:10	10:15	Daily
UB-017	17:45	19:15	Daily	UB-020	10:35	11:10	3,5	YGN TO KMG				KMG TO YGN			
UB-019	8:00	9:30	3,5,7	UB-018	21:05	21:35	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
UB-019	8:55	10:25	1,6	UB-020	11:30	12:05	1,6	CA-416	12:30	16:00	Daily	CA-415	10:50	11:30	Daily
YGN TO DMK				DMK TO YGN				MU-2032	15:30	18:50	Daily	MU-2031	13:50	14:30	Daily
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	MU-2012	12:55	19:55	3	MU-2011	08:20	11:55	3
FD-252	8:30	10:20	Daily	FD-251	7:15	8:00	Daily	YGN TO TPE				TPE TO YGN			
FD-256	12:55	14:40	Daily	FD-255	12:55	12:25	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-254	17:35	19:25	Daily	FD-253	16:20	17:05	Daily	CI-7916	10:50	16:10	Daily	CI-7915	7:00	9:50	Daily
FD-258	21:40	23:30	Daily	FD-257	20:15	21:10	Daily	YGN TO PEK				PEK TO YGN			
DD-4231	08:00	9:45	Daily	DD-4234	10:30	11:15	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
DD-4235	12:00	13:45	Daily	DD-4230	6:30	7:15	Daily	CA-906	23:50	0550+1	1,3,5,7	CA-905	19:30	22:50	1,3,5,7
DD-4239	21:00	22:55	Daily	DD-4238	19:25	20:15	Daily	YGN TO HAN				HAN TO YGN			
SL-201	11:00	13:35	Daily	SL-200	08:45	10:00	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
SL-207	19:45	21:45	Daily	SL-206	17:10	18:35	Daily	VN-956	19:10	21:30	Daily	VN-957	16:40	18:10	Daily
YGN TO CAN				CAN TO YGN				YGN TO SGN				SGN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
8M-713	20:25	01:00+1	1	8M-714	2:05	3:40	2	VN-942	12:10	14:55	2,3,4,5,7	VN-943	9:25	11:10	2,3,4,5,7
8M-711	8:40	13:15	2,4,5,7	8M-712	14:15	15:50	2,4,5,7	YGN TO HKG				HKG TO YGN			
CZ-3056	11:35	15:50	3,6	CZ-3055	8:40	10:35	3,6	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CZ-3056	17:40	22:20	1,5	CZ-3055	14:40	16:40	1,5	KA-251	1:05	5:25	Daily	KA-250	21:50	23:45	1,3,5,7
YGN TO SIN				SIN TO YGN				UB-8027	09:00	13:30	1,3,5,7	KA-252	22:20	00:10	2,4,6
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	YGN TO DOH				UB-8028	14:50	16:20	1,3,5,7
8M-231	8:20	12:40	Daily	8M-232	13:45	15:15	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DOH TO YGN			
SQ-997	10:25	15:10	Daily	SQ-998	07:55	09:20	Daily	QR-919	8:05	11:30	1,3,4,6,7	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-515	14:20	18:50	1,3,5	MI-522	11:30	15:30	4,6	YGN TO CNX				QR-918	20:10	5:20	1,3,4,6,7
MI-519	17:35	22:10	Daily	MI-518	15:15	16:40	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	CNX TO YGN			
MI-522	16:20	20:50	4,6	MI-516	12:00	13:25	1,3,5	PG-724	13:40	15:35	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
MI-533	13:35	20:50	2	MI-533	11:30	12:45	2	YGN TO DAC				PG-723	12:00	12:55	Daily
3k-584	19:40	00:10	Daily	3K-583	17:30	19:00	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DAC TO YGN			
3K-582	11:35	16:05	Daily	3K-581	09:10	10:40	Daily	BG-061	16:45	18:30	1,3,6	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
TR-2823	9:25	13:55	1,2,4,5,7	TR-2822	7:20	8:45	1,2,4,5,7	MDL TO DMK				BG-060	13:30	16:00	1,3,6
UB-001	7:15	11:45	Daily	UB-002	13:00	14:30	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	DMK TO MDL			
YGN TO NRT				NRT TO YGN				FD-245	12:55	15:15	Daily	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	YGN TO KMG				FD-244	11:10	12:25	Daily
NH-814	22:10	06:45	Daily	NH-813	11:00	16:30	Daily	YGN TO KMG				KMG TO YGN			

MDL TO SIN

SIN TO MDL

MDL TO BKK

BKK TO MDL

MDL TO KMG

KMG TO MDL

NYT to BKK

BKK TO NYT

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
AI = Air India
CI = China Airlines
DD = Nok Airline
KA = Dragonair
MI = Silk Air
TG = Thai Airways
AK = Air Asia
CA = Air China
CZ = China Southern
FD = Air Asia
KE = Korea Airlines
QR = Qatar Airways
TR = Tiger Airline

DAY

1 = Monday
2 = Tuesday
3 = Wednesday

4 = Thursday
5 = Friday
6 = Saturday
7 = Sunday

In Peru, a smelter’s future stirs fears of its toxic past

LA OROYA, (Peru) — Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski’s efforts to revive a nearly 100-year-old smelting complex could overcome a crucial hurdle at a coming auction where five companies have shown interest in placing bids.

But celebration is far from universal given the sprawling smelter’s toxic legacy and Kuczynski’s criticism of environmental rules.

Reviving La Oroya, nestled in a destitute region in Peru’s central Andes at nearly 3,800 meters (12,500 feet), would mark an early victory in Kuczynski’s plan to ramp up the country’s smelting capacity to bring more value from mineral shipments that make up at least half of overall export earnings.

Such exalted goals are of little comfort to some La Oroya residents like Sonia Ponce, who worries the government will not do enough to prevent a repeat of the smelter’s dirty past. Its smokestacks once spewed so much smoke that midday sometimes appeared to be evening, lacing the soil with heavy metals to a depth of two feet (60 cm) in some parts of town.

Hundreds of children in La Oroya have been found to have dangerous levels of lead in their blood, including Ponce’s grand-



Rocio Carhuaz (C) carries her 7-months-old daughter Cielo as a nurse prepares her for a test for lead in the blood in a medical centre in Peru’s central Andes at nearly 3,800 meters (12,500 feet), in La Oroya, Peru, on 21 October 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

children, who once had to spend their days in a different town to reduce their exposure and today cannot keep up with schoolwork. “They’re constantly fatigued,” Ponce, 56, said from her home in a hillside slum in La Oroya, blaming the smelter. “It’s very sad to see young people grow up sick. No one can give them their health back.”

At the same time, scores of La Oroya residents have been agitating for a full revival of the smelter, which ground to a halt in

2009 but has since restarted some zinc production.

Dismissing pollution concerns as exaggerated, they say the town, which has already lost a quarter of its population, will wither away without it. “It’s terrible to live like this,” said Marisela Perez as she waited for customers in her grocery shop. “There’s no work and businesses are closing.”

Finding a new owner for the smelter while ensuring a cleaner operation will be a key test for

Kuczynski, 78, who once ran a mine in West Africa for Alcoa Corp, as he seeks to “modernize” the Andean country to cap an illustrious career in finance and public administration.

Five companies, including Chinese-owned steel waste recycler GreenNovo Environmental Technology, have signaled interest in buying the smelter in three days of auctions starting 10 March, said Luis Castillo, a workers’ representative in the group of creditors overseeing the sale.

Kuczynski said last year the smelter would be able to process copper concentrates from Chinese miner Chinalco’s nearby Toromocho mine that contain arsenic levels that surpass Chinese import limits, forcing it to pay special fees. When the smelter’s most recent owner, Doe Run Peru, controlled by New York billionaire Ira Rennert’s Renco Group, operated La Oroya, sulfur dioxide emissions sometimes surpassed the daily limit of 365 micrograms by a factor of 10, according to a report by the environment ministry. “It used to import highly contaminating material to feed the smelter ... that ended up in the city and in residents,” said Luis Egocheaga, the former manager of state clean-up agency Activos Mineros that is

still working on removing pollution from soil in La Oroya. Doe Run Peru went bankrupt without finishing mandatory environmental upgrades, saying it had invested heavily to try to transform a creaking unit that had previously been under state control for decades.

A 2015 auction failed to draw any bidders as potential buyers fretted over liability for lingering pollution, labour contracts for some 2,200 workers and an estimated \$700 million needed to clean up copper smelting, said Pablo Peschiera, the director of consulting firm Dirige, which is in charge of the bidding.

But Kuczynski, who declined requests to be interviewed, has said it would be cheaper to revive La Oroya if emission limits were looser, calling current standards an obstacle to investment in smelters.

While Peru’s national sulfur dioxide limit is far stricter than Canada’s, current law allows La Oroya to comply with a looser standard until 2029. Kuczynski’s government has said it is revising environmental rules.

“We want the metallurgical complex to be reactivated, but in an environmentally and socially responsible way,” said La Oroya Mayor Carlos Arredondo. —Reuters

New York seeks to develop US's biggest offshore wind projects

NEW YORK — New York Governor Andrew Cuomo this week proposed to develop up to 2,400 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind power by 2030 capable of powering 1.25 million homes as the state seeks to lead the nation in renewable energy production.

The offshore wind proposal came after the Democratic governor said on Monday that Entergy Corp's 2,069-MW Indian Point nuclear power plant in Westchester County would shut by 2021 and the state planned to replace its power output with renewable and low carbon energy sources.

The offshore wind proposals include Deepwater Wind's 90-MW South Fork project to be built about 30 miles southeast of Montauk that the Democratic governor, in a release, said he wanted the Long Island Power Authority to approve.

Deepwater built the nation's first and only offshore wind farm off Block Island in Rhode Island. It is majority owned by New York investment firm D.E Shaw Group.

Cuomo said the state would complete its plans for offshore wind developments by the end of 2017. He said any projects, including the Montauk wind farm, would be developed out of view from the coast.

Cuomo, seen as a potential 2020 presidential candidate, is pursuing wind power after President-elect Donald Trump on the campaign trail dismissed solar and wind energy as too expensive



A crew boat passes through Horns Rev 2, the world's largest wind farm, 30 km (19 miles) off the west coast of Denmark near Esbjerg in 2009.

PHOTO: REUTERS

and pledged to focus on oil and coal.

Offshore wind is key to meeting Cuomo's Clean Energy Standard goal to meet 50 percent of electricity needs with renewable sources by 2030 in New York, the second-most-populous US state after California.

The governor directed the Department of Environmental

Conservation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to study how the state could become 100 percent renewable in the future.

Unlike in many European countries, there is only one offshore wind farm operating in the United States at present, Deepwater's 30-MW project off Block

Island, which entered service December 2016.

On Long Island, Cuomo said LIPA was expected to vote on the 90-MW wind project at its January meeting. He said the area off the coast of Montauk could ultimately host up to 1,000 MW of offshore wind.

A second project would provide about 800 MW of offshore

wind power in an area 17 miles south of the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, the governor said.

A unit of Norwegian oil company Statoil ASA spent \$42.5 million to win a federal auction to lease the area for wind development in December.

The governor said he called on NYSEDA to work with Statoil on the project.—Reuters

Havana welcomes end of US preferential immigration policy concerning Cubans

HAVANA — Cuba on Thursday welcomed the end of a US preferential immigration policy concerning Cuban nationals and asked the upcoming Trump administration not to reverse it.

US President Barack Obama on Thursday announced the end of the "wet foot, dry foot" policy that granted permanent residence to Cubans a year after entering US territory even by illegal means.

The Cuban authorities had

considered the policy, adopted in 1995, as encouragement to illegal migration and human trafficking, and had been trying to persuade Washington into scrapping it.

This policy change marks an important step in the advance of Cuba-US relations, Josefina Vidal, director for US affairs at the Cuban Foreign Ministry, told a press conference on Thursday.

It also helps to overcome

serious problems for the security of the two countries and for the safety of Cubans who had been encouraged by the preferential policy and had been exposed to human trafficking, immigration fraud and other scams.

Havana hopes that the administration of Donald Trump will continue the process of normalization of relations with Cuba and will not reverse this measure, said Vidal.—Xinhua

More than 70 killed in Tu-154 plane crash identified

MOSCOW — Using genetic testing, specialists have identified more than 70 people killed in an air crash involving a Russian military Tu-154 plane, the Russian news agency TASS reported Friday. According to the forensic medical examination, among those identified were Anton Gubankov, who was the head of the Russian Defence Ministry's Department of Culture and Valery Khalilov, director of the Alexandrov Ensemble.

Families of the air crash victims have already been informed

of the results, and the identification process remains ongoing. The Tu-154, en route to Russia's Hmeimim air base in the Syrian port city of Latakia, crashed shortly after take-off from the Black Sea resort city of Sochi on 25 December. Ninety-two people — 84 passengers and eight crew members — were aboard the plane. Most of them were members of the Alexandrov Ensemble, a renowned choir of the Russian Armed Forces, as well as nine Russian journalists. They were heading to the air base for New Year celebrations.—Xinhua

Amazon apologizes to Indian FM over flag insult

NEW DELHI — E-commerce giant Amazon has apologized to Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj for hurting Indian sensibilities over offering sale of doormats having the country's national flag on it.

"Amazon India is committed to respecting Indian laws and customs. To the extent that these items offered by a third-party seller ... offended Indian sensibilities, Amazon regrets the same. At no time did we intend

or mean to offend Indian sentiments," Amazon India vice president Amit Agarwal wrote in a letter to Swaraj on Thursday night.

The apology came a day after Swaraj asked the e-commerce giant to apologize for insulting Indian flag and withdraw all products insulting the flag or Amazon officials would not be granted Indian visas.

In its letter to the Indian foreign minister, Amazon writes,

"a third party seller, not Amazon had listed these products for sale."

Swaraj's reprimand came after Amazon in Canada was found selling doormats depicting the Indian national flag. Following the row, Amazon on Wednesday night removed the Indian flag-themed doormats from its website.

Amazon has vowed to invest more than 5 billion US dollars in India.—Xinhua

Kremlin says hopes Putin and Trump will get along, disagrees with Tillerson

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Thursday it hoped President Vladimir Putin and President-elect Donald Trump would get along and that there would be more mutual respect in US-Russia relations than there was under the Obama administration.

Addressing reporters on a conference call, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was responding to questions about how the Kremlin assessed Trump's news conference on Wednesday. "Moscow is genuinely hoping that our presidents will get along," said

Peskov. "At least Trump has spoken of his readiness for dialogue. This doesn't mean there's a readiness to agree about everything with each other. That is hardly possible and Moscow isn't expecting that, but dialogue is grounds for hope and could help us find a way out of many complex situations." Peskov said however that the Kremlin did not agree with views on Crimea expressed by Secretary of State nominee Rex Tillerson on Wednesday, who said Moscow's 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula was illegal.—Reuters

Britain opens debate on toughening corporate criminal laws

LONDON — The British government opened a long-awaited consultation on how to crack down on corporate fraud, money laundering and false accounting on Friday, in what it billed as an effort to repair public trust in businesses and improve accountability.

Government ministers floated suggestions that ranged from introducing tough, US-style laws that punish companies for the crimes of their staff to holding companies accountable for failing to prevent staff from committing such crimes and merely strengthening regulatory regimes.

“Corporate economic crime undermines confidence in business, distorts markets, and erodes trust,” said Justice Minister Oliver Heald. “Companies must be held to account for the criminal activity that takes place within them.

The “call for evidence” seeking views on whether further reform is needed to combat corporate criminality, after banks and other institutions have paid billions of pounds in fines for fraud



Canary Wharf and the city are seen at sunset in London, on 14 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

and dishonest activities, will run until 24 March.

UK prosecutors have long argued that it is hard to prosecute companies in Britain because of high legal hurdles. In English law,

a corporation is only criminally liable if senior bosses are culpable under the “identification principle”.

Initial plans to extend corporate criminal liability were shelved by former

prime minister David Cameron’s government in 2015 before being reintroduced at an anti-corruption summit last May and reaffirmed by the Attorney General last September.

The consultation comes after the draconian Bribery Act came into effect in 2011, under which companies with assets in the UK face unlimited fines and bosses up to 10 years

in jail if they fail to show they have “adequate procedures” in place to prevent staff and agents from committing bribery across the world.

David Green, head of the UK Serious Fraud Office, has argued since his appointment in 2012 that English law is stacked against him. He says the complex hierarchies of large multinationals create an incentive for executives to distance themselves from knowledge of wrongdoing lower down.

Business lobby groups, however, might latch on to the suggestion that corporate economic crime could be dealt with in the regulatory sphere. They have argued that law changes are unnecessary and add too great a compliance burden on firms attempting to navigate a future post-Brexit Britain.

According to consultancy PwC’s latest Global Economic Crime Survey, around 44 per cent of UK organisations already expect an increase in compliance costs over the next two years —*Reuters*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV INDUSTRIAL MAYA VOY. NO (300)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV INDUSTRIAL MAYA VOY. NO (300) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of BSW-1 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 DYNAMIC OCEAN 03 VOY. NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DYNAMIC OCEAN 03 VOY. NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT-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 BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE
LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KOTA HASIL VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA HASIL VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ADVANCE CONTAINER
LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MALACCA STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MALACCA STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185



Former general Raul Baduel (C) walks out from his house in Maracay, Venezuela in 2015. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venezuela arrests anti-Maduro politicians in sweep

CARACAS — Venezuela rounded up a dissident former general and two other regional politicians on Thursday in what the opposition called a wave of repression by socialist President Nicolas Maduro’s government.

With its popularity falling during a brutal economic crisis, Maduro’s government cast the arrests as part of a crackdown against “terrorists” and coup plotters.

Authorities put ex-general Raul Baduel, who was first jailed in 2009 for six years, back behind bars on accusations of breaking parole conditions by conspiring against the government.

Two city councilmen, from Venezuela’s second city Maracaibo and Bolivar

state, were also arrested on Thursday, the government and opposition party Popular Will said.

Another Maracaibo councilman was detained on Wednesday

In addition, two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles warned that authorities are about to ban him from holding political office due to alleged irregularities in the Miranda state he governs. Capriles says the charges are trumped up.

“This is a raid against those of us who will not sell our principles,” Capriles said on Thursday, adding he had been fined for the alleged irregularities. “They’re paving the way to later declare us... barred from office.”—*Reuters*



Actress Natalie Portman arrives at the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, US, on 8 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hollywood's gender pay gap is 'crazy': Natalie Portman

LONDON — New complaints of discrimination have hit the film awards season after Oscar-winning actress Natalie Portman slammed the gender pay gap as “crazy” — and said it was even worse in Hollywood than in other jobs.

In a magazine interview, Portman revealed that she was paid three times less than her male co-star Ashton Kutcher for her role in the 2011 ro-

mantic comedy “No Strings Attached”.

“Compared to men, in most professions, women make 80 cents to the dollar,” Portman told Marie Claire. “In Hollywood we are making 30 cents to the dollar.”

The 35-year-old star — who won a best actress Oscar in 2011 for her role in “Black Swan” and plays Jackie Kennedy in a forthcoming biopic about the former US First Lady — said the pay disparity was “crazy”.

The World Economic Forum, a non-profit foundation, predicts the global gender pay disparity may take up to 170 years to close. The average global gap stood at 59 per cent in 2016, it said in a report released last October.

Hollywood's gender pay gap was highlighted in 2015, when

hacked documents from film studio Sony Pictures revealed major pay disparities between top actors.

They showed that US actress Jennifer Lawrence was paid less than her male co-stars Christian Bale and Bradley Cooper in the 2013 black comedy “American Hustle”.

Hacked emails showed that Bale and Cooper earned nine percent of the film's total profits, whilst Lawrence was only paid seven per cent.

Lawrence later said she was “mad at herself” after learning about the pay gap because she had “failed as a negotiator”.

Other movie stars — such as Sandra Bullock and Jessica Chastain — have also hit out at pay discrimination.

The 2017 awards season began on Sunday with the Golden

Globes dinner in Beverly Hills, kicking off two months of red carpets and black tie events, culminating in the Academy Awards ceremony on 26 February.

Actress Meryl Streep turned her Golden Globe acceptance speech into a scathing commentary on US President-elect Donald Trump, stunning her audience into silence and grabbing headlines with her criticism of Trump's impersonation of a disabled newspaper reporter.

Last year, the Academy Awards were heavily criticized for picking an all-white lineup of best actor nominees, prompting boycotts from several big names, including Will Smith, Jada Pinkett-Smith and Spike Lee.

The criticism became widely associated with the Twitter hashtag #OscarsSoWhite.—Reuters

Paris Jackson ‘wants to vomit’ seeing white actor as ‘King of Pop’

LOS ANGELES — Michael Jackson's daughter Paris says she is “incredibly offended” by a new comic film in which a white British actor, Joseph Fiennes, portrays the late “King of Pop.”

Paris Jackson, 18, also called the tongue-in-cheek film vomit-inducing in a series of tweets following this week's release of a trailer from Britain's satellite TV channel Sky Arts.

The 30-minute “Urban Myths” series on Sky Arts explores real-life stories involving well-known figures, “using a generous dose of artistic license,” Sky Arts said in statement.

The story about Jackson casts Fiennes in a re-imagined tale of a road trip across the United States that the “Thriller” singer is said to have taken in 2001 with movie stars Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando.



Michael Jackson's daughter Paris Jackson. PHOTO: REUTERS

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

The trailer unleashed a new round of outrage on social media about whitewashing, in which white actors are cast to portray characters of other ethnicities.

Asked to comment by Jackson fans on seeing Fiennes as her father, Paris Jackson tweeted on Wednesday that she was “incredibly offended by it, as i'm sure plenty of people are as well, and it honestly makes me want to vomit.”

“It angers me to see how obviously intentional it was for them to be this insulting, not just towards my father, but my godmother liz as well,” she said, referring to Jackson's close friend, the late Elizabeth Taylor.

One of Jackson's nephews, Taj Jackson, also objected.

“Unfortunately this is what my family has to deal with. No word could express the blatant disrespect,” Taj Jackson wrote on Twitter.

Sky Arts said last year when the project was announced that it “gives producers the creative freedom to cast roles as they wish, within the diversity framework which we have set.”—Reuters

Among awards frontrunners, ‘Birth of a Nation’ lands surprise DGA nod

LOS ANGELES — Nate Parker's historical slavery drama was a surprise inclusion among the Directors Guild of America's nominations on Thursday, after the early awards frontrunner was derailed by a decade-old lawsuit involving a rape charge against the filmmaker.

Parker was one of the five nominated filmmakers in the outstanding directorial achievement for a first-time feature film category, the only major awards recognition “Birth of a Nation” has received so far.

In the main category for outstanding directorial achievement in a feature film, five awards-season frontrunners were nominated. The Directors Guild picks often go on to score Oscar success, such as last year's winner Alejandro Inarritu, who also won the best directing Oscar for “The Revenant.”

Damien Chazelle, nominated for romantic musical “La La Land,” will contend alongside Barry Jenkins for his intimate drama “Moonlight,” Garth Davis for adoption drama “Lion,” Kenneth Lonergan for the drama “Manchester by the Sea” and Denis Villeneuve for his poetic alien film “Arrival.”

“Birth of a Nation,” the Fox Searchlight film about a 19th century slave rebellion, is writ-



Actor Nate Parker attends the premiere of “The Birth of a Nation” in Hollywood, California, on 21 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

ten, directed, produced and stars Parker, and was seen as a strong Oscar contender for its diverse cast until reports of the 1999 lawsuit, of which Parker was acquitted, surfaced last year.

Parker addressed the case in interviews and on Facebook, saying he was devastated to learn that his female accuser had taken her own life in 2012, but he said he would not apologize over the case, instead asking people to look beyond it and focus on the film.

Despite Fox Searchlight

standing behind the film and campaigning for awards, the movie has failed to land recognition until now. It is unlikely to factor into the Oscars nominations, announced later this month.

Parker was nominated alongside Davis for “Lion,” Kelly Fremon Craig for teen coming-of-age tale “The Edge of Seventeen,” Tim Miller for raunchy superhero action “Deadpool” and Dan Trachtenberg for sci-fi thriller “10 Cloverfield Lane.”

The winners of both categories will be announced at a dinner ceremony on 4 February in Beverly Hills.

“La La Land,” about two struggling artists falling in love against the backdrop of Hollywood, has emerged as the film to beat this year, sweeping last week's Golden Globes with seven wins including best comedy/musical film. It also leads Britain's BAFTA awards with 11 nods. Notable snubs this year include Martin Scorsese for his 19th century missionary tale “Silence,” Denzel Washington in family drama “Fences,” Mel Gibson for war drama “Hacksaw Ridge” and Tom Ford for stylistic thriller “Nocturnal Animals.”—Reuters

Two high-powered lawyers vie for role in overseeing Prince estate

CHASKA, (Minn) — The likely heirs of pop star Prince's estate are split between two lawyers who vied in court on Thursday to represent their interests in managing his legacy — a political activist turned cable news commentator and a recording industry insider.

Both men — CNN contrib-

utor and onetime White House adviser Van Jones, and a show business attorney already hired as an estate consultant, L. Londell McMillan — boasted long-standing ties to Prince as they testified in Minnesota probate court.

Their different backgrounds and priorities hold profound implications for the control and

commercial exploitation of musical assets left by Prince when he died unexpectedly last April at age 57.

Some experts have estimated those assets are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and the two men seeking appointment as personal representative to the heirs contrasted sharply in their re-

spective pitches to Carver County Judge Kevin Eide.

Jones stressed his collaboration in Prince's various philanthropic endeavors. “They talk about him being a musical genius, but he had a genius for human beings, for humanity,” Jones said, adding: “It's not for me about the money.”

McMillan emphasized his business acumen and depth of experience in handling the financial interests of numerous recording stars, including Prince, as chairman and chief executive of North-Star Enterprises Worldwide.

“Half the people at the (Prince) tribute were my personal clients,” he said.—Reuters

Madame Tussauds unveils Amitabh Bachchan waxwork for Delhi opening

NEW DELHI — Madame Tussauds unveiled a waxwork of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan on Thursday ahead of the museum’s opening later this year in the Indian capital of New Delhi.

Bachchan, 74, is one of Indian cinema’s most revered and influential actors and has been a mainstay on screens for five decades.



People take pictures of a waxwork of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan at a photocall for the new Madam Tussaud’s waxwork museum in New Delhi, India, on 12 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

“We looked at the culture and of course, we have a lot of Indian visitors in our existing attractions as well. Their feedback is so positive ... that we said we need to be there,” Marcel Kloos, Merlin Entertainments’ director of new openings in emerging markets said.

Guests at the unveiling photographed themselves alongside Bachchan, as well as with a waxwork of American popstar Lady Gaga.

The Delhi branch above the city center’s famed Regal Cinema is India’s first Madame Tussauds, the museum’s twenty-third globally and its ninth in Asia, where a growing middle class are prepared to pay to see wax figures of their favourite stars. Wax statues of leading figures from Bollywood, sports and politics will feature in Delhi including one of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi — who is already in the London branch — as well as cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar.

—Reuters

Gov’t eager to stamp out smoking in public areas ahead of Olympics

TOKYO — Japan’s health minister on Friday expressed eagerness to pursue the eradication of passive smoking ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, saying it is the government’s “mission” to alleviate the effects of secondhand cigarette smoke.

Emphasizing that Olympic host countries in recent years have implemented regulations and penalties to curb smoking, Health, Labour and Welfare Minister Yasuhisa Shiozaki said at a press conference the move away from allowing smoking in public areas is “a big trend across the world.”

The health ministry is aiming to submit a bill revising the Health Promotion Law, possibly including a complete ban on smoking in indoor public spaces, to the ordinary parliamentary session scheduled to be convened next Friday.

In a report called the “Tobacco White Paper,” released last year, the ministry warned that secondhand smoke definitely raises the risk of lung cancer.

The report said setting up sealed smoking rooms does not prevent the cigarette smoke from leaking and even causes passive smoking effects among staff tasked with cleaning the areas.

On Thursday, Japanese restaurant industry groups voiced opposition to a total ban on smoking in restaurants.

Shiozaki, however, shrugged it off, saying it is important to make efforts to protect people from secondhand smoke with an eye on increasing the number of foreign visitors to Japan.

—Kyodo News



Herbs for sale are pictured at a herbal store in Cairo, Egypt, on 10 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

As drug supplies run short, Egyptians turn to herbal remedies

CAIRO — In an economic crisis that has led to a shortage of medicines, Egyptians are skipping trips to drug stores and instead turning to herbal remedies to treat every-day illnesses.

In the Cairo working class neighbourhood of Basateen, dozens line up outside a decades-old herbal spice shop with pyramid-shaped stacks of jars on display, filled with everything from honey and ginger to camel’s hay.

Apothecaries say there has been a roughly 70-80 per cent increase in sales of their wares since a series of harsh economic reforms hit supplies of conventional medicines and increased the cost of some generic and even life-saving drugs.

The government said on Thursday those price rises could reach as high as 15 per cent for domestically-produced medicines and 20 per cent for imports.

Store owner Samy al-Attar — whose last name is Arabic for apothecary — says a knowledgeable apothecary can find substitutes for drugs treating almost all non-terminal illnesses.

Just like pharmacies, the walls inside al-Attar’s store are lined with drawers and containers. But rather than drugs, they hold herbs, each said to have its own unique healing property. Customers crowd outside the shop window, as staff dash around the tiny interior, choosing from a variety of textures and colours, filling clear plastic bags with orders.

—Reuters



People plant trees on the outskirts of Khartoum, Sudan, on January 2017. Sudan’s Khartoum State authorities on Thursday started planting around 1,000 trees as part of the state’s greenbelt project, which is part of the African Great Green Wall. The African Great Green Wall project was endorsed by the community of Sahel-Saharan states (CEN-SAD) in 2005 and then it was approved by the African Union in 2007 as a strategic African project to help the African countries curb up the risk of desert creeping which threatens the CEN-SAD countries. PHOTO: XINHUA

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Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(14-1-2017 07:00am ~ 15-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Great Shwedagon - Charitable Associations
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Manuha Temple Festivities
08:45	Am	YUFL
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Discovering Tribes “Gaybar Kayin”
09:48	Am	Marketable Goods-(Aluminum Glasses & Stainless Steel)
10:03	Am	News
10:25	Am	Next Generation “Saw Noel (Violin)”
10:34	Am	Family of Toys
10:54	Am	Moe La Win’s Piano Melody 4 (Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer by Johnny Marks)

10:56

Am

Dances of Myanmar “Akha Traditional Dance”

(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
07:25	Pm	Alaungdaw Kathapa
07:43	Pm	Guiding Star of Song Birds
07:49	Pm	Today Myanmar: Yangon Night Market
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Sai Htee Hseng Or An Exceptional Music Star From Shan Plateaus (Ep-2)
08:52	Pm	Myanmar Master Class “Artist Phyu Mon”

(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)

Real claim record with last-gasp draw against Sevilla

MADRID — Real Madrid set a Spanish record of 40 matches unbeaten in all competitions after they came back from two goals behind to snatch a 3-3 draw at Sevilla with a last-gasp equaliser from Karim Benzema in the King's Cup on Thursday.

Real trailed 3-1 in the 77th minute of their last-16 second leg tie but captain Sergio Ramos reduced the arrears from the penalty spot in the 83rd minute after Matias Kranevitter had pulled down Casemiro in the area.

With seconds remaining, Marcelo fed Benzema in the area and the Frenchman struck a right-footed shot past Sevilla goalkeeper David Soria as Real progressed to the quarter-finals with a 6-3 aggregate win.

"Sevilla played a great game and it proved very difficult for us," Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane told reporters. "We suffered a lot. But we have character and that is good."

"Perhaps Sevilla deserved to win on the night but in terms of the tie, we deserved to go through."

Sevilla took the lead when Danilo headed a cross from Pablo Sarabia into his own net in the 10th minute, but Marco Asensio equalised with a low near-post shot following a terrific run from midfield three minutes after the re-start. Stevan Jovetic, who joined Sevilla on loan from Inter Milan this week, volleyed home right-footed eight minutes after coming on to put the hosts in front in the 54th minute before Vicente



Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos scores his first goal from penalty spot during Spanish King's Cup at Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville, Spain, on 12 January 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iborra pounced on a loose ball to add a third.

Real looked to be heading for their first defeat since they lost to VfL Wolfsburg last April, but Ramos clawed his team back into the contest with a Panenka-style dinked penalty into the middle of the goal before substitute Benzema completed the comeback.

Real had equalled arch-rivals Barcelona's long unbeaten run with a 5-0 rout of Granada

on Saturday.

"We weren't thinking about the record," Real Madrid left-back Marcelo said. "We take it one game at a time."

"The important thing is that we reacted, we played a great game and we are going to continue to fight like we did tonight."

Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli handed Clement Lenglet his debut following his move from Nancy last week and the French defender saw his close-

range header kept out by goalkeeper Kiko Casilla minutes before Benzema's equaliser.

Real, four points clear of Sevilla at the top of La Liga, face them again at the same venue on Sunday.

"We expect an even more difficult game on Sunday," Zidane said. "Sevilla are a very good side. They are doing very well and it's not by chance that they are second in the table." — Reuters

Djokovic faces Verdasco test at Australian Open

MELBOURNE — Defending champion Novak Djokovic will launch his bid for a record seventh Australian Open title with a mouth-watering first round match against Fernando Verdasco.

Spaniard Verdasco knocked out compatriot and 14-times grand slam champion Rafa Nadal in the opening round last year at Melbourne Park and had five match points against Djokovic in their recent clash at the Qatar Open.

Should Djokovic advance, the world number two could face a resurgent Grigor Dimitrov in the fourth round. The Bulgarian won the Brisbane International last week and is in ominous form.

Andy Murray, who swiped the top ranking from Djokovic late last year, is unlikely to feel much sympathy for his long-time rival's

tough first week.

The Briton suffered his fourth defeat, and fifth in Australia overall, to 12-times grand slam champion Djokovic in last year's Melbourne Park final.

Murray holds the top seed and the advantage this year, however.

The Scot faces 93rd-ranked Ukrainian Illya Marchenko in his opener, who he beat comfortably in the second round of the 2011 tournament, their sole Tour encounter. From there, three-times grand slam winner Murray enjoys a relatively smooth run to the quarters where fifth seed Kei Nishikori or Roger Federer may await.

Federer, seeded 17th after the longest injury lay-off of his near-20 year career, eases back in to grand slam action against a qualifier.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a shot during a training session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia, on 12 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

But the Swiss master's path to an 18th grand slam title is likely to mean passing a huge third round hurdle against Japan's Nishikori.

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka, the 2014 champion, faces a challenging first round clash with Slovak Martin

Klizan, with a possible fourth round against tempestuous Australian talent Nick Kyrgios.

Nadal, the 2009 champion and seeded ninth this year, plays German journeyman Florian Mayer first up as he seeks to revive his career after a barren two years at the majors. — Reuters

Mourinho may make the difference at Manchester United, says Rush

LONDON — Jose Mourinho knows how to get the best out of his players and his arrival at Manchester United will bring some added spice to Sunday's Premier League clash against arch rivals Liverpool, the Merseyside club's all-time leading scorer Ian Rush has said.

United head into the game on a 15-game unbeaten run and recorded a ninth successive win in all competitions against Hull City in the first leg of the League Cup semi-final on Tuesday.

They are sixth in the league on 39 points, trailing second-placed Liverpool by five points.

"I think with Mourinho going there, he's going to be a great manager," Rush told Sporting News. "When you've got a great manager like Mourinho, he'll bring out the best of the players ... That's something we should all be worried about, when you've got a manager like Mourinho who knows exactly what to do." — Reuters



PHOTO: REUTERS

Konta crushes Radwanska to win Sydney title

SYDNEY — Britain's Johanna Konta overpowered Agnieszka Radwanska 6-4, 6-2 in a one-sided victory in the final of the Sydney International on Friday to claim her second career WTA title.

The Sydney-born world number 10 reached the semi-finals at the Australian Open last year and will be a major threat again next week going by her form in this week's warm-up.

The 25-year-old had lost both her previous meetings with 2013 champion Radwanska but simply brushed aside the world number three with a 82-minute display of aggression and power at the Olympic Tennis Centre.

Konta overcame a string of unforced errors to win the first set when her Polish opponent sent a return wide after 45 minutes before whipping through the second, sealing the victory with a seventh ace on her second championship point. — Reuters