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State Counsellor attends New Year luncheon

STATE COUNSELLOR Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the New Year luncheon hosted by the Foreign Diplomatic Corps in the Padauk Hall, Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw at 12:30 pm yesterday to deliver New Year greetings.

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Singaporean Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Robert Chua extended greetings at the New Year luncheon.

Before having lunch together with members of the diplomatic corps, the State Counsellor extended her New Year greetings, calling the luncheon “an opportunity to exchange ideas”.

“I don’t doubt that this year ahead will be – challenging and very, very interesting,” she said.

“This year is a great challenge for our country. We need stability. We need national reconciliation and we need peace. We have not had peace, total peace since we became an independent nation. This is our most important goal. Because without peace, there can be no sustainable prosperity,” she said.

“Your understanding on all situations will help us define the right solutions because whatever solution we adopt for our



State Counsellor Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is seen together with diplomats at the new year luncheon hosted by foreign diplomatic corps at Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

own country, it has to meet the standard of humanity and human needs,” said the State Counsellor.

She also appreciated previ-

ous discussions between the Myanmar officials and diplomats, saying that “we all understand that different views only help us in finding the best solution,”

While having lunch, diplomats sang songs played by the Rainbow musical band. Afterwards, the State Counsellor and the members of the diplomatic

corps had documentary photos taken. Then, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps presented a New Year present to the State Counsellor. – Myanmar News Agency

Licenses issued for more than 280 trawlers, 161 boats in Maungtaw Tsp to overcome fishing challenges

DESPITE resumption of fishing which was suspended following deadly violent attacks in November and October and November last year, fishermen in Maungtaw District, Rakhine State, are facing challenges for nearshore fishing at night due to curfew order and labourers who have not yet received the National Verification cards.

“More than four-month ban on fishing has caused challenges for both fishing business men and

workers,” said U Maung Myint, a local fishing business man in Maungtaw.

As part of efforts for remove the constraints, the authorities have issued fishing licenses to trawlers and boats in the district including 83 above 20-horse power trawlers, 203 trawlers under 20-horsepower and 161 boats from Maungni, Nyaungpingyi, Ale Thankyaw, Myinlut, Kyaukpanu, Innidin and Thayetchaung villages in Maungtaw Township

from 11th to 20th January.

About 300 fishing trawlers and about 1,300 manageable-level fishing boats operate in Rakhine State for nearshore fishing to fulfil domestic demand for fishery products per year. The district depends heavily on fishing industry in which more than 70,000 families are relying for their livelihood.

“We are taking measures to assist the fishermen in selling the product at local markets and in

exporting to Bangladesh legally. Meanwhile, we will enforce fishing rules on them so that they can fish in accordance with the fishing rules,” said U Naing Win Thein, Deputy Director of the Maungtaw District Fishing Department.

Fishing trawlers in Rakhine State were monitored by combined teams of the Department of Marine Administration, the Fisheries Department, Myanmar Insurance, police and township

general administration departments in the state in Sittway, Pauktaw and Yanbye Townships.

Arrangements are underway to conduct surveys in Alethankyaw Village in Maungtaw Township to issue licenses for fishing in the near future.

A 2014 Oxfam report on Rakhine’s fisheries estimated that 43 per cent of the population gain income from fishing, or a combination of fishing and farming.

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BULGOGI BROTHERS
Korean BBQ Restaurant

Bulgogi Brothers in Korea took the 1st prize in Franchise (Bulgogi) of KOREA SATISFACTION CONSUMER INDEX 2016 held on Aug. 23rd in Seoul, Korea. Bulgogi Brothers is globe Korean food brand with 'Bulgogi'. It was opened 1st store in Gangnam on 2006. Bulgogi Brothers has 17 stores in Korea and 11 stores in overseas including China, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand.

G-136, G- Floor, Building 1, SOHO Diamond Tower, Nar Nat Taw St., Kamayut Tsp., Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 09-73038899, 01-705577

KOREA SATISFACTION CONSUMER INDEX 2016
2016 한국소비자만족지수 1위
프랜차이즈(불고기) 부문 1위

Bulgogi Brothers in Korea, 1st place in Korea Satisfaction Consumer Index 2016

Senior General visits head of Shwekyin Religious Order at hospital



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits the Head of Shwekyin Buddhist Religious Order Abhidhaja Maharatha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhama Jotika Bhaddanta Agghiya. PHOTO: MNA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited the Head of Shwekyin Buddhist Religious Order Abhidhaja Maharatha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhama Jotika Bhadd-

anta Agghiya, who is receiving treatments in the intensive care centre at Mandalay People's Hospital, yesterday.

The senior general asked after the health of the Sayadaw and rewarded staff who were taking

care of the health of the Sayadaw round the clock.

The Sayadaw has been receiving medical treatment at the hospital since 12 January and he will turn 100 years in April.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Missing village administrator in Maungtaw found dead of knife wounds

THE body of Zawki Muhammad aged 33, acting village administrator of Kyetyoepyin Village, was found in a swamp yesterday.

He had been reported to Nganchaung Police Station for unusual disappearance.

The victim's brother, who

had been looking for him, found the body in swamp southwest of Pyaungpaik Village and reported to the police.

The victim's body was found with one cut on the cheek, two cuts on the throat, one knife wound on the knee, two stabs on

the chest and one stab on the left wrist in the swamp.

Action has been taken against perpetrators in the case, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office.—*Myanmar New Agency*



Naga ethnic people performs at the charity event yesterday at the National Theatre in Yangon to raise money for rehabilitation relief to the Naga People who have been adversely affected by serious infectious diseases. Between June and August of last year, 45 people were killed by measles, a highly infectious viral illness, in Naga-Self Administered Zone in Sagaing Region, according to a spokesperson of the council, saying that people in the area also experienced several fire accidents and loss of farmlands. PHOTO: YE HTUT

14th Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida emerges

BHADDANTA Viriyananda, 47, vassa (27 Years), from Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery on Sagawa Road in Dagon Township, Yangon Region has now become the 14th Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida as he passed the latter two texts of Abhidhamma written test, which is the last requirement to fulfil to be conferred on the title, Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida.

Five years ago, the 13th holder of the same title emerged.

Bhaddanta Viriyananda was born on 14th Waxing of Pyatho, 1331 Myanmar Era (21st Janu-

ary 1970), in the village of Taung Kham in Nawnghkio Township in northern Shan State. He is a Wednesday born, who became a Buddhist monk on 6th Waxing of Kason in 1351 Myanmar Era.

His parents are U Ba Kyaw and Daw Tin Kyi. As he has become the Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title holder, he can travel by upper class free of charge in all modes of transportation accompanied by two lay disciples. He will also receive monthly ration of rice etc.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Assailant suspected of attack on Kyikanpin violence arrested

POLICE acting on a tip-off, arrested a man yesterday morning on suspicion of involvement in the attack on the Kyikanpin violence.

A combined team from Taungbazar police station interrogated those involved in the

Kyikanpin violence and arrested Yawshi Armad, 32, at his house at 4 am yesterday.

A case has been filed against Yawshi Armad involved in Kyikanpin violent attack, it is learnt.—*Myanmar News Agency*



A young woman flashes the victory sign during the Chinese New Year celebrations in downtown Yangon yesterday evening. The downtown neighbourhood of Chinatown in Yangon was festooned with red Chinese lanterns to celebrate the Chinese New Year. PHOTO: MARK ANGELES

Domestic gold prices continue to decline due to slumping global gold price

THE local gold prices have declined to Ks 861,000 a tical on 27 January because the global gold price decreased, it is learnt from the local gold market.

The price of global gold has increased to US\$ 1,218 per ounce on 24 January, up from US\$ 1,200 per ounce on 12 January. But, the price of global gold has fallen to US\$ 1183 per ounce on 27 January, down from US\$ 1197 per ounce on 15 January. The price of global gold has been decreasing by over US\$ 30 during the past three days.

The price of local gold reached Ks 900,200 per tical on 4 October because the value of

gold on the global market and US dollar have appreciated.

Although the price of global gold has decreased, the US exchange rate is still rising. So, the price of local gold was Ks 850,000 per tical on 22 December.

The price of local gold was Ks 860,000 per tical on 10 January, up from Ks 850,000 per tical on 8 January. Then, the local gold price reached over Ks 869,000 per tical on 17 January, Ks 875,000 per tical on 18 January and Ks 877,700 per tical on 24 January.

The price of local gold was closed at Ks 861,800 per tical on 27 January.—*Min Min*

Children in garden of literature as happy as butterflies in colourful garden

"I did not think that the Children Literature Festival would be as crowded as now although I saw advertisements for it on the television and in newspapers. My son and daughter cannot choose where to go first as they have too many choice to participate. Their happiness even spread to me," said Daw Ni Ni Aye, who visited the festival with her children.

The literary festival, being held at Myanmar Information and Institution Technology in Chanmyatharzi Township in Mandalay from 27 to 29 January is being visited by students from all schools in Mandalay Region, including public schools, private schools and monastic schools who also participated in various events of the festival.

"I can't help comparing children participating in the festival with butterflies flying in a colourful garden," said a writer in Mandalay.

The festival is being organized jointly by the Ministry of Information and the Mandalay Region Government, with the assistance of Hepta Mix run by Ko Kyaw Wunna Swe.

Golden Duck Restaurant donated 1,500 lunch boxes, bottles of drinking water and soft drinks for attendants at the first day of the event and a total of 1,000 lunch boxes and bottles of drinking water and soft drinks for another two days of the event. In addition, the company will provide 10,000 tins of Asia soft drinks and Lucy Purified Drinking Water will supply 10,000 bottles of drinking water for the festival, according to Ko Wunna Swe.

Although it was estimated that about 20,000 visitors would come to the festival, the actual number of visitors reached 27,000 on the first day of the festival and more than 40,000 on its second day. Book stalls at the festival could also sell books worth more than K 24 million at the festival.

"Although the festival opens at 9 am, people are waiting to visit the festival at about 8 O'Clock with their cars and motorbikes. It is an amazing success. Book stalls owner are also very happy as they can sell many books. The festival is as crowded as the Thingyan Festival around



Children take part in team building game at the Children Literature Festival in Mandalay.

PHOTO: THAN ZAW MIN (IPRD)

the moat," Director-General U Maung Pe of the Information and Public Relations Department said.

A book house from Yangon named as Naing Naing, which also sold books at the similar

event in Yangon, came to the festival bringing about 4,000 books, all of which were sold out on the first day of the event and had to bring more books for the festival. A service provider as the book store said that it was a great

pleasure to see parents who buy every books their children asked for. Children, parents and teachers are looking forwards to another children literature festival like this one. —Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Children enthusiastic about colouring and proverb contests at Children Literature Festival in Mandalay



Children participate in painting contest at the Children Literature Festival in Mandalay. PHOTO: THAN ZAW MIN

COLOURING and proverb contests have found to be most popular among other features of Children Literature Festival being held at the Myanmar Information and Institution Technology in Chanmyatharzi Township, Mandalay Region.

A total of 27 children can

participate in one session of the contests, according to a member of the organizing committee for the event. He also said that these contests are a test of creativity of children, and notebooks were presented to all participants but eight prizes will be presented on the last day of the festival, he

added.

Children are also interested in programs like drawing caricature of them and having their faces coloured. Bookstall are also crowded with people who bought children literature books. —Tin Maung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

More than 280 trawlers, 161 boats issued licenses in Maungtau Tsp...

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While Myanmar and international trawlers operate off the coast, most local communities rely on medium to small-scale fishing operations. The local fishing sector has been beset by a number of problems, most importantly a dramatic decline in catch and a lack of storage technology and transport options so its produce can

be sold in Myanmar's cities or in neighbouring Bangladesh.

The Oxfam report cites a study by the Department of Fisheries and Norwegian researchers that estimates a decline of fisheries in Rakhine of about 65 per cent in the last 30 years, though other estimates are even higher.

The number cold storage facilities have also decreased in

recent years due to high cost of electricity, while there has been no improvement in road connections to Yangon. As a result, most of the catch is sold locally at relatively low prices, according to a research paper on small-scale fishermen in Rakhine published in the Journal of Burmese Scholarship last August. —Zin Oo (Myanma Alin)

Second day of Children Literature Festival crowded in Mandalay

THE Children Literature Festival jointly organized, with the aim of nurturing children who will become leaders of Myanmar to become ones who possess intelligence, creativity, conceptual and verbal skills and love of literature, by the Ministry of Information and the Mandalay Region Government was packed with more than 45,000 visitors at the Myanmar Information and Institution Technology in Chanmyatharzi Township, Mandalay Region, yesterday. Students and teachers from private schools and public schools in the region and families of residents visited the festival from the opening hour to the closing hour and bought books there all day.

The festival features children poems and literature writ-

ten by Poet Laureate Sayagyi Min Thu Wun, book stalls of children literature, face coloring, making toys with malleable rubber and various games for children.

On the first floor of the university, entertainment programmes of private school were presented including story-telling, impromptu talks, children's library and pictures of characters in power rangers, Spiderman and superman films.

At the literary talks and workshops, Poet Maung Naing Lin (Kawlin), Saya Soe Bar Dine, Saya Thike Tun Thet, Sayama Khin Thida Latt (Man Takkatho), Sayama Khayan Pyar, Saya Nyi Nyi Zaw and Sayama Cho Cho Aye explained their views and participants took part in the discussions. —Aye Mya (Mandalay)



A child sees books on children literature at the Children Literature Festival in Mandalay.

PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

Garden of medicinal plants to be built in Nawngkhio

A new medicinal plant garden will be built starting at the end of February in Bant Bway village, Nawngkhio Township, northern Shan State, according to Dr. Sein Sein Thein, chairman of the Natural Environmental Conservation Association (Evergreen).

"The medicinal plants are rare because of deforestation. So we will plant the medicinal plants," said Dr. Sein Sein Thein.

The project involves construction of medicinal plant gardens in the upper and lower gorges in Nawngkhio Township.

The first medicinal plant garden was opened on 6 November in Nawngkhio Township at a cost of Ks3.5 million. There are over 50 species of medicinal plants native to Myanmar.

"Well-wishers can contribute plants to the garden. Also, people who need medicinal plants can come and get plants at the garden," said Daw Myat Myat Khine, the leader of the garden's organising committee.

The first medicinal plant garden is located on Mandalay-Lashio Highway. Although medicinal plants may interest only a few people, the organising committee will try to persuade the local populace in different ways to engage their interest.

"There are many medicines imported from various countries, so Myanmar people do not know the potency of the traditional medicines."



PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

icines.

The medicinal plants garden will make Myanmar traditional medicine popular again," said U Thar Paw from Nawngkhio Township.

The organising committee needs young volunteers interested in planting medicinal plants. Those wishing to donate plants should call 09254342704 or 09975162462.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

2nd literary talks held in Dawbon Tsp

WITH an aim to have youths value literature, a ceremony for the literati and book-lovers was held for the second time at Yamonna(1) Ward in Dawbon Township on Saturday 21 January under the sponsorship of bookworms and bibliophiles.

Present at the ceremony were U Pyone Cho, Pyithu Hluttaw

representative for Dawbon constituency, U Thant Zin, Yangon Region Hluttaw representative, responsible officials from NLD Dawbon Township and literature lovers. Altogether, the gathering grew a crowd of about 700.

"Now that writers already had a great chance to link with readers and lovers of literature,

it is necessary to observe any events and occasions with good intentions. I would like all people to take part in the transitional movement. Provided that powers will emerge among writers and the reading audience and ideas and the avant-garde will result from literary talks, the talks will be more beneficial. In the near future, I want all the populace to exploit the knowledge and ideas out of these literary talks for the betterment of the country," said Pyithu Hluttaw parliamentarian U Pyone Cho in his opening address. During the literary talks, cartoonist Win Aung's discussion was titled "Time to get rid of stupidity." Composer and poet Naing Myanmar's was "With Unity and Lifelong Friendship," and the movie actor Sayar Beiluwa's talk was titled of "Myanmar Introduction". The talks included matters on making youths love reading and helping the youth's judgement abilities accumulated from reading in building up the nation into a strengthened democratic Union, developing the spirit of practicing responsibility and accountability and joining the process of peace and national reconciliation.—*Ye Htut Tin (Dawbon)*



Composer and poet Naing Myanmar. PHOTO: YE HTUT TIN (DAWBON)

Women's Support Centre to launch in Mandalay in February

THE Social Welfare Department is planning to launch a One Stop Women's Support Centre in Mandalay next month for the purpose of offering care to women and children who are experiencing any form of violence, its spokesperson said.

A similar centre was opened in the commercial capital Yangon in December, helping 11 women and one child from lower Myanmar.

Daw Naw Tha Wah from the department said that women and child victims need such centres to receive necessary cares and assistance. The new centre in Mandalay will provide services for those from upper Myanmar.

The centre will provide a wide range of support includ-

ing healthcare, legal advice and financial assistance to the target victims," Daw Naw Tha Wah said.

"My spouse, who is a gambler, frequently hit me, especially my face with his hands, and nobody in our village dared to help me because the villagers are afraid of him," said a victim from Hlaingthaya Township.

"My spouse has several times intimidated me over the phone when I was under care of the group working for women and children." People may call the department's hotline 067 404 666 and 067 404 777 when they face different types of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial and cultural violence.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Myanmar railways to upgrade circular train tracks

MYANMA Railways will upgrade the tracks used by the circular trains and fix the new signal system that will allow trains to run at a speed of 60 kmph with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), according to the railway.

"Previously, the trains were running at 20 kmph, but now the speed will be 60 kmph (36 mph) which is much faster. When we are running the train up to 36 mph, accidents can happen. So we need to conduct awareness training courses for the passengers. Usually, accidents occur because of careless actions," said U Zaw Lwin, traffic manager of Division 7 of Myanma Railways.

Myanma Railways is conducting an awareness training courses to prevent train accidents from January 23 to 29 together with JICA.

"Currently, Myanma Railways has issued warning signs at the railway station. Also, they are distributing pamphlets to the passengers.

The vendors who are selling on the railway platforms have to move out.

Also, we can see the Japanese from JICA upgrading the railway lines and the signal systems," said U Tin Maung Hla, a train user.

Currently, Myanma Railways has 23 trains plying a total of 215 rounds daily.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

Crime NEWS

Yaba seized in Lashio

POLICE from Lashio Myoma station seized Yaba from a house at Yadanabon road, ward 4, Lashio on 27 January. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched the house of Moe Thu and found 6,585 Yaba tablets.

On the same day, a combined team comprising officers and staff from Mandalay (South) anti-narcotic drug unit 18 seized 887 Yaba tablets from Win Thant in front of the No.12 high school, 76th street between 28th and 29th streets, Chanayethasan township. Police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Laws.—*Myanmar Police Forece*



Moe Thu. PHOTO: MPF

Myanmar-Chinese begin grand celebration of New Year in Yangon

YANGON — Myanmar-Chinese began a grand celebration of the traditional Chinese New Year here on Saturday.

An inaugural ceremony was held at the archway of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Latha township in the western part of Yangon.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Chinese Ambassador Hong Liang, Patron of the ruling National League for Democracy Party (NLD) U Tin Oo and Chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce U Myint Shwe.

U Phyo Min Thein urged the Chinese people in Myanmar to collaborate for the country’s development.

The event has been the grandest in several decades in Chinatown.

Chinese Ambassador Hong hoped that the Myanmar people could also enjoy the New Year celebration.

Various entertainment programmes, including songs and dances, were launched at six stages up to late night.

Chinese traditional handicrafts and cultural objects were also showcased at booths. A total of five archways were built in the Chinatown with more than 3,000 light bulbs spanning along Maha Bandoola Street, the main road of Chinatown.—Xinhua

Japanese chamber makes proposals to Daw Aung Suu Kyi to promote investment

YANGON — A visiting Japanese business delegation proposed policy measures to address major challenges impeding Japanese investment into Myanmar in a meeting Friday with the country’s leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, state media reported on Saturday.

During the meeting in the capital Naypyitaw, the delegation of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, led by its chairman Akio Mimura, submitted to Daw Aung San Suu Kyia request for action by the government to improve the investment environment, the report said.

A statement released by the Japanese side after the meeting said the list of 10 items covers infrastructure development including roads and power, regulatory reforms, human resource development for small and medium-sized firms and establishment of a framework for continuous dialogue between the government and the business sectors from both countries.

Mimura said that Suu Kyi showed high regard for the proposals and agrees with them, indicating she will work toward their implementation.

The JCCI has been making efforts to strengthen bilateral business relationships with Myanmar since it signed a memorandum of understanding with its Myanmar counterpart, the Union of Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in 1998, the statement said.

It said the JCCI is highly encouraged by last year’s establishment of a new government in Myanmar led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and would like to promote Japan’s responsible investment, particularly from the perspective of SMEs, to contribute to the sustainable development of Myanmar.

“Japanese SMEs have a variety of technologies and experiences and thus will be able to provide opportunities of employment, skills transfer and self-realization for Myanmar people in a wide range of business sectors,” the statement said.

JCCI’s proposal to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s government includes publicizing master plans and credible schedules to achieve a stable supply of electricity and efficient transportation and logistics, improving investment, trade, and customs-related regulations, and immigration systems, according to the statement.

During its stay in Myanmar, the JCCI delegation visited the Japan-backed Thilawa Special Economic Zone project near Yangon on Wednesday and held a one-day joint seminar with its Myanmar counterpart on Thursday.—Kyodo News

Indian PM dubs main opposition party as “sinking ship”

NEW DELHI — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has again taken a jibe at the country’s main opposition party, the Indian National Congress, dubbing it as a “sinking ship” and “history.”

“The Congress is a sinking ship. The Congress is history. It is on its last breath. The party is like water and changes its shape to suit its political needs,”

Modi said as he kicked off a massive political rally in the northern Indian state of Punjab on Friday.

Urging voters not to vote for the Congress in the upcoming state assembly polls, Modi said: “The Congress is a strange party. It has no principles or rules”

At the rally, the prime minister also challenged the opposition parties to change the political discourse in India.

“The country has seen the politics of destruction for 70 years and the youths of this country are suffering due to it. If you want to do politics, do politics of development.”

Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party has formed a coalition with Shiromoni Akali Dal in the country, which it has been ruling for the past 10 years.—Reuters

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Brunei has third highest social media penetration in world

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN — Brunei has the third highest social media penetration in the world with 370,000 users, or 86 percent of its total population, local media reported Saturday.

Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the chart with 99 per cent social media use, said the report, citing latest statistics of the new Digital in 2017 Global Overview report from We Are Social and Hootsuite.

The latest data shows that eight countries around the world have social media penetration levels in excess of 80 percent.

Brunei also fared very high in terms of penetration of mobile social media with 76 per cent people using it. It is the sixth highest globally after Qatar, the UAE, South Korea, Aruba and the Maldives.

In total, 10 countries have mobile social media penetration rates in excess of 70 percent, but 43 countries have penetration rates of less than 10 percent, the majority of which are in Africa.

This year’s report also highlighted that almost two-thirds of the world’s population now has mobile phones and more than one in five of the world’s population shopped online in the past 30 days.—Xinhua

Smoke-free Nepal possible only through clean cooking programme: report

KATHMANDU — Nepal can meet its target to eradicate smoke from kitchens by 2022 only through strong implementation of clean cooking programme, a new study has suggested.

The recommendation was made through a report looking at the needs of energy poor communities “Poor People’s Energy Outlook (PPEO) 2016,” which was launched in the capital city on Friday.

The report, released by global development charity Practical Action, stresses on rapid implementation of better measurement of clean cooking, a more systemic and participatory approach to markets for clean cook stoves, a continuing strong emphasis on gender considerations, and a focus on energy access as part of post-earthquake reconstruction efforts.

The report comes at a time when traditional cooking fires are still used in more than half the households in Nepal, which is regarded as a silent killer with their smoky fumes responsible for the deaths of nearly 23,000 people every year.

Addressing the launch event, Minister of Population and Environment Jay Dev Joshi said, “People’s energy access plays crucial role in Nepal’s economic and social transformation and the government is concentrated on generation, dissemination, distribution and leakage control of energy.”

The report was written using evidences gathered in villages in South Asia and Africa, while it urges politicians and development experts to revisit their approach to energy planning and funding.

The report states that improving access to efficient, renewable energy sources, and delivery mechanisms, will help reduce reliance on biomass.

“This would include investment in environment conservation, reduction of indoor air pollution risks in the households, provision of reliable communal services such as health and education and sustaining the gains made in rural development,” the report reads.—Reuters

N Korea likely to have restarted plutonium reactor: US think tank

WASHINGTON — North Korea is suspected of having resumed operations at its plutonium production facility, a US institute monitoring the site said on Friday.

Commercial satellite imagery from 22 January showed “a water plume originating from the cooling water outlet of the reactor, an indication that the reactor is very likely operating,” the US-Korea Institute of Johns Hopkins University said on its 38 North website, referring to the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center.

A river running along the nuclear site that is usually frozen at this time of the year was not frozen where the water plume mixes with the river, the institute said.

North Korea is keen to im-

prove its nuclear weapons including those to be mounted on inter-continental ballistic missiles to counter what Pyongyang claims is the threat from the United States.

“Without being able to measure the water temperature rise or water flow from the reactor, it is impossible to estimate at what power level the reactor is running, although it may be considerable,” the institute added.

According to the institute, the nuclear facility at Yongbyon has been stalled since the second half of 2015.

The United States, Japan and South Korea have been on alert for possible provocations by North Korea such as missile launches and nuclear tests. —Kyodo News



North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center is pictured in this on 16 January 2017 handout satellite image obtained by Reuters on 27 January, 2017. PHOTO REUTERS

Japan should push for Asia cooperation in Trump's absence

TOKYO — With US President Donald Trump apparently paying little attention so far to regional order in Asia, Japan should push for cooperation with other Asian countries to seek long-term co-existence with a rising China, according to a Japanese expert on international relations.

Trump's apparent indifference to maintaining order in Asia has triggered concern in the region, but the birth of the Trump administration “should rather be taken as an opportunity for Asian countries to think about regional order by themselves,” Yoshihide Soeya, professor at Keio University, said in a recent interview with Kyodo News.

Japan is expected to play a role in promoting cooperation in

Asia, such as through strengthening capacity building and helping Southeast Asian countries develop infrastructure, while at the same time maintaining its alliance with the United States which is necessary to prevent China from ultimately prevailing in Asia, Soeya said.

In that respect, the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade deal, even without the United States, could be “extremely important” for pushing regional cooperation in Asia, Soeya said.

On assuming office on 20 January, Trump said the United States would pull out of the TPP, a signature policy of his predecessor Barack Obama which was signed by the United States, Japan and 10 other Pacific Rim coun-

tries. The pact excludes China.

It is very important that a new security and economic system in Asia is formulated by countries without China, utilizing a TPP without the United States if necessary, Soeya said.

“This does not mean, however, that Asian members of the TPP are starting a fight with China. It is important that the countries discuss how to address China and the United States, the two powers wielding great influence on the region,” he said.

While stressing the importance of Japan's cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Soeya warned against the strategy taken by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of stressing China's threat and

seeking to gravitate around the alliance with the United States.

“ASEAN countries would be reluctant about cooperating with Prime Minister Abe if he continues to depend too much on the United States in his bid to counter China,” Soeya said.

“Worries about aggressive Chinese behavior are increasing, but ASEAN countries cannot antagonize China explicitly and would not want to take sides with Japan and the United States” in opposing China, he said.

Japan needs to keep in mind that if Abe tries to strengthen ties only with specific ASEAN countries as a way to counter China, it could hurt the unity of the 10-member bloc, Soeya said, adding that creating such rifts would

benefit China.

“In the end, Prime Minister Abe may be playing into China's hands if he is fixated on the China threat theory,” Soeya said.

On Trump's overall foreign policy, Soeya said the president is unlikely to address North Korea's nuclear threat or the South China Sea issue from the standpoint of maintaining order in the Asian region.

“His ‘America First’ policy will continue and he does not have any principles regarding international order, while Japan and other countries in Asia, as residents of the region, need to think about ensuring regional order. So there is a big gap between” Trump and Asian countries, Soeya said. —Kyodo News

Kunming's hospitable weather attracts visitors



People pose for photos at the Daguan park in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, on 28 January 2017. Kunming's hospitable weather during the Spring Festival attracted many visitors. PHOTO: XINHUA

Austrian ruling coalition continues crisis talks

VIENNA — The two parties to the Austrian federal coalition government will continue their crisis talks through the weekend, to determine whether early elections will need to be held, local media reported on Saturday.

Discussions about the viability of the present government have been ongoing this week, with officials from both the Social Democrats (SPO) and the People's Party (OVP) at both state and federal levels arguing that the present government should be abandoned this year due to not seeing eye-to-eye.

Local media reports said opinions of officials have in recent days shifted back and forth from claims that the differences

between the two parties are insurmountable and that the new elections could be held within just a few months, to a stabilizing of the situation following positive talks.

Chancellor Christian Kern had initially set a deadline for the negotiations to be concluded on Friday, though this will now be extended over the weekend, the chancellor himself having cancelled a planned trip to Israel and Palestine because of this.

The full term of the government would otherwise not require elections to be held until late 2018. Vice-Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner of the OVP on Friday said that both sides “must be flexible” in the intense negotiations. —Xinhua



US President Donald Trump signs an executive order he said would impose tighter vetting to prevent foreign terrorists from entering the United States at the Pentagon in Washington, US, on 27 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump bars door to refugees, visitors from seven nations

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and temporarily barred travellers from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries, saying the moves would help protect Americans from terrorist attacks.

In the most sweeping use of his presidential powers since taking office a week ago, Trump paused the entry of travellers from Syria and the six other nations for at least 90 days, saying his administration needed time to develop more stringent screening processes for refugees, immigrants and visitors.

“I’m establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America. Don’t want them here,” Trump said earlier on Friday at the Pentagon.

“We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country and love deeply our people,” he said.

The order seeks to prioritize refugees fleeing religious persecution, a move Trump separately said was aimed at helping Christians in Syria. That led some legal experts to question whether the order was constitutional.

One group said it would announce a court challenge on Monday. The Council on American-Islamic Relations said the order targets Muslims because of their faith, contravening the US Constitutional right to freedom of religion.

“President Trump has cloaked what is a discriminatory ban against nationals of Muslim countries under the banner of national security,” said Greg Chen of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The bans, though temporary, took effect immediately, causing havoc and confusion for would-

be travellers with passports from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Trump has long pledged to take this kind of action, making it a prominent feature of his campaign for the 8 November election, but people who work with Muslim immigrants and refugees were scrambling on Friday night to determine the scope of the order.

Even legal permanent residents — people with “green cards” allowing them to live and work in the United States — were being advised to consult immigration lawyers before travelling outside the country, or trying to return, said Muslim Advocates, a civil rights group in Washington. On Friday evening, Abed Ayoub of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee said he had fielded about 100 queries from people anxious about the order, which he said he believed could affect travelling green card holders, students, people coming to the United States for medical care and others.

“It’s chaos,” Ayoub said.

During his campaign, Trump tapped into American fears about Islamic State militants and the flood of migrants into Europe from Syria’s civil war, saying refugees could be a “Trojan horse” that allowed attackers to enter the United States.

In December 2015, he called for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States, drawing fire for suggesting a religious test for immigrants that critics said would violate the US Constitution.

His idea later evolved into a proposal for “extreme vetting.”

Trump’s order also suspends the Syrian refugee program until further notice, and will eventually give priority to minority religious groups flee-

ing persecution.

Trump said in an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network that the exception would help Syrian Christians fleeing the civil war there.

Legal experts were divided on whether this order would be constitutional.

“If they are thinking about an exception for Christians, in almost any other legal context discriminating in favour of one religion and against another religion could violate the constitution,” said Stephen Legomsky, a former chief counsel at US Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Obama administration.

But Peter Spiro, a professor at Temple University Beasley School of Law, said Trump’s action would likely be constitutional because the president and Congress are allowed considerable deference when it comes to asylum decisions.

“It’s a completely plausible prioritisation, to the extent this group is actually being persecuted,” Spiro said.

Trump’s order had been expected to include a directive about setting up “safe zones” for Syrian refugees inside the country, but no such language was included on Friday.

The order may also affect special refugee programs for Iraqis who worked for the US government as translators after the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

It is already affecting refugees and their families, said Jen Smyers of the Church World Service, a Protestant faith-based group that works with migrants.

Smyers said she spoke to an Iraqi mother whose twin daughters remain in Iraq due to processing delays. “Those two 18-year-old daughters won’t be able to join their mother in the US,” she said.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN agencies urge Trump to allow refugees entry

GENEVA — The United Nations refugee agency and International Organization for Migration (IOM) called on the Trump administration on Saturday to continue offering asylum to people fleeing war and persecution, saying its resettlement programme was vital.

US President Donald Trump on Friday put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and temporarily barred travelers from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries, saying the moves would help protect Americans from terrorist attacks.

“The needs of refugees and migrants worldwide have never been greater and the US resettlement program is one of the most important in the world,” the two Geneva-based agencies said in a joint statement.—Reuters

French foreign minister says Trump’s refugee measures are worrying

PARIS — US President Donald Trump’s decision to limit immigration and refugees from some Muslim-majority countries is worrying, the French foreign minister said on Saturday.

“This can only worry us,” Jean-Marc Ayrault, who was speaking at a joint press conference with his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel in Paris. “Welcoming refugees who flee war and oppression is part of our duty.”

Trump on Friday signed an executive order that will curb immigration and refugees from some Muslim-majority countries and he separately said he wanted the United States to give priority to Syrian Christians fleeing the civil war there.—Reuters

Russia sanctions must be tied to progress on Ukraine peace -Gabriel

PARIS — Germany and France agree that any moves to lift sanctions against Russia must be tied to progress in the peace process for eastern Ukraine, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on Saturday.

“We in Germany and France have a clear position on the sanctions,” Gabriel said during the news conference with his French counterpart Jean-Marc Ayrault. “We wish to implement the Minsk peace process ... And that is the only way that sanctions can be lifted.” Gabriel said he and Ayrault also agreed that it was important that Germany and France express strong unified positions on issues. He said the two countries would create bilateral working groups to address issues such as Ukraine and Russia.—Reuters

Five Iraqis, one Yemeni barred from Cairo-New York flight -airport sources

CAIRO — Five Iraqi passengers and one Yemeni were barred from boarding an EgyptAir flight from Cairo to New York on Saturday following President Donald Trump’s ban on the entry of citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, sources at Cairo airport said.

The passengers, arriving in transit to Cairo airport, were stopped and re-directed to flights headed for their home countries despite holding valid visas, the sources said.—Reuters

Syrian army takes over water spring near Damascus — Hezbollah-run media unit

BEIRUT — Syrian government forces entered the village of Ain al-Fija near Damascus on Saturday and took control of a spring that supplies most of the capital’s water, a military media unit run by Lebanese group Hezbollah said.

The Syrian army entered the area in the Wadi Barada valley as part of an agreement with rebels that have been fighting to hold it, the media unit said. The deal will include the evacuation of insurgents from the area, it added.—Reuters

Wall St slips as earnings, data underwhelm

NEW YORK — US stocks edged lower for a second consecutive session on Friday as some underwhelming corporate earnings and gross domestic product data cooled recent enthusiasm over policy actions by President Donald Trump.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 7.98 points, or 0.04 per cent, to 20,092.93, the S&P 500 lost 2.12 points, or 0.09 per cent, to 2,294.56 and the Nasdaq Composite added 5.61 points, or 0.1 per cent, to 5,660.78.—Reuters

Opinion

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Children and Poems

Dr. Nu Nu Win

WHEN we were young, we participated in singing with activities and dancing with songs. While children were young they prefer participating actively in their classroom activities, especially using their active physical movements according to the rhythm and meaning of the songs. Have you ever seen young kindergarteners singing happily "Shint Nyo Lay, Shint Nyo Lay, Ameer lay hlote tote" meaning "little brown squirrel, with its fluffy tail, wiggling her tail from side to side." At the same time they imagine themselves to be these little brown squirrels, happily waving their hands behind their backs as if these were fluffy tails of the little brown squirrels.

Nowadays, the kindergarteners act happily as if they were galloping on the back of a brown horse, singing merrily "He's coming galloping on a brown horse". I think not only the children, but their teachers also enjoy acting along with them as if they were on horseback. Oh! What a scene! Singing with active participation can make both young and old happy.

Especially for the young children and youths, it was a time when they were so young and energetic that if they did not get a chance to let out their energies in

the classrooms, all their extra energy could burst out in other improper places, maybe in a fight using their physical strength to show off.

So, we teachers and parents can create proper situations to allow children to use their extra energy properly by encouraging them to participate in singing and joining sing-along sessions with physical movements. In this way we may see the wonderful effects songs and music can have on children and youths.

Nowadays, everybody can hear the song "Bo Aung Din" everywhere, being played aloud with loud speakers together with a duet dance of a couple in the pre-war period. Think of this song. There are no new or modern words and feelings in that song which can be sung with just a banjo. But, it can move the hearts of both young and old as the melody is very lively for an active dance. That is why this song became very much popular through the whole time during Tazaungdaing.

It leads to the truth that songs and poems can make all young and old hearts come alive with energetic activities.

The important thing is that we teachers and parents should have the idea how to put this into practice for children and youths

in their teaching-learning process. If one has to study his lesson in the form of a written text, sometimes it can be very boring for him. But, if you change it into a poem or a song, it becomes easy to learn.

For example, to learn the era and dynasties of Myanmar Kings such as, Bagan Era, Pinya Era and so on, it is not very easy and interesting to learn it by heart. But, if you make it into a poem as follows:

"Pu, Pinn, Inn, Taung, Nyaung Yan Naung, Konbaung hnakhit khwe" which means, Pu = Bagan, Pinn = Pinnya, Inn = Innwa, Taung = Taungoo, and then we have Nyaung Yan Era and followed by Konbaung 2 Eras (the First Konbaung Era and the Second Konbaung Era).

Learning through poems and songs not only makes lessons easy to learn, this process can generate loving kindness and non-selfishness by singing songs together or reciting poems together. It brings love and happiness to the young innocent hearts which can lead to togetherness and peace.

We can also create patriotism and constructiveness in the minds of children through poems and songs. This morning I saw young children in a school singing our National Anthem whole-heartedly enjoying themselves in their own

singing. It can generate feelings of loyalty for their Motherland and their Nation. And they continued to sing the song "Myanma Kyaungtha". It can also teach them what they should do for themselves and for their country and nation.

So also when we are learning moral lessons, instead of learning by heart the difficult Pali words, they can be trained with this poem in the following manner: "Lu mike ko thar shaung thway hlwe loh ma mhiwe net kin aung nay" which means "You should shun fools and should keep company with the wise", as we learnt in our Thirty Eight Kinds of Auspiciousness (Thone set Shitphyar Mingalar). This way we can teach our young children what is good and what is bad, what is correct and what is incorrect. It can be more effective to learn by heart through this poem.

Therefore, we parents and teachers should find ways and means for our young generations to learn what they should learn, whether it is a lesson or a text or a particular mindset or moral principles. The method of learning lessons through songs and poems is sure to be more effective than just reciting them by heart.

More poems and songs for our children!

A powerful cure for leprosy: inclusiveness

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh,
Regional Director for WHO
South-East Asia

Why greater inclusivity is key to ending leprosy transmission, as well as protecting children from leprosy-related disabilities

There are many diseases medicine is yet to cure. Diabetes is one. Polio is another. Even for asthma, a respiratory disease common in both developed and developing countries, management is the only course possible.

When it comes to treating leprosy, one of humanity's oldest and most notorious maladies, however, we are in a strong position. If detected early, the nerve-attacking disease can be completely cured through multidrug therapy (MDT), a treatment that has healed more than 16 million people since it was first introduced. Owing to MDT's remarkable breakthrough, leprosy's transmission has long been avoidable; so too the crippling disabilities it can cause.

There is no reason that leprosy transmission and associated disabilities should persist. In 2015 almost 212 000 leprosy cases were reported worldwide, of which

8.9% were found in children. 6.7% of the total number of cases already exhibited grade two disabilities such as visual impairment, muscle atrophy or clawing. Though the 22 countries that account for 96% of reported cases have large leprosy-free areas, the affliction continues to circulate among vulnerable communities. In the South-East Asia Region, six countries still report more than 1000 new cases annually. Social stigma and discrimination is a major cause. Leprosy's association with poor social status remains a powerful disincentive to seek testing and treatment, leading to the disease's spread among family and social contacts. Fear of the disease's social and economic consequences is likewise inhibiting early detection among children, causing disability and life-long complications. To make matters worse, several leprosy-affected countries still have legislation in place that allows discrimination against those suffering the disease.

Inadequate access to health care services is also a key deterrent. It is no coincidence that communities in hard-to-reach areas are the most affected, and that the disease's burden is often highly con-

centrated. Migrant populations, displaced communities and the very poor are particularly vulnerable due to their exclusion from health services generally, and gaps in targeted campaigns more specifically. Ongoing neglect will ensure that endemic areas remain so, and that affected communities continue to bear the disease's unnecessary burden. To reverse the situation, and to accelerate towards a world in which there is zero disease transmission and zero leprosy-related disability, especially among children, full implementation of the Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-2020 is essential. As the strategy outlines, one of the most effective ways to hasten progress is by adopting one basic though powerful principle: inclusiveness.

First, health authorities should reach out to and include leprosy-affected persons and communities in all aspects of their programming. Not only will this make policy more responsive, it will also advance the interests and visibility of leprosy-affected persons in the public domain. As part of this, persons suffering the disease should be empowered to carry out advocacy

activities, as well as to participate in early case identification and treatment adherence campaigns.

Second, the reach of health systems and targeted programmes should be expanded. Leprosy care should be integrated in primary health care services with referral to specialist services where needed. Targeted campaigns should meanwhile be tailored to the needs of groups vulnerable to the problem, while taboos on active case-finding should be quashed. Third, laws that sanction or abet discrimination against persons suffering leprosy should be repealed. Regressive legislation that discriminates against persons with leprosy continues to exist in several countries in the Region, inhibiting a range of basic rights, from travelling on public transport to those related to marriage or inheritance. Whether from a medical or rights-based perspective, there can be no excuse for this ongoing injustice. Finally, resources should be mobilized to counter harmful social attitudes. Nongovernmental and civil society organizations should be included in society-wide campaigns to challenge leprosy-related stigma, and to ensure, as per UN resolutions,

that discrimination against affected persons and their family members is eliminated. As previous social initiatives demonstrate, change can come remarkably quick, providing a powerful – and immediate – fillip to public health efforts. Should countries be successful in driving inclusiveness within leprosy programmes, the wider gains will be significant. Greater health coverage will boost progress in tackling other neglected tropical diseases such as trachoma and lymphatic filariasis. More engagement in policy design and implementation will enhance ownership of public health endeavors, including for key infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis. And society-wide efforts to root-out stigma and discrimination will enhance social capital and make for a fairer, more just society in which public health issues can be tackled effectively. This final point is fundamental. As in so many areas of public policy, where science has found solutions our social, political and economic structures have created barriers. These barriers must be dismantled. In our ongoing efforts to achieve zero leprosy transmission and zero leprosy-related disabilities, inclusiveness is the remedy most urgently needed.

Apple strategy in 'smart home' race threatened by Amazon

SAN FRANCISCO — In less than a year, Amazon's combination of the Echo speaker system and the Alexa voice-controlled digital assistant has come close to delivering on the elusive promise of easy-to-use technology that can control gadgets in the home with a few spoken words.

Yet Amazon.com Inc's (AMZN.O) surprise success sets up a long-term battle with Apple Inc (AAPL.O) and Alphabet Inc's Google (GOOGL.O) for primacy in the connected household. And the contours of that competition are following a classic tech industry dynamic.

Amazon is pursuing an open-systems approach that allows quick development of many features, while Apple is taking a slower route, asserting more control over the technology in order to assure security and ease-of-use.

The strategic importance of the "connected home" niche looms large: Amazon wants a way to own its customer interactions — mainly shopping online — without an Apple phone or a Google Web browser as an intermediary.

Apple needs to keep the iPhone at the center of customers' lives, and has built a whole home automation architecture, called Homekit, into its smartphone.

Google, for its part, is investing heavily in both intelligent assistant software and home-automation devices like the Nest



The Amazon Echo, a voice-controlled virtual assistant, is seen at its product launch for Britain and Germany in London, Britain, on 14 September, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

thermostats and, more recently, the Google Home speaker.

But Google is behind in the race, with its speaker only hitting the market in November and compatible with a handful of gadgets beyond Nest and Dropcam, which the company also owns.

"When the iPhone rolled out in 2007, everyone developed [software] for that. Right now, everyone is developing for the voice-activated Internet," said Mark Mahaney, an analyst and

managing director with RBC Capital Markets.

Mahaney estimates Amazon sold as many as 10 million Alexa-enabled devices over the holiday season. Google hasn't disclosed sales for its Home speaker. Apple has declined to comment on reports that it has a voice-activated speaker in the works.

Apple spokeswoman Trudy Muller said the company is leading the industry by being the first to integrate home automa-

tion into a major platform with iOS 10. "The number of HomeKit-compatible accessories continues to grow rapidly with many exciting solutions announced just this month," she said.

For the smart home, the key developer partners are the makers of household devices ranging from lighting systems to refrigerators. There are currently about 250 devices that are certified to work with Alexa, and Amazon has encouraged rapid development of third-party applications with its open-systems approach and even financial incentives for some partners.

Apple's Homekit, by contrast, has about 100 certified devices. And the reasons behind that gap show both the risks and the potential rewards of Apple's approach.

To be Homekit-certified, gadget makers must include special chips to work with Apple's system.

Developers that order small volumes of the chips say they can cost an 50 cents to \$2, though prices are lower for larger buyers.

Apple also requires developers to buy specific WiFi and Bluetooth networking chips that cost more than competitors.

The devices have to be made in special factories that are certified by Apple.

A confidential Apple document obtained by Reuters lists more than 800 of these factories, but only a few specialize in home

automation products.

Developers can ask Apple to certify an unlisted factory they want to use.

But the limited selection means that device makers can't always get the best prices or work with their preferred factories.

The founder of one startup that considered pursuing HomeKit approval for a device that helps control home temperatures said the company picked a factory with 40,000 employees that was making well known "Star Wars" toys, but it couldn't use that factory for HomeKit products.

"They're a huge company, a legitimate manufacturer that makes tech household brands. And yet they're not [Apple] certified," said the founder, who declined to speak on the record because of non-disclosure agreements with Apple.

Manufacturers also have to send product samples to Cupertino, where Apple tests them extensively for compatibility. The whole process can take three to five months. During that time, device makers aren't allowed to say publicly that they're pursuing HomeKit certification.

Some developers say it's worth it. "They found issues with our product before we released it that we didn't find in our testing," said Gimmy Chu, CEO of Nanoleaf, a smart lighting system. "We know that after we have the certification that it's rock solid."—Reuters

Italy government fund has room to recapitalize other banks after Monte Paschi: BOI

ROME — Twenty billion euros earmarked by the Italian government will be enough to help recapitalize other weak banks after Monte dei Paschi di Siena (BMPS.MI), the Bank of Italy governor said on Saturday.

Ignazio Visco did not name any banks that may need government support to bolster their capital but bankers and analysts say Banca Popolare di Vicenza, Veneto Banca and Genoa-based Carige will likely have to strengthen their balance sheet soon.

The government is already expected to inject around 6.6 billion euros in Monte dei Paschi, taking a 70 per cent stake in the bank after it failed to raise money from private investors in December.

"The injection of public funds into Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena will presumably use up about a third of the 20 billion euros set aside by the government. There is more than enough room to address the recapitalization needs of any other Italian bank that meets the conditions laid down in the decree"

Visco told a financial conference in Modena.

"However ... the banks must be willing to apply for public support and deal with the ensuing commitments."

Visco said Italian banks, weighed down by low profitability, high costs and a pile of bad loans accumulated during a painful recession, could no longer put off much needed restructuring.

In some cases they will have to strengthen their capital, while for medium-sized banks mergers were necessary to cut costs and increase efficiency.

Visco said the bulk of Italy's bad loans were held by banks that were in a sound financial position and therefore did not need to sell them immediately. However, for weaker lenders, getting rid of soured debts was essential.

He said that recovery rates for bad loans averaged 43 per cent in 2006-2015. The rate fell to 23 per cent for en bloc market sales of loans to specialized investors, who demand high returns.—Reuters

FBI request for Twitter account data may have overstepped legal guidelines

WASHINGTON — The FBI appeared to go beyond the scope of existing legal guidance in seeking certain kinds of internet records from Twitter as recently as last year, legal experts said, citing two warrantless surveillance orders the social media company published on Friday.

Twitter said its disclosures were the first time the company had been allowed to publicly reveal the secretive orders, which were delivered with gag orders when they were issued in 2015 and 2016. Their publication follows similar disclosures in recent months by other major internet companies, including Alphabet's Google and Yahoo.

Each of the two new orders, known as national security letters (NSLs), specifically request a type of data known as electronic communication transaction records, which can include some email header data and browsing history, among other information.

In doing so, the orders bolster the belief among privacy advocates that the FBI has routinely used NSLs to seek internet records beyond the limitations set down in a 2008 Justice Department legal memo, which concluded such

orders should be constrained to phone billing records.

The FBI did not immediately respond to a request for comment. An FBI inspector general report from 2014 indicated that it disagreed with the memo's guidance.

In a blog post announcing the two NSL disclosures, Twitter said it did not hand over all the information the FBI requested.

"While the actual NSLs request a large amount of data, Twitter provides a very limited set of data in response to NSLs consistent with federal law and interpretive guidance from the US Department of Justice," Elizabeth Banker, associate general counsel at Twitter, wrote. The identity of the accounts sought by the FBI are redacted in both of the NSLs.

Andrew Crocker, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said the orders disclosed Friday were among a small handful of those publicly released that show the FBI continues to ask for internet records despite the 2008 guidance.

"This is an ongoing practice and it is significantly beyond the scope of what is intended," said Crocker, whose organization is challenging the constitutionality

of NSLs in the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals. Twitter has also sued the government to more freely discuss NSLs.

National security letters are a type of government order for communications data sent to service providers. They are usually issued with a gag order, meaning the target is often unaware that records are being accessed, and they do not require a warrant.

They have been available as a law enforcement tool since the 1970s, but their frequency and breadth expanded dramatically under the USA Patriot Act, which was passed shortly after the 11 September, 2001, attacks. Tens of thousands of NSLs are issued annually. In June of last year the US Senate narrowly rejected a Republican-backed proposal to expand the kinds of telephone and internet records the FBI could request under an NSL to include senders and recipients of emails, some information about websites a person visits and social media log-in data.

The legislation failed amid opposition from some major technology companies and civil liberties advocates, but lawmakers have said they intend to pursue the expansion again.—Reuters

May calls on Turkey to maintain human rights after coup

ANKARA — Prime Minister Theresa May said in Ankara on Saturday that Turkey should maintain human rights and the rule of law, alluding to the arrests and sackings of thousands of people following last year's failed coup.

May, visiting Turkey after a trip to Washington where she met US President Donald Trump, is making her first foreign visits as Prime Minister, promoting trade deals to strengthen her hand in negotiations to leave the European Union.

Speaking to reporters at the presidential palace in Ankara after meeting President Tayyip Erdogan, May called Turkey one of Britain's oldest friends and briefly touched on human rights, a sore point for Erdogan, who accuses the West of not showing enough solidarity following the 15 July military putsch attempt.

"I'm proud that the UK stood with you on the 15 July last year in defense of democracy and now it is important that Turkey sustains that democracy by maintaining the rule of law and upholding its international human rights obligations as the government has undertaken to do," she said.

More than 100,000 people have been sacked or suspended following the failed coup and



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan meets with Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, Turkey, on 28 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

some 40,000 jailed pending trial. The scope of the crackdown has worried rights groups and some of Turkey's Western allies, but Ankara says the moves are necessary to root out supporters of the attempted putsch.

May said the two countries had agreed to form a joint working group for post-Brexit trade

and would step up an aviation security program.

Erdogan told reporters that he discussed steps toward defense industry cooperation with May, and that he hoped to increase annual trade with Britain to \$20 billion from \$15.6 billion now.

He said an important step

between the two countries would be taken on Turkey's TF-X fighter jet project.

Britain, Turkey sign defence deal to develop Turkish fighter jet.

Following her meeting with Erdogan, May was due to hold talks with Prime Minister Binali Yildirim. —Reuters

About 40 Turkish NATO soldiers requested asylum in Germany-media

BERLIN — About 40 mostly high-ranking Turkish soldiers who worked at NATO facilities in Germany but were suspended after the failed coup in Turkey in July have requested asylum in Germany, news magazine Der Spiegel and broadcaster ARD reported on Saturday.

No comment was immediately available from the government or NATO officials.

The reports of the asylum applications filed by Turkish soldiers in Germany came as Chan-

cellor Angela Merkel prepares to travel to Turkey to meet President Tayyip Erdogan.

Ties between the two NATO partners have been strained over issues including alleged spying by Turkish clerics in Germany, German concerns about Turkey's crackdown on dissidents, and Ankara's accusation that Berlin is harbouring militants from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and far-leftists of the DHKP-C.

The report quoted officials

with German federal migration office and the interior ministry as saying that the asylum applications would be handled as all others.

Norbert Roettgen, head of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, told Spiegel that political considerations could not play a role in asylum cases.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told a conference in November that some Turkish military officers posted to NATO in Europe had request-

ed asylum but gave no specific numbers.

Reuters reported in October that Turkey had fired hundreds of senior military staff serving at NATO in Europe and the United States after the coup. Most were recalled to Turkey, but some chose not to return, fearing reprisals.

Greece's Supreme Court this week ruled against the extradition of eight Turkish soldiers who fled to Greece in July after the abortive coup. —Reuters

14 Austrian terror suspects to face remand hearings over weekend

VIENNA — The 14 suspects arrested by Austrian authorities following a series of large-scale anti-terror raids on Thursday are to have their remand hearings conducted on the weekend, according to an Austria Press Agency report.

While no information regarding the progress of the investigations has yet been provided, it was confirmed by a public prosecutor in Graz that the 14 men and women are to be taken to prison by Saturday morning, APA said.

From there, the remand hearings would have to take place within 48 hours, to determine whether they will be kept in pre-trial detention or be released from custody, it said.

Four of the suspects are presently being held in Vienna,

with the remainder in Graz.

The allegations leveled against the suspects are both suspicion of association with a terrorist organization, in this case Islamic State, as well as connection to an anti-state organization. —Xinhua

Merkel says migrant deal with Libya needed, but not possible yet

BERLIN — Europe should work with Libya to control illegal migration, but cannot sign a deal similar to that reached with Turkey last year until political stability is restored in the North African country, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday.

Merkel said it was important to work with Libya given that more than 4,000 migrants had died in the Mediterranean while en route from Libya to Italy.

"At the moment we cannot sign an agreement like that concluded with Turkey," she said in a video podcast, adding that such an accord would only be possible when "the political situation has improved, when the unity government is really a unity government and has control over the entire country, and we can talk about human rights issues, standards and other issues."

Libya sank into chaos following the 2011 overthrow of veteran ruler Muammar Gaddafi, and the new UN-backed government in Tripoli exercises no control over its territory.

The sea crossing from Libya to Italy, operated by people-smugglers based in the North African country, is now the main route for migrants bound for Europe.

A record 181,000 mainly African boat migrants reached Italy last year, taking the total number of arrivals in the past three years to more than half a million.

European Union leaders, who will meet in Malta next week, are looking at new proposals to handle asylum seekers after more than a year of wrangling over the issue that has undermined the bloc's unity. EU interior ministers on Thursday already pushed ahead with plans to finance camps in Africa, where the UN refugee agency and aid groups would process migrants to prevent them from trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. —Reuters

UAE Air Force helps to shoot down Iranian drone in Yemen conflict: media

DUBAI — Arab Coalition Forces destroyed an Iranian military drone at Yemen's Red Sea coast "with the help of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Force," UAE state news agency WAM reported on Saturday, quoting "a Yemeni military source."

The unmanned aerial vehicle

was at a mobile launching platform, "intended to target Yemeni forces participating in the liberation of Mokha city and port," said the report. The drone was "about to take off" for its mission when it was destroyed by an air-to-surface missile in coordination with the UAE Air Force operating in

Yemen, WAM quoted General Ahmed Saif Al-Yafei, deputy chief of General Staff of Yemeni Armed Forces. The general claimed further the rebel militias have started using the smuggled weapons from Iran to Yemen, including this unmanned aircraft.

He also stressed that the pres-

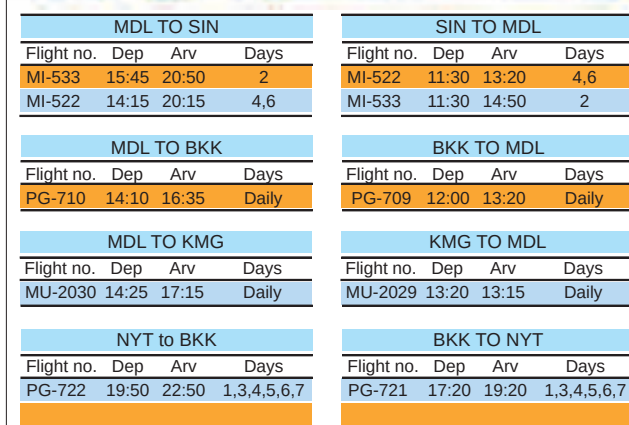
ence of these Iranian weapons in Yemen, which clearly show the "blatant Iranian interference" in Yemen's crisis, and attempts to "destabilize" the region. The UAE is part of a Saudi-led coalition comprising nine Arab states to support Yemen's "legitimate" government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour

Hadi. The coalition has been air striking on a daily basis the Iranian-backed Shiite Houthi group across Yemen since 26 March, when Hadi fled to the Saudi capital Riyadh to take refuge. The coalition said its intervention aims to restore Hadi's authority in the country. —Xinhua



YGN TO ICN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily
YGN TO KUL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily
AK-503	19:10	23:30	Daily
8M-501	16:10	20:10	2
8M-501	11:45	15:45	1
MH-741	11:15	15:40	Daily
MH-743	16:00	20:15	1,4,6,7
YGN TO KMG			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-416	12:30	16:00	Daily
MU-2032	15:30	18:50	Daily
MU-2012	12:55	19:55	3
YGN TO TPE			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CI-7916	10:50	16:10	Daily
YGN TO PEK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-906	23:50	0550+1	1,3,5,7
YGN TO HAN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-956	19:10	21:30	Daily
YGN TO SGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-942	12:10	14:55	2,3,4,5,7
YGN TO HKG			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KA-251	1:05	5:25	Daily
UB-8027	09:00	13:30	1,3,5,7
YGN TO DOH			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
QR-919	8:05	11:30	1,3,4,6,7
YGN TO CNX			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-724	13:40	15:35	Daily
YGN TO DAC			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
BG-061	16:45	18:30	1,3,6
MDL TO DMK			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-245	12:55	15:15	Daily

ICN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KE-471	18:30	22:30	Daily
KUL TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
AK-504	6:55	8:00	Daily
AK-502	17:20	18:30	Daily
8M-502	16:45	17:45	1
8M-502	21:10	22:10	2
MH-742	13:55	15:05	1,4,6,7
MH-740	09:10	10:15	Daily
KMG TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-415	10:50	11:30	Daily
MU-2031	13:50	14:30	Daily
MU-2011	08:20	11:55	3
TPE TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CI-7915	7:00	9:50	Daily
PEK TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
CA-905	19:30	22:50	1,3,5,7
HAN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-957	16:40	18:10	Daily
SGN TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
VN-943	9:25	11:10	2,3,4,5,7
HKG TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
KA-250	21:50	23:45	1,3,5,7
KA-252	22:20	00:10	2,4,6
UB-8028	14:50	16:20	1,3,5,7
DOH TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
QR-918	20:10	5:20	1,3,4,6,7
CNX TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
PG-723	12:00	12:55	Daily
DAC TO YGN			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
BG-060	13:30	16:00	1,3,6
DMK TO MDL			
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days
FD-244	11:10	12:25	Daily



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

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

LONDON — British authorities say they have confirmed two more bird flu cases on farms in northern and eastern England, meaning there are now four areas where restrictions are in place across the country to reduce the spread of the disease. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) said it had confirmed a case of H5N8 avian flu in a flock of about 1,000 pheasants at a farm in Wyre, Lancashire, in northern England on Friday. A number of birds had died and the rest were being culled. It was the second outbreak reported at a farm in Wyre this week. Another H5N8 case had been identified on Thursday at a turkey rearing farm which had about 19,500 birds near Boston in Lincolnshire, Defra said. A 3-km (1.9-mile) protection zone and a 10-km surveillance zone have been put in place around both farms, with authorities saying the virus posed a very low risk to humans and no food safety risk. Different strains of bird flu have been spreading across Europe and Asia since late last year, leading to the large-scale slaughter of poultry in certain countries and some human deaths in China.—*Reuters*

Peru and Colombia vow to stand with Mexico after row with Trump

AREQUIPA — Peru and Colombia vowed to stand with Mexico as the country faces an uncertain economic future and grapples with a crisis with the United States just days into US President Donald Trump's administration.

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said members of the Latin American trade bloc the Pacific Alliance must double down on efforts to open markets and strengthen ties as they navigate the "turbulent waters" of protectionist rhetoric.

Peru, Colombia, Chile and Mexico formed the Pacific Alliance in 2011 to remove obstacles to trade and orient their markets to the fast-growing Asia-Pacific region.

"Right now one of us is facing serious difficulties that are not of its own making," Kuczynski said in reference to Mexico as he sat beside his Colombian counterpart on an official visit. "We have to stand together on our ideals, on global trade which has done us so much good."

Though Kuczynski did not mention Trump by name, his comments were some of the first rumblings of displeasure with the Trump administration from traditional US allies in Latin America.

Trump has insisted he will force Mexico to pay for a wall between the two countries to curb illegal immigration and



Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski and his Colombian counterpart Juan Manuel Santos attend the 3rd Binational Cabinet in Arequipa, Peru on 27 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

drug trafficking. He has also threatened to slap taxes on Mexican imports and tear up the regional trade deal NAFTA if he cannot renegotiate it to ensure more benefits for the United States.

The Mexican peso has been rocked by tensions between the two countries, firming on Friday after Trump said he had a friendly phone call with Mexican President Pena Nieto.

"There are clouds of uncer-

tainty around the world," Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said. "We want to join the call of countries that adhere to the principles that have been so good for the world: free trade, respect for treaties... multilateral solutions."

Santos said he spoke with Pena Nieto by phone on Thursday, when the Mexican leader announced he cancelled a meeting with Trump as a diplomatic crisis over the proposed wall

deepened. Kuczynski, a former investment banker who spent years living in the United States, said the four countries in the Pacific Alliance represent a market of some 200 million people and that each has emerged from economic crisis in the past by opening markets to global trade.

"Of course there are costs to global trade, of course there are job losses, but it's also clear that the benefits are bigger," Kuczynski said.—Reuters

Vatican seeks to work with Japan in abolishing nuclear arms

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican foreign minister expressed his willingness to work with Japan in eliminating nuclear arms and building peace in a recent interview with the Japanese media ahead of his visit to the country starting Saturday.

Paul Gallagher, secretary for relations with states who is scheduled to visit Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park among other locations during his stay in Japan through 3 February, called the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in western Japan "a symbol of a great human tragedy," in the interview Thursday in Vatican City.

"It is a symbol of a great conflict, and it is obviously something in which we, as human beings, have to be absolutely committed never to repeat it," the archbishop said, adding, "We have to learn from the history...and move forward from that."

"We have to understand that peace is our responsibility today. We are all responsible. We do not just leave it to the politicians. It's for ordinary people," he said, touching on the sufferings of the people in the two cities that have lasted for decades.

While he has no plan to visit an area in northeastern or eastern Japan which has been affected by the major earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis in 2011, Gallagher said the disasters "made a great impact on the world."

He also called the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant "a powerful message" that the world must take into consideration in deciding what energy we are going to use in the centuries to come and what risks we prefer to take.

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship with Japan, Gallagher said the Vatican is trying to keep the ties "not just alive but flourishing."

With regard to US President Donald Trump, who has pushed his "America First" protectionism agenda despite controversies since last week's inauguration, Gallagher implied it is premature to characterize Trump's measures. "It's very early days. It's a sort of wait-and-see situation," he said.

Mentioning the need for dialogue in general, Gallagher said, "You do not always have to agree with everybody you meet. You have to exchange ideas, you have to make constructive criticisms and you have to be able to receive that as well."—Kyodo News

New US UN envoy warns allies: back us or we'll take names

UNITED NATIONS — The new US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, pledged on Friday to overhaul the world body and warned US allies that if they do not support Washington, then she is "taking names" and will respond.

Haley made brief remarks to reporters as she arrived at the world body's headquarters in New York to present her credentials to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

"Our goal with the administration is to show value at the

UN and the way that we'll show value is to show our strength, show our voice, have the backs of our allies and make sure that our allies have our back as well," Haley said.

"For those that don't have our back, we're taking names, we will make points to respond to that accordingly," added Republican President Donald Trump's UN envoy.

Haley, who was South Carolina's Republican governor when Trump picked her for the post, has little foreign policy and no

US federal government experience.

French UN Ambassador Francois Delattre and British UN Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said they looked forward to working with Haley. The United States, Britain and France, along with Russia and China, are permanent veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council.

After her meeting with Guterres, a US official said they had "a good and productive conversation about ways they can work together to reform the UN"

Haley told reporters, "Everything that's working, we're going to make it better, everything that's not working we're going to try and fix, and anything that seems to be obsolete and not necessary we're going to do away with."

According to a draft executive order published by The Daily Beast, Trump wants a committee — including his secretary of state, attorney general and director of national intelligence — to carry out a one-year review of US funding to international organizations with the aim of almost halving voluntary funding.

A senior US administration

official said on Friday that no such executive order was "expected at this time."

The United States is the largest contributor to the United Nations, paying 22 per cent of the \$5.4 billion core UN budget and 28 per cent of the \$7.9 billion UN peacekeeping budget. These are assessed contributions — agreed by the UN General Assembly — and not voluntary payments.

UN agencies, such as the UN Development Programme, the children's agency UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the UN Population Fund, are funded voluntarily.

Last year, Trump took to Twitter to disparage the 193-member world body after the United States abstained in a 23 December UN Security Council vote, allowing the adoption of a resolution demanding an end to settlement building by US ally Israel.

Trump, who had called on President Barack Obama's administration to veto the resolution, warned that "things will be different" at the United Nations after he took office on 20 January.—Reuters



Newly appointed US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley makes a statement upon her arrival at UN headquarters in New York City, NY, US on 27 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

“Farm Domes” pave way for veggie production on new level

By Nana Kunieda

KANAZAWA, (Japan) — For years, Katsuyuki Kitagawa dreamed of living in a comfortable home in the shape of a dome-shaped manju dumpling, minus the bean paste.

For over a decade, his company Japan Dome House Co., based in Kaga, Ishikawa Prefecture, central Japan, has come about as close to that realization as possible with the construction of a dome house made of next-generation polystyrene foam with various applications.

The styrofoam, a denser variant of the packing material used for consumer products, is now being used for agricultural purposes and drawing attention because of its durability against earthquakes and thermal insulating properties that enable energy savings, replacing more conventional materials like concrete or wood.

“I’d like to change the way of farming,” Japan Dome House President Kitagawa, 72, said about the



Photo taken on 21 January, 2017, in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, shows Katsuyuki Kitagawa, president of Japan Dome House Co., inside a dome house developed by his company. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

material, which is ideal for pesticide-free cultivation because it does not rust or rot and is not subject to termite infestation. The streamline curvature of the dome offers gale resistance from winds.

A “Farm Dome” in

Kaga measures 7.7 metres wide and 30 metres in length. Although the outside temperature might be close to below freezing, a temperature of about 22 degrees Celsius is maintained inside the structure, suitable conditions for growing

succulent summertime vegetables, normally produced outdoors.

Kitagawa was born in Shanghai but grew up in a hot springs village in southern Ishikawa. As a young man he operated a wholesale Japanese confectionery

company but opened Aso Farmland, a health-themed recreational facility in Minami-aso Village in Kumamoto Prefecture in 1995.

Hemisphere-shaped dome houses were developed as accommodations in 2004 when Kitagawa noticed that polystyrene, unlike other materials does not rot. It is highly customizable for everything from residences to educational facilities, or even karaoke bars. What’s more, an antioxidant has been kneaded into the building material and formaldehyde is not used in the construction process.

“I thought I’d be happy if I could scoop out the bean paste from a manju dumpling and live there,” Kitagawa said about one of the products he sold before establishing the modular home manufacturer.

The company began developing the dome houses for agricultural purposes in 2015. The stable structure of the dome, which can be assembled in several days, protects against wind and snow, and is highly earth-

quake resistant because there are no beams or rods holding it up. It uses about one-10th the energy of a wooden structure, the company says.

More than 450 dome houses in Aso Farmland were undamaged when a major earthquake hit Kumamoto and its vicinity in April last year and the village was later used as an evacuation site for nearly 700 people.

Not only has the company been expanding domestically, but it has been receiving a string of orders from overseas, from the Middle East, and other areas with harsh climates such as Antarctica.

Kitagawa, whose parents died of illness during his childhood, says no one should have to go hungry. “Farm Dome,” he believes is the first step to achieving the goal. “I want people around the world to be healthy and not go hungry. This is farming that will not be influenced by the weather or disasters,” he said. —Kyodo News

N Korea urges repatriation of citizens in South who want return

NEW YORK — North Korea wants UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to help some of its citizens whom it claims are being held against their will in South Korea to go home, according to a letter obtained by Kyodo News on Friday.

In the letter to the UN chief, Ambassador Ja Song Nam cited the case of Kim Ryon Hui, who left North Korea in 2011 to seek medical treatment in China and now claims to be trapped in South Korea.

“I would like to take this opportunity to urge for an appropriate action by your office for an immediate repatriation of Kim Ryon Hui,” Ja said in the letter.

He branded Kim’s case as an example of “the enticed group abduction” of the North’s nationals by authorities in the South.

Kim claimed she was convinced to seek out short-term employment in South Korea to help pay the costs of the medical treatment she received in China, according to media reports.

Kim told Kyodo News in a 2015 interview in South Korea that she had made a mistake and was now without a passport, having been required to turn it over, and

is unable to leave the country.

In his letter, Ja claims that such acts constitute a “crime against humanity” and “will be a touchstone testing the true stand of the UN for the promotion and protection of human rights.”

North Korean Counselor Ri Song Chol told Kyodo that a previous letter last May to then UN chief Ban Ki Moon, whom Guterres replaced in January, went unanswered.

“This is a real human rights violation case but they (the United Nations) do not touch this issue,” Ri said. “We have high expectations for the secretary general to solve this issue as an urgent and emergency human rights issue.”

The United Nations has confirmed receipt of the letter but did not offer any further details. North Korea’s human rights record was the focus of discussion in the UN Security Council for the third year in a row last December. The UN General Assembly also adopted last month a Japan- and European Union-led resolution rebuking the North for its continued rights abuses for the 12th year in a row.—Kyodo News

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'La La Land' a 'team effort', says director Damien Chazelle

TOKYO — Actor Ryan Gosling and director Damien Chazelle stressed the collaboration that went into making their Oscar-nominated film "La La Land", at their first news conference following the release of nominations on Friday.

"This was such a labor of love to make and it was a real team effort," said 32-year old director Chazelle, who is poised to become the youngest ever Best Director Oscar winner.

"There were an incredible number of people who came together at the heights of their crafts and really pushed themselves beyond their limit to make this film. So I was really pleased that so many of those people got recognized", he said before breaking open a celebratory barrel of sake with Gosling. "La La Land" became the movie to beat at the Academy Awards after earning 14 nominations on Tuesday, in a diverse list that silenced the #Oscars-SoWhite controversy of the last

two years. With nominations that include best picture, actor, actress, director, score and screenplay, the musical about a struggling actress, played by Emma Stone, and her jazz pianist boyfriend, played by Gosling, equaled the record set by the 1997 blockbuster "Titanic" and the 1950 film "All About Eve".

"La La Land" will vie for Best Picture Oscar with black coming-of-age movie "Moonlight", and sci-fi film "Arrival" each with eight nods, Mel Gibson's Hollywood comeback war movie "Hacksaw Ridge", dramas "Manchester by the Sea", "Hidden Figures", and "Lion", modern western "Hell or High Water" and Denzel Washington's adaptation of stage play "Fences".

The musical, which has raked \$174 million worldwide, will be released in Japan on 24 February.

Jimmy Kimmel will host the Academy Awards ceremony in Hollywood on 26 February. —Reuters



Dancers perform at a premiere event for the movie 'La La Land' in Tokyo, Japan, on 26 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan artist says latest sticker graffiti aimed at Trump



A Japanese graffiti artist known as 281 Antinuke poses for a photo with his sticker art depicting US President Donald Trump in Tokyo's Shibuya shopping and entertainment district, Japan, on 27 January 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

TOKYO — Japanese graffiti artist "281 Antinuke" says his latest street art — politically-charged stickers plastered around central Tokyo — takes aim at US President Donald Trump.

Amid the bustling night life of Shibuya, a major shopping and entertainment hub in Tokyo, the artist pastes stickers dealing with social issues to lamp posts and walls to attract the attention of passersby.

His latest postings target the controversial remarks made by Trump about women and minorities during his 2016 campaign.

The stickers show a figure resembling the US president standing between figures in white capes, which symbolize members of the white supremacist group Ku Klux Klan, the artist told Reuters Television in a recent interview.

"My art was produced out of the fear of what may happen to Japan because of such a horrifying leader," 281 Antinuke said,

Trump "is saying white supremacist things, things that are much more than America first,"

he said.

Wearing sunglasses and a white surgical mask, 281 Antinuke declined to give his name or reveal his face, saying he feared retaliation for the political views contained in his art.

Graffiti is also punishable by heavy penalties and frowned upon by Japanese society.

Much of 281 Antinuke's previous artwork criticized nuclear power, inspired after the 11 March, 2011, earthquake and tsunami that caused a meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The artist said the more political a sticker — other works have criticized Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe — the faster it is taken down. On the busy streets of Shibuya, people who stopped to take a look were initially confused by the anti-Trump stickers.

"My first impression is that they are hard to understand, but once I get the context of it, it's very expressive as an art form," said Tokyo resident Manato Kato. —Reuters

India orders probe after Bollywood filmmaker thrashed on sets of historical film

NEW DELHI — Indian authorities on Saturday ordered a probe into the assault on Bollywood filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali on the sets of his historical flick Padmavati.

A group of protesters belonging to Rajput Karni Sena, a fringe outfit, stormed the film's sets at Jaigarh Fort in the western state of Rajasthan on Friday, alleging that his film distorts history.

Rajasthan's Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria said he had ordered a probe into the incident, stressing "anger should not be shown by breaking the law."

Padmavati is based on the story of legendary Queen Padmini who committed suicide along with a number of women after refusing to submit to Emperor Alauddin Khilji when he arrived at the Chittorgarh fort with his army and was about to storm it in 1303.

The protesters alleged that the film contains love scenes between Queen Padmini and Alauddin Khilji and Bhansali should delete such scenes as they distorted facts.

Bollywood has been united to condemn the incident that was captured on camera.

The film fraternity has demanded actions against the group that carried out the assault on the veteran Bollywood director who is an acclaimed figure in the industry. —Xinhua

Matthew McConaughey would love to be teacher

LOS ANGELES — Matthew McConaughey says if not an actor he would have been a teacher.

The "Gold" star said he has already got a taste of his other dream career as he is a professor at the University of Texas, reported Female First.

"If I weren't an actor, I'd be a teacher or an astronaut ... I'm a professor at the University of Texas at Austin! This semester, I'm teaching students about the science behind the

magic of filmmaking," McConaughey said.

The 47-year-old actor grew up in Texas and is keen to pass some of those core values he learnt as a kid to his own children, Levi, eight, Vida, seven, and Livingston, four, who he has with his wife Camila Alves.

"The things about growing up Texan that I've tried to pass on to my kids are a strong work ethic and no false drama," he said. —PTI



Matthew McConaughey poses with co-star Jennifer Garner at the premiere of 'The Ghosts of Girlfriends Past' at the Grauman's Chinese theatre in Hollywood, California, in 2009. PHOTO: REUTERS

Chinese Year of Rooster kicks off with fanfare in Nigeria

ABUJA — The Chinese community in Nigeria on Saturday held a carnival-like celebration to mark the beginning of Chinese Lunar New Year 2017, Year of the Rooster.

In Abuja, Nigeria’s capital, the event, organized by the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, witnessed a large turnout of Chinese citizens, local Nigerian officials, and students.

It was the first of several events outlined for the celebration of what is also known as the Spring Festival observed by the Chinese people.

The revelers, who gathered at the China Cultural Center tucked in the central business area of Abuja city, were enthralled by an exhibition of the Chinese culture and various Chinese and Nigerian art performances as well as the Chinese traditional lion dance performed by students of the Government Girls Secondary School in the Nigerian town of Dutse.

Zhou Pingjian, Chinese ambassador to Nigeria, told Xinhua the celebration was to mark the beginning of good things to come.

In an earlier message to congratulate China, the Chi-



People perform a dragon dance to celebrate China’s Lunar New Year in Dabu County, Guangdong province, China, on 28 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

nese community in Nigeria and the world over on the Chinese lunar new year, Nigerian leader Muhammadu Buhari noted the Spring Festival is the most important traditional festival for the Chinese. The celebration emphasizes the concept of family and the opportunity of reunion — values shared by both Nigeria and China, Buhari wrote in a statement released by his office last Sunday. The Spring Festival has gained popularity in most cities in Nigeria due to the sense of anticipation and excitement shared by the Chinese community in the West African country for the festival and the way it is colorfully celebrated every year. The Chinese new year celebrations are emblematic of the cultural tradition, heritage and aesthetic aspirations of the Chinese nation, abounding in distinctive Chinese symbols of great emotional appeal. The tradition of such celebrations by Chinese dates back to more than 4,000 years and includes displaying fireworks, Chinese new year couplets, preparing Jiaozi (the Chinese dumplings) and having the family reunion dinner on the new year’s eve.—Xinhua

Retired emperor’s duties to remain unspecified under abdication law

TOKYO — The government will not outline Emperor Akihito’s official duties in any legislation drawn up to allow his abdication in an effort to ensure the incoming symbolic figurehead’s role is clearly defined, a government source said on Saturday.

Some critics say that if the current emperor is allowed to abdicate, the coexistence of the new emperor and the retired one could be seen as a conflict of authority. The emperor is widely expected to step down by

the end of 2018.

At a gathering of the government advisory panel studying the possible abdication of the emperor on 11 January, the Imperial Household Agency explained that all official duties — both state acts and public duties — will be conducted by the new emperor, brushing aside such concern.

The government classifies the emperor’s activities into three categories — state acts, public duties and other acts deemed private. While the Constitution stipulates

the emperor’s state acts, the supreme law does not mention his public duties. In state acts, the emperor convenes Diet sessions and dissolves the House of Representatives based on the recommendation and approval of the Cabinet.

His public duties include traveling to foreign countries and visiting disaster-hit areas to console and encourage affected people. While the retired emperor is unlikely to perform any state acts, he may take part in unofficial acts such as

observing sumo wrestling, according to the source. The government is mulling a special law that will allow only Emperor Akihito to step down, instead of crafting a permanent law to also be applied to his successors.

The issue of the 83-year-old emperor’s abdication emerged after he strongly hinted in a video message in last August at his desire to resign and hand over the Chrysanthemum throne to his son, Crown Prince Naruhito. —Kyodo News

Abdication letter and papers give insight into Britain’s ‘mad’ King George

LONDON — A handwritten draft letter of abdication penned by King George III is to go on display for the first time as part of a huge cache of documents from the reign of the last British monarch to rule over America, the royal household said on Saturday.

The letter, covered in blotches, scratchings and corrections, was penned during a period of political crisis in March 1783 at the end of the American War of Independence.

“I am therefore resolved to resign my Crown and all the Dominions appertaining to it to the Prince of Wales, my eldest son and lawful successor,” said the letter, which was never sent.

It is among a collection of 350,000 Georgian papers from the royal archives which have been digitally scanned and will be placed on an online portal for historians and the public to study from

Saturday. The documents include intimate letters between George and his wife Charlotte, household bills and a huge number of letters between the king and the government with detailed notes about the war in America.

There is also an instruction manual from George’s father about kingship.

George, Britain’s longest-reigning king who was on the throne from 1760 until 1820, suffered from health problems in the latter part of his life which was documented in the award-winning 1994 film “The Madness Of King George”.

Current heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles has said George was unfairly remembered by history as mad and the king who lost America, when he was in fact one of Britain’s most dutiful, cultured and misunderstood rulers. —Reuters

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Programme Schedule

(29-1-2017 07:00am ~ 30-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Rakhine Tourist Area
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	My Travel In This Exceptional Place, Inle Lake
08:46	Am	News Extra “Exclusive Interview with Dy-Foreign Minister of Czech Republic
08:58	Am	Moe La Win’s Piano Melody 2 (Sonata by Mozart)
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Dawei -Tavoy, Travel to The Southern Part of Myanmar
09:45	Am	Gardener: King Orange Plantation

10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Those Who Never Give Up (Ep-1) Aung Thamar Di Gold Shop
10:49	Am	MONASTERY (Shwe In - Pin Kyaung)

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Saturday 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	New
07:26	Pm	Travel to The Southern Part of Shan State (Kalaw)
07:46	Pm	Today Myanmar: Yangon Books Street
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	The Great Po Sein
08:53	Pm	Paper Art Creator

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

Serena wins Australian Open for 23rd grand slam crown

MELBOURNE — Serena Williams pushed sentiments aside in an emotion-charged 6-4, 6-4 defeat of sister Venus to win the Australian Open on Saturday and a record 23rd grand slam title in the professional era.

Tortured by nerves in a tense family affair, Serena had to produce some of her best tennis to overcome Venus who won the crowd at Rod Laver Arena by scrapping hard to the end.

The American's seventh title at Melbourne Park was won with an aggressive charge to the net and a desperate defensive backhand from Venus that floated into the tramlines.

Williams slumped to the ground, with hands in the air and eyes wide with joyous disbelief, before congratulating her sister for inspiring her run in Melbourne.

"She's an amazing person, there's no way I would be at 23 without her," the second seed Serena said, cradling the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup at the trophy ceremony.

"There's no way I would have anything without her."

"She's the only reason the Williams sisters exist, so thank you for inspiring me to be the best that I can be."

The win moved her past Steffi Graf on the list of all-time slam winners and she now sits



Serena Williams of the US holds her trophy after winning her Women's singles final match against Venus Williams of the US at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia on 28 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

just one shy of Margaret Court's long-standing record of 24.

The victory also wrested back the world number one ranking from Angelique Kerber who swiped it away during her winning run to the US Open championship.

Kerber, like a number be-

fore her, may yet be remembered as another caretaker for the ranking before its return to its rightful owner.

Venus was oldest finalist in Melbourne in the professional era and won huge admiration for her unlikely run to the final.

"Serena Williams, that's

my little sister, guys," she said beaming.

"Congratulations Serena on number 23, I've been right there with you, some of them I've lost with you."

"Your win has always been my win, you know that."

"I'm enormously proud of

you, you mean the world to me."

At 35, an age at which most former champions have enjoyed life after tennis for several years, Serena's powers appear undiminished and she will now train her sights on Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 major titles.

Rightly or wrongly, many will feel Serena's top ranking in history is already assured, with Court's haul split between the amateur and professional eras and the American's silverware amassed despite numerous physical setbacks.

In the ultimate throw-back tournament, Serena met her sister on the same Rod Laver Arena court where 14 years before she had edged her in three sets to claim her first Melbourne Park crown.

Eight years had passed since their last grand slam decider at Wimbledon in 2009, and their combined ages in Melbourne added up to the 'oldest' major final ever contested.

They walked down the corridor silently prior to the match, with Serena tuned into headphones and Venus focusing only ahead.

It was a tense start and neither player was able to hold serve until Venus took the fifth game.

Serena was the worst afflicted by the nerves, and she smashed her racket in a rage in just the third game after she slipped behind the baseline when chasing down a ball.—Reuters

Ranieri tells defence to tighten up after Derby draw

LONDON — Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri called on his leaky defence to plug the holes after they rescued a late draw in their FA Cup fourth round clash against second tier Derby County on Friday.

The Premier League champions were five minutes from exiting the cup but staved off embarrassment thanks to captain Wes Morgan's late header that rescued a 2-2 draw.

It was another awkward evening for Leicester's rear-guard, who were the backbone of their stunning title victory last season, but were breached twice before halftime against Derby.

"We have to concentrate. Too many times we concede. We can only work and be more focussed," Ranieri told the BBC.

Leicester took the lead with a woeful own goal from Darren

Bent, who then drew Derby level with a precise header at the other end. Craig Bryson put the hosts ahead as he carved an easy path through the Leicester defence five minutes before half-time.

It was another example of how porous Leicester's backline has become. Ranieri's side have conceded 37 league goals in 22 games this season, having let in one fewer in the whole of their title winning campaign in 2015/16.

For Derby's former England manager Steve McClaren it was a missed opportunity.

"We did everything we could, we came across a team who were at it tonight," he said.

"Our character was fantastic, we dug in in the second half and (Derby keeper) Scott Carson made some saves when we needed him to."—Reuters

Arsenal's Wenger given four-match touchline ban

LONDON — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has been given a four-match touchline ban after admitting a Football Association (FA) misconduct charge for appearing to push the fourth official during their Premier League win over Burnley on Sunday.

Wenger was charged by the FA on Monday after he was sent to the stands by the referee for allegedly using abusive or insulting language towards fourth official Anthony Taylor after an injury-time penalty was awarded to Burnley.

"It was further alleged that following his dismissal from the technical area, his behaviour in remaining in the tunnel area and making physical contact with the fourth official amounted to improper conduct," the FA said in a statement on Friday.

"The Arsenal manager, who was also fined 25,000 pounds, admitted the charge and requested a personal hearing which took place before an Independent Regulatory Commission today (Friday)."

Wenger reacted angrily after Burnley were awarded a



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger Action . PHOTO: REUTERS

93rd-minute penalty at the Emirates Stadium, one they scored to level at 1-1. He was sent to the stands by referee Jon Moss, but stood in the tunnel entrance and refused to move as he tried to watch the remainder of the game.

Taylor appeared to encourage Wenger to move away, but the Frenchman was seen pushing back against him.

Arsenal snatched a winner at the death when they were awarded a penalty of their own, which was converted by Alexis Sanchez.

Arsenal travel to face Southampton in the fourth round of the FA Cup on Saturday, before they host Watford in the Premier League three days later.

The other matches Wenger will miss are league encounters away to Chelsea on 4 February and at home to Hull City a week later.

He will return to the dugout should Arsenal reach the FA Cup fifth round or for their Premier League trip to Liverpool on 4 March.—Reuters