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Police volunteers for new bus system

The Myanmar Police Force has provided free ferry service using its police vehicles to passengers during rush hours from outlying areas to downtown Yangon and from downtown to the outskirts since the first day of the new bus service. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

DEAD BABY STORY BY FOREIGN NEWS AGENCIES QUESTIONABLE

AUTHORITIES have launched an investigation concerning the news of the death of a 16-month old baby in the Naf River and the claims of its father, Zafor Alam, but found no evidence supporting the claims. The investigation is still ongoing, however, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office.

Some foreign news agencies, including US-based CNN and the Daily Mail in the UK, reported that Myanmar border guards opened fire on a boat carrying people trying to escape to Bangladesh in the Naf River, killing at least 15 people, including a sixteen-month old. The photograph of the body, said to be that of

Mohammad Shurabart, was sent to its father, who lives in Lada refugee camp, in the neighbouring country, the story claimed.

In the government investigation, authorities found a Zafor Alam in Ushinkya Village, but discovered he has been in prison for two years and learnt that

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Zafor Alam.

Peace process orientation course begins

PEACE Process Orientation course 1/2017 kicked off at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The three-day course is being attended by supervision committee members from places that are initially to hold national-level political dialogues, designated supervision committee members from States which have not yet prepared to hold national-level political dialogues, government representatives at the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong and executive members of government's group.

The Orientation Course was arranged to clarify how to perform the very basics of the present peace process — the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the framework of the political dialogues, instructions on national-level political dialogues, and how to carry out negotiations during the conference, said Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, in his capacity as the Vice-Chairman of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre.

Political negotiations have been categorised into five sectors — political, economic, social, security and land/natural environment sectors. Trainees should be well-versed in how to negotiate in sectors, how to make decisions and how to resolve a deadlock in negotiations.

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 69th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 4 January.

From H.E. Mr. Hamad Bin Eissa Al Khalifa,
King of Bahrain Kingdom
Excellency,

We are pleased as you are celebration the National day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to extend in my name and on behalf of the kingdom of Bahrain people our greetings, congratulations and best wishes on this national occasion.

Once again we are pleased to avail our self of this opportunity to express to your highness our wishes of health and to your people and country of continued progress and prosperity under your wise leadership.

Accept our deepest respect and consideration.

From H.E. Mr. John Dramani Mahama,
President of the Republic of Ghana
Excellency,

On the joyous occasion of the 69th National day of the Union of Myanmar, I have the greatest pleasure in extending on behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Ghana and in my own name, warm felicitations to Your Excellency, the government and people of Myanmar.

It is my expectation that coming years would provide opportunities for us to further strengthen the cordial ties between our two nations at both bilateral and multi-lateral for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

Accept, Your Excellency, my sincerest wishes for your good health and the continued prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

From H.E. General Michel Aoun,
President of the Lebanese Republic
Your Excellency,

In my own name and on behalf of the people of Lebanon, I would like to convey to your Excellency, on the occasion of the National Day, my sincere congratulations as well as my best wishes of happiness and success to Your Excellency and prosperity to the people of Myanmar.

Foreign Heads of State and Ministers send felicitations to State Counsellor

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

From H.E. Ms. Maria Angela Holguin Cuellar,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Colombia
Excellency,

It is my pleasure to express to Your Excellency on behalf of the Government of Colombia, my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of the celebration of the 69th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the upcoming 4 January 2017.

In such an important date, I present my wishes for the welfare and prosperity of Myanmar and reiterate our willingness to continue strengthening the ties of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, for instance through high level meetings like the one held on the sidelines of the 71th UNGA occasion in which we signed the Agreement on Visa Exemption for Holders of Diplomatic, Official, Special and Service Passports.

I also manifest our interest to carry on the development of initiatives such as the successful bilateral cooperation project "Strengthening Capacities in Management of Cultural Heritage in Myanmar," which allowed our two countries to interchange experiences in the field of culture during the last five years.

I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and distinguished consideration.

From H.E. Mr. Walid Al-Moualem,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates,
Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Greetings,

I have the pleasure to extend to you on the occasion of the National Day my heartily congratulations, and I seize this opportunity to convey to you my best wishes of good health and happiness and to your friendly people

more progress and prosperity.

Please accept, Your Excellency, my highest consideration.

From H.E. Mr. Nikola Poposki,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia
Your Excellency,
On the National Day of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to extend sincere congratulations, with best wishes for further progress and well-being of your country and its people.

I avail myself of this formal occasion to express hope for further promotion of the friendly ties and cooperation between the Republic of the Macedonia and the Union of Myanmar in all areas of mutual concern.

Renewing congratulations on the National Day, please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Dead baby story by foreign news agencies questionable

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he was not the Zafor Alam in the story after comparing photos used with the story and mugshots of the prisoner. Further investigation revealed that the Zafor Alam referenced in the story lived in Yekhartchaung, Gwazon Village.

Mammaud Zalin, administrator of the village, told authorities that he knew Zafor Alam very well as he lived in the village and his father Dudu Mia and his mother Roset had been working in Malaysia for ten years. Zafor Alam has two sons, one being three-year old Sofite and the other one-and-a-half-year old Mohammad Shurabart, the village administrator added. Zafor Alam fled to Lada refugee camp in Bangladesh after his house was burnt down, said the administrator. However, he said that he had never heard of a boat fleeing to Bangladesh that had sunk on 4 or 5 December nor of a shooting by border guards that was said to have led to the death of children and women.

Head of 10-household Mammaud Shoree, village clerk Sauli Mollar, village elder Mammad Tarlaung and casual labourer Mammad Rawfee also said that they knew Zafor Alam well and



Police interviews Satda Kharton, alias Sawraw Tarkhatu, younger sister of Zafor Alam, PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

told authorities the same story as the administrator.

Satda Kharton, alias Sawraw Tarkhatu, younger sister of Zafor Alam, said that she recognised the photo of her brother. She said another name of her elder brother was Fafa Sinhu before saying that they had lived at family No. 112 in the village. She told the authorities that her sister-in-law and two of her sons fled to Bangladesh about two months ago and heard that they were dead. However, she said that she had neither heard of a boat wreck nor of women and children being killed

by border guards.

Zafor Alam of Ushinkya Village, cited by foreign news agencies, had been serving his prison sentence for offences of the law long before the violent attacks in Maungtau.

Authorities tried to find Zafor Alam by using the photos of news agencies and found out that he lived in the village, but there was no evidence of a boat sunk by security forces. Authorities are still continuing their investigation. Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office.—Myanmar News Agency

Deputy Attorney-General receives Mr. Kozo Kawai, Nishimura & Asahi Law Firm

DEPUTY Attorney-General U Win Myint from the Office of the Union Attorney General received a delegation led by Mr. Kozo Kawai from the Japanese law firm of Nishimura & Asahi Law Firm at the guest hall of the Office of the Union Attorney General yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they

discussed matters related to co-operation between Myanmar and Japan for development of the legal sector, progress on scholarship programmes and legal assistance provided by the Japanese law firm for investments of Japanese companies in Myanmar.—Myanmar News Agency

Peace process orientation . . .

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Persons who have previously taken part in the peace process were selected as tutors after completing the course, he added.

He also said that the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong comes as ethnic armed groups have demanded time to solve political issues through political means in order to end the nearly 70-year-old civil armed conflicts in the country.

"The unique solution to cease age-old armed conflicts is Federalism, which will suit Myanmar and be able to be effectively implemented. It has been accepted by all. Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong is the only political round-table to negotiate Federalism," said the

Union minister.

In today's meeting, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Union Minister, discussed the emergence of the NCA step by step, with the Joint Monitoring Committee and its responsibilities discussed by Col Wunna Aung, secretary of JMC, the framework of political dialogues by U Hla Maung Shwe, member of the JMC, and Federalism by Sayar U Kyaw Win.

Peace Process Orientation Course 1/2017 will be conducted for 3 days from January 19 to January 21. On January 20 & 21, situations of peace process and organisation, working instructions for political dialogues, national-level negotiations and working instructions are matters that will be discussed.—Myanmar News Agency

National-level political dialogue for ethnic groups (Kayin) continues

THE 2nd day meeting of the national-level political dialogue (Kayin) attended by members of the presiding committee was held at the Hpa-An Hotel yesterday morning.

The meeting was opened by saluting the Kayin National Flag, followed by the opening speech by Naw Dar Dar, a member of the presiding committee.

In addition, Naw Dar Dar, acting as master of ceremonies, read out the format of the dialogue, with the types of discussions by sectors explained by Saw Zaw Lin on behalf of the Facilitator Team, and represent-

atives in four groups present at the meeting discussing political, social, economic and land/natural resource sectors.

Phado Saw Thamein Tun, central executive committee member of the Karen National Union (KNU) made a closing address.

In the second day meeting, Kayin national representatives discussed the issuance of a paper by sectors, with the revised paper to be submitted to representatives on the third day of the meeting, it is learnt.—Saw Myo Min Thein (Information and Public Relations Department)



Participants discuss in the National-level political dialogue (Kayin)
PHOTO: SAW MYO MIN THEIN (IPRD)

Thura U Shwe Mann receives UN rights envoy

CHAIRMAN of Legal Cases and the Special Assessment Commission of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann and Ms. Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, met yesterday over legal affairs concerning human rights.

At the meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, they exchanged views on legal cases related to the human rights situation in the country, including the specific rights of women, children and

Myanmar citizens.

They also discussed the commission's assessment of existing laws and cooperation on drafting bills and the role of assessment of laws in democratic reforms.

The meeting was also attended by commission members U Ko Ko Naing, U San Shwe Aung, U Mya Thein, U Myint Naing, Daw Than Than Yi and Secretary of the commission U Khin Maung Tun.—Myanmar News Agency



Thura U Shwe Mann welcomes Ms. Yanghee Lee. PHOTO: MNA



Ms Yanghee Lee holds talks with officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. PHOTO: MNA

Special Rapporteur meets union ministers, Hluttaw committees

MS. Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, met with union ministers and members of Hluttaw committees separately in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

She discussed the peace process and humanitarian aid to Rakhine State with Union Minister for the State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe and

national reconciliation and development of states with Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin.

She also discussed human rights, women and children's rights with the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee, the Amyotha Hluttaw Citizens' Fundamental Rights, the Democracy and Human Rights Committee, the

Amyotha Hluttaw Women and Children's Rights Committee and the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee.

She also discussed implementation of ETTI, land rights and environmental conservation with the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.—Myanmar News Agency.

Fish ponds are seen in Maungtaw. PHOTO: THIHA SITHU



Fish farming in Maungtaw District to be expanded

ABOUT 200,000 of fingerlings have been distributed to farmers in Buthidaung and Maungtaw township in the 2016-2017 fiscal year as it expands two aquaculture farms in two townships, according to the Maungtaw District Fisheries Department.

When the first hatchery in Buthidaung was opened in 2013-2014 and in Maungtaw in 2015-2016, there were about 100 acres of fish farms in Maungtaw District.

The number of fish farms has today reached about 400 acres, with 100 farmers.

"We are making efforts for development of fish farming in Maungtaw District as the population is increasing and fish resources from the sea are declining," said U Naing Win Thein, Deputy Director of the Maungtaw District Fisheries Department.

The department has planned to establish fin ponds in 96 villages in Maungtaw District and will assist the farmers to get low-interest loans from banks.

Some of the 15,000 acres of prawn ponds in Maungtaw District are also converting to fish farming as a pilot business.

The deputy director also called for authorities to control sea fishing in the non-fishing season as part of an effort to prevent declining fish resources in the sea.

The coastal area was not accustomed to consuming fish from ponds, and fish farming was not popular in the area.

"The fish from farms in Yangon are expensive in Rakhine. It shows that fish production is not sufficient even for domestic consumption. So, we are making efforts for expanding fish farming in Rakhine," said U Naing Win Thein. — Zin Oo (Myanma Alin)



Vice-Senior General Soe Win poses for photo with Mr. Paul R. Seger. PHOTO: MNA

Vice Senior General Soe Win receives Swiss Ambassador Mr. Paul R. Seger

DEPUTY Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win received the Ambassador of Switzerland to Myanmar H.E. Mr. Paul R. Seger yesterday afternoon at Bayintnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed measures for peace taken by the government, the Tatmadaw, indigenous armed forces and the people, with the assistance provided by Switzerland for the peace process.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Two villagers arrested under suspicion of recruiting, spying for armed insurgents

TWO villagers suspected of recruiting and spying for armed groups who attacked Monekoe were arrested.

DD Naung Latt, son of U Dot Naw of Ward 1, Monekoe and Lanjaw Gumsai, son of U Lan Jaw Laphone, of Kaunglon Village, Monekoe, were also accused of acting as informers and spreading false news on behalf of the armed insurgents, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office.

The two men had been pursued earlier by government troops on 4 December, but the suspects fled to a neighboring country before they returned to Monekoe on 24 December, when they were finally arrested.

According to the investigation, it was learnt that DD Naung Latt, disguised as the chairman of Monekoe Baptist Church during the Monekoe attacks, gave information of the Tatmadaw's activities

to the armed groups, gave them money and spread rumours to foreign media so as to arouse mistrust of the government among public and international communities. The two suspects made repeated connections with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) armed groups before and

during the Monekoe attacks and recruiting new troops for the armed groups and transported oil, it is learnt.

The government troops are making arrangements to seize cadres of the armed groups and to stabilise the area.—*Myanmar News Agency*



DD Naung Latt. PHOTO: MNA



Lanjaw Gumsai. PHOTO: MNA

Drugs and ammunition seized in Mongkhat



A TAMADAW column searched a motorcycle driven by U Arr Kaw, son of U Arr Kyi, en route from Hokepone to Mongnon in Mongkhat Township in eastern Shan State on Wednesday afternoon.

Members of the Tamadaw seized 4,980 WY-stimulant tablets from Arr Kaw. He said he bought the illegal drugs from U Eike Lut, alias U Eike Phu, son of U Lon Sai. The Tatmadaw column searched U Eike Lut's house at about 3 pm later that day, according to the interrogation of U Arr Kaw.

The Tatmadaw seized 31,370 WY-stimulant tablets, one kilogram of raw opium, Ks 102,000, Yuan 2,028, Baht 100 as well as a pistol, 55 bullets, two pistol magazines and 16 AK-47 rounds from the house.

Members of the Tatmadaw handed over the drugs worth over Ks 545 lakh, arms, ammunition and a motorcycle to police. They also brought the two arrested men to Mongkhat Township Police Station to take action under the law.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Crime NEWS

Action taken against two stone-throwing young men

Police are interrogating two young men who threw stones at a Pan Taw Oo Express bus driven by Nan Aung en route from Magway to Mandalay between mileposts 308/4 and 308/5 in Meikhtila Township on Yan-gon-Mandalay Expressway on 19 January. None of the passengers on board were injured, but the bus

had Ks 6.5 lakhs in damage.

The express driver and conductors pursued the two stone-throwing men, one of them named Kyaw Naing Win, to Thee Gon Highway Police Station.

Police have taken action against two men under the section 279-A of the Penal Code.—*Than Oo (Lemyethna)*



Kyaw Naing Win.



Damaged part of Pan Taw Oo Express bus.

12-wheeled vehicle overturns in Kyaukme

A 12-wheeled vehicle carrying car tires en route to Muse from Mandalay overturned between mileposts 87/5-6 near Goktwin road, Kyaukme township, Shan State (North) on Wednesday, according to the Nawngkhio township traffic police. The 12-wheeled vehicle driven by Kyaw Ye Aung, 24, overturned when its brakes apparently failed, causing it to crash into the mountainside. The driver was injured in the accident. "No one died in the accident. The road was blocked temporarily," said an official from Nawngkhio township traffic police. Police have filed a lawsuit against the driver under section 279 of the Penal Code.

After the accident, traffic police issued a warning for Mandalay-Muse drivers to double their mindfulness, not to drink and drive, to follow the rule that up traffic has the right of way and to check the vehicle's condition before driving.—*Myitmakha News Agency*



The 12-wheeled vehicle is seen after overturned. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

LOCAL Business

Export value via border trade camp reaches US\$ 0.492 million within more than two weeks

Zin Oo and Ko Min

THE export value to Bangladesh through the Maungtaw border trade camp, which was opened on 24th December after shutting down following violent attacks in November and October, has reached a volume worth US\$ 0.492 million in the first 17 days of January.

The camp saw exports resume on 1 January with a flow of fishery products, foodstuff and products for beauty salons.

“Most of the export products to Bangladesh are dried fish,” said U Khin Kyaw Myint, In-charge of the Maungtaw trade camp.

But with no imports from Bangladesh to Maungtaw, the price of electronics, clothing and household utensils are rising at Maungtaw Market, he added.

Recent armed attacks on northern Rakhine State prompted closure of all border gates with Bangladesh for more than two months, causing financial hardships for local shrimp and prawn farmers and merchants, according to officials from the saltwater prawn and shrimp market.

Local products such as dried fish and shrimp, which can be easily transported, were traded via Sittway. But export of products such as bamboo to Bangladesh came to a complete halt.

Bangladesh buys most of the aquacultured prawn



Workers load the boat with bags of dried fish in Maungtaw, Rakhine State. PHOTO: THIHA SI THU

and marine shrimp from Maungtaw and regions nearby.

Bangladesh has been purchasing saltwater prawn from Maungtaw region for years, merchants said, and the sudden halt to the commerce is unwelcome.

Last year, the volume of saltwater prawn along the Maungtaw border trade route reached 286 tonnes, resulting in an income of US\$2million.

Similarly, there were exports earning about US\$4.3m from the sale of fishery products including mud crabs, saltwater fish and various kinds of fried fish, according to the district fishery department. There were about 15,000 acres of saltwater prawn farms in Maungtaw prior

to the armed attacks. Depots received several thousand viss of prawn daily. That figure has now been reduced by half, officials said.

Meanwhile, the Maungtaw District Fishery Department is planning to expand aquaculture businesses to villages in the district as part of efforts for assisting in socio-economic development in the area.

Under the plan, five fish ponds each in 96 villages in Maungtaw District along with low-interest loans will be granted to villagers through banks, according to the Maungtaw District Fishery Department.

The department plans to spend more than Ks3.6 billion on digging fish

ponds in the villages.

While the number of saltwater prawn ponds has reached more than 100,000 in Rakhine State, the number of freshwater fish ponds was less than 100, according to the department.

The number of freshwater fish ponds in Buthidaung has increased recently from 100 to more than 300, while Maungtaw has just around 100 ponds.

“The fishery department has asked permission from its ministry to open five more hatchery farms in Maungtaw District, which set its target of earning US\$7.5 million from exporting fishery products this year, which would be an increase from the US\$ 7.3 million earned last year.

Lack of storage for daily vegetables result in 40 per cent wastage

THE vegetables across the country are flowing into the Yangon market, but the lack of storage for the perishable vegetables result in about 40 per cent wastage every day, said Daw Sandar Myo, the secretary of Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association.

The Yangon market receives a daily inflow of vegetables from across the country. The entrepreneurs keep their stock in their own way. About 12 truckloads of vegetables daily enter Thiri Mingala market, with about 2,600 tonnes of vegetables and fruits. However, there is no

cold storage to preserve the vegetables. The merchants keep the vegetables on the trucks, which results in 40 per cent of daily wastages due to the lack of storages. Bitter melon and lady fingers (okra) are being imported from Thailand and China because of the insufficiency in local consumption, she added.

Establishing storage facilities can prevent waste, allowing merchants and the growers to benefit. The vegetable wholesale market in Yangon Region is mainly dependent on the Thiri Mingala market and the Danyingon market. —200

Construction of high-quality rice mills completed

IN a bid to produce quality rice, high-quality rice mills were constructed in Kyaukse, Ayeyawady Region and are now complete, said an official from Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation (MAPCO).

The country's top rice milling businesses will now be all in the same place, with this project's Phase-1 slated to open in March. These mills are likely to provide about 60,000 tonnes of rice for export and 15,000 tonnes of quality rice for domestic consumption per year.

Additionally, 440 V.2.2 MW of electric power will be generated by a turbine-powered boiler, which produces steam with the use of paddy husk as

fuel, it is learnt.

It will be the first and biggest machine which generates the electric power with the use of paddy husk. This machine was imported from Lucky Export Company and the construction of this is 90 per cent completed. The installations of the rice mills which can produce 250 tonnes a day, the machines which can produce 200 tonnes of parboiled rice a day, two grain dryers with its capacity of 15 tonnes and the other two grain dryers with a capacity of 17 tonnes are now finished.

This project is being conducted by MAPCO, responsible for 55 per cent of the project, and Golden Lace Co., Ltd for 45 per cent, it is learnt.—200

Fuel price on the rise in domestic market

THE fuel price is on the rise in the domestic market despite its decline in the global market. The price of fuel jumped by seven to 10 per cent during a month's time, followed by the record-high exchange rate of US dollar at Ks1,438 on 16th December.

The fuel price remained on the rise in January, although the US dollar exchange rate decreased a bit compared to last month's price. The fuel prices on 18th January were Ks690 per liter

for diesel, Ks710 per liter for premium diesel, Ks700 for Octane 92 Ron and Ks740 for Octane 95 Ron, according to the petrol stations.

The global crude oil price rose by 13 per cent on 17th Dec when compared to that on 17th Nov 2016, with a price of US\$52 a barrel. The price is down a bit in January against the price in December, statistics show.

A total of 126,862.001 tonnes of fuel were imported from 1st to 7th Jan, with



A worker checks the digital meter as he fills a car with fuel at a refilling station in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHAW

91,654.948 tonnes of diesel and 35,207.053 tonnes of petrol, according to the Commerce Ministry.

The petrol and diesel market is regular in Yan-

gon market. The price of diesel is around Ks3,000 per gallon whereas petrol price is Ks2,800 a gallon in the private retail market, it is learnt.—Ko Khant



Bangladesh Embassy presents
“Rhythms of Bangladesh”



a dance show by
Samina Husain Prema & Team
23 January 2017 at 6pm
at the Embassy (11/B Thanlwin road)

Singapore, India renew air force agreement to conduct joint training

SINGAPORE — Singapore has renewed Bilateral Agreement for the Conduct of Joint Military Training and Exercises between with the Indian Air Force (IAF) in India, said Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) said on Thursday.

The ministry said the renewed bilateral air force agreement allows the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) to continue its joint military training at Kalaikunda Air Force

Station in India for another five years.

Under the agreement, the RSAF will have opportunities to train with the IAF's advanced Su-30 fighter jet.

The renewal was signed by Singapore's Permanent Secretary (Defence) Chan Yeng Kit and India's Defence Secretary G Mohan Kumar, who is in Singapore on 18-19 January to co-chair the 11th Singapore-India Defence Pol-

icy Dialogue with Chan.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and India's High Commissioner to Singapore Jawed Ashraf.

During the dialogue, both sides underscored the strong and growing ties between the RSAF and the IAF, said the MINDEF.

The ministry added that the visit of the Indian defense secretary reaffirms the warm and long-stand-

ing defence relations between Singapore and India.

Both countries are committed to strengthening bilateral defence interactions and welcomed deeper defence cooperation for mutual benefit, it added.

The Bilateral Agreement for the Conduct of Joint Military Training and Exercises in India was inked in 2007 and renewed in 2012.—Xinhua

DPRK can test-launch ICBM whenever its leadership decides: South Korean military

SEOUL — The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) can test-launch an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at any time when its leadership decides, South Korea's military said on Thursday.

A Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) official told a regular defence ministry briefing that under such assessment, the South Korean military is maintaining defence readiness.

Armed forces of South Korea and the United States are cooperating in preparations for the DPRK's ICBM threats, jointly operating surveillance assets and closely monitoring relevant moves, the official said.

Top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un said in his

new year speech that his country had entered a final stage to prepare for the test-fire of a long-range ballistic rocket, indicating the ICBM test-launch in the foreseeable future.

Yonhap news agency cited sources of South Korea and the United States as saying that Pyongyang had produced a new type of two ICBMs that are already mounted on mobile launchers. It would be very hard to detect missiles fired from mobile launchers.

According to the sources, the new long-range missiles are less than 15 meters in length, shorter than the 19-20 metre KN-08. Its enhanced version, KN-14, is 17-18 metres in length.—Xinhua

Indonesia to settle tax negotiation with Google in Q1 this year

JAKARTA — After went through series of negotiation process with giant internet searching engine Google over the tax for its operation in Indonesia, a minister said on Thursday that Google has demonstrated positive signals during the process with its tax payment highly expected to commence in the second quarter this year.

"Negotiations related to Google tax issue are expected to be settled in the first quarter this year," Indonesia's Communications

and Information Minister Rudiantara said.

He pointed out that all Over the Top (OTT) providers operating their business in Indonesia are obliged to pay the tax to the government.

Google was initially reluctant to pay the tax to Indonesian government despite the fact that it runs an office in Jakarta to facilitate its operation in Indonesia.

Google did not allow Indonesian tax officials to examine the office's finan-

cial reports in September last year.

Google's transactions with its clients related to its operation in Indonesia were done in Singapore, reports said.

According to Indonesian tax office estimate, Google's unpaid tax stood at 5.2 trillion rupiah (388.7 million US dollars) in 2015 alone, not including the amounts since its Indonesian office opened four years before.

Besides Google, Indonesian government is now

also aiming to tax social media mogul Facebook which takes up 20 per cent of commercial advertisements in Indonesia's OTT industry valued around 840 million US dollars per year.

According to results of a survey carried out by Indonesian internet providers association, 132.7 million from the nation's total population of 256.2 million are internet users with 97.4 per cent of them are actively accessing social media contents.—Xinhua

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China says Philippines' Duterte to visit again as ties warm up

BEIJING — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will visit China in May to attend a multilateral summit, China's foreign ministry said on Thursday, his second visit to China since taking office as he seeks to further distance himself from Washington.

Duterte has carried out a stunning U-turn in Philippines' foreign policy since assuming office last year, making overtures towards China while berating traditional ally the United States.

In a statement issued after Duterte met China's Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin in Manila on Tuesday, the Chinese foreign ministry said Duterte said he was pleased with how ties had developed since he came to China last year.

"I will come to Beijing in May to attend the 'One Belt, One Road' international cooperation summit forum, and I look forward to meeting President Xi Jinping again," the ministry paraphrased Duterte as saying, without elaborating.

The Philippines De-



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte speaks during the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship launch at SMX Convention Centre in Davao city, southern Philippines, on 15 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

partment of Foreign Affairs said it could not immediately confirm the comments were made as no ministry officials were present at the meeting.

China has given few details about the summit, but diplomatic sources in Beijing say the government is expected to invite

a large number of foreign leaders to attend.

China has dubbed a series of infrastructure projects stretching across some 60 countries as the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, based upon resurrecting the old Silk Road that once connected China with Central Asia, Europe

and beyond.

Duterte reiterated last month he wanted to avoid confrontation with China and saw no need to press Beijing to abide by a July ruling on China's claims in the disputed South China Sea that went in favour of the Philippines.—Reuters



Madoka Kitamura, head of the Japan Sanitary Equipment Industry Association, unveils eight standardized pictograms for multifunction toilet seats adopted by the association in a press conference in Tokyo on 17 January 2017. Kitamura is also president of major toilet manufacturer Toto Ltd. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

High-tech Japanese toilets to become more foreigner friendly

TOKYO — As more foreigners choose Japan as a holiday destination, the country's toilet manufacturers have joined forces in an effort to simplify the sometimes complicated business of washing and drying — Japanese style.

The Japan Sanitary Equipment Industry Association said recently they will introduce eight standardized pictograms for the multifunction toilet seats, including icons depicting warm water washing, drying and seat heating.

The nine manufacturers belonging to the association will introduce the pictograms, featuring what they hope will be obvious designs, in their new products to be launched in April or later.

"We believe Japan can enhance its charm by making sure that people coming from abroad can use toilets, which are clean and comfortable, without stress,"

said Madoka Kitamura, head of the association and president of industry leader Toto Ltd.

A 2014 survey found many foreigners have difficulty understanding how to use Japanese toilets because of the complicated buttons on the control panel featuring icon designs that are specific to each manufacturer.

The Japanese companies also aim to make the new pictograms an international standard in toilets, eventually.

The number of foreign visitors to Japan rose for the fifth straight year in 2016, when it jumped 21.8 per cent to 24 million, surpassing the 20 million mark for the first time.

The government set a target of attracting 40 million tourists in 2020, when Japan will host the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.—*Kyodo News*

All Nippon Airways plane skids off runway in Hokkaido, no injuries

SAPPORO — An All Nippon Airways plane skidded off a runway after landing at Shin-Chitose airport in Hokkaido around noon Thursday but no one was injured, the transport ministry said.

The Bombardier DHC8-Q400 carrying 21 passengers and 4 crew members from Akita, northeastern Japan, stopped after ramming into a pile of snow.

One of the two runways at the northern Japan airport was shut following the incident.

The plane, which had taken off from Akita at 10:30 am, skidded as it tried to enter a taxiway from the runway and proceeded to slip into the overrun area, according to All Nippon Airways Co.

The passengers were allowed to get off the aircraft about an hour after the incident.

"When the airplane was slowing after touching down, it felt as if it was a car skidding on a snowy road. I felt it plowing into snow eventually but I was not

greatly worried," said one passenger, Masaki Ota, a 54-year-old employee of the local pro basketball team Levanga Hokkaido.

It was snowing around the airport at the time and 32 centimeters of snow had accumulated near the runways.

The temperature was minus 2.5 C and the wind speed was 24.48 kilometers per hour around noon, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency.—*Kyodo News*



An All Nippon Airways plane overruns and stops outside a runway at New Chitose Airport near Sapporo on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido on 19 January 2017. Passengers travelling on the flight from Akita were not injured. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Viet Nam stops importing multiple seeds from Indonesia

HANOI — Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on Thursday issued a decision to stop importing peanuts, cassia seeds, cocoa beans and peas from Indonesia due to high risk of *Caryedon serratus* (Olivier) injection.

The decision will take effect from Thursday, reported local Bao Dau Tu (Viet Nam Investment Review) online newspaper.

According to the MARD, in

2016 alone, over 5,000 tons of Indonesia-imported goods had been detected with living *Olivier* insects.

From 5 to 16 January 2016, the MARD continued to detect 40 more containers with Indonesian origins that contained nearly 1,000 tons of peanuts injected with the insect.

MARD assessed this is a dangerous insect in Vietnamese list of phytosanitary objects.

The insect that has never been in Vietnamese soil is said to cause huge damage to stocked agricultural products.

Before issuing the decision, MARD said it has sent multiple warnings to Indonesian plant quarantine organization. However, the situation has not improved, and so far, the Indonesian side has made no response, reported Bao Dau Tu.—*Xinhua*

Protesters urge Modi to allow ancient bull-taming rite

NEW DELHI — Protests by thousands of people demanding the resumption of a traditional bull-taming festival have disrupted daily life across the state of Tamil Nadu, forcing its leader to urge intervention by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Protesters want the central government to reverse a Supreme Court ban on "jallikattu", a hazardous rite in which youths and men wrestle rampaging bulls, and have made a request to Modi to permit it.

Thousands of small factories, shops and schools were closed across Tamil Nadu for a second day on Thursday by widespread protests against the ban, with the largest crowd gathering on the Marina beach of the state capital, Chennai.

Children carried placards blaming the judiciary and animal rights groups for the ban on what

they view as a sport forming a key part of the Pongal harvest festival, which some Hindus celebrate after the winter solstice.

"It is a primitive sport and we love it. No one has the right to stop a sporting activity," said Kanimozhi Subramanian, 23, a university student spearheading youth protests.

The state's chief minister, O. Panneerselvam, flew to the capital New Delhi to ask Modi to issue an ordinance allowing the festival this year.

Talks between the state government and protest leaders on Tuesday failed to find a solution allowing the event to be held.

Political parties, college students and cultural groups refused to disperse, leaving police struggling to rein in the protests.

"We fear that the protests could get violent or a stampede could lead to loss of lives. It is



Villagers try to control a bull during a bull-taming festival on the outskirts of Madurai town, about 500 km from Chennai in 2014. PHOTO: REUTERS

hard to contain the outrage," said Deputy Police Commissioner G. Shasshank Sai.

Animal rights activists have urged Modi to back the ban on a

sport in which bullfighters must retain hold of the hump of a bucking animal for three jumps to win a prize. Modi declined to intervene, however.

"While appreciating the cultural significance of 'jallikattu', the Prime Minister observed that the matter is presently sub judice," his office said in a statement.

The reference was to a final ruling awaited from India's highest court on a 2016 federal measure that permitted the rite.

Hundreds of raging bulls are injured annually because participants twist their tails, beat them and even stab them with knives to control the animals.

More than 1,200 spectators have been injured at such events between 2010 and 2014, says animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

"A cruel tradition cannot be part of Indian culture," said Manilal Valliyate, PETA's director of veterinary affairs.

"The ban should be respected."—*Reuters*

Obama to Trump: Keep Russia sanctions separate from nuclear talks



US President Barack Obama holds his final news conference at the White House in Washington, US, on 18 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama urged President-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday to keep separate the issue of economic sanctions on Russia from the pursuit of talks to reduce nuclear stockpiles.

Trump, who takes office on Friday after winning the 8 November election, said in an interview with the *Times of London* published on Monday that he would propose offering to end sanctions on Moscow in return for a nuclear arms reduction deal.

Obama's administration imposed the sanctions in 2014 after Russia's annexation of the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine.

"Russia continues to occupy Ukrainian territory and meddle in Ukrainian affairs," Obama told reporters during his final news conference at the White House.

"I think it would probably best serve, not only American interests, but also the interests of preserving international norms if we made sure that we don't confuse why these sanctions have been imposed with a whole set of other issues," he said.

"It is important for the United States to stand up for the basic principal that big countries don't go around and invade and bully smaller countries," the Democratic president added. Trump, a Republican, has said he wants he wants to improve ties with Russia, despite allegations by US intelligence agencies that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a cyber campaign to boost Trump's campaign against Democrat Hillary Clinton. Moscow has denied the allegations. Obama worked on a nuclear arms

control agreement with Moscow early in his presidency, resulting in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed in 2010.

"I was prepared to go further, I told President Putin I was prepared to go further. They have been unwilling to negotiate," Obama said, blaming Putin for "escalating anti-American rhetoric" and resuming what he called a Cold War-like "adversarial spirit." Obama said a more "constructive relationship" with Russia would be a good goal. The United States and Russia are by far the world's biggest nuclear powers.

"If President-elect Trump is able to restart those talks in a serious way, I think there remains a lot of room for our two countries to reduce our stockpiles," Obama said.—Reuters

EU leaders welcome Brexit clarity, Merkel says EU united ahead of talks

BERLIN — EU leaders on Wednesday welcomed clarity from Britain over what it wants from Brexit talks, with Germany's Angela Merkel promising a united front in what will be "very intensive" negotiations.

Responding to Prime Minister Theresa May's speech on Tuesday that made clear that Britain would quit the European Union's single market, Merkel welcomed the fact that London had accepted that free movement of EU citizens was not something it could opt out of without losing other EU rights.

"There cannot be any cherry picking by Britain in Brexit negotiations," Merkel told an economic conference, adding that access to the bloc's single market

was ultimately linked to accepting the EU's four freedoms — of movement of goods, capital, people and services.

"The speech made by British Prime Minister Theresa May has given us a clear impression of how Great Britain wants to proceed," Merkel said at a joint news conference with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

"The main thing is that Europe does not let itself be divided and we will make sure of that via very intensive dialogue," Merkel said.

Gentiloni said the EU was "ready to discuss the issue with the correct approach, which is in solidarity and friendship with the UK".

A spokesman for the Ger-

man finance ministry said London's vision for implementing Brexit could prove to be "pretty complicated" given that Britain would have no "EU passport" to conduct financial transactions once it left the bloc.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said he feared the two-year negotiation period, which will begin when Britain launches Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, may not be enough. "Everybody needs to think through the timetable for these negotiations because in practice we have actually not more than perhaps one-and-a-half years, perhaps a little bit more," Lofven told reporters at the World Economic Forum in Davos.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Britain will find ways to stay competitive if no EU deal: Hammond

DAVOS — British finance minister Philip Hammond warned the European Union on Thursday that if there was no "comprehensive trading relationship" after Brexit, the government would be forced to find ways to remain competitive.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Hammond told Reuters that Britain already had a competitive tax system and it was "not indicative of any kind of race to the bottom".

"We have to remain competitive. The best way to do that is to have a comprehensive trading relationship with the European Union, our closest neighbours," he said.—Reuters

At least 38 firefighters hurt as blazing Tehran building collapses

ANKARA — At least 38 firefighters were injured when a blazing high-rise building in Tehran collapsed, state television reported on Thursday.

Everyone had been evacuated from the building, state TV said, but firefighters were still trying to control the blaze and police have cordoned off the area.

Rescue teams were at the scene, state TV said.

"The building is one of the oldest buildings in Tehran. The Plasco building is a very old building in southern Tehran. It is mostly a commercial building," state TV said, referring to the Plasco Building, which is more than 50 years old.

"At least 38 people were injured and hospitalised but most of them have been discharged."—Reuters

Putin, Merkel and Hollande discuss Ukraine, Syria — Kremlin

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed peacemaking efforts in Ukraine and Syria during a conference call on Wednesday, a Kremlin statement said.

It said Putin informed his counterparts about preparations for forthcoming talks on Syria backed by Russia and Turkey that are to take place in Kazakhstan on 23 January.

The talks come in the context of a ceasefire declared by Russia and Turkey at the end of last month that has reduced, but not ended, fighting between pro-government forces and rebels that began almost six years ago.—Reuters

Israel deploys 'Star Wars' missile killer system

JERUSALEM — Israel's upgraded ballistic missile shield became operational on Wednesday, in a "Star Wars" — like extension of its capabilities to outer space where incoming missiles can be safely destroyed.

The Defence Ministry said the US-funded Arrow 3 system, jointly developed by state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries and US firm Boeing Co., was handed over to the Israeli Air Force.

The Arrow 3, together with the Arrow 2, which has been operational since 2000, would "significantly reduce the possibilities of ballistic missiles" hitting Israel, the ministry said in a statement.

The Arrow 2 is designed to intercept projectiles high and low within the atmosphere. Arrow 3 missiles will fly into space, where their warheads detach to become "kamikaze" satellites that track and slam into their targets.—Reuters

Greece reports outbreak of H5N8 bird flu at hen farm — OIE

PARIS — Greece reported an outbreak of the highly contagious H5N8 bird flu virus among laying hens on a farm in the southern part of the country, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) said on Thursday, citing a report from the Greek farm ministry.

The country had already reported a case of H5N8 in a swan in December but this would be the first outbreak on a farm.

Some 28,000 hens died of the virus, the report said.

The H5N8 Bird flu virus has spread among European countries in recent months with more than 20 countries hit so far, according to the OIE.—Reuters

Opinion

Write for us

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

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

Contemplation of a Noteworthy phrase: "Man Matters Most!"

Khin Maung Oo

THERE are many kinds of people in the world and their minds differ from each other. Different as they are in many ways, they all have an absolutely similar desire. That is none other than peaceful living free from anxiety and worries. The rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the kind and the cruel want to live in happiness with their families and their loved ones. Yet, our world is unstable. Some places are not always tranquil. They are living in fear and difficulty. In our country as well, many people in some places are being displaced. In fact, these conditions were attributed to inner self—ego, that is, defilements of greed, anger and ignorance. To put it simply, every individual except for Arahats - those who have liberated themselves from attachment, pride and wrong views, is subject to the defilements. Some have greed for wealth whereas some crave for power. So as to gain what

they want, they tend to use cruel and dubious ways. Some people want to be free from poverty while some people aspire to rise up against their own governments leading to anarchism.

Some educated people want to contribute their physical and mental labor to build a better nation for their younger generations, while some other educated ones are reluctant to accept new changes for fear of losing the power and the wealth in their possession. Some are poor but they want peace and justice.

They are above doing mischief. Some are poor but they are eager to get money and they are not above killing others if they are paid a great deal of money. Though they belong to the same level of poverty, their minds and mental status differ. All around us we are seeing a myriad of beings. Poor as some people are, they never hesitate to return a valuable lost item they have found to

its rightful owner. Much as they possess a considerable amount of wealth, some are conspicuous by their absence when they have the chance to help desperate people. Here, I would like to say, "Mind Matters most," to coin a phrase. As our minds control our deeds, evil deeds will never occur to us, if we get rid of these ill wills, once they appear in our minds. We can and need to cultivate our minds. Simultaneously, we are responsible to change our unwholesome and wrong mindsets of our colleagues so that our society can become a pleasant place to live in.

As known by all, our country is marching towards a federal democratic modernized and developed Union under the leadership of our chosen government. In doing so, we all are responsible to take an active part in the march. Any kind of criticism made with positive attitudes must be accepted so that the government can make necessary changes. And it will be

beneficial for the younger generations. Instead, these days criticism with negative views is being seen and heard here and there. The other day, H.E Mr Martin Tlapa, deputy minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic who is currently in Myanmar mentioned his views on Myanmar in an interview that every citizen in the Czech Republic hopes for new and favorable prospects after making reforms in the Czech Republic. They had tolerated very much for the betterment of the future, taking time to confront with many challenges.

He noted that Myanmar would gain success, becoming widely known in the global economy and accumulating good opportunities. At a time when a foreign country is criticizing Myanmar, our local people should get rid of their pessimistic attitudes and mindsets and try as much as possible to have a positive frame of mind, Mind matters most!

What's on your mind?

Tin Maung Than

THE driver is so careful in maintaining his pace below the 100-kilometer-per-hour mark as he knows well that exceeding the speed limit on this highway can cost his driving license. Giant roadside digital speedometers all along the thoroughfare are showing how fast a car is moving, and any speed violation will meet with punishment.

The journey begins at five in the morning during which Yangon sky is ruled by grey rain-carrying clouds. Adversely, the sky in the far north where Nay Pyi Taw lies is bright suggesting a fine weather for us at the destination. Luckily, no rain comes. But the scene of the dark grey sky touching the clear horizon is so breathtaking that it compels me to take some pictures of the view and the travelling party. At this moment, a thought comes into my mind to share this wonderful panorama with friends on the Facebook. "On our way to

Nay Pyi Taw" reads the caption of my photos.

As usual, my post receives responses such as likes and comments. One of the comments comes from my niece who is living in Maryland, the US with her husband. It's normal, every person living abroad hungers for a reunion with friends and rela-

Facebook.

Normally, I love posting or sharing views that may be acceptable, comments that may be encouraging, suggestions that may be useful, information that may be valuable and stories and pictures that may be enjoyable. Care is always on my mind that my post never harms or

We are free to create and send posts on Facebook, but something that is on our mind must be harm-free too in all aspects and if possible must be beneficial. We all have the duty to serve and protect our own community.

tives back home. So the pictures of her uncles, aunties and cousins travelling as a group remind her of the days she happily spent together with us in Myanmar. I suppose my photographs make her happy. Likewise, they would be exciting for friends and other relatives who love travelling. Hopefully, my post is a joy for everyone who finds it on the

hurts anyone.

Every time I found a Facebook friend suffering from distress, pain, dejection or depression on economic, personal or occupational grounds, or from bereavement, my message or comment for him or her will be the words of solace, succor and encouragement with the hope of bringing some relief from

anguish.

As for me Facebook is an instrument which provides me with the joy of getting in touch with friends and relatives some of whom are long-lost ones, reading real time news and information or the valuable knowledge on various subjects from the web blogs I am following, visiting funny websites that make me happy and browsing the internet for finding something new or exciting. Accordingly I have found the Facebook helpful in many aspects. It also creates a win-win situation for every user.

But there are some people misusing the Facebook just for personal gains, winning popularity or realizing their sinister aims without taking into account the evil consequences their posts could bring.

Some with the ulterior motives are fond of writing hate speech or sending hate messages on their posts, and some even establish web blogs or websites specialized in creating and distributing such contents with the intention of breeding communal, religious or racial violence.

The popular-crazed and

self-seekers sometimes use false or exaggerate news and information as a tool in pursuing their personal goal. Even though most of them may be harmless, such false or exaggerated news can at least tarnish the reputation of a person, especially a celebrity. But in certain cases, they are far more harmful than that as they can even trigger chaos and confusion.

Normally, when we have something on our mind which we like to share with others or which we think is worth sharing, we create a post on our Facebook page. It can be a piece of information or about an event we wish to tell friends and other users or that may be interesting widely.

We are free to create and send posts on Facebook, but something that is on our mind must be harm-free too in all aspects and if possible must be beneficial. We all have the duty to serve and protect our own community. Harming our community is like burning it down which will be resulted in a no-win situation.

So, what's on your mind?

Afghan troops kill four militants in northern province

KUNDUZ, (Afghanistan) — The Afghan special forces killed four Taliban militants and detained 12 others after conducting an operation in restive northern province of Kunduz Wednesday night, an army source said on Thursday.

“The night raid operation was launched based on a confirmed tip-off on a Taliban hide-out in Chahar Dara District. Upon arrival of the force, the militants engaged the troops and the security force returned fire, killing four militants,” Abdul Khalil, a press officer of army’s Division 20 Pamir based in the

region, told Xinhua.

One Taliban bunker was destroyed and 12 arrested were transferred to an army base, Khalil said, adding “the troops also confiscated four suicide vests, 23 improvised explosive devices (IEDs), explosive materials, a communication radio and several rounds of weapons.”

No civilian or security force member was hurt during the operation which lasted roughly for three hours, he said.

The targeted militants were responsible for subversive activities in the province, he added.

However, the Taliban militant group has rejected the assertion. Zabiullah Mujahid, a purported Taliban spokesman, told local media that the detainees were local villagers and no Taliban fighter was captured in the district overnight.

The Kunduz province, bordering Tajikistan and neighboring Baghlan and Takhar provinces, has been the scene of heavy clashes over the past couple of months as Taliban has been trying to challenge the government forces in the once relatively peaceful region.—Xinhua

Lebanon gets a new government, now it needs a new economy



Lebanon's President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri (L) attend the first meeting of the new cabinet at the presidential palace in Baabda, Lebanon, on 4 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEIRUT — After years of political deadlock, Lebanon finally has a new government. Now it needs a new economy.

Battered by war in neighbouring Syria, neglected by wrangling politicians and caught in rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the pillars of the economy — remittances from overseas workers, tourism and real estate — are not what they were.

Long-term, Lebanon is searching for new sources of growth, which fell from 8-9 per cent to below 2 per cent when Syria's civil war began in 2011. Beirut is working to start oil and gas exploration, offering support to technology start-ups and urging its vast diaspora to bring their brains and bank accounts home.

But before these dreams can be realized, the government, which started work in the new year after the country spent 2-1/2-years without a president, has an urgent to-do list.

The country's infrastructure has been awaiting repair since the 15-year civil war ended in 1990: roads are clogged with cars, beaches are littered with waste, internet links are slow or patchy and cuts to power and water supplies are frequent.

Reams of legislation, such as a hydrocarbon industry tax law and the privatization of the stock market, await completion.

Top of Prime Minister Saad Hariri's list is a budget, which the country has not had since 2005, and a better environment for business, his economic adviser Mazen Hanna told Reuters.

The cabinet encompasses most sides of the country's political spectrum and all of its religious sects, making any agreement a challenge. “The first sign of the government's seriousness is if they will pass a new budget,” Hanna said.

“This is the priority now.”

Without one, there will be little chance of tackling Lebanon's

growing fiscal deficit and debt-to-GDP ratio, forecast by the World Bank at 155 per cent this year, the third highest in the world.

The government's term may be as short as five months if long-overdue parliamentary elections take place on time, but Hanna said it can work on telecoms and the electricity shortages that drive people to hook up to expensive private generators.

It also plans to resolve problems with rubbish disposal which spurred anti-government protests last year and the cabinet includes an anti-corruption minister for the first time.

The fate of Lebanon's economy is important not only for the livelihoods of 4 million Lebanese, but for avoiding even more chaos in the Middle East: the country is home to more than one million Syrian refugees and half a million Palestinian refugees, and has its own history of instability.—Reuters



Citizens welcome Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) during an operation to clear the al-Andalus district. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iraq special forces chief says mission accomplished in east Mosul

BARTELLA (Iraq) — Elite Iraqi forces have ousted Islamic State insurgents from all districts of eastern Mosul they were tasked with recapturing, their commanding officer said on Wednesday, bringing almost all of the city's eastern half back under government control.

Lieutenant-General Talib Shaghathi said the Counter Terrorism Services (CTS), who have spearheaded the three-month-old offensive against Islamic State (IS) in the northern Iraqi city, had taken the eastern bank of the Tigris river.

Regular army troops were still fighting the ultra-hardline militants in northeast Mosul, however, according to a military statement. A few parts of the bank further north had yet to be fully taken.

“Today we celebrate ... the liberation of the eastern bank in Mosul,” Shaghathi told reporters in the nearby town of Bartella.

He said that recapturing Mosul's western half, which the jihadists still fully control, would be an easier task. Officers have previously said that the more densely populated west bank of the Tigris could pose additional military challenges.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said victory was near.

“The promise of final liberation and total victory in Mosul has come close to being realized,” he said in a statement.

“Work is under way now to liberate what remains of the forests and palaces (along the eastern bank) and few areas” where IS was still holed up.

Bridges across the Tigris, which bisects Mosul from north to south, have been hit by US-led warplanes to prevent

IS reinforcements joining the fighting in eastern neighborhoods, and more recently by the militants trying to block a future westward advance by the military.

If the US-backed campaign is successful it would probably spell the end of the Iraqi side of the jihadist group's self-styled caliphate, which also extends well into neighboring Syria, that it declared during a lightning offensive in 2014.

The Iraqi army, special forces and elite police units have operated in tandem to capture different areas of eastern Mosul.

The army is mostly deployed in the north, the CTS in the east, and the federal police in the south.

Army units advanced into the northeastern neighborhoods of Qadiya 2 and al-Arabi, the military statement said.

Abadi said late on Tuesday that IS had been severely weakened in the Mosul campaign, and that the military had begun “moving” against it in western Mosul, without elaborating.

Residents reached by phone said air strikes against Islamic State deep inside western Mosul had increased in recent days.

More than a dozen missile strikes in the Yarmouk district targeted weapons depots and workshops the militants used to make explosives, and also destroyed two car bombs stored there, according to one resident.

Some raids had killed or wounded civilians, including in the Mosul al-Jadida neighborhood and an industrial zone, residents said.

Reuters could not independently verify the witness accounts.—Reuters

China's quantum communication satellite delivered for use

BEIJING — China's quantum communication satellite, launched last August, is officially operational after four months of in-orbit testing, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said on Wednesday.

Testing of the satellite, payloads and space-ground links have been completed, the CAS said, adding that everything was operating properly.

The Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS) satellite is the first-ever space-ground test platform for quantum communication, said Wang Jianyu, execu-

tive deputy chief engineer of the project.

The research team has begun to carry out experiments and preliminary data has been obtained, said Pan Jianwei, chief scientist on the project. China successfully launched the world's first quantum satellite from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on 16 August 2016. QUESS will explore "hack-proof" quantum communications by transmitting unhackable keys from space, and provide insight into the strangest phenomenon in quantum physics — quantum entanglement. —Xinhua



Composite photo taken on 9 December 2016 shows a satellite-to-earth link established between quantum satellite "Micius" and the quantum teleportation experiment platform in Ali, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. PHOTO: XINHUA

Successful pregnancy possible even with heart defects

NEW YORK — Women who are born with high-risk heart defects can have successful pregnancies if they get the right medical support, according to new US guidelines. The guidelines are the first from the American Heart Association to offer a road map to women with congenital heart defects who have long been told to avoid pregnancy altogether, said Mary Canobbio, a researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles and chair of the committee that drafted the advice.

"Historically the tendency has been to advise these women to avoid pregnancy because the defect and surgeries done to keep these women alive are complex and the long term survival is difficult to predict — so concern has been that the 'added burden' of pregnancy could potentially cause more problems and decrease their own long term survival," Canobbio said by email.

Congenital heart defects such as defective vessels, leaky valves or holes in the heart muscle are among the most common types of birth defects. These structural problems can cause symptoms

like abnormal heart rhythm and breathing difficulties and may require surgery or a heart transplant.

While most girls born today with congenital heart disease will reach childbearing age, pregnancy carries a risk of complications for both these mothers and their babies.

One concern is that women's blood volume increases by 50 percent during pregnancy to help support her growing baby.

That means the mother's heart must be able to handle the additional burden, Canobbio said. Hormonal changes during pregnancy can also increase the risk of irregular heart rhythm and blood clotting. In healthy women these changes aren't usually a problem, but in women with structural heart damage this can increase their risk of stroke, Canobbio added.

Pre-pregnancy counseling is essential for women with complex congenital heart defects so that they have a clear understanding of how their heart abnormalities could affect both their own health and the health of their child during a pregnancy, the new guidelines advise. —Reuters



A child touches her pregnant mother's stomach at the last stages of her pregnancy in Bordeaux in 2010. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Hairy snail' among 150 new mollusc species discovered in Australia

SYDNEY — Australian researchers have discovered more than 150 new species of snails and molluscs.

Researchers surveying the remote islands off the Kimberley coast of Western Australia (WA) documented a series of previously undiscovered land snail living in the untouched region.

Having recently completed analysis of the survey, which ran from 2009 to 2011, scientists concluded that there was up to 13 unique species of snail living on each of the islands.

The newly discovered molluscs range from snails less than two millimetres long to larger snails covered in "alien-like" hair.

With 180 species of land snails previously identified in the area, the study suggests that the Kimberley is home to a third of

Australia's snail population.

Frank Koehler, a research scientist with the Australian Museum and leader of the expedition, said the diversity of the new species' was striking.

"I was just astounded by the huge diversity that I found. As a European it was simply something out of my grasp," Koehler told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on Thursday.

"There's amazing diversity in terms of their shells, shapes and sizes. Each species has its own ecological niche.

"They're very beautiful animals."

While the research remains in its preliminary stages, Koehler said he had developed theories about how each species used its unique attributes.

"Probably the most unusual

ones would be the tiny little species that have hairy shells," he said.

"It's quite unusual for snails to have hairs on their shell, and one idea is that little particles of soil get entangled in these hairs and they help the shell to be camouflaged."

Each of the newly-discovered species appears to have developed its own way of surviving the extreme weather cycles of the Kimberley climate.

"These snails hibernate and during the dry season are buried in the ground, but as soon as it rains they come out and they climb up the trees," Koehler said. He said despite the findings he believed his research only scratched the surface and there could be up to 700 unique snail species living in the region.—Xinhua

Global coalition aims to outpace epidemics with new vaccines

DAVOS, (Switzerland) — A global coalition of governments, health specialists and philanthropists will launch a new plan on Thursday to "outsmart" future disease epidemics with a fund to prepare and create new vaccines.

Stung by the devastation of West Africa's 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak, which killed more than 11,300 people before an effective vaccine was developed, the coalition is aiming to ensure such deadly outbreaks can't happen again.

John-Arne Rottingen, interim chief executive officer of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), said it is designed as "a global insurance

policy against epidemic and pandemic threats".

CEPI's founders used the World Economic Forum in Davos to announce its launch, with initial funding of \$460 million from the governments of Germany, Japan and Norway, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust global health charity.

Bill Gates, co-chair of the Gates Foundation and a leading global health philanthropist, said recent major viral disease epidemics -- Ebola and Zika -- showed how the world "is tragically unprepared to detect local outbreaks and respond quickly enough to prevent them from becoming global pandemics".

"Without investments in research and development, we will remain unequipped when we face the next threat," he said. "The ability to rapidly develop and deliver vaccines when new unknown diseases emerge offers our best hope to outpace outbreaks, save lives and avert disastrous economic consequences." The initial commitments mean CEPI has raised nearly half the \$1 billion it needs for its first five years. It is now calling for proposals from researchers and companies who want to work on developing shots against its first target diseases — the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Lassa and Nipah viruses.—Reuters

French Socialists still trail four other Presidential candidates as primary approaches: poll

PARIS — France's Socialists still trail well behind four other main candidates for the French presidency days ahead of the first round of the party's presidential primary, according to extracts from a new opinion poll published by Le Monde.

An article on the newspaper's web site on Thursday said the poll by Cevipof put far-right National Front (FN) leader Marine Le Pen in front for the first round of the election itself on between 25 and 26 per cent.

Conservative Francois Fillon was close behind her on between 23 and 25 per cent, with independent Emmanuel Macron on between 17 per cent and over 20 per cent.

Jean-Luc Melenchon of the Left Party was in fourth place, set to gather 14-15 per cent of the vote, between five and seven points ahead of any of the leading three



Marine Le Pen, French National Front (FN) political party leader and Member of the European Parliament, attends the election of the new President of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on 17 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Socialists, the article said.

All the predicted scores varied according to which Socialist candidate emerges from the primaries and depending on whether the centrist Francois Bayrou decides to stand or not, the article said. The poll itself was not immediately available.

Former Prime Minister Manuel Valls, ex-economy

minister Arnaud Montebourg, and Benoit Hamon, a former education minister, are due to contest the first round of the Socialist primaries on Sunday. A second round is due to take place on 29 January between the top two scoring candidates.

The first round of the election itself is due to take place on 23 April, with the

top two scoring candidates also going through to a second, run-off round. The Le Monde report did not mention a second round prediction. Most polls predicting a run-off result have shown Fillon beating Le Pen in that second round, although some scenarios have predicted a contest that Macron would win.—Reuters

Brazil police separate gangs in prison where 26 killed

SAO PAULO — Heavily armed police on Wednesday entered the prison where 26 inmates were butchered in recent days and separated members of rival drug gangs waging a turf war that set off a wave of riots in Brazil's overcrowded penitentiary system.

About 220 gang members will be transferred in buses from the Alcaçuz penitentiary in the state of Rio Grande do Norte to another prison at Parnamirim, outside the state capital, Natal, authorities said.

The police SWAT team searched the cells and founds firearms, a bullet-proof jacket and a large quantity of knives, the state's security chief, Caio Bezerra, told reporters.

Police used rubber bul-

lets and tear gas on Tuesday to break up a renewed clash at Alcaçuz between the gangs disputing control of the flow of drugs from countries bordering Brazil's Amazon region for shipment to Europe or distribution in the Brazilian market.

The prison was calm on Wednesday and Bezerra said the inmates did not resist the police entry to separate the gangs. But 13 buses were destroyed by fire in Natal in an apparent protest of the transfer of inmates.

Brazil has been hit by a wave of deadly gang clashes in prisons in the north and northeast regions of the country since the start of the year. At least 140 inmates have been killed in the violence, many decapitated or mutilated.—Reuters

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EVER ALLY VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER (1/2017)

[TENDER NO. MPPE / MOGAS / T / 1 (2016 — 2017)]

1. Open Tender is invited for the Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise, Ministry of Electricity and Energy for the supply of Mogas (92-RON) UNL (94,000 ± 10% Barrels)

2. Tender Closing Date & Time - 30 - 1 - 2017, 12:00 Hrs

3. Tender Opening Date & Time - 30 - 1 - 2017, 13:00 Hrs

4. Delivery Time - 27th February 2017 to 2nd March 2017.

5. Tender documents and details information are available at the Department of Finance, Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise, Nay Pyi Taw, during our office hours commencing 19 - 1 - 2017 on payment of Myanmar Kyat One Hundred Thousand (Kyats 100,000.) per set.

6. Only bid from tenderer who has purchased tender document officially from Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise will be accepted for evaluation.

Managing Director
Myanma Petroleum Products Enterprise
Ministry of Electricity and Energy
No(6) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw

Contact Phone No.
067-411487/411486/411280

Guterres vows UN reform and diplomatic 'surge'

GENEVA — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday he is determined to reform the world body and to see a diplomatic "surge" to overcome obstacles in peace talks.

Guterres said the United Nations was irreplaceable and its actions had reduced suffering. "But I'm also aware of the shortcomings and the failures of the UN," he told reporters.

"That's why I'm totally committed first of all to a surge in diplomacy for peace, to make the UN more effective in trying to address the dramatic multiplication of conflicts that we are witnessing and to put full priority on the prevention of those conflicts."

Under Guterres' predecessor Ban Ki-moon, the UN tried and has so far failed to make peace between warring sides in Syria, Yemen

and Libya, while wars in Ukraine, South Sudan, Nigeria and elsewhere have continued unabated.

An early test for Guterres will be UN-led talks to reunify Cyprus, a decades-old conflict that has pushed Greece and Turkey to the brink of war in the past. Officials from both sides of the divided island, as well as Greece, Turkey and Britain, opened a round of technical talks at a secluded Swiss resort on Wednesday to try to pave the way for a potential deal at talks in Geneva later this month.

In the previous round of Cyprus talks, UN envoy Espen Barth Eide said Guterres had been very active and involved almost daily in negotiations.

"It will send a very strong signal to a conflicted world and a region in which we see many wars and many

things breaking apart, if we could find one place where things just came together," Eide said.

Eide cited UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura, who is planning a new round of Syria peace talks in February, as saying that a sign of progress on Cyprus could help other peace processes around the world.

Guterres said he also wanted to simplify and decentralise UN management and make it more effective, accountable and flexible.

He also pledged to "engage constructively" with the new US administration, and cited Donald Trump's view that there was a lot of potential in the United Nations. "That is exactly what I think, and we need to work to reform the UN in order to make sure that potential is fully met," Guterres said.—Reuters

Ireland reports 'mad cow' case, says no risk to health

DUBLIN — Ireland said on Wednesday that a dead cow had been confirmed as having bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known as mad cow disease, but said it had not entered the food chain and there was no risk to human health or beef's trade status.

The animal tested positive for 'Atypical BSE', Ireland's agriculture department said in a statement, referring to the strain that it said has been identified more recently and which occurs spontaneously in older animals with a low incidence rate.

That type is distinct from 'Typical BSE' which was the basis of widespread cases of mad cow disease that began in the 1980s. There have been 101 'Atypical' cases identified in the EU from 2003 to 2015 compared to 2,999 'Typical' cases, it added.

"The disclosure of this case of Atypical BSE does not have any impact on Ireland's current OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) BSE 'controlled risk' status or trade status," the department said.—Reuters

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (2 / 2017)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-080(16-17)	Spares for 3300V Water / Oil Pumps Motors (19) Items	US\$
(2)	IFB-081(16-17)	Gas Supply Accessories (8) Items	US\$
(3)	DMP/L-023(16-17)	Hydraulic Oil Light (H.O.L) (1) Lot	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time - 6-2-2017, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 17TH January, 2017 at the Finance Department , Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

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

Avalanche hits Italy hotel, many feared dead or injured

ROME — An avalanche hit a popular mountain hotel in central Italy after a series of strong earthquakes had rattled the area, and up to 30 people might be buried under the snow, officials said on Wednesday.

“Around 30 people are unaccounted for, between guests and workers at the Hotel Rigopiano in Farindola,” Fabrizio Curcio, head of Italy’s civil protection department, told reporters.

Other officials said it was too early to say if anyone might have died, with the rescue operation hampered by up to 5 meters (16.4 ft) of snow which has fallen on the Gran Sasso mountain range in the central Abruzzo region in recent days.

The avalanche collapsed part of the four-storey hotel, which is some 1,200

meters (4,000 ft) above sea level, and moved it some 10 meters (30 ft) according to media reports.

A wall of snow and debris hit the hotel on Wednesday evening, just hours after four strong earthquakes had shaken central Italy, sparking fears about possible avalanches. Two men who were outside the building at the time of the disaster and raised the alarm. “I am alive because I went to get something from my car,” one of the two, Giampiero Parete, told medical staff, according to la Repubblica website.

Blocked roads in the area meant the first rescuers only arrived at 4.30 a.m. (0330 GMT) after they had skied through a heavy snow storm to reach the site. After dawn broke, emergency services sent in helicopters.

“We’re dropping our rescue units down by helicopter and they are starting to dig,” said Luca Cari, spokesman for the national fire brigades.

A base camp for rescue workers was set up in the town of Penne, some 10 km (6 miles) away from the Rigopiano hotel, which was a popular 4-star spa resort with 43 rooms. An aerial shot of the hotel released by the fire brigade showed just the last floor and the roof visible above a thick blanket of snow. Initial television pictures showed that mounds of snow and debris had smashed through a hotel wall into the lobby. Italian media had earlier reported that “many dead” had been found inside the hotel. However officials in the area denied the report.—Reuters



Firefighters arrive near Hotel Rigopiano, hit by an avalanche, in Farindola, central Italy, on 19 January 2017 handout picture provided by Italy’s firefighters. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sri Lanka eyes Europe for more tourists

COLOMBO — Sri Lankan government seeks to attract more European tourists and have appointed a senior official as a tourism consultant to focus especially on the European continent, officials said on Thursday.

Tourism Minister John Amaratunga said the coun-

try hopes to attract more Europeans who are traditionally identified as good spenders with demand for high standards as several international hotels are now opened in Colombo.

“Today with so many hotels coming up, we need to redouble our efforts to at-

tract more Europeans to our country,” Amaratunga said.

Sri Lanka’s tourism industry has witnessed a positive growth in recent years with India and China being the leading sources of tourists. Europeans once formed the bedrock of Sri Lanka’s tourism industry.

Sri Lanka received over 2 million tourists in 2016 and the government hopes to achieve a target of 4 million tourists per year by 2020.

Amaratunga told media earlier this month that Sri Lanka hopes to attract 2.5 million tourists this year.—Xinhua

World temperatures hit new high in 2016 for third year in a row

OSLO — World temperatures hit a record high for the third year in a row in 2016, creeping closer to a ceiling set for global warming with extremes including unprecedented heat in India and ice melt in the Arctic, US government agencies said on Wednesday.

The data, supported by findings from other organizations, was issued two

days before the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, who questions whether climate change has a human cause.

Average surface temperatures over land and the oceans in 2016 were 0.94 degrees Celsius (1.69 degrees Fahrenheit) above the 20th-century average of 13.9C (57.0F), according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-

tration (NOAA).

US space agency NASA reported almost identical data, and the UK Met Office and University of East Anglia, which also track global temperatures for the United Nations, said 2016 was the hottest year on record.

Temperatures, lifted both by man-made greenhouse gases and a natural El Nino event that released

heat from the Pacific Ocean last year, beat the previous record in 2015, when 200 nations agreed a plan to limit global warming. That peak had in turn eclipsed 2014.

“We don’t expect record years every year, but the ongoing long-term warming trend is clear,” said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

Global temperature records date back to the 1880s. Temperatures are unlikely to set a new peak in 2017 after the El Nino faded, even as greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels keep building up in the atmosphere, led by China and the United States.

Piers Forster, climate expert at the University of Leeds, said this year was likely to be cooler. “However, unless we have a major volcanic eruption, I expect the record to be broken again within a few years,” he said. Ash from big eruptions can dim sunlight.—Reuters



People are seen in silhouette as they cool off in water fountains in a park as hot summer temperatures hit Paris, France, on 24 August 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

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‘Will & Grace’ comedy series returning to TV

NEW YORK — Television comedy “Will & Grace,” the show that brought gay men and women into mainstream pop culture, is returning to US television with 10 new episodes, broadcaster NBC said on Wednesday.

Emmy-winning stars Eric McCormack, Debra Messing, Sean Hayes and Megan Mullally all will reprise their roles for the limited run that will air later in the fall of 2017 or early 2018.

“This groundbreaking series for everything from gay rights to social and political commentary — all disguised as a high-speed train of witty pop culture — is coming back where it belongs,” Robert Greenblatt, chairman of NBC Entertainment, said in a statement.

Max Mutchnick, who created the show in 1998 with David Kohan, said the duo were “thrilled about the opportunity to write what Will, Grace, Jack

and Karen are thinking about in 2017.”

The comedy series, about a gay lawyer living in New York with his straight best female friend, was one of the most popular shows on US television during its eight-year run.

It was credited with fostering acceptance of gay people long before the US Supreme Court made gay marriage a right nationwide in 2015.

Vice President Joe Biden said in 2012 that he thought the show “probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody has ever done so far.”

NBC said the idea for reviving the show came after a cast reunion last fall where all four actors were enthusiastic about the prospect.

NBC is owned by cable TV company Comcast Corp. —Reuters



Members of the cast of the NBC television series “Will and Grace” Debra Messing (L) Eric McCormack (C) and Megan Mullally (R) clown around on the bell balcony overlooking the main trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange shortly before ringing the closing bell for the session in New York, in 2006. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hong Kong actor Andy Lau injured during filming in Thailand

HONG KONG — Veteran Hong Kong actor and singer Andy Lau, one of the biggest stars in the Chinese speaking world, is being treated in hospital after being thrown from a horse while shooting a commercial in Thailand, he said on his blog.

“There was an accident when I was shooting for a commercial in Thailand on January 17. I fell from a horse and this lacerated my pelvic bone,” Lau wrote on his blog.

“Right now a medical team is taking proper care of me. I am doing well. Please do not worry. Thank you for your well wishes.”

There was no immediate response from one of Lau’s pro-

duction companies, Focus Films, on his latest condition after he was flown into Hong Kong late on Wednesday and wheeled into hospital on a stretcher according to footage carried by local media.

Lau has enjoyed a nearly 30-year career as an award-winning singer, actor and producer, and is widely known as one of the “Four Heavenly Kings” of Cantopop.

He has starred in over 140 movies according to his production company website, and was recently cast in Chinese director Zhang Yimou’s movie, the Great Wall, that also featured Hollywood star Matt Damon. —Reuters



Musician Paul McCartney performs at the Desert Trip music festival at Empire Polo Club in Indio, California, US, in 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Paul McCartney sues Sony/ATV for Beatles music rights

SAN FRANCISCO — Former Beatle Paul McCartney sued Sony Corp’s music publishing arm on Wednesday in federal court in New York, seeking to reclaim copyrights to 267 Beatles songs that pop star Michael Jackson acquired two decades before his death.

Jackson famously outbid McCartney for publishing rights to the songs in 1985, paying \$47.5 million to obtain the collection as part of a much larger trove of some 4,000 pop music tunes from Australian businessman Robert Holmes a Court.

The Beatles songs and rest of the ATV collection were then rolled into a joint venture Jackson formed in 1995 with his Sony-based label, creating Sony/ATV Music Publishing, which grew into the world’s biggest song publisher.

His estate sold off its stake in Sony/ATV, including the Beatles collection, to Sony Corp

(6758.T) for \$750,000 in 2016, seven years after Jackson’s fatal 2009 drug overdose from the powerful anaesthetic propofol.

According to his lawsuit, McCartney put Sony/ATV Music Publishing on notice as early as October 2008 that he wished to reclaim rights to the dozens of songs he co-wrote with the late fellow ex-Beatle John Lennon from September 1962 to June 1971. Those songs form the bulk of the Beatles catalogue.

The suit claims Sony/ATV has so far failed to acknowledge the composer’s rights to terminate copyright transfers of that music, including such hits as “All You Need is Love” and “I Want to Hold Your Hand,” under the US Copyright Act.

“Because the earliest of Paul McCartney’s terminations will take effect in 2018, a judicial declaration is necessary and appropriate at this time so that Paul McCartney can rely on qui-

et, unclouded title to his rights,” the suit said.

Sony/ATV Music Publishing called the lawsuit “unnecessary and premature” in an emailed statement.

“Sony/ATV has the highest respect for Sir Paul McCartney, with whom we have enjoyed a long and mutually rewarding relationship with respect to the treasured Lennon & McCartney song catalogue,” Sony/ATV said.

The lawsuit said Sony/ATV attempted to stall talks with McCartney until the conclusion of a separate lawsuit involving similar claims by British pop band Duran Duran in an English court. Duran Duran lost the legal battle to a Sony/ATV subsidiary in December.

The suit is seeking a declaration from the court that McCartney can reclaim his copyright interests in the songs, as well as attorneys’ fees.—Reuters

Sporty, couture and 1980s-inspired fashion dominate Berlin catwalks

BERLIN — Sporty, couture and 1980s-inspired looks dominated the catwalks at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Berlin, with a wide selection of designers offering creations for women’s winter wardrobes.

The Tuesday-to-Friday event may not be as high profile as the fashion weeks in Milan, Paris, London and New York but draws plenty of fashionistas for its variety of brands.

On Tuesday night, Marc Cain creative director Karin Veit sent models down the runway in ribbed jumpers, sporty jack-

ets, patterned trouser suits and tutu skirts, at times worn with leg warmers. There were also animal prints on coats and trousers.

Austrian designer Lena Hoschek took inspiration from a T-shirt her mother once wore for her “Dollhouse” collection of pastel-coloured and sparkly tops, dresses, skirts and trousers and designs adorned with cartoon characters.

“It rarely happens that one piece of clothing gives me the inspiration for a whole collection but this time it was an old

T-shirt of my mum’s from the 1980s,” Hoschek said. “She wore it when she was pregnant with me. That T-shirt is my absolute favorite piece of clothing. It is turquoise, light blue, pinkish, typical candy colors, typical ‘80s.”

Dorothee Schumacher presented a pattern-rich line of long-sleeved dresses, tops and trousers, cinched at the waist with belts.

Her color palette including a black-and-white mix as well as warmer orange tones, green and mustard.—Reuters

Czech bubble artist surrounds 275 students with soap 'screen' to claim record

MLADA BOLESNAV (Czech Republic) — A Czech performer of bubble art surrounded 275 high school students and a car with a single soap-bubble screen on Wednesday,

breaking the national record. Matej Kodes raised the screen around a rectangular 11 metre-by-7.5 metre area, enclosing those inside for a few seconds.

Participants had to

be taller than 156 centimeters (5 ft 1 inch) to fulfill the conditions for the event, which was supervised by a representative from the Czech Book of Records, who declared it

a new record. Kodes, who has performed since 2008, achieved a Guinness World Record in 2014 for "most people inside a soap bubble", which at that time stood at 214.—Reuters



275 participants and a car stand inside a soap bubble to achieve the Guinness World Record for the most people surrounded by a soap bubble in Mlada Boleslav, Czech Republic, on 18 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan decides to ask UNESCO to list remote islands, Christian sites

TOKYO — The Japanese government said on Thursday it will submit a proposal to UNESCO to add a number of islands in the country's southwest and a number of sites linked to the history of Japan's persecuted Christians to the natural and cultural sites on the World Heritage list.

The natural sites are Kagoshima Prefecture's Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island as well as the northern part of Okinawa Prefecture's main island and Iriomote Island, also in Okinawa.

As for the cultural sites, places in Nagasaki and Kumamoto prefectures in southwestern Japan associated with the history of Japan's persecuted Christians will be recommended. The decision to make the proposal was taken at a meeting of ministries and agencies concerned the

same day. Following Cabinet approval, the government will submit the proposal to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization by 1 February, and a UNESCO panel will examine and decide whether to add the sites to the list in the summer of 2018, following on-site inspections.

The Amami-Okinawa sites consist of some 38,000 hectares known as the habitat of rare animal and bird species, such as the Amami rabbits and the Okinawa rail and Iriomote cat. The Christian sites comprise 12 assets including Oura Church, a national treasure and the oldest existing church in the country, in Nagasaki and Sakitsu Village where the hidden Christians resided in Amakusa, Kumamoto Prefecture.—Kyodo News

Decades-old Madrid cafe keeps flamenco spirit alive

MADRID — In one of Madrid's oldest flamenco venues, a heart-wrenching voice commands attention as arms rise, fingers curl and feet strike wooden floors to the sound of gypsy chords.

Renowned for showcasing artists at the forefront of Spain's flamenco scene for six decades, the family-run Corral de la Moreria attracts a nightly mix of aficionados and foreigners.

Housed in a 19th century building just steps away from Spain's royal palace, the venue's candle-lit walls are peppered with pictures

of visiting celebrities ranging from Paul Newman to Justin Bieber that were taken by the owners.

Other visitors have included politicians such as former US presidents Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon, musicians from 1970s hard rock band Kiss, songstress Mariah Carey and sports stars such as Brazilian soccer player Pele. Some have even taken to the stage to dance.

"Flamenco may have been born in the south but Madrid is its capital," said Juan Manuel del Rey, di-

rector of Corral de Moreria and son of the founder who opened the 'tablao' in 1956.

"Tablao", Spanish for floorboard, emerged in the 1960s as a cabaret-style cafe for flamenco shows.

Rich and harrowing, flamenco is designed to stimulate all the senses, performed passionately by men and women typically involving a fiery singer, dancer, guitarist and "palmero" who claps the rhythms.

The founder's widow, Blanca del Rey, is an award-winning flamenco

dancer who made her debut at Corral de Moreria at age 14. She still scours Spain's flamenco festivals for top talent, handpicking the weekly programme that includes a roster of celebrated artists complimented by Spain's rising stars.

Sitting at arm's distance from the stage, aficionado Eloina Martinez, 68, has been enjoying flamenco for years.

"This gives me life. If it weren't for flamenco, I wouldn't be the same," she says, swirling a glass of red wine.—Reuters



Flamenco dancer Alba Heredia performs at El Corral de la Moreria 'tablao' flamenco venue in Madrid, Spain, on 16 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Peach Aviation to start 1st nonstop Okinawa-Bangkok flight

BANGKOK — Japanese budget carrier Peach Aviation Ltd. will next month launch a direct service between Bangkok and Naha, capital of Japan's southern prefecture of Okinawa, in its bid to enter the Southeast Asian air passenger market.

The daily nonstop service takes between 4 hours 15 minutes and 4 hours 55 minutes, with the one-way airfare ranging from 3,180 to 13,980 baht (\$89-391), claimed to be 50 per cent cheaper than connecting

flight fares offered by full-service carriers.

The inaugural flight is scheduled for 19 February from Naha Airport to Suvarnabhumi Airport serving Bangkok.

Peach Chief Executive Officer Shinichi Inoue said the new Bangkok-Okinawa service, its first route to Southeast Asia, is expected to have a 75-80 per cent passenger load factor and will be the 13th international route for the airline.—Kyodo News

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(20-1-2017 07:00am ~ 21-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Discovering Tribes "MUUN (Episode - I)
07:49	Am	Amazing: May Phoo Han
08:26	Am	Between the Beaches: Chaung Tha Vs Ngwe Saung
08:36	Am	Today Myanmar: Yangon Bus Service
08:42	Am	Beach Food Delivery
08:52	Am	Safari World
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	A Street Vendor Spreading Knowledge
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	The Green Corner (Epi 10) Glow In the Dark Mason Jars
10:35	Am	The Caves

10:51 Am Kindhearted Pet Lovers

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	A Journey for Healthy Future (The 36 th Geumsan Insam Festival)
07:43	Pm	Impressionist Myanmar Master Artist — U Lun Kywe
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Myanmar National Poet And Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-1) In Memory of Him & His Childhood
08:54	Pm	Now in Yangon

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

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

Istomin stuns champion Djokovic in Melbourne second round

MELBOURNE — Uzbek journeyman Denis Istomin pulled off an Australian Open upset for the ages on Thursday when he sent Novak Djokovic tumbling out of the second round of the grand slam the Serbian has all but dominated for the last seven years.

The 30-year-old world number 117 played the match of his life to hand the six-times champion only his second defeat in 41 matches at Melbourne Park since 2011 with a 7-6(8), 5-7, 2-6, 7-6(5), 6-4 second-round win on Rod Laver Arena.

Istomin, playing in his trademark fluorescent yellow glasses and bandana, let out a huge roar when the 12-times grand slam champion Djokovic sent a service return long to end an enthralling contest after four hours and 50 minutes.

"All the credit to Denis for playing amazing, he deserved to win," said reigning champion Djokovic after making his earliest exit at a grand slam since 2008.

"I was not pleased with my performance. It was just one of days when you don't feel that great and the other player is really feeling the ball. That's sport."

Istomin, who needed to go to the Asia-Pacific qualifying tournament just to get a wildcard for his 11th Australian Open, was stunned by his own performance.

"First of all I feel sorry for



Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin embraces Serbia's Novak Djokovic after winning their Men's singles second round match at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, on 19 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Novak. I was playing so good today," Istomin said in an on-court interview.

"So much emotion on my mind so I cannot hold it you know but I want to say thanks very much for coming to support me."

To say the odds were stacked against the 117th-ranked Uzbek was an understatement.

Second seed Djokovic had won all five of their previous meetings, giving up just one set, and had lost to a player ranked outside the top 100 only once since 2010.

Istomin knew he would have to play the best tennis of his life to have even a chance of victory and he produced it in a captivating arm-wrestle of a contest.

Charging out of the gate, Istomin hit seven aces and 27 winners in the opener, taking the match to the world number two and prevailing when Djokovic hit a return long on his third set point in a 13-minute tiebreaker.

The onslaught continued in the second set, Istomin moving the Djokovic around the court and smashing winner after win-

ner off his forehand.

Djokovic shouted in frustration, watched his first service success rate slide into the 60th percentile and called for the trainer after feeling a twinge in the back of his leg.

The tide looked to have turned, however, when the Serbian scrambled to save two set points in the second stanza before breaking the Uzbek immediately and serving out to even up the contest.

Djokovic whipped through the third set in a relatively rapid 45 minutes but Istomin, by now nursing his left thigh with an ice-pack at every changeover, would simply not fold.

"I mean it was tough, since third set I get cramping in my leg so I don't know how I held on," added Istomin, whose reward for the biggest win of his career is a third-round meeting with Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta.

Going for everything, the former world number 33 grabbed an early break in the fourth and, even after Djokovic broke back, raced to a 5-1 lead in the tiebreaker before sealing the set to send the match into a decider.

The crowd were expecting the famed Djokovic fight back in the final set but it was Istomin who ripped a backhand down the line to take an early break before playing some dazzling tennis to beat back every Djokovic assault and claim a famous win.—Reuters

Drinkwater confident of Leicester's top half finish

LONDON — Leicester City can still finish in the top half of this season's Premier League after a feeble start to their title defence, according to midfielder Danny Drinkwater.

Leicester have failed to build on last season's fairytale title triumph and, despite a fine Champions League campaign, the Foxes are languishing in 15th in the standings after 21 games, five points ahead of the bottom three.

"We knew what we achieved was unbelievable and something that probably won't happen again. But we needed to set a new target and hopefully reach it -- and the target is still there to reach," Drinkwater told Sky Sports.

"Come the end of the season, if we are in the top half and we've got through to the quarter finals of the Champions League, for a team like Leicester City, I can't see many people complaining.

"You can understand the frustrations of the fans at the minute but we'll get there... Looking at the first half of the season, it can only improve."

Drinkwater, who was a surprise exclusion from England's Euro 2016 squad, admits that on his current form he will have a hard time convincing national team manager Gareth Southgate he deserves a call-up.—Reuters

Osaka knocked out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE — Up-and-coming Japanese teenager Naomi Osaka was knocked out of the Australian Open in the second round on Thursday after a straight-sets defeat to Britain's Johanna Konta.

Konta, the ninth seed, ended Japanese interest in the women's singles competition, taking a little over an hour to post a convincing 6-4, 6-2 victory on Rod Laver Arena.

"I could not play my game. My returns were poor," said Osaka, who allowed last year's semifinalist Konta to break at 4-4 with a razor-sharp backhand before going on to take the first set.

A backhand unforced error from Osaka saw Konta break in the third game of the second set before the Brit drove on to an impressive win.

"I did my best and I just wanted to see what would happen so I am not too down," said Osaka.

Konta said of Osaka, "She is



Britain's Johanna Konta celebrates winning her Women's singles second round match against Japan's Naomi Osaka at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, on 19 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

one of the up and coming players and she's had some really impressive results over the last 12 months or so."

"I played her once before, we had a tough battle and it was the same today. I knew I had to give

it my best on every single point."

In the men's draw, Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka also tasted defeat in the second round, going down 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 to 13th-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut.—Kyodo News

Real Cup hopes hit by second successive defeat

BARCELONA — Real Madrid lost 2-1 at home to Celta Vigo in their Spanish King's Cup quarter-final first leg on Wednesday to slump to their second defeat in a row following a record winning streak.

Spain striker Iago Aspas, the top-scoring Spaniard in La Liga, gave the visitors a shock lead in the 64th minute by pouncing on a misjudged back-heeled clearance from Marcelo and showing composure to fire past a sea of defenders.

Brazilian Marcelo made amends with a volley into the Celta net five minutes later but La Liga leaders Real were caught out again almost instantly on the counter-attack.

The lively Aspas robbed Lucas Vazquez around the halfway line and rolled the ball to full back Jonny Castro, who drilled a shot past Kiko

Casilla to notch a second away goal for the Galicians and put Celta on the path to their first ever away Cup victory over Real.

Substitute Karim Benzema blazed over the bar from inside the area in the closing stages, failing to avoid a second straight defeat for Real who surrendered a Spanish record 40-game unbeaten run in all competitions with a 2-1 loss at Sevilla on Sunday.

"I don't know what happened but once again we didn't concentrate enough and didn't get into the game. It's a bad moment but we have to get over it. We have a second leg to turn it around but today was a bad game," Zidane told reporters after his team lost two games in a row for the first time under his management.—Reuters